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ON CERTAIN SEPULCHRAL CROSS-LEGGED EFFIGIES OF CIVILIANS.

By MATTHEW HOLBECHE BLOXAM, Esq.

THE numerous cross-legged effigies on sepulchral monuments, mostly belonging to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, to be found in our churches, have very commonly been attributed or assigned to Crusaders or Knights Templars. There is, however, a want of early evidence to establish either fact, and though Gough, in the introduction to his costly work on sepulchral monuments, moots the question as to the origin of cross-legged effigies, he arrives at no definite conclusion. It was to him, as it still is, and is likely to remain, a *veraxata questio*.

The Crusades commenced at the close of the eleventh century (*circa* A.D. 1095), and ceased at the close of the thirteenth century. The order of the Knights Templars, instituted A.D. 1118, was suppressed by Pope Clement V., A.D. 1309, and finally abolished, A.D. 1312; and the majority of cross-legged effigies are of a period subsequent to the cessation of the Crusades, and to the abolition of the Order of Knights Templars. Even the effigies of knights in the Temple Church, London, are variously represented, some with the legs straight, and some with the legs crossed. None of these, however, can be said to be of earlier date than the reigns of John or Henry III., the commencement of the thirteenth century.

Even the curious wooden effigy in Gloucester Cathedral, said to commemorate Robert Duke of Gloucester, who died A.D. 1134, and who took a part in the first Crusade, A.D. 1096, and which effigy is perhaps the earliest we have in a cross-legged attitude, is of a date long subsequent to his death, and we can hardly assign to it a period earlier than the commencement of the thirteenth century, the reign of John, or the early part of the reign of Henry III.

Was there then no religious signification attached to the

cross-legged attitude, as represented in sepulchral effigies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? I think there was, but as I have not found in any mediæval writer any allusion to or explanation of this custom, I can only give a conjectural opinion.

Some persons were buried with their legs crossed, as their remains have been so found. In the reparation, some years ago, of Hereford Cathedral, a skeleton was found in a stone coffin with the legs crossed. A skeleton in a similar position was also discovered a few years ago in Brougham Church, Westmoreland.

In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries a community existed in this country called the *Cruce signati*, or *Fratres crucis*, consisting of those who took upon themselves the sign of the cross, and who either went to the Crusades, or on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, or of those who in lieu thereof contributed of their goods towards those objects.

Spelman in his Glossary defines the terms "Cruciferi, Crucigeri, Crucesignati—Sunt qui militiam Terræ sanctæ profitentes, crucem professionis symbolum, vesti in humero dextro appingebant. Sic olim noti, qui prædicata cruce, militaturos se voverant Hierosolymis." Whence then the origin of the *Cruce signati*.

When the Council of Clermont, held A.D. 1095, and presided over by Pope Urban II., came to a conclusion, the Pope addressed those about him, enjoining them to take up the cross and join in the expedition, the first Crusade, to the Holy Land. From his sermon or discourse, as given by Roger of Wendover, I give in a translated form the following passage:—"Gird yourselves then for the battle, my brave warriors, for a memorable expedition against the enemies of the Cross. Let the sign of the Cross decorate your shoulders, in token that you will aid to propagate Christianity; let your outward ardour declare your inward faith."

Of the same discourse or sermon William of Malmesbury treats:—"Let such as are going to fight for Christianity put the form of the cross upon their garments, that they may outwardly demonstrate the love arising from their inward faith, enjoying by the gift of God, and the privilege of St. Peter, absolution from all their crimes."

Again, Roger of Wendover, sub A.D. 1097, speaks of Robert Duke of Normandy, whose cross-legged effigy in Gloucester Cathedral was executed not earlier than near a century after his death, as joining in the first Crusade. "Hoc denique tempore Robertus Dux Normanniæ, cruce signatus, iter Hierosolymitarum, omnium perigrinorum novissimus arripiens, posuit Normanniam in vadimonium fratri suo Regi Willielmo, accepit ab eo decies mille libris argenti." "About the same time Robert Duke of Normandy took the sign of the Cross, and set out, last of all the pilgrims, for Jerusalem, having first placed Normandy in pledge to his brother, King William, for ten thousand marks of silver."

