

VIII.—*Remarks on a Portrait of the Duchess of Milan, recently discovered at Windsor Castle, probably painted by HOLBEIN at Brussels in the year 1538.*
By GEORGE SCHARF, Esq., F.S.A., in a Letter addressed to the Earl STANHOPE,
President.

Read November 19, 1863.

National Portrait Gallery.
Nov. 19th, 1863.

MY LORD,

I BEG to lay before the Society a few notes on an historical portrait, which I was so fortunate as to discover recently at Windsor Castle, and the original of which Her Majesty has been most graciously pleased to permit to be exhibited to the Society this evening.

The portrait has for a considerable time past occupied a prominent place in the small apartment of the Castle known as the Waiting-room, which is situated close by the entrance to the Royal pew in the Private Chapel. It is the same room that I described on a former occasion, and the picture belongs to the same series of Royal Portraits as I had alluded to in my paper printed in the *Archæologia* (Vol. XXXIX. page 245). This portrait, both for its subject and on account of the circumstances under which it appears to have been painted, throws further light on a passage in Mr. Franks's remarks on the discovery of the will of Hans Holbein, (*Archæologia*, Vol. XXXIX. page 7), and is connected also with my own remarks on a picture at Hampton Court representing the "Three Children of the King of Denmark," printed in the *Archæologia* (Vol. XXXIX. page 257). The portrait now under consideration, although holding a prominent position in a panel next the window, was unnamed. It represents, as will be seen (Plate IV.), a lady in a dark dress trimmed with fur, now nearly as dark as the dress, and wearing a black cap. The peculiarities of the features, and the stern simplicity of the dress, combined with the somewhat studious display of a cameo of the ring on the third finger of her left hand, could hardly fail to command atten-



J. H. Maguire lith

M. & N. Harbar's imp

CHRISTINA DUCHESS OF MILAN.

From the original Painting in Windsor Castle.

tion. The manner of holding her gloves was in itself a peculiarity, and the solid blackness of her dress and sleeves and cap, destitute of such folds and minute details as the painters of that age so freely indulged in, being totally "empty," as the artist would technically express it, attracted my attention from the first time of my noticing the picture. The countenance strongly indicated a relationship to the Emperor Charles V., whilst the gold ring containing a square black stone, and a black ring on her other hand, were expressive of mourning, if not of widowhood. Until very recently, I believed the picture to have been intended for Mary of Austria, sister of Charles V., widow of the King of Hungary, and Regent of the Netherlands. That is the same lady who is represented at an early age in a broad hat in the picture belonging to the Society of Antiquaries,^a and, at a later period of life, in a curious portrait at Hampton Court. The latter picture is described in the Catalogue of King Charles I. collection, and is verified by a curious engraving in Grimeston's History of the Netherlands, fol. Lond. 1627, page 196.

When referring to my notes made at Arundel Castle, after having recently been at Windsor, I was struck with the similarity of manner in which the gloves were held in two pictures, namely, in the full-length Holbein of the Duchess of Milan at Arundel, and in the unknown lady's portrait at Windsor Castle. Moreover, the simplicity of dress, the plain white of the small frill and ruffles, bordered merely with a black line, and the square form of the black cap entirely concealing any hair, were sufficient for all general purposes of identity. It was, however, satisfactory, although not sufficient for me to believe that I had recovered a missing portrait belonging to the royal collection, and that the picture at Windsor really represented Christina, Duchess of Milan. This lady is generally familiar to us through the answer which she sent to Henry VIII., on his soliciting her hand in marriage. She declined the honour on the ground that nature had not prepared her for it by endowing her with two heads! The negotiations which Henry entered into in regard to this alliance have been fully quoted by Mr. Franks in his paper on Holbein, before referred to (Vol. XXXIX. pages 6 and 7). Holbein, as we have there seen, was sent to Brussels, where the Duchess was then staying with her aunt Mary, Regent of the Netherlands, for the express purpose of taking her portrait for the king his master.

The letter from Brussels, written by John Hutton, the diplomatic resident from the English court, and dated 14th March, 1538, shows that Holbein arrived

^a See Fine Arts Quarterly Review, vol. ii., p. 326.

there on the 10th, and on the following day acquitted himself of his appointed task in three hours. This limitation of time is also recorded by Lord Herbert^a and noticed by Walpole in his anecdotes.^b The picture by Holbein could only have been a drawing or a painting on a rather small scale, inasmuch as it had at once to be conveyed by a messenger to England, and one of the objects of Hutton's letter was to show the diligence with which the king's commands were executed and to announce the coming of the picture. The scale and workmanship of the picture before us are exactly such as might have been expected from a first-rate painter and tactician under such circumstances. All essential points are observed with scrupulous fidelity, and, certainly, as far as internal evidence extends, without flattery. It is not to be supposed that Holbein did nothing to the picture beyond the term of the three hours' sitting afforded by the duchess. Having secured all the essential points of likeness, and given the general colouring, he doubtless spent some time in further finishings from memory. But time must have been given for the picture to dry.

