

NOTICES OF ANCIENT ORNAMENTS AND APPLIANCES OF SACRED USE.

THE FLABELLUM, FLABRUM, MUSCATORIUM, MUSCIFUGIUM, ALARA OR VENTILABRUM.

THE *flabellum*, a sort of fan, formerly used from a very early period in the services of the Roman Church, originated in the less temperate climates of the east, and was introduced with the customary ornaments and requisites of sacred use into churches even in the most western parts of Christendom. It was not unknown in our own country, and it was very commonly used in France, during a long period, although scarcely, if ever, required to fulfil the purpose for which it had originally been devised.

It must be remembered that even in very early times, the frequent pilgrimages to Rome or the east from these remote countries of Europe caused the introduction of various usages and ornaments peculiarly adapted to the countries where they had their origin. The simplicity of Christian rites gradually became encumbered by the multitude of external decorations and ceremonies, whereby the vital faith was dimly obscured. In later times a symbolical import was attributed to every circumstance and minute detail of form or ornament connected with the services of the Church, and objects, originally hallowed, solely by their appropriation to some sacred purpose, assumed a holy character on account of the deep mysterious import assigned to them. Those who were ignorant of their origin, as things for the most part of daily and ordinary use in primitive times of Christian faith, conformable to the simple requirements of the country or the occasion, might well suppose that the vestments and ornaments of the Latin Church had been devised by divine ordinance, as were those of the Jewish dispensation.

It is remarkable to note the pious intention of our forefathers, even in Saxon or in Norman times, when, returning from distant pilgrimage, they sought to make demonstration of their zeal for the enrichment of all that was connected with the fabric or the ceremonies of the Church. In their desire to bestow thereon the best of their possessions, they returned

laden with the tissues of Baldak or Tarsus, the gems and oriental rarities, the horn of the unicorn, or the egg of the griffin, to be offered at the altar in token of devotion, or grateful memorial of their preservation through manifold perils. To such causes, likewise, we may doubtless trace the introduction into the simple churches in Britain of observances of sacred repute in other climes; these usages, like the novel architecture of the fabric reared by the pious founder of Weremouth, Biscopius, claimed reverential admiration, because conformable to the "manner of Rome."

The use of the *flabellum*, called in the Greek Church *ῥιπίδιον*, has been traced by liturgical writers to a very early age. Cardinal Bona observes that it is mentioned in the "Apostolical Constitutions," in the liturgies of St. Basil and St. Chrysostom^a, and other ancient Greek and Syriac rituals. In the liturgy of James, included by Pope Clement I. in the "Constitutions," its purpose is thus expressed. Two deacons, one on either side of the altar, were directed to hold fans formed of thin membrane (*ἐξ ὑμέρων λεπτῶν ῥιπίδια*) of the feathers of the peacock, or of linen tissue, to drive away any little flying creatures, lest they should fall into the sacred vessels. It can scarcely be questioned that these writings, although of great antiquity, and comprising probably much that is of primitive authority, had been handed down with many additions and interpolations. It is, however, highly probable that in the hot climate of the east, or of southern countries, the use of such an object might have been adopted from a very early period, in churches open to the exterior air, and where the atmosphere teems with insect life. The large size moreover, and number of the vessels used in earlier ages of the Church, when the congregation of communicants was very great, rendered such precaution the more indispensable. Much has been written on the antiquity of this usage, and without entering further into the enquiry, it may suffice for the present purpose to refer to the learned observations of Bona, Goar, Suaresius, Sebastian Paulius, Catalanus and Macer^b. In the Greek Church it was customary to depict upon the sacred fan the semblance of a cherub, and Goar

^a Divina Missa S. Joan. Chrysostomi, Goar, *Rituale Græcorum*, p. 76. See also the notes on this subject, *ibid.*, p. 136.

