

ST. HENRY OF FINLAND: AN ANGLO-  
SCANDINAVIAN SAINT<sup>1</sup>

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*Ortus in Britannia pollens Dei gracia superna  
providencia pontifex efficitur*

*Clarus in Vpsalia demum pro iusticia decertans in  
Finlandia pugil Christi moritur.*

*Sequence from the Officium de Sancto Henrico.*

The historical character, of whom the present paper treats, is one which, dim and shadowy though his figure appears to us across the centuries, may yet, I think, lay claim to not inconsiderable interest. A native of England, it was in a distant northern country that the really significant part of his career was spent: it was there that he rose to a fame which to this day remains unobscured in Scandinavia, while he is a figure of prime importance in the iconography of mediaeval art in Finland. In England, one may say that he has perhaps at no time been wholly forgotten—a fact of which the small niche occupied by him in the *Dictionary of National Biography* may be regarded as significant; but the questions affecting him have never, so far as I am aware, been systematically collated and reviewed in this country: and it is with a view to supplying this gap that I have ventured to choose him as the subject of the present paper.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning St. Henry of Finland, the voice of records is practically silent in England. It is to Northern historical sources that we must turn for all the detailed information concerning him which is

<sup>1</sup> Read at Burlington House, November 5th, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> My task has been rendered possible through the kind assistance which I have received in many quarters in Finland; and I should like to tender an expression of my warmest thanks to Dr. K. K. Meinan-

der of the National Museum of Finland at Helsingfors; to Dr. Juhani Rinne, the head of the archaeological survey and administration of Finland, who is himself preparing a full monograph on St. Henry; and to Professor P. O. von Törne of Åbo University.

available<sup>1</sup>: and it is in these Northern records that he is put down as an 'Englishman' *tout court*, no additional information being given. It has been suggested to me that his very name 'Henry' might be indicative of Norman origin; and I understand that the possession of that name by an Englishman, in the first half of the twelfth century, indeed makes such an origin probable. In any case it is clear that he belonged to that little group of people hailing from England who during the twelfth century, when native competence was still but sparingly forthcoming, took a prominent part in Swedish ecclesiastical life following in the footsteps of those Englishmen who at the beginning of the eleventh century had displayed particular energy in christianizing Sweden, one of them, St. Sigfridus, gaining a royal convert in King Olof Skotkonung about the year 1008. But to return to the twelfth century, another prominent English ecclesiastic whom we must notice was Nicholas Breakspear, Cardinal Bishop of Albano, who about the middle of the century visited Scandinavia as Papal Legate, and in the year 1152 at a Synod in the city of Linköping was able to get the Swedes to agree to the payment of Peter's Pence. Two years later, as is scarcely necessary to recall, he was elected as Adrian IV to the Chair of St. Peter's, which he held until 1159. The chronology of this particular phase of Swedish history is peculiarly uncertain and elusive: but recent opinion inclines to the view that it was at that Synod in Linköping that Nicholas Breakspear in 1152 consecrated Henry as bishop—traditionally, the fourth or fifth bishop—of Uppsala; and that it was in 1154—not as formerly has been generally supposed, in 1157—that he embarked upon the

<sup>1</sup> The earliest source of full and connected information is the *Vita et Miracula Sancti Henrici*, conveniently accessible in the *Acta Sanctorum* Jan. 19, ii, 613-14; its date has been put not before 1250, and I imagine it may be considerably later. This prose legend of St. Henry forms part of the *Officium de Sancto Henrico* which is published in *extenso* in

*Scriptores rerum suecicarum medii aevi*, vol. ii (Uppsala, 1828), pp. 331-343. The fullest collection of various early sources of information concerning St. Henry is the one published by Ad. Neovius, 'Akter och undersökningar rörande Finlands historia intill år 1401' in *Historiallinen Arkisto*, Helsingfors, 1912, vol. xxiii, i, 3.

greatest enterprise of his life, the Crusade to Finland, led by St. Erik, King of Sweden and ninth of the name.<sup>1</sup>

This, it will be recalled, was the very period when a fresh interest in the crusading idea made itself felt in Europe, crystallizing above all in the second crusade so lamentably barren of result. In organizing a crusade to Finland, St. Erik entered upon a course of action which was destined to be of the greatest political significance : for he thereby took the first step towards the union of Finland to the Swedish crown ; and this union, of such far-reaching importance in the political history of Northern Europe, endured in its essentials until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Where exactly the crusade of St. Erik touched Finland, there is no definite evidence : but everything points to its having been the district in the extreme south-west of the country, round the locality where subsequently arose the city of Åbo, for many centuries the capital of Finland and ever since the end of the thirteenth century and down to this day the principal episcopal See of Finland.

