

XXIV. *Account of an ancient carved figure of St. George, preserved in the Museum at Dijon ; in a Letter from THOMAS WILLEMENT, Esq. F.S.A. to Sir HENRY ELLIS, K.H., F.R.S. Secretary.*

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Read 18th April, 1833.

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DEAR SIR,

Green Street, April 12th, 1833.

MY friend Mr. Ambrose Poynter having entrusted to my care a statue of St. George, which may, I think, in many points be considered extremely curious, I beg to forward it, with his permission, for the inspection of the Society of Antiquaries.

Mr. Poynter writes to me, that ‘ the accompanying figure of St. George, is cast from the original, carved in wood and emblazoned, and forming part of an altar-piece now in the museum at Dijon. This altar-piece is the work of Jacques de Baertz, carver of images (*tailleur d’images*) to Philippe le Hardi, Duke of Burgundy, who presented this work, and another of the same sort, to the Chartreuse of Dijon in 1391. There are several figures of saints in these compositions; but this of St. George is undoubtedly the most valuable, as giving an exact representation of the knightly costume at the end of the fourteenth century.’

Mr. Poynter’s opinion of its value will, I am sure, be fully established by a close examination of the figure. It is clearly evident, by the great care with which the most trivial parts are defined, that it is a very studied representation of the costume of the period in which it was executed. (See the Plates LXI. LXII.)

The Saint is armed on the body by the *plastron de fer*, or some such defence of plate armour, from which the lance-rest projects through the upper garment, perforated expressly for that purpose. Below the band confining the waist, he is covered with the *gamboison*, which is neatly laced in front down to the lowest point; above the waistband the covering is the

pourpoint with sleeves, evidently of some light texture, buttoned closely down the front, and on the outside of the sleeves. This is not marked by one cross extending to its limits, but is powdered, or *semée*, of circular badges, each charged with the cross of St. George: to these badges I shall more particularly refer hereafter.

The head of the Saint is covered by the *basinet à visiere*, seldom represented in sculpture, the *ventaille* of which he holds open by the hand bearing his shield; the *camail* with its lace, and the *vervilles* or staples of the *basinet*, are beautifully defined; three cords, which are looped, attach the *camail* and *pourpoint* to the under defence of plate. The inner part of the thighs appear to be covered with leather of an uneven surface, which is riveted to the edges of the *cuisse*s; the girdle is richly jewelled, and is very similar to the girdle of William of Hatfield and to those of several other figures of nearly the same period, which are engraven so satisfactorily in the 'Monumental Effigies,' by the late Charles Stothard; the statue of St. George is, however, deficient in the dagger and decorated sword-sheath which generally accompany those; the sword itself appears to have been curtailed of its fair proportions, perhaps on account of its position in a niche.

The shape of the shield is unusual; but the material with which it is covered is evidently the same as on the outside of that which belonged to Edward the Black Prince, still preserved in Canterbury cathedral, namely, of very stout leather, impressed while wet by a mould, which left the lines of the cross and the rich diaper-work in relief. On the inner side of this shield, near the *bouche* or notch for the lance, is a small heraldic escutcheon charged with a cross; this most probably was an usual ornament to shields, and in this particular part, as it would thus, in action, place immediately before the eye of the warrior the emblem of his faith.