Here then we have one, a Crusader, designated by Roger of Wendover as *Cruce signatus*, whose sepulchral effigy, executed long after his death, is fashioned with the legs crossed.

Matthew Paris, in his "Additamenta," sub anno 1247, briefly alludes to the *Cruce signati*: "Literæ generales directæ per singulos Episcopatus, super collectione decimarum et redemptionem votorum et cruce signatorum et aliorum."

We do not find on the surcoat of any cross-legged effigy any mark or sign of the cross.

In the year 1312 Greenfield Archbishop of York issued an injunction against certain persons, who, in the habit of religious mendicants, entered his diocese and province, of whose state, condition, and orders he had no certain knowledge, they pretending that they were of the order of Brethren of the Cross. *Se de ordine fratrum de cruce prætendentes.*

In certain synodical constitutions of Alexander de Stavenby, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, A.D. 1237, one is headed "*Sequitur de Cruce signatis.*" In this the bishop enjoins all the *Cruce signati* within his diocese, under an anathema, to take their journey without delay to perform their proper vows, nor was any one spared, or the vow of *either sex* relaxed, except such as laboured under manifest infirmity, or was such a valetudinarian that it was not doubtful that he was unable to execute his vow, and then such were, according to their means, to give of their goods for the redemption of their vows. Thus we see the *Cruce signati* were not confined to the one sex, or to those of a pure military order.

And this may be explanatory of the fact why we sometimes, though very rarely, meet with sepulchral effigies of civilians, in lay, not in military costume, represented with the legs crossed. Of these, prior to the seventeenth century I know but of four, all of them of the fourteenth century, and, as far as I am able to judge, they are all about the middle of that century. They are to be found in the churches of Birkin, Yorkshire; of Youlgrave, Derbyshire; of Thurlaston, Leicestershire; and of Much Marcle, Herefordshire.

In Birkin church, Yorkshire, a church not easily accessible, is the cross-legged effigy of a civilian, most difficult to examine, inasmuch as it lies beneath a sepulchral arch in the north wall of the nave, and the front of the arch is obscured by pew work, so that the effigy can only be seen from above by letting down a light. My friend, Mr. Albert Hartshorne, to whom I communicated the existence of this effigy, whilst he was staying in Yorkshire, went over to Birkin, and under extreme difficulties made a drawing of this effigy, of which drawing he was kind enough to send me a tracing. This effigy represents the person commemorated as bareheaded; the hair on each side the face is curled in the fashion of the period, *i. e.*, of the fourteenth century. The hands, upraised on the breast, hold a heart. The close fitting and buttoned sleeves of the tunic, *manicæ botonatæ*, are visible, as is also a portion of the skirt of the tunic, reaching to below the knees. Over the tunic appears a loose supertunic with short and wide sleeves. This is open in front at the skirt, which reach to the calves of the legs. The left leg crosses the right; the feet rest against a dog. The sepulchral arch beneath which this effigy reposes is plain, with a double hollow architrave moulding.

In Thurlaston church, Leicestershire, amongst other interesting effigies, is the recumbent sepulchral effigy of a civilian, lying beneath a sepulchral ogee-shaped arch in the north wall of a chantry chapel. This effigy, from the position it occupies, is probably commemorative of the founder of the chantry. From the nature of the material out of which it is sculptured, a kind of blue lias, it is not so perfect as could be desired. It represents a frankleyn or squire in his ordinary lay attire, bareheaded, with a fillet round the forehead, clad in a loose tunic, belted round the



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EFFIGY IN BIRKIN' CHURCH.

waist and extending to the knees. The lower portions of the legs are gone, but the cross-legged attitude is very apparent. It is probably commemorative of one of the Turville family.

In Youlgrave church, Derbyshire, is an interesting recumbent cross-legged effigy of a civilian. This was first brought to my notice by an engraving of it in the seventh volume of the "Journal of the Archaeological Association." It is there described as "a cross-legged effigy of the *twelfth* century, representing a male personage attired in the quilted gambeson of that period, and holding in his hand a human heart, as in other examples of the time."

