XXXIV. *Dissertation, by Dr. Lyttelton, Dean of Exeter, on the Antiquity of Brick Buildings in England, posterior to the Time of the Romans.*

Read January 20, 1757.

AS an enquiry into the original of any useful art practised in this kingdom seems to be one of the objects of our institution, I shall beg leave to lay before you some short remarks I have made on the antiquity of our Brick Building, which I am the rather induced to do, as it is a subject which has never been considered, as I know of, by any of our writers on architecture or antiquities.

OUR very learned and worthy brother, Dr. Ward, in his ingenious remarks on a date in Arabian numerals, impressed in relievo on a brick chimney at Shalford in Bucks, has satisfactorily proved, that the date could not be 1182, as was supposed, but rather 1382. (Phil. Transf. abridged, vol. Xth, p. 1263.) He founds his objection upon the Arabian or Indian numerals being of later introduction into this part of Europe than the twelfth century. But had he known that the oldest brick buildings here (posterior to the Roman government) reached not higher than the close of the fourteenth century, this alone would have been a very strong argument against the supposed antiquity of the Shalford date.

As in this instance, the material of the building where the date occurred is a very considerable circumstance towards a discovery of its authenticity, so likewise in judging of the pretended date on the stone gate at Worcester, under the statues of King Edgar and his two Queens (as Dr. Thomas, in his survey of Worcester cathedral, calls them), the Gothic style of the arch, &c. would alone have proved, that the date could not be near so old as 975,
as.

as Dr. Ward, by other convincing arguments, evidently made appear before the Royal Society (Phil. Transf. abridged, vol. IXth, p. 431). For the Saxon mode of building, which continued with very little alteration till about Stephen's time, was widely-different from the Gothic, as Sir Christopher Wren justly observes in his letter to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, lately printed in the Parentalia, and in Widmore's account of Westminster abbey; which confirmed an hypothesis of my own, that I ventured to advance long before this letter was made public, and endeavoured to ascertain by accurate drawings made of several old buildings, which were communicated to this Society. I must acknowledge, indeed, to have taken the first hint of this different style of architecture from a loose sheet of Mr. Aubrey's MSS. in the Ashmolean Museum; wherein he gives a rude drawing of a tower belonging to Saint Mary's church at the Devizes, and a window of the Chequer inn, at Oxford, as specimens of Saxon architecture, in contradistinction to the Gothic; but all our other writers on antiquities have hitherto confounded them, except Staveland, in his tract on church-building, (p. 151), and Dr. Warburton, in a note on Mr. Pope's Epistle on Taste, to Lord Burlington.—As I have occasionally mentioned this gateway at Worcester, permit me to observe, that Dr. Thomas asserts, “it is commonly called King John's tower, and
“said by some to have been built by him; but is much more an-
“cient, having, in the front of it, the statues of King Edgar and
“his two Queens; and the street it leads into is called, in several
“writings, Edgar-street.”

Now I will venture to affirm, this gate-way or tower is not older than King John's time. In a manuscript in my possession, written by Mr. Habington, the great Worcestershire antiquary, about the reign of King Charles I. is the following passage:

“KING John, a great benefactor to the church of Worcester;
“did by all likelihood build the stately gate-house of his court;
“which,

“ which after served the priory, and now the college. In the
 “ front whereof, under the statues of our blessed Saviour crown-
 “ ing his blessed mother, is a King armed, with his legs crossed,
 “ which may represent King John, who, An. Dom. 1215, in
 “ Saint Paul’s church, London, took on him the sign of the cross
 “ for the holy voyage; or King Richard the Ist, whose lion’s
 “ heart so conquered the Infidels.”

OUR author here supposes the principal figure to represent King John, or Richard the Ist, and takes no notice of the female figures on each side, nor of the supposed date. Now, as King Richard and King John had each but one wife, I am inclined to think with Dr. Thomas, that the cross-legged figure rather represented King Edgar than either King Richard the Ist, or King John: and the two side-figures, Queen Ethelflede and Ethelfride, King Edgar’s two wives; but, at the same time, I can by no means allow these statues to be any proof of the edifice on which they are placed having been erected in the Saxon age, the sculpture being much too good for those very barbarous times; not to mention, that the cross-legged figure very nearly resembles more than one of the statues which adorn the west front of Exeter cathedral, and one in the north west angle of the front of Wells cathedral. It is well known the former were placed at Exeter by bishop Grandison in King Edward the III^d’s reign.

N. B. A good engraving of the statues on the Worcester gateway is prefixed to Heming’s Chartulary, published by Hearne. As Mr. Habington is quite silent about the date in question, I conclude it was illegible in his time; and Dr. Ward, for the same reason, concludes it was equally so when Dr. Thomas wrote his survey; but yet I am inclined to think, there was an antient date in Arabian or Indian numerals, perhaps filled or covered with moss, or almost obliterated by time, though not so old by many centuries as the year 975; and the front of this gate being a few years since under repair, some part of the numerals might remain,

main, and were rendered more conspicuous by the scraping and cleaning of the stones. Now, as Dr. Thomas had a few years before declared his opinion in print, that the tower or gate-way was much more antient than King John's time, and also, that the statues represented King Edgar and his two Queens, the master-workmen set up the present date (975), which was the year King Edgar died; as a restoration only of what appeared to him the original one.