^b Card. Bona, *Rerum Liturg.*, lib. i. c. 25; Goar, p. 136; Suaresii *Diatriba de*

flabellis Pontificiis et Muscariis Pavoninis; Seb. Paul. *de Patena argentea Forcorneliensi*, Neap. 1745; Catalan. in *Pontificali Roman. Romæ*, 1738; Macri *Hierolexicon*, &c. See also Ducange.

gives a representation of one formed with the head of such angelic being affixed to the end of a staff or handle, the fan consisting of the six wings surrounding the face^c. If such appliance were deficient, the Greeks used a napkin or piece of linen to supply its place. The Maronites make use of fans formed of plates of silver or brass, surrounded with little bells.

Although no mention of the *flabellum* is found in the "Ordo Romanus" and many ancient rituals of the Latin Church, there are sufficient evidences of its early use. Cardinal Bona cites the relation of Moschus, a writer of the seventh century, in which an occurrence is described shewing the use of the flabellum in the time of Pope Agapetus, (A.D. 535), and the epistle of St. Hildebert, archbishop of Tours, presenting to a friend such an object of sacred use, to drive away flies from the sacrifice, and setting forth its mystic import. He cites also the ancient Cluniac Consuetudinal, and other proofs of its adoption by the Roman Church.

In the inventory taken at St. Riquier, near Abbeville, in the year 831, mention is made of a "flabellum argenteum, ad muscas a sacrificiis abigendas." In another, relating to the church of Amiens, is found "flabellum factum de serico et auro ad repellendas muscas et immunda," given by a canon of that church, about 1250. An inventory of the Sainte Chapelle, at Paris, in 1363, gives the "Item, duo flabella, vulgariter nuncupata muscalia, ornata perlis," and another, in 1376, "ij. flabelli, Gallice esmouchoirs, ornati de perlis."

In our own country the following instances of the use of this singular object of sacred use may be cited. In a MS. inventory preserved at Salisbury, the following entry occurs, A.D. 1214, "Ornamenta Ecclesie Sarum, inventa in Thesauraria,—ij. flabella de surto (? serico) et pergamento." In 1298 amongst the ornaments and vestments in the church of St. Faith, in the crypts under St. Paul's, London, there was "unum muscatorium de pennis pavonum^d." Hamo, bishop of Rochester, gave, in the year 1346, to a chantry founded by him in that cathedral, "unum flabellum de serico cum virga eburnea^e." In the enumeration of the valuable effects of the deceased Queen Isabella, daughter of Philippe le Bel, and

^c Rituale Græc., p. 137.

^d Dugdale, Hist. of St. Paul's, orig. edit.

^e p. 232.

^e Registrum Roff., p. 554.

consort of Edward II., the following entry appears. "De Capella. Duo flagella pro muscis fugandis. Duas pixides de ebore et unum coffinum pro pane imponendo," &c., 33 Edw. III. 1359. John Newton, treasurer of York Minster, between the years 1393 and 1413, gave a sacred fan to that church, as noticed in the following entry in a description of its valuable possessions, taken at the Reformation.—"Manubrium flabelli argenteum deauratum, ex dono Joh. Newton Thesaurarii, cum ymagine Episcopi in fine enamelyd, pond' v. unc." In the costly furniture of the chapel of William Exeter, abbot of Bury St. Edmund's, according to the *Comptus* dated 1429, preserved in the register of his successor, William Curteys, occurs—"j. muscifugium de pecok." By the extracts from the churchwardens' accounts at Walberswick, Suffolk, we learn that occasionally it was even found in small parochial churches, in rural districts. Under the year 1493, is the payment, "for a bessume of pekoks fethers, iv. d.^f"

These examples may amply suffice to shew that this usage of eastern origin had been adopted pretty generally in western countries, where, as in our own, it could in no degree be requisite, as regarded its original intention. A few ancient *flabella* have been preserved on the continent, and I regret to be unable here to offer representations of any: they are very rarely represented in illuminated MSS., and one such design alone has hitherto been published; it is given by Paciaudi from a Service Book written early in the thirteenth century, and preserved in the Barberini Library[§]. In default of an illustration from any *muscarium*, actually in existence, I have to offer two curious exhibitions of its use, taken from the illuminated MSS. preserved in the public Library at Rouen. In one of these, a missal of the thirteenth century, formerly belonging to the abbey of Jumieges, and known at Rouen by the class mark 234—412, the priest appears attended by the deacon and sub-deacon, in front of the altar, upon which is placed the chalice covered: the first, standing immediately behind him, raises the flabellum, a circular fan, the centre of which is coloured green, with a broad border of red; this fan is attached to a long handle. The sub-deacon standing behind holds up with both hands an object which appears to

^f Gardner's Hist. of Dunwich, p. 185. It is singular that so late as 1688, Holmes in his Academy of Armory, amongst things pertaining to an altar enumerates "the flap

or fann to drive away flies from the chalice." p. 465.