The information about the Crusade, supplied by the legends and chronicles, is to the effect that it was a retaliatory measure, provoked by warlike expeditions into Sweden by the Finns ; further, that on the arrival of the crusaders in Finland, St. Erik offered the natives peace and the Christian faith, both of which were refused. A battle ensued, in which the Swedes were victorious, the vanquished being baptized by St. Henry—an event which is localized by tradition at the Spring of Kuppis near Åbo. Subsequently, St. Erik returned to Sweden, while St. Henry remained in Finland to look after the newest plantation of the church ; but not for long either. The legend of St. Henry relates quite briefly, that having imposed ecclesiastical penance on a murderer, the latter slew St. Henry. This is considerably modified and embroidered by the popular tales,<sup>2</sup> which describe

<sup>1</sup> Compare for this date and various interesting considerations on the Crusade of St. Erik, K. Grotenfelt 'Erik den helige och hans Korståg

till Finland' in *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, 1920, pp. 111-125.

<sup>2</sup> These are published in *extenso* by Ad. Neovius, u.s. p. 20 sqq.

how St. Henry during his travels on a winter's day arrived at the house of a yeoman called Lalli, living at Kjulo, a parish lying some forty or fifty miles to the north of Åbo. In the absence of Lalli, his wicked wife refuses the wayfarers food and drink: so St. Henry commandeers bread and beer for himself and the driver of his sledge and hay for the horses, but on departing leaves behind him payment for the goods requisitioned. Shortly afterwards, Lalli returns to his house, and is told by his wife that wayfarers have

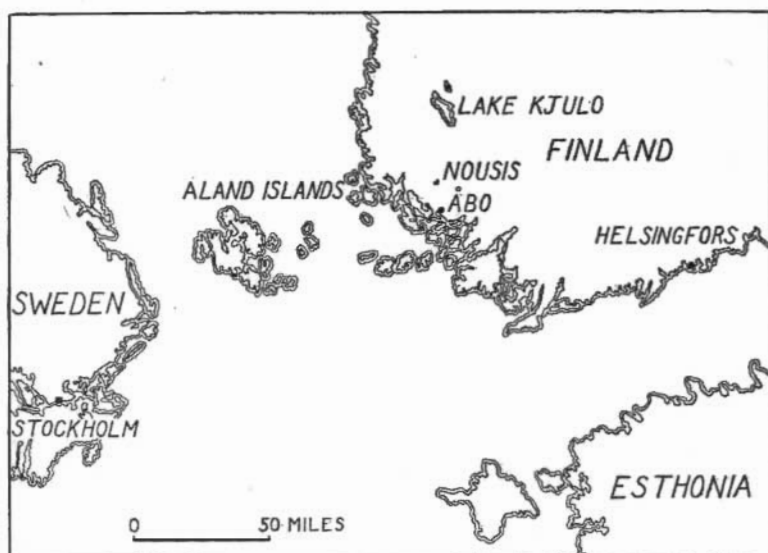


FIG. 1. SKETCH-MAP OF THE REGION REFERRED TO IN THIS PAPER

pillaged the house, nothing being said about the payment. Lalli gets on to his skis and starts the pursuit; he overtakes the sledge of St. Henry travelling across the ice of Lake Kjulo,<sup>1</sup> and slays him, an important further episode—known in its main lines also to the Latin legend—being that Lalli robs the dead bishop of his cap, returns home and on his wife remarking on his new headgear, removes it, when his scalp adheres

<sup>1</sup> Lake Kjulo is the smaller, northernmost one of the two shown on the accompanying sketch map. The larger lake called Pyhajarvi

