

## ON A MONUMENTAL EFFIGY IN CONINGTON CHURCH, HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

To the important sway exercised in this country over the minds of many in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, by the members of those two great religious fraternities the Franciscan and Dominican, may, perhaps, be traced the elucidation of practices, once common, yet now not merely obsolete, but the very remembrance thereof altogether so completely sunk in oblivion, that in searching the records of the past, we deem our labour not mis-spent, if we can here and there find an incidental passage or allusion which may cast even a glimmer of light on certain matters now buried in deep obscurity.

For although the difference in arrangement and architectonic features observable in our churches are now, generally, well understood, we still meet with exceptions—with peculiarities relating to usages as yet so insufficiently explained, as to be individually regarded, even at this time, as a *vexata quæstio*; and these remarks may be applied to monumental as well as to other ecclesiological remains.

Sometimes we have a popular notion professing to explain these peculiarities, the truth or converse of which may be the fact, the former being difficult of direct and positive proof.

Whether, or how far, the popular belief, that the cross-legged monumental effigies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are those of the *cruce signati*, is correct, is one of those notions. This opinion, general as it is, may be perfectly true, yet it is formed on vague, and at best inferential evidence, to confirm which we stand in need of some kind of contemporary proof, and this I have never yet been able to meet with; I have, however, endeavoured in some measure to unravel, and trace to its source, another subject of popular belief, illustrated by a very curious recumbent effigy in Conington church, Huntingdonshire, and this is the *opus operatum*, or virtue which was, in certain of the medieval ages, popularly ascribed to the wearing of, and being buried in, the friar's mantle or cowl.

In the recumbent monumental effigies of ecclesiastics from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, we commonly find them represented either as vested for the Eucharistic sacrifice or in the canonical or choral habit. But of religious represented in the monastic costumes of the different orders we have an incredible paucity of examples. In the conventual church of Hexham is the recumbent effigy of a supposed prior attired in the *tunica talaris* or ancient cassock, over which is worn the surplice without sleeves, and over this an ample mantle or cowl, the *cappa magna*, with its *caputium* or hood drawn over the head and eyes, leaving the lower portion of the face only visible. In the church of Orton-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, formerly an appendage to the Cistercian abbey of Merevale, Warwickshire, is the recumbent effigy of a religious represented in the *cappa clausa* or close cowl without sleeves, with the *caputium* or hood attached to the *mozetta*, a plain kind of cape, and thrown back over the shoulders, whilst on the head is worn the close-fitting skull-cap or coif called the *birretum*. These are, however, singular if not unique examples; for whilst to the suppression of the religious houses may be attributed the destruction of many monuments, few of the effigies represented thereon were, as far as existing vestiges enable us to ascertain, sculptured in monastic costume.

One of the most rare and curious effigies of this kind is that in Conington church, Huntingdonshire. It is a recumbent sepulchral effigy of the fourteenth century, and represents a knight, who had in after life taken the habit of a religious community, that apparently of the Franciscan order. He is clad in a hooded hawberk or tunic of chain mail, the coif and mufflers or gloves of which are alone visible; over this, his defence against human foes, he wears as defensive armour against the powers of darkness the *cappa manicata*, or friar's cowl with sleeves, girt about the waist with a knotted cord, which falls pendant to the feet; over the coif of mail is drawn the *caputium* or hood, attached and apparently of a piece with the *mozetta* which covers the shoulders and upper part of the breast. Below the *mozetta* the hands are conjoined on the breast in attitude of prayer. That the body of the knight thus represented was actually clad in this habit for burial, the hawberk of mail excepted, is more than probable, if we investigate the motives why he should be, and that he was one of

those in allusion to whom the great poet of the seventeenth century observes—

“And they who, to be sure of Paradise,  
Dying, put on the weeds of Dominic,  
Or in Franciscan thought to pass disguised.”

And Weever in his “Funeral Monuments,” published in 1631, tells us that many “having large portions in their own possessions, out of zeal and devotion, would give all, with themselves, to some cloister or other, and therein take upon them the habits of religion,” and that “in regard of burial abbeys were most commonly preferred before other churches whatsoever; and he that was buried therein in a friar’s habite, if you will believe it, never came into Hell.”

So also the author of that witty, but coarse and profane satire, “The Beehive of the Roman Church,” translated out of Dutch into English by Gilpin, and published in 1580, alludes to this subject in the following passage:—“Well, go to nowe, read the whole bible over and over, and I will be bound to give the theologians or divines of Louen a potle of wine to make mery withal if they can finde out there that either Christ or his Apostles did ever knowe that whosoever doothe die in a gray frier’s cote shall neither come in purgatory nor in Hell; and yet, notwithstanding, not onely Radulphus Agricola, Albertus Pius, the Prince of Carpi, and Pope Martinus woulde die in such an habite, and bee buried in it, but lyke-wise many other Kinges, Dukes, Earles, and Barons, as in the book of the Conformities of Saint Francis is specified, and with the Pope’s Bulles established.” And elsewhere the same author, in his pretended reproof of the Heretikes, observes:—“They do not greatly glorie to bee buried in a monke’s greasie hood.”