As, from the representation of the effigy, supposing it to be fairly correct, I formed a different opinion both as to the age and attire of the effigy to that as above given, I made a journey in the summer of 1874 to Youlgrave for the purpose of a personal examination. I found the engraved representation in the "Journal of the Archaeological Association" to be fairly correct; the description there given not so. For the effigy is that of a civilian, of about the middle of the fourteenth century; the head is bare, the neck is also bare, with the exception of a chin cloth; the hair on each side of the face is curly. The attire appears to consist of a supertunic, with wide and loose sleeves reaching to the elbows, belted about the loins, and descending in loose folds to a little below the knees. On the left side, attached to a belt crossing transversely from right to left, is a short hunting sword. The close-fitting sleeves of the tunic, from the elbows to the wrists, appear from beneath the supertunic, and the hands hold between them that frequent emblem, a heart—in allusion to that scriptural passage, "I will lift up my heart with my hands to thee in the heavens." The legs are crossed, the right leg over the left, and rest on some animal, too mutilated to be distinguishable. To the heels spurs and spur leathers are attached. The head reposes on a lozenge-shaped cushion, placed on a square cushion beneath. There are no indications of body armour on the effigy, and, if I may hazard a conjecture, I should say it is commemorative of a forester or verderer, in his hunting habit, with the exception of the *capucium* or hood.

On a window sill in the south aisle of Much Marcle church, Herefordshire, not its original position, is placed the recum-

bent wooden effigy of a civilian, said to have been brought from some other church. The person here commemorated is represented as bareheaded, with curly locks on each side the face, with moustache and beard. He is attired in a close-fitting tunic or cote, hardly reaching to the knees, with close-fitting sleeves buttoned from the elbows to the wrists—*tunica botonata cum manicis botonatis*. Round the loins is a plain girdle buckled in front, with the strap end of the girdle hanging down; to this girdle a small gipciere or purse is buckled. The caputium, or hood, is worn about the neck and front of the breast, but is not drawn over the head. The legs are crossed, the right leg over the left; the shoes are pointed. A portion of the right foot is gone. The feet rest against a lion, the tail of which curls round the left foot. The head reposes on a square cushion; the neck is bare. This effigy is 6 ft. 4 ins. in length¹ from the crown of the head to the points of the feet; the length of the tunic is little more than 5 ft., and beneath it appears an inner vest. This effigy is evidently of the fourteenth century, to the middle of which period, *circa* A.D. 1350, I would assign it.

There are, I believe, some few effigies of ladies of the fourteenth century, represented in a cross-legged attitude, but these I have not met with. Besides the Order of Knights Templars, there was another well-known Order, that of Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, who appear to have been first established in England at the commencement of the twelfth century, *circa*, A.D. 1100. In 1540 this Order was suppressed in this country. In 1557 this Order was re-established by Queen Mary, and Sir Thomas Tresham made Lord Prior. In 1558, the Order in this country was finally abolished by Queen Elizabeth. The peculiar habit assigned to it by Pope Ilonorius III. (A.D. 1216—1297), consisted of a long black tunic or mantle worn over the armour, with a white cross flory on the breast. I have met with two effigies in this country, the one of which I conjecture to be, the other is well authenticated as, that of a Knight Hospitaller of St. John.

¹ I have often found wooden recumbent effigies much elongated, the proportions of the body not being strictly correct. This I attribute to the material

out of which they were carved, and the difficulty of obtaining blocks of wood of sufficient width to work out these effigies in their proper dimensions.

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EFFIGY IN RUSHTON CHURCH.

