A BRITISH HUNTING PORTRAIT

By ELIZABETH E. GARDNER

Department of Paintings

In March, 1603, soon after the death of Elizabeth, James VI of Scotland, son of Mary Queen of Scots, was proclaimed King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Before setting out with his court on his leisurely progress to London to take possession of his new kingdom as James I, he wrote to his eldest son, Henry Frederick Stuart, then a boy of nine, admonishing him:

“My Sonne; . . . lett not this newis make you proude or insolent, for a King’s sonne and heir was ye before, and na maire are ye yet; the augmentation that is heirby lyke to fall unto you, is but in caires and heavie burthenes, be thairfore merrie, but not insolent; keep a greatnes, but sine fastu; be resolute, but not willfull; keepe youre kyndnes, but in honorable sorte; choose nane to be your playle fellows but thaine that are well borne; and, above all things, give never good countenance to any but according as ye shall be informed that they are in estimation with me.”

Henry’s portrait by an unknown British painter appears on the cover, a detail from a painting of the prince and his hunting companion, Sir John Harington. This double portrait was painted, as the inscriptions show, in 1603, when the prince was nine and his friend eleven years old. The artist has shown Henry sheathing his sword after giving the coup de grâce to the stag, whose antlers are held by young Harington. The prince’s horse and groom and one of his dogs complete the group. A shield with Harington’s coat of arms hangs from the tree behind him while the coat of arms of England suspended above identifies the prince. Both are dressed in hunting costumes closely resembling the armor of the time, and Henry wears the George, the jewel of the Order of the Garter, hung on a blue ribbon around his neck and tucked under his belt for convenience. This painting is probably a souvenir of an unrecorded visit paid by the prince to the Harington estates in Rutlandshire some time in the summer or fall of 1603. The landscape looks very much like the Vale of Catmos with Burley-on-the-Hill in the background. It has been suggested that it was painted to commemorate the visit of the king and prince to Burley on the king’s progress to London, but this idea must be discarded, since the prince did not accompany his father and was not invested with the Order of the Garter until three months later.

Henry was born at Stirling Castle on February 19, 1594, in the thirty-sixth year of Queen Elizabeth’s reign. As an infant he was placed in charge of the Earl of Marr and the Dowager Countess of Marr to be brought up as befitted a royal prince. This Scottish custom of placing royal children in the care of eminent nobles was most distasteful to Henry’s mother, Anne of Denmark, who made repeated unsuccessful efforts to retrieve her first-born. King James, however, had issued a war-

1 A repetition of our picture with Robert Devereux as the prince’s hunting companion is in the royal collection at Hampton Court.
rant to the Earl of Marr authorizing him to maintain his custody of the prince until his majority or such time as the king or the prince himself should request his release.

Queen Anne remained in Scotland after the king's departure and was to follow him to London in a few weeks' time. But she refused to leave without Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth and finally prevailed upon James to have Henry released from the custody of the Earl of Marr. This accomplished, she set out with the two older children, leaving the baby, Prince Charles, in Scotland. The nobles of England who had vied with one another in providing entertainment and hunting for the king on his journey in April now did the same for the queen and her children.

King James met his wife and children and escorted them to Windsor, arriving there on the last day of June, 1603. On the second of July, at the celebration of the feast of Saint George at Windsor, Prince Henry was installed a knight of the most noble Order of the Garter, "at which ceremony his quick witty answers, princely carriage, and reverend obeisance at the altar, greatly attracted the notice of the spectators."

It is not surprising that Henry chose to be painted with his close friend Sir John Harington. The fortunes of the Haringtons were closely bound up with those of the royal family. Sir John's father, created Baron Harington of Exton in July, 1603, by King James, had entertained the king on his progress to London by an afternoon of hunting at Exton and a dinner following at near-by Burley-on-the-Hill. Lady Harington and her daughter Lucy, Countess of Bedford, were among Queen Anne's ladies who accompanied her to London in June. Lord Harington and his wife were charged with the care and upbringing of Princess Elizabeth, and after her marriage to the Elector Palatine in 1612 Lord Harington accompanied her to Heidelberg.

Thomas Birch, who wrote a life of Henry, says of young Harington, "Among the young noblemen who frequented the Prince's court, Sir John Harington deservedly enjoyed the principal share of his Highness's favour and even friendship, being indeed in all respects one of the most virtuous and accomplished youths of his time, and an example to those of his rank in all ages. . . . The friendship (for such it was) between the Prince and Sir John Harington was cultivated by a correspondence of letters during their absence from each other, especially while the latter was on his travels abroad." Harington wrote to his friend in Latin and Henry wrote to him on one occasion as follows:

"My Good Fellow; I have here sent you certaine matters of anciente sorte, which I gained by searche in a musty vellome book in my Father's closet, and as it hathe great mention of your ancestry, I hope it will not meet your displeasure. It gave me some paines to reade, and some to write also; but I have a pleasure in over-reaching difficult matters. When I see you (and let that be shortlie) you will find me your better at tennis and pike.

Good Fellow, I reste your Friend,

Henry

Your Latin Epistle I much esteem, and will at leisure give answer to."

Birch, in his characterization of the young prince, says: "Besides his knowledge of the learned languages, he spoke the Italian and French; and had made a considerable progress in Philosophy, History, Fortification, Mathematics and Cosmography. . . . He greatly delighted in all rare inventions and arts, . . . in Music, Sculpture, and Painting, in which last art he brought over several valuable works of great masters from all countries." Indeed, the paintings of his collection were incorporated into the more renowned one of his younger brother, later King Charles I, and they are still in the royal collection at Hampton Court.