In the “Defense of the Apologie of the Church of England,” published in 1570, against “the Confutation and Detection of sundry Foule Errors,” &c., written by that great controversialist and opponent to Bishop Jewell, Dr. Harding, who denied that the Catholics—that is, those of the Roman Church—put great holiness in mere outward observances, as in apparel, and taunted Jewell, apparently in allusion to the great controversy of 1564, with the diversity respecting apparel found among the “ministringe clergie” of the Reformed Church, asking him—“Doe not somme amonge you wear

square cappes, somme round cappes, somme batten cappes, somme only hattes? Doe not somme wear side gownes havinge large sleeves, with tippettes, whiche is not wel liked of your secte, somme of more perfection, Turkey gownes, gaberdeines, frockes, or nighte-gownes, of the most laye fashion, for avoidinge of superstition?" In replying to which Jewell incidentally alludes to this subject, putting this question to Harding—"Wherefore doothe Thomas of Aquine tel us so certainly that the wearinge of Francise or Dominike's Cowle had power to remove sinne as well as the Sacramente of Baptisme?"

The marginal reference given by Jewell to the works of that great schoolman is a general one, and I have been unable to verify it.

Amongst the writings of Becon against the Church of Rome, those on "The Acts of Christ and of Anti-Christ," published in 1577, contain the following passage—"Anti-Christ, for the forgiveness of our sins and of our justification, sendeth us to his pardons and Bulls, to his years of Jubilee, and masses of *Scala Cæli*; yea, he sendeth us to a Grey Friar's Cowl and willeth us to be buried in that, promising us by that means both remission of sins and everlasting life."

In a letter from Latimer, bishop of Worcester, to Sir Edw. Baynton, is the following passage:—"I have thought in times past that if I had been a Friar and in a Cowl, I could not have been damned nor afraid of death." And elsewhere, in a sermon preached by him on Septuagesima Sunday in 1552, he observes as follows—"True it is that God requireth good works of us, and commandeth us to avoid all wickedness. But for all that, we may not do our good works to the end to get heaven withal; but rather to show ourselves thankful for that which Christ hath done for us, who with his passion hath opened heaven to all believers; that is to all those who put their hope and trust not in their deeds, but in his death and passion, and study to live well and godly; and yet not to make merits of their own works, as though they should have everlasting life for them, as our Monks and Friars, and all our religious persons were wont to do, and therefore may rightly be called murmerers; for they had so great a store of merits that they sold some of them unto other men, and many men spent a great part of their substance to buy their merits, and

to be a brother of their houses; or to obtain one of their coats or cowls to be buried in."

And in a sermon preached by him many years earlier in 1537, he says—"But yet they that begot and brought forth our old ancient purgatory pickpurse; that was swaged and cooled with a Franciscan's Cowl; put upon a dead man's back to the fourth part of his sins."

In the works of Wickliff, who lived in the latter part of the fourteenth century, above one hundred and fifty years before Latimer, occurs the following curious passage: "And here men noten many harmes yat Freris doen y the cherk . . . . but keypyng of Godde's mauntements thei chargen not halfe so muche as he schulde be holden apostata, that lefe ye abite for a daie, but for levyng of dedys of charite, schulde he nothyng be blamed; and thus thei blasfemen in God, and seien whoso dieth in this abyte schall never go to helle for holynesse that is therein."

Lastly, it is related by Wadding, in his "Annales Minorum," of Clement the Fifth, who occupied the papal chair from A.D. 1305 to A.D. 1314, that he remitted to those buried in the habit of a friar the fourth part of all their sins; "*sepeliendis in habitu minorum quartam partem omnium peccatorum remisit*,"—a passage which verifies the last quotation I have given from the works of Latimer.

The only other effigy of a friar I am at present conversant with is a small demi-figure, acting as a crest to a tilting helme, beneath the head of a knight in Sawtrey All Saints' church, Huntingdonshire; a church in the neighbourhood of Conington. This figure constitutes a portion of an incised brass<sup>a</sup>, and appears in the *cappa manicata* or sleeved cowl, with the *caputium* or hood attached and drawn over the head, but without the *mozetta* or tippet; in the hands the ancient "discipline," as the instrument in the shape of a whip with knotted cords was called, is represented as held. This figure is of the early part of the fifteenth century, the date given on the inscription being 1404.

In Standish church, Lancashire, there is said to be a statue of the first Protestant rector, Richard Moodie, representing him as dressed in the habit of a Franciscan, of which order he had been, but this I have not yet seen.

<sup>a</sup> Noticed in the Archaeological Journal, vol. ii. p. 386.

If we regard the effigy at Conington as doubly memorative of one who in early life followed a warlike and secular, and in his later years a religious profession, we see a type of a similar change of feeling recorded, but in a different mode, on other sepulchral memorials, even to a late period; as on a sepulchral memorial in Haltwistle church, where on one side of the stem of a cross flory is represented the sword and shield of a knight who, in after life, went on a pilgrimage—a fact indicated by the scrip, and bourdon or palmer's staff, represented on the other side of the stem of the cross; and in that inscription of the seventeenth century in Oxhill church, Warwickshire, of the date of 1681:

“When I was young I ventured life and blood,  
Both for my kinge, and for my countrey's good;  
In elder years my care was chief to be  
Souldier for Him that shed His blood for me.”

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