BUT to return from this digression.

I MEAN not here to consider the Roman brick buildings in this island, but shall observe only, that it is somewhat surprizing so useful an art should have been practised here so long by the Romans, and such considerable specimens of brick work remaining; as Pevensey castle, the walls of Silchester and York, &c. after the Saxons got footing here, that this art should have been wholly lost for a course of many centuries; and yet 'tis evident, the Normans, if not the Saxons, were ready enough to employ this material in their buildings, when they could easily procure it, witness the present great church of Saint Alban's, Saint Martin's near Canterbury, and Kingsbury in Middlesex; in all of which much Roman brick is worked up with the stone. The first, we know, was built by Paulus the 19th abbot, circa ann. 1077, (11 William I.) with materials got out of the ruins of Old Verulam (Stavely, p. 149, from M. Paris, fol. 49). Saint Martin's near Canterbury, is said by all our writers to be the identical church which Queen Bertha gave to Augustin the monk to celebrate divine service in; but, from the form of the arches, pillars, windows, &c. we may venture to pronounce it to have been rebuilt since King Henry II; and here we find a great deal of Roman brick in the walls, as we do also in Kingsbury church, which, from being wholly in the Gothic style, we may also pronounce not older than Saint Martin's.

THE earliest period I can fix for the revival of this art in Britain, was about King Richard the II^d's reign; which, by the way, confirms Dr. Ward's opinion, that the date on the brick chimney should be read 1382, which falls under the 5th year of that King's reign. We learn from Leland (*Itin.* vol. I. p. 49),
 “ that in King Richard the II^d's days, the toune of Kingeston on
 “ Hull waxid very rich, and Michael de la Pole, marchaunt there,
 “ was made Count of Southfolk; yn whose tyme the toune was
 “ wonderfully augmentid yn building, and was enclofid with
 “ diches, and the waul begon, and yn continuance endid and
 “ made al of brike, as most parte of the houses of the toune at
 “ that tyme was — In the waul (adds this writer) be 4 principal
 “ gates of brike; the north gate having 4 wardes, bytwixt the
 “ which and Beverle gate be 12 touers of bryke, and yn one of
 “ them a postern — Betwixt Miton gate and Hasille gate there be
 “ 3 toures of brike, and from thens to the havin mouth be 5
 “ toures of brike. Michael de la Pole buildid a goodly house of
 “ brike again the west end of Saint Maries chirch lyke a palace,
 “ with goodly orchard and gardein at large, enclofid with brike. He
 “ buildid 3 houses besides in the town, whereof every one has
 “ a toure of brike. The Trinite church, most made of brike, is
 “ larger and fairer a great deal than St. Mary's.” So far Leland.

THIS author here asserts, that Hull was first inclosed with ditches, and the wall begun by De la Pole in King Richard the II^d's time, and that the latter was built wholly with brick. Now, in Gent's history of Kingston on Hull, we are informed,
 “ that the 15th Edward II^d, (An. 1321), the King, hearing of
 “ the town's wonderful improvement, granted a charter, whereby
 “ the inhabitants were impowered to build their houses for the
 “ future of lime and stone, and to make a wall, as designed by his
 “ predecessor, with a mote for greater security; and that the next
 “ year the inhabitants petitioned the King, that a toll of one
 “ penny per pound might be laid on all goods imported and ex-
 “ ported,

“ ported, to enable them to build a strong stone wall whereon
“ towers might be erected, &c.” (Gent, p. 87) No doubt, a
stone wall was then built, and the mote made in consequence of
this grant; for the same author (at p. 91.) says, “ that Ann.
“ 1378 (1 Richard II.) the Scots and French being enemies to
“ England, the King sent to Hull, to have the town put into a
“ posture of defence, the long happy reign of his predecessor
“ having rendered their wall and ditches useless; but now, the
“ case being altered, the King commanded them to be repaired
“ at the expence of the town.” And again (at p. 72,) “ That
“ in the year 1383, Sir Michael de la Pole erected here a stately
“ palace, the magnificent gate-house, made of brick, being sup-
“ ported by great timbers, having two chambers covered with
“ tyle. Through this first passage, and an entry twenty feet
“ broad and one hundred long, was a spacious tower built of brick
“ and stone, three stories high, covered with lead, in which were
“ chambers eighteen feet square, &c. The chapel was twenty-
“ eight feet long, and fifteen broad, built of fine brick and stone,
“ covered with lead, &c.” In a marginal note he adds, “ That
“ anno 1538, a survey was taken of this magnificent building,
“ (from which I suppose this description was copied, though the
“ author cites no authority), when it was stiled the King’s house;
“ and anno 1540, the King visiting the town, beautified, repaired,
“ and enlarged it.”