Although he was only a young man, Henry was a generous patron of literature, and numerous publications of the period were dedicated to him. He had a fine library, based in part on his purchase of the library of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and that of Lord Lumley, formerly owned by his father-in-law, the Earl of Arundel. Henry's books are interesting "association items" in present-day libraries.
Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales, and Sir John Harington, by an unknown painter of the British school. Dated 1603
Queen Anne, by Paul van Somer (1576-1621). Dated 1617. Reproduced from the Catalogue of the Principal Pictures . . . at Windsor Castle

While Henry's main interests lay in intellectual pursuits, he did not neglect the manly arts of hunting and other sports. When Wales was clamoring for a prince, chivalric custom demanded that Henry prove himself worthy of being invested with the principalities of Wales and Cornwall. So, in January, 1610, under the name of Meliades, Lord of the Isles (an old Scottish title), he delivered a challenge to all the knights of Great Britain to meet him at the "Barriers." He chose six nobles to assist him and each of them fought two combats at push of pike and with single sword against eight defendants. According to one chronicler, "The Prince performed this challenge with wonderous skill and courage, to the great joy and admiration of the beholders, the Prince not being full sixteen yeeres of age until the 19th of February." In the Arms and Armor Department of this Museum there is a gauntlet with Prince Henry's monogram (from his suit of armor at Windsor Castle), perhaps a memento of this very occasion.

After Henry's success at the "Barriers" there were pageants and masques to honor him, and in May he made a progress down the Thames from Richmond to Whitehall. At that time the City of London put on fireworks and a water fight for his entertainment, the spectacle called "London's Love to the Royal Prince Henrie." On the fourth of June, 1610, he was created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester in an elaborate ceremony in Parliament. After this he set up his court at St. James's Palace in London.

Henry's great popularity, evidenced by the throngs of people at his court, caused his father some pangs of jealousy, and James is said to have asked if his son would "bury him alive." His jealousy was short-lived, for in the summer of 1612 it was remarked that the prince was looking peaked and he complained of severe headaches. However, he continued his usual round of activities. By mid-October he had taken to his bed. The doctors tried all manner of treatments, but to no avail. He died on the sixth of November. All England joined in mourning the untimely death of this promising young prince, and countless elegies were written in his praise. From all accounts he does indeed appear to have been a youth of many virtues, and the course of English history might well have been different had he succeeded to the throne instead of his brother, Charles I. Henry's friend, Sir John Harington, died little more than a year later.

The question of who painted this hunting portrait of Prince Henry and young Harington presents some difficulties. Until lately most portraits of the period were indiscriminately called the work of such dissimilar artists as Marcus Gheeraerts or Federigo Zucchero. Our painting as recently as 1913 was published as the work of Gheeraerts. A more careful study of Elizabethan and early Jacobean portraiture reveals a twofold problem. There are numerous unsigned portraits of the time, and the names of various artists are known from contemporary documents, payrolls, household accounts, and so forth. The difficulty lies in connecting the artists with the pictures.

For instance, John de Critz was apparently one of the outstanding portrait painters of the
late Elizabethan period, and King James appointed him to the court as “Serjeant Painter” in September of 1603—the year in which our double portrait was painted. The Calendar of State Papers records a number of payments to him for portraits of the royal family and other commissions. Yet it has not been possible to identify with certainty one painting by De Critz. It would be tempting to suppose that our picture was his first commission as “Serjeant Painter,” but without any conclusive evidence, documentary or otherwise, this idea must be set aside.

Other artists have been suggested as the author of our picture. Among these is Isaac Oliver, the great English miniaturist. But the portrait of Henry and John Harington resembles Oliver’s work only as it resembles the work of all other artists of this time. The handling of the costume, particularly the lace, is typical of the period and not peculiar to any one artist. And it seems highly unlikely that a miniaturist could achieve anything like this painting on a scale so large. It also seems very improbable that he would have received a commission to paint a picture in life size.

It is interesting to compare our painting with one painted by Paul van Somer in 1617 (his only extant dated work) showing Queen Anne with her horse and groom and her dogs. Van Somer was a Flemish artist who had worked in Amsterdam before coming to England. When he arrived in England is not known but it is possible that he was working there by 1603.

In Van Somer’s portrait Queen Anne, wearing an elaborate hunting costume of cut velvet, stands in a landscape with the royal palace of Oatlands in the background. The most striking point of similarity between this picture and ours is, of course, the horse and groom. If Van Somer painted our picture, it is plain to see that in fourteen years he had made considerable progress in the lifelike rendering of the horse. In the earlier painting the horse seems wooden and has extremely short legs, whereas Queen Anne’s horse is better proportioned.

It seems reasonable to suppose that our picture was painted by an artist who had already established his reputation in England before 1603, and perhaps one day research will turn up a receipt for it identifying the painter. The high quality of this painting makes it a welcome addition to the Museum’s collection of British portraits.

This picture does not appear to have remained long in the possession of the Harington family. It was probably sold in 1614 shortly after the death of Sir John Harington, by his sister, the Countess of Bedford, who inherited the Harington estates. It was acquired by Sir William Pope, first Earl of Downe, who built a great house on the site of Wroxton Priory in Banbury, Oxfordshire. The Wroxton estate passed by marriage in 1671 to Sir Francis North, through whose heirs it descended to the eleventh Baron North. The portrait was purchased in 1916 by Mr. Henry P. Davison and was acquired by the Museum in 1944. Acc. no. 44.27. Pulitzer Fund. Canvas 79 1/2 x 58 inches.

The quotations in this article are from John Nichols, Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James I (London, 1828) and Thomas Birch, The Life of Henry Prince of Wales (Dublin, 1760).