



AN ENGLISH FIFTEENTH-CENTURY
GOLD BOX.

AN ENGLISH MEDIEVAL GOLD BOX.

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THE small globose, gothic, gold box, the subject of this note, measures $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and weighs 258 grains troy.

This unique object, which may be dated as early as 1495, consists of two separate halves: a lid, which fits upon the cup-shaped lower portion, having a circular shallow base.

Each half of the box is decorated in high relief with eight obtusely pointed leaves, having central mid-ribs, all of which leaves narrow towards their bases, owing to exigencies of space.

The upper surface of the lid is adorned with a beautifully embossed double MARGUERITE, having sixteen petals, eight small petals within eight large, set about a cross-hatched centre.

Both in size, shape and workmanship, the gold box under review may be compared with the spherical terminal of the silver-gilt "Richmond Cup," the property of the Armourers' Company, which is likewise of English workmanship of late fifteenth-century date.

We must now consider what purpose this gold box may have served, and two alternatives may be advanced. It may be suggested that it was a "comfit-box" to contain sweetmeats, or it may have been a "musk-ball" or "pome de muske," to enclose prophylactic aromatics. Of the same date as the gold box under consideration we may quote from the will of Sir Brian Roucliffe (A.D. 1495), "Annæ, filiæ suæ, j musk ball argenti."¹

¹ Surtees Society, *Test: Ebor.*, pt. iv, p. 107.

The presence of a MARGUERITE on the lid is without doubt a "rebus" and as such, a punning allusion to the name of its original owner, MARGARET.

Is it possible to suggest to whom this, the only known example of English fifteenth-century gold plate, may once have belonged.

The owner, in view of the then high value of gold, must have been a person of very considerable affluence, whilst the fine quality of the workmanship implies an owner of cultured taste.

Is there anyone of the name of Margaret, in 1495, who would adequately fulfil such conditions? The name which most readily occurs to one in this conjunction is that of the Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII and second wife of Thomas Stanley, first Earl of Derby, whose "rebus," a MARGUERITE, adorns Christ's College, Cambridge, of which she was the foundress. The Lady Margaret bequeathed several jewels bearing her rebus to her granddaughter, Margaret, Queen of Scotland,¹ and though the gold box is not named in her will, it is more than probable that it was once in the possession of the Countess of Derby.

¹ Cooper, *Life of Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby.*