(Holy Lake, a name very frequent in Finland) has no connexion with the legend of St. Henry.

to it.<sup>1</sup> The popular version of St. Henry's death also adds that on seeing Lalli approach, St. Henry asks his driver to seek safety for himself: when the bishop is dead, the driver is to place his body on a sledge, drawn by a pair of oxen at will: where the oxen stop from tiredness, a church is to be built. The driver does as he is told, and the oxen stop at a place called Nousis, which is about 35 miles due south of Kjulo, in the direction of Åbo: and at Nousis the church is built, to hold the saint's relics. One fact emerges from this popular tradition, taken together with the evidence of archaeological finds—that Nousis was the very first church in Finland, with a bishop at its head. Later on—probably before the end of the twelfth century—the episcopal see was transferred further south, to a place called Rantämäki, and finally, as the result of an enquiry, ordered by a papal Bull of 1229, it was removed once more, and permanently, to Åbo, probably in 1290. The relics of St. Henry had meanwhile remained at Nousis; but in 1300, on June 18, they were translated from Nousis to the cathedral, and there they stayed for several centuries—until 1720, when the Russians, who had overrun Finland, carried them off to a fate which has remained unknown. They had by that time been placed in an iron box, a silver reliquary, which formerly contained them, having vanished.

There is no evidence of St. Henry's ever having been formally canonized. A statement to the effect that he was canonized in 1158 by the Pope (who, as we saw, very probably knew him), Adrian IV, has been widely repeated but cannot be traced back further than to the seventeenth century writer, Johannes Vastovius.<sup>2</sup> However, the claim of the Apostle of the Finns to a rank among the saints is recognized by the *Acta Sanctorum* under January 19—the day of St. Henry in Finland; another day sacred to his memory being the 18 of June, the day of the translation of his relics to Åbo, on which day a great

<sup>1</sup> In the version of the legend, Lalli boasts that he has returned from having slain a bear.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes Vastovius, *Vitis Aquilonia*, 1st ed. Cologne 1623, 2nd ed. Uppsala, 1708.

fair annually used to take place in Åbo, to which people congregated from near and far.<sup>1</sup>

Tradition indicates as the actual place where St. Henry was slain a little island on Lake Kjølo, known as

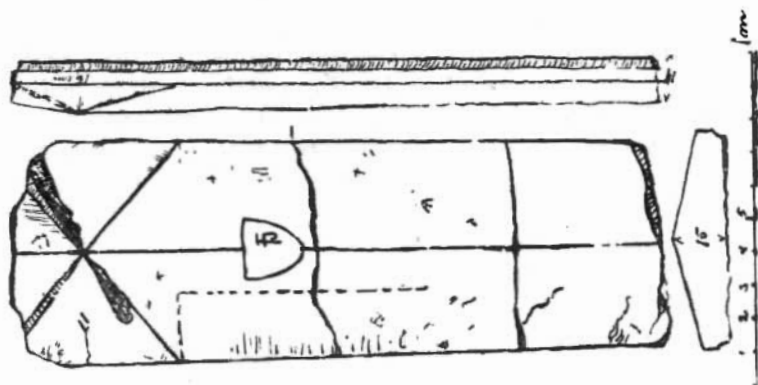


FIG. 2. TOP SLAB OF STONE COFFIN, FOUND ON THE SITE OF THE OLDEST CHURCH AT NOUSIS

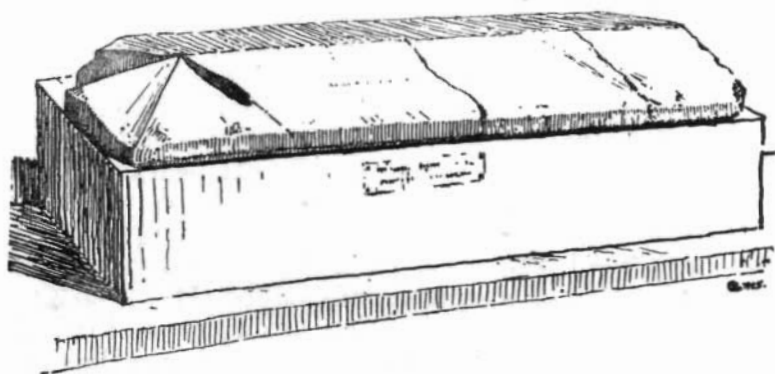


FIG. 3. RECONSTRUCTION OF SARCOPHAGUS WITH LID AS IN FIG. 2

Kirkkosaari (Church Island) : and that there is something special about this island is undoubtedly indicated by the fact that although it is less than 30 yards long and about 20 yards wide, a stone edifice did stand on it in days gone by. That building is nowadays regarded