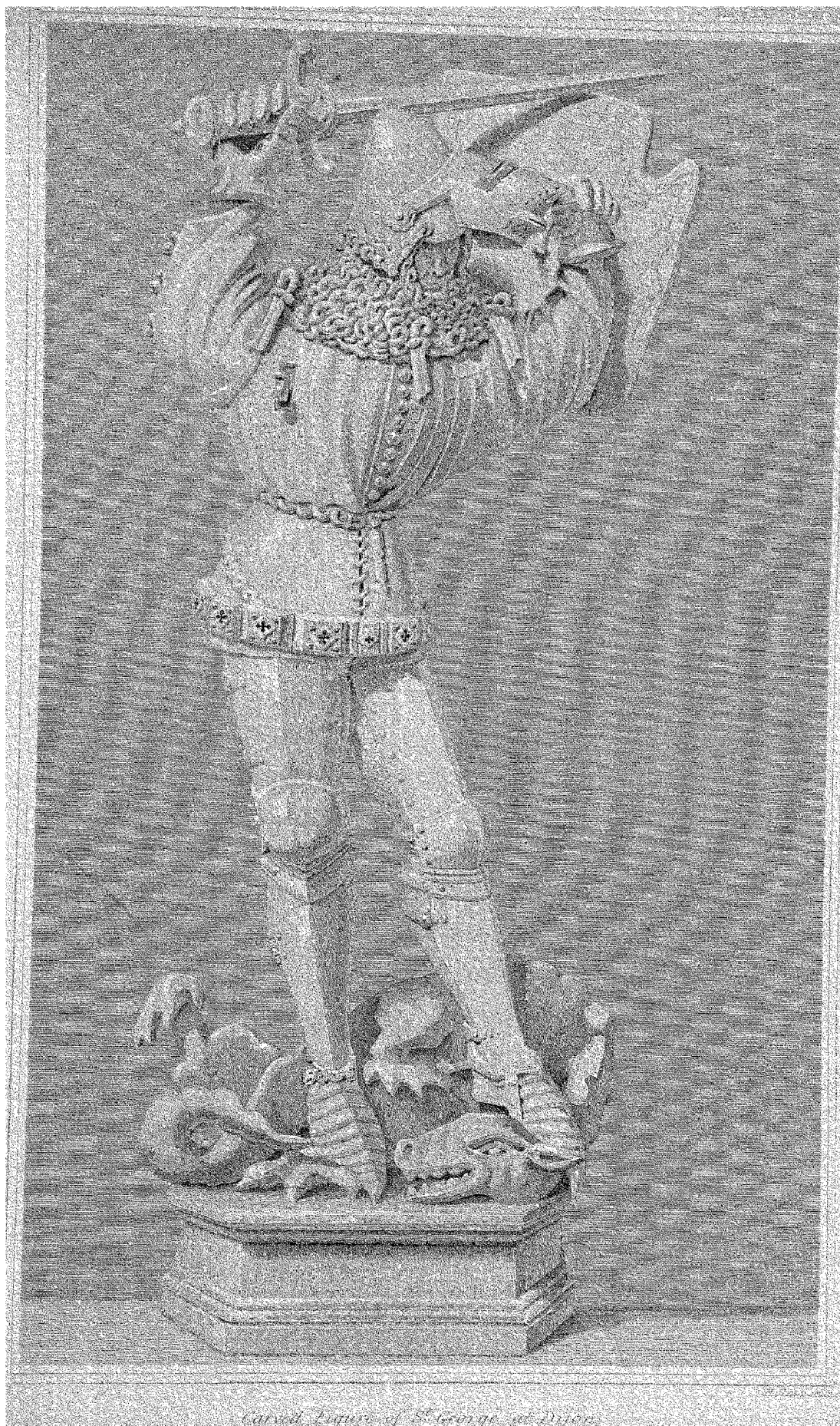
All the plate armour on the statue has been silvered, the rims and studs of burnished gold; the mail of the gorget dead gilt. The vest appears to have been blue, but the colour is now very defective; the badges on it are silvered, with red crosses. The shield on its interior surface, is gilt and burnished, the small escutcheon being the same as the badges on the garment. On the exterior, the whole front has been silvered, the cross being

emblazoned with a transparent crimson. The jewelry of the girdle is in imitation of rubies and emeralds.

Referring again to the ornamented vest, we have clear information of the extreme costliness and splendour of the dresses worn by the higher ranks during the reigns of King Edward the Third and King Richard the Second; and personal badges, as distinguished from coats of arms, appear at that period to have had, if not their first rise, certainly a more general application. At the institution of the most noble Order of the Garter, and for some time after, the dress of the Sovereign and of the Knights was powdered all over with the badge of that fraternity. Of this many proofs are given by Anstis from the wardrobe accounts; one hundred and sixty-eight Garters, with their buckles and pendants, were worked on the first surcoat and hood made for the Founder.