The first is a recumbent effigy in a chantry chapel, lying southward of the chancel in Loverseal church, South Yorkshire. It is that of a man who appears clad in a supertunic or surcoat, which reaches to the calves of the legs, and is encircled round the waist by a broad girdle, the right sleeve of this being somewhat loose, reaches to the elbow, and hangs down, disclosing the close-fitting sleeve of the tunic or inner vest, buttoned to the wrist. On the head, and in front of the breast, is worn the caputium or hood, partially drawn over the head; the hair appears with the usual flowing and graceful locks, in the fashion prevalent in the fourteenth century, and the head reposes on a double cushion. A heater-shaped shield, one foot nine inches in length, is attached to the left side by a narrow guige or belt, crossing diagonally over the right shoulder, and the first dexter quarter of the shield is charged with a cross flory. On the left side a sword is worn. No trace of defensive or body armour appears; the attire simply consists of *tunica et supertunica cum caputio*. The only weapons of a warlike character being the sword and shield. I should assign this effigy to about the middle of the fourteenth century.

But the undoubted effigy we possess of a Knight Hospitaller is that in Rushton church, Northamptonshire, of Sir Thomas Tresham, Knight, and Prior of the Order in this country, who died A.D. 1559. He is represented bareheaded, with a moustache and beard, habited in a long, loose gown or robe, with full sleeves, from beneath which appear vambraces of plate armour, indicative that body armour was worn beneath the robe; on the feet are broad-toed solerets. The sword is suspended from a buckled belt, crossing diagonally from right to left; the hands, which are bare, are raised on the breast, as in prayer; the legs are straight. In front of the gown, on the breast, appears the cross flory.²

In mediæval sepulchral effigies we do not often meet with the cross-legged attitude after about the middle of the fourteenth century. In the latter part of the sixteenth, and in the seventeenth centuries, we have a few cross-legged effigies, both in military and civilian costume, thus fashioned,

² An accurate representation of this effigy appears in Mr. Albert Hartshorne's exhaustive work on the recumbent effigies

in Northamptonshire, a work which for accuracy of detail is, I need hardly say, no mean boon to archaeologists.

I think, not of symbolical import, but of fanciful design—mere conceits of the sculptors.

The sepulchral effigy in Exeter cathedral of Sir Peter Carew, A.D. 1580—1589, represents him in a recumbent position, bareheaded, with a moustache and beard. Such of his body-armour as is visible consists of the breastplate, cuisses, genouilleres, jambs, and sollerets. Round the loins drapery is disposed. On his left he has a heater-shaped shield. He appears in the act of sheathing or drawing his sword; his legs are crossed, and his feet rest against a lion. The composition is altogether fanciful.

In Brading church, Isle of Wight, are two effigies in armour, said to be carved out of solid elm wood. One of these appears to be a diminutive of the other. They are represented cross-legged, and are said to be commemorative of two of the Oglander family. I have no notes of these effigies, and it is upwards of fifty years since I saw them. As far as my recollection will serve, they appeared to be encased in armour of the early half of the seventeenth century, *temp.* Charles I.

In Great Mitton church, Lancashire, in a north chapel, on a high tomb, are the recumbent marble effigies of Richard Shirburn and Elizabeth his wife. He appears to have died in 1689; she in 1699. He is represented bareheaded, with flowing locks, a falling cravat about his neck, a long single-breasted coat, reaching nearly to the knees, and buttoned all the way down, with stockings, and high-heeled, square-toed shoes, buckled on the insteps. The left leg is crossed over the right. A loose robe or gown is worn over the coat, and tied loosely round the waist by a sash. Ruffles are worn round the wrists, and the right hand is placed on the breast. Round the head of the lady is a loosely-tied kerchief, and she wears a bodiced gown with full skirts. Both effigies recline on mats.

An effigy in similar costume represents Richard Shirburn, son of the above, who died in 1690. His right leg crosses over the left. There is another effigy of the same family and of the same period, with falling cravat and loose gown, tied with a sash. The left leg crosses over the right.

These effigies and tombs were sculptured and finished in 1699, by William Stanton, lapidary, who lived near St. Andrew's church, in Holborn, at the cost of 253*l.* They

are the latest of the cross-legged effigies I have met with, and the costume simply civilian, that of the gentry of this country in the latter part of the reign of William III.

There are, I believe many effigies still existing in the churches of this country deserving of minute examination, which have hitherto been neglected, or misdescribed from a want of knowledge of appreciation, and to such greater attention should be directed.