[§] Pauli Paciaudi de Umbellæ gestatione Commentarius, Romæ, 1752, p. lxxiii.

be a flat loaf, possibly the Panagia, or blessed bread, sometimes distributed to the faithful after the celebration of the mass ^h. Perhaps, however, this may represent the paten.



Illuminations from MSS. in the Public Library, Rouen.

In the second representation a bishop is seen in the act of elevating the wafer, he bows the head, over which the attendant deacon seems to wave the flabellum, in this instance apparently formed of a circular piece of plain white parchment, attached to a handle. This subject is found in a MS. of the thirteenth century, a Pontifical of the Church of Rheims, distinguished by the class-mark 372—224.

A remarkable *flabellum*, supposed to be of the twelfth century, was long preserved in the abbey of Tournus, on the Saone, south of Chalons: it was first noticed and described by the learned Benedictines, in the "Voyage Litteraire,"ⁱ and more recently by Du Sommerard, in his great work on Medieval Art. The handle is of ivory, measuring about two French feet in length, the circular fan measuring about twelve inches in diameter: St. Philibert and several saints are represented upon it: Latin hexameters and pentameters are inscribed upon three concentric bands on the fan. Around a pomel forming part of the handle is found the name of the maker:— † IOH ELME SCAE FECIT IN HONORE MARIAE.

^h See Maeri Hierolexicon, v. Fermentum, Panagia, &c.

ⁱ Tom. i. p. 231. An engraving is given by Guemin, in the Histoire de l'Abbaye de Tournus, representing this singular

object: it has been also given by Du Sommerard, Arts au Moyen Age, ch. xiv. Atlas, pl. iv. and Album, ix. serie, pl. xvii.

The verses are curious ; the following reading may not be perfectly correct,—

- + FLAMINIS HOC DONUM, REGNATOR SUME POLORUM,
OBLATUM PURO PECTORE SUME LIBENS.
VIRGO PARENS XPI VOTO CELEBRARIS EODEM,
HIC COLERIS PARITER, TU FILIBERTE SACER ^k.
- + SUNT DUO QUÆ MODICUM CONFERT ÆSTATE FLABELLUM
INFESTAS ABIGIT MUSCAS ET MITIGAT ESTUM,
ET SINE DAT TEDIO GUSTARE MANUS CIBORUM.
PROPTEREA CALIDUM QUI VULT TRANSIRE PER ANNUM,
ET TUTUS CUFIT AB ATRIS EXISTERE MUSCIS,
OMNI SE STUDEAT ÆSTATE MUNIRI FLABELLO.
- + HOC DECUS EXIMIUM PULCHRO MODERAMINE GESTUM,
CONDECET IN SACRO SEMPER ADESSE LOCO ;
NAMQUE SUO VOLUCRES INFESTAS FLAMINE PELLIT,
ET STRICTUM MOTUS LONGIUS IRE FACIT.

This curious example was recently in the possession of an antiquary at Lyons. Other ancient *flabella* are in existence ; the Benedictines mention one at the Dominican monastery of Prouille, in the diocese of Toulouse ; another was formerly preserved at the monastery of St. Victor, near Marseilles, which had a handle of silver^l.

The *flabellum* appears gradually to have fallen into disuse in the Latin Church : it was retained in certain churches, at Messina for instance, at Malta and Troja in Apulia : and *flabella* are still carried on certain occasions by the attendants of the Roman pontiff in solemn processions. A. W.

^k St. Philibert, founder of the abbeys of Jumièges and Hermoutier, died A.D. 684. His relics were subsequently translated to

Tournus.

^l Martene, Ant. Eccl. Rit., lib. i. c. 4. Art. viii. 6.