Hutton also speaks of a second picture of the duchess, likewise intended for the king, and painted, at the lady's own command, immediately before the arrival of Holbein. The picture had just been sent off: but, as soon as Hutton saw that Holbein had acquitted himself so well, he sent to overtake the other messenger and to prevent the picture reaching its destination too early. Of Holbein's work, he says to the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Cromwell, "Mr. Haunce, having but three hours space, hath showed himself to be master of that science (the making of physiognomies), for it is very perfect; the other is but slobbered in comparison to it, as by the sight of both your lordship shall well apperceive." We thus find that both pictures went to England at the same time. The "Slobbered" one has still to be found. This epithet would certainly neither suit the truthful and careful portrait before us nor the very fine whole-length picture now preserved at Arundel Castle. As Mr. Franks observes in a note, "it is a full-length picture carefully painted, and could not have been executed in the time." He further suggests, and with great probability, that the Arundel picture was perhaps painted from a sketch made by Holbein on this occasion. This I quite believe to have been the case.

Before compiling these notes I again went to Arundel and, by the favour of the Duchess of Norfolk, examined the picture very minutely. It is very fine

^a Lord Herbert's "Life and Reign of King Henry VIII.," printed in Kennett's History of England. Fol. 1706. Vol. II. page 214.

^b Page 72 note, of Dallaway and Wornum's edition.

and in excellent condition, and evidently represents the same person; but the dress has obviously been improved and the entire appearance of the person softened or subdued under a harmless tone of flattery. The hands are less clenched and the fingers much more tapering and delicate than in the original study done at Brussels. The fur down the front of her dress is narrowed and of a paler brown than in the painting at Windsor, but the plain white of the small frill is quite the same. There is a further argument to show that the full-length picture may have been painted some time after the year 1538, as the name and titles of the lady written on a painted piece of paper, on the blue background, designate her "Duchess of Lorraine." The inscription reads thus:—"Christine, Daughter to Christierne King of Denmark, and Dutchesse of Lotragné and heretofore (?) Dutches of Milan." This would, if the writing be contemporary with the picture, bring the date to 1541, the year of her second marriage to Francis, Duke of Lorraine and Barr. The style of writing on the paper may perhaps raise some question, and may possibly be found to belong to the period of James I. when, through his Queen and the occasional presence of Christian IV. in England, a considerable interest was felt in matters connected with Denmark. There can, however, be no reason to doubt the correctness of the designation of the portrait, and it may also be confirmed by a reference to existing medals, both of Sforza^a and Lorraine, and by the fine engraving or etching of the duchess by Agostino Carracci, published in Campo's History of Cremona.^b

The picture now at Arundel Castle would appear to have been for some time in the possession of the Howard family; since Walpole observes in a note to his anecdotes, "Vertue saw a whole length of this princess at Mr. Howard's in Soho Square." It was afterwards at Worksop Manor (then belonging to the Duke of Norfolk), in company with many of the best of the family paint-

^a Litta, *Famiglie Celebre Italiane*, volume i. Attendolo-Sforza, Medals illustrative of Tavola vi. No. 12. The Duchess is represented in profile to the right with the legend CHRISTIERNA. DVC. MED. On the reverse, a Pine apple, with FRANC. SFOR. SECONDI. VSOR round it, and date 1533.

^b Cremona da Antonio Campo pittore e Cavalier Cremonese. Folio, 1585, page 107. The head is spiritedly engraved within an oval border inscribed + CHRISTIERNA DANIAE REGIS FIL. FRANC. II. SFORTIÆ VX. The face is seen in three quarters, to the left, wearing a close cap covering the ears, and a small portion of the hair on each side at the temples. A white dress covers the bosom and terminates at the neck in a plain turn-over collar. A fur trimming passes over her shoulders. The portrait is inscribed, "E cavata la sua effigie da un quadro à oglio che è appresso à Don Antonio Londonio Presidente del Magistrato ordinario di Milano."

ings, all of which have since been removed to Arundel Castle. The picture was at that time in a small dressing-room and particularly mentioned as "a very curious portrait of a Duchess of Milan."^a It is, however, very probable that this picture was originally in the royal collection, for we find in the inventory of King Henry's pictures, referred to on a former occasion, the following entry, bearing date April 24th, 1542:—

"A greate table with the picture of the Duchyes of Myllayne, beinge her whole stature."