IN the month of September last I made a journey to Hull, and
carefully viewing the walls, found part of the towers between
Beverley and North-Gates still standing, and entirely composed
of brick; but another part of the wall (viz.) that which stretches
from the North Block-house towards Drypool-church, for a con-
siderable length, is built with stone, having been faced only with
brick; the said coat or facing being now fallen, and lying under
the wall. This might lead one to suspect, that the whole wall
which surrounds the town had been faced in like manner, and

consequently might have been the work of a later age than King Richard the III's time. I should, indeed, have embraced this opinion, had the town been first strengthened with a wall by De la Pole, as Leland asserts; but as Mr. Gent mentions a royal charter from King Edward II, to empower the inhabitants to build a wall of stone, as designed by his predecessor, and a toll granted in consequence thereof; and we find King Richard the III sending orders to the town, to repair their wall on an apprehension of the French and Scots invading England; I see no room to doubt of De la Pole's repairing with brick the old stone wall, and building the towers with the same material.

WITH regard to the Trinity church (which Leland says had a great deal of brick worked up in the walls), there does not appear a single brick in or about the whole fabrick, except a few on the south front, placed there of very late years; and yet the church walls seem to have undergone no alteration, either by way of addition or repair, since King Henry the VIIIth's time, when Leland wrote: nor is the old gate-way leading to De la Pole's palace built of brick, but wholly of stone; and, by the style of the arch, windows, &c. it appears much more antient than King Henry the VIIIth's time; consequently there is no room to suspect that this gate-way was rebuilt by that Prince when he erected the present block-houses (which, by the way, are both brick edifices), and also ordered Pole's house to be repaired and beautified, as is above-mentioned; but it is possible, there might have been another gate-way of brick, now demolished. No other part of De la Pole's mansion is now standing, the whole site being covered with the townsmen's houses. But, as Leland positively asserts, it was built with brick, and the orchard and gardens inclosed with a brick wall; and in the circumstantial description of this house which Mr. Gent gives us, Leland's assertion is confirmed; I think we may venture to pronounce that brick was used at Kingston on Hull, as early as the reign of King Richard II.

FROM this time to the reign of King Henry the VIth, I meet with no evidence of brick being employed as a material in building; that is, during the reigns of King Henry the IVth and Vth. But in the 1st year of Henry the VIth (Cart. N^o 21, in Turre) a licence occurs to Roger Fenis, knight, to embattel and fortify his manor-house of Hurst-Monceaux in Suffex, “*Licentia kernellandi manerium suum de Herts-Monceaux, &c.*”

THIS noble house, which is wholly built of brick in the castle style, and, as such, occurs among Buck’s engravings of castles and abbeys in the county of Suffex, is still standing complete; and now that Audley-End is in part pulled down, is perhaps the largest house belonging to a subject in the kingdom. No doubt it was built, and not merely embattled, at the time when the licence was obtained, the whole being built upon one plan; and it is worthy of remark, that the art of making brick was then carried to such perfection, though it should seem to be but in its infancy, that this vast structure has stood the brunt of weather for above three centuries, and particularly of the salt corroding vapours arising from the sea, to which it is greatly exposed, without suffering the least injury in any part of the walls; insomuch that hardly a single brick shews the least mark of decay.

THERE is another large brick house embattled in like manner, and surrounded also with a mote, coeval with Hurst-Monceaux; I mean the seat of the Tyrrells at Heron-Gate in Essex. As the architecture here suits exactly with the taste and style of Henry the VIth’s age, there is great reason to believe it was built by Sir John Tyrrell, in that or the preceding reign, as he was appointed captain or overseer of the carpenters by King Henry V. for his new works at Calais, and made treasurer of the household by King Henry VI.

ETON college, Queen’s college in Cambridge, if I am not misinformed, and several other public and private edifices, were built of brick in this reign; so I think we may fairly pronounce the

148 *On the Antiquity of Brick Buildings in England, &c.*

fashion of building with brick to have generally prevailed in England about Henry the VIth's time, and from thence continued to the present without interruption.

I FIND in Leland's *Collectanea*, vol. I. page lxxviii. is a letter to the editor from Mr. Bagford, dated February 1, 1714-15, in which the antiquity of Brick Buildings in England is considered; from which, as it so immediately relates to the present subject, I shall take the liberty to subjoin an extract:

“ HERE we must take notice, that there were no brick buildings except chimneys, before the reign of Henry VII; and that even such as were afterwards built, were chiefly in monasteries, or some few palaces for kings and noblemen; such as that at Ouldford (which was King Henry the Eighth's house), Brookhouse at Hackney (Lord Shower's house), the Church-house in the Church-yard, &c. Henry VII, brought in the use of flint building, which, Sir Henry Wotton says, was not practised by the antients.—It was in his reign that we began to be more regular in our buildings, and had the use of brick from the Italians. This was afterwards revived by Inigo Jones, anno 1630, who brought it into common use. One of his first buildings was that of the Piazza in Covent Garden.

THE bricklayers of that age were curious workmen, as might have been seen by the buildings at Hampton Court, Saint James's, Whitehall, Nonfuch-house, &c. especially by the chimnies, not to be matched by any in Europe for variety of forms, differing very much from one another in the texture and curious workmanship, some of which are now standing at Whitehall, and Saint James's.”