<sup>1</sup> The earliest mention of the day of St. Henry is in 1256.

as a memorial chapel to St. Henry, erected in the fourteenth century at a time when there is evidence that much was being done to add lustre to the name of St. Henry. As to Nousis, its present church of which I shall have more to say anon, dates from the first half of the fourteenth century : but a few years ago, excavations laid bare, some two miles to the south-west of the present church, the vestiges of an older church built of wood. Nor was this all : for these investigations—conducted by Dr. Juhani Rinne, the head of the archaeological administration of Finland—also led to the discovery of the top slab of a large stone coffin. Fig. 2 gives us two aspects of the lid itself ; Fig. 3 illustrates the type of sarcophagus of which such a lid is an integral part. The lid points to a type of sarcophagus which may be paralleled in Sweden as well as in England, Dr. Rinne instancing two specimens at Westminster Abbey, one of very much older date, the Roman stone coffin in the vestibule to the chapter house, and the other a later example (c. 1300) in the east aisle of the north transept.<sup>1</sup> As this Nousis sarcophagus evidently belongs to the twelfth century, the question which inevitably presents itself is—was it St. Henry's own ?

Turning now to the iconography of St. Henry, it is by remaining at Nousis that we may come across the most important existing monument bearing on it. In order to see it, we must, however, enter the later mediaeval church of Nousis, where, in a chapel, stands the great sepulchral brass of St. Henry—the Cenotaph of St. Henry as it is more usually called (Pl. i).

This cenotaph is indeed no stranger to English archaeological research, Dr. Montague James having written on it learnedly about thirty years ago<sup>2</sup> : and excellent reproductions having been given in the second portfolio of the Monumental Brass Society ; but it is nevertheless, I venture to think, not nearly as well and as widely known as it deserves to be, and a

<sup>1</sup> *Westminster Abbey. (Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London, vol. i). 1924, plate 181.*

<sup>2</sup> Montague R. James 'The Sepul-

chral brass of St. Henry of Finland,' in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, new series, vol. iv, No. xliii (1901-2), pp. 215-222.





GENERAL VIEW OF THE CENOTAPH OF ST. HENRY OF FINLAND,  
NOUSIS CHURCH





BRASS ON TOP OF CENOTAPH OF ST. HENRY  
OF FINLAND, NOUSIS

careful examination of its component parts will, I hope, not be devoid of interest.<sup>1</sup>

After the translation of the relics of St. Henry from Nousis to Åbo in 1300, the memory of the saint nevertheless continued to be specially venerated at Nousis; and in 1370 a cenotaph in black schist was set up in Nousis church. It was this cenotaph which, in the next century, was encased in engraved brass plaques, the donor being one of the most notable figures in the history of Finland in the Middle Ages, Bishop Magnus II Tawast, who occupied the See of Åbo between 1412 and 1450—a widely travelled, splendour-loving Prince of the church,<sup>2</sup> scion of one of the great noble families of Mediaeval Finland, and curiously enough, if a recent genealogical theory is accurate, himself a descendant of St. Henry's murderer, Lalli.

The top of the cenotaph is occupied by one large brass<sup>3</sup> (Pl. ii), made up of several smaller plaques, containing as the principal feature of the design, a large and impressive full-length figure of St. Henry in full vestments, crozier in his left hand and the right hand raised in benediction. He is trampling underfoot his slayer Lalli, cap in hand, the instrument of martyrdom, Lalli's axe, being also seen; and on the left kneels Bishop Magnus, the donor of the brass. Numerous small figures—Christ, angels and saints, the latter largely connected with Sweden—are symmetrically disposed across the elaborate architectural setