

INTERNATIONAL  
STUDIO

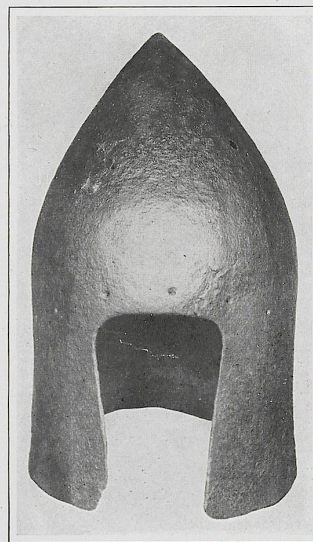
## HELMETS of FIVE CENTURIES

OF ALL THE many parts of a suit of armor the helmet is the most beautiful work of the armorer's antique craft. From a purely utilitarian head defence of the simplest basin-like form it grew, in the sixteenth century, to be a marvelous work both in respect to shape and ornamentation, prized by kings and great nobles and now among the chief treasures of museums and private collections. These beauties of form and craftsmanship were carried down even to the helmets worn by the foot soldiers, those of the royal guards being second only to the helms worn by the emperors or kings they served. And it is for the reason that the helmet makes the readiest appeal to the uninitiated in the multifold mysteries of armor as a fine art that the Metropolitan Museum of Art gave an exhibition in the summer of 1924 of a collection of European helmets dating from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries, the only parallel to which was the show arranged by the Archeological Society in London in 1880. Borrowed for this exhibition chiefly from the private collections of the Armor and Arms Club this exhibition displayed the development of the helmet in an orderly manner from the era of William the Conqueror to that of the Emperor Charles V and Cromwellian times.

Genuine pieces of armor are rare for several reasons. Armies were smaller in those days than in more modern times and of these bodies of troops not all wore metal body protections. Armor was costly and took a long time in the making, three years being spent on some of the finest suits. When

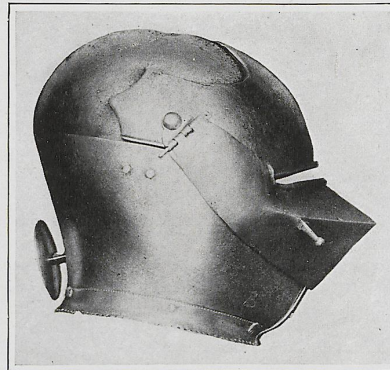
*It would be impossible to reproduce today these superb examples of the medieval armorer's craftsmanship*

BERNARD TEEVAN



CRUSADER'S HELMET OF BASINET SHAPE  
TENTH TO TWELFTH CENTURY

ARMET À RONDELLE SHOWING EARLIEST VISOR  
AND PIN FOR LIFTING IT



peace settled over a country parts of armor were often converted into tools or put to homelier uses. And when the general introduction of gunpowder altered the whole aspect of military tactics both commanders and soldiers relegated body armor to the place of souvenirs of the military uniforms of the past. Composed as it was of materials that disintegrated unless properly cared for, European armor gradually disappeared from general sight and knowledge, some pieces being recovered in the form of a mass of rust-covered plates or even, as in the case of one very famous helmet, as a meal-scoop in a little German shop. As an illustration of how completely some types of armor have disappeared there was in this Metropolitan Museum collection an example of the conical nasal helmet of the kind worn by William the Conqueror and his soldiers, best known through their pictures in the Bayeux tapestry and in shape very like the leather head protection with nose-guard worn by our football players. Only six of these Norman helmets of the tenth to twelfth centuries are in existence, the particular one in the Metropolitan exhibition having been dredged out of the bed of the river Thames in England.

Developed from this type was the helmet worn by the Crusaders and technically called a *basinet*, this word being derived from the *basin* which it was supposed to resemble. As our illustration shows, the basinet gave additional protection to the front and sides of the face as well as the head, besides making the wearer of it more easily recognized, helmets gen-

five hundred

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