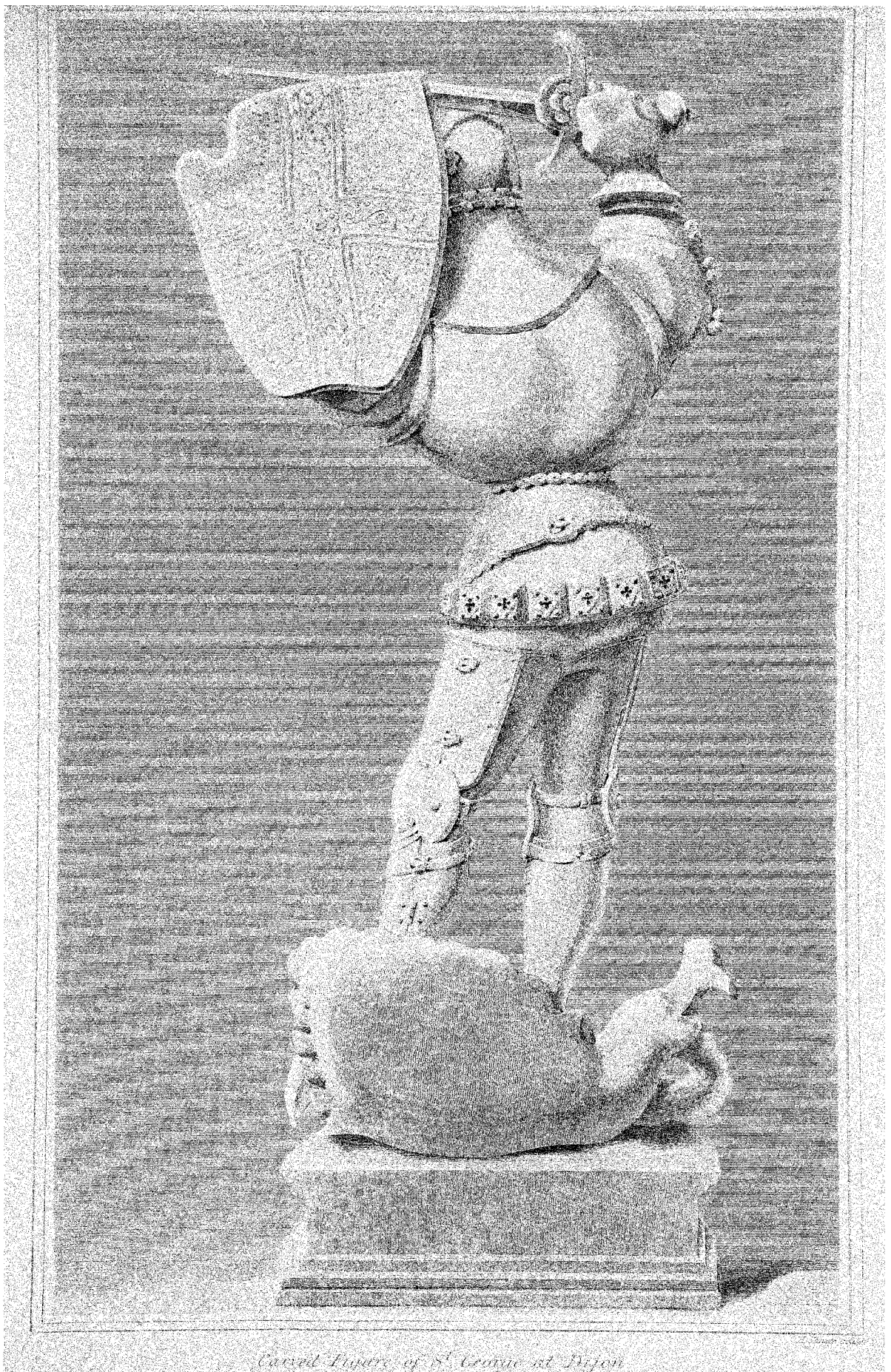
The badges on the dress of St. George so closely resemble, not only in form, but in the charge upon them, some pieces of gold found in Ireland, but which were doubtless of much greater antiquity, that I trust I may be excused for transcribing from Bishop Gibson's edition of Camden's *Britannia* the account he there gives of them: He says, (vol. ii. col. 1412), 'South from Donegall, is Belishannon; near which, not many years ago, were dug up two pieces of gold, discovered by a method very remarkable. The Lord Bishop of Derry happening to be at dinner, there came in an Irish Harper, and sung an old song to his harp. His Lordship not understanding Irish, was at a loss to know what the song meant; but the herdsman being called in, they found by him the substance of it to be this: That in such a place (naming the very spot) a man of gigantic stature lay buried, and that over his breast and back there were plates of pure gold, and on his fingers rings of gold, so large that an ordinary man might creep through them. The place was so exactly described, that two persons there present were tempted to go in quest of the golden prize, which the harper's song had pointed out to them. After they had dug for some time, they found two thin pieces of gold, exactly of the form and bigness of this cut.' [Here a representation of one of these pieces is introduced.]

'This discovery encouraged them next morning to seek for the re-



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mainder ; but they could meet with nothing more.' The passage is the more remarkable, because it comes pretty near the manner of discovering King Arthur's body by the directions of a British Bard. The two holes in the middle of this seem to have been for the more convenient tying of it to the arm or some part of the body.

On a paper which accompanies this, I have given a fac-simile of the wood cut which illustrates Bishop Gibson's account, and with it an enlarged representation of one of the badges on the pourpoint of St. George. Their great resemblance is particularly striking, and the original application of the two pieces of gold found in Ireland may be explained by the statue.

I have merely to add, that the church of the Chartreuse at Dijon was founded by Philip le Hardi, Duke of Burgundy, fourth son of John King of France, on the 15th of January 1384, being the anniversary of St. Maurice, whose lance was said to have been effectually used in the first conquest of Burgundy from the Vandals. Philip was buried in this church on the 15th of June, 1404, having died at Halle in Brabant on the 27th of April. The Plates represent the front and back of the figure.

I am, dear Sir,

Your very faithful humble servant,

THOMAS WILLEMENT.