The picture at Arundel so far corresponds to the description. It is in a ponderous and very ill-suited frame; unfortunately screwed to the wall, so that there was no opportunity of examining the back of the panel and ascertaining whether any brand or marking were upon it.

The general design of the picture will be shown by the accompanying sketch, (Plate V.) which I have reduced from the tracing of the picture made by the kind permission of the Duchess of Norfolk.

The smaller picture, which seems to have duly reached its destination, after leaving Brussels, appears to correspond with a *second* picture of the Duchess of Milan which occurs in the Catalogue of pictures belonging to King Henry VIII., under the shorter designation,

"A Table with a Picture of the Duchesse of Myllayne."

There can, I think, be very little doubt that the entry refers to the picture now before us; since the other entry particularly specified "her whole stature."

We have yet one further point of interest in connection with this portrait. It not only affords a desirable illustration for Mr. Franks's account of Holbein's operations in 1538, but gives us also an additional representation of one of the "three children of the King of Denmark," whose portraits, no longer to be found in their native country, (Archæologia, Vol. XXXIX. pages 257 and 262) formed one of the subjects of my communication to the Archæologia. This Duchess of Milan is identical with the little black-eyed girl, wearing a peculiar hood, seen on the right hand side in the Hampton Court picture. The same features and expression of countenance, notwithstanding the difference of years, may be traced in both. The look of the eyes is quite the same, and I would also invite attention to the form of the upper eyelids which, especially in the Arundel picture, become remarkably broad on the side away from the nose. The dark

^a Beauties of England and Wales, published in 1813, "Nottinghamshire," vol. xii. page 344.



T.H. Maguire. lith.

M & N Hamhart. imp.

Christine Daughtr to Chr
Suerne h of Denark & Dutche
of Lorraine and here
Dutche of Milan

From the original Painting in Arundel Castle.

eyebrows on the full-length picture I found on careful investigation had been reduced by scraping, which tends to give a somewhat softer and more melancholy expression to the countenance. There is also in the deeper shadows about the temples, under the black cap of the Arundel portrait, suggestion of hair without any being actually shown. The entire concealment of hair and muffling up of the neck give an appearance of a far more advanced age than was really the case. She was at the period of her arrival at Brussels in 1537 only 16. Her personal appearance is thus described in a letter written by Hutton to Lord Cromwell, 9th December,—“The Duchess of Milan arrived here as yesterday, very honourably accompanied as well of her own train as with such as departed from hence to meet her. I am informed she is of the age of 16 years, very high of stature for that age. She is higher than the Regent, a goodly personage of body and competent of beauty, of favour excellent, soft of speech, and very gentle in countenance. She weareth mourning aparel after the manner of Italy.”^a He further adds, in a note to Wriothesley,—

“She is not so pure white as was the late Queen; but she hath a singular good countenance, and when she chanceth to smile, there appeareth two pitts in her cheeks and one in her chin, the which becomith her excellently well.”^b

In a letter dated February 21st, Hutton also adds, “In her speaking she lispeth which doth nothing misbecome her.” Thus far have we accounts of the personal appearance and deportment of a distinguished lady taken at a very remarkable period. When applied to the pictures these descriptions appear to be perfectly consistent. A third picture appears to have been painted of the Duchess in richer apparel, a day or two before Hutton’s first interview with her, as his letter, dated 21st February, from Brussels and addressed to Lord Cromwell clearly indicates. After having seen the Duchess in company with the Regent, he accepted an invitation to dine with “The Lady Marqueis of Barrough.” His letter proceeds to state—“She made great praise of the Duchess of Milan, as well for her beauty, favour, wisdom, and for her much gentleness, all which sayings I affirmed. With that she said that if I had seen her out of her morning apparell, so gorgeously as she had seen her the day before, I would have marvelled, for she said, to tell me a secret, she caused her picture to be made, which being finished, the Duchess had promised to give it to her, so that she of her own motion said, as soon as it came to her hands I should have a sight thereof.”

^a State Papers, vol. viii. pages 6 and 7.

^b *Ib.* vol. viii. page 16.

It is satisfactory to think that the recognition of this portrait takes place so soon after the valuable literary notices by Mr. Franks and Mr. J. G. Nichols upon the works of Holbein and his contemporaries, as to afford a supplement to their theme, and to contribute, in some degree, to our knowledge of the state of Art in connection with the History of our country at a very important period.

I have the honour to be,

Your very obedient Servant,

GEORGE SCHARF.

To The Earl Stanhope, P.S.A.

&c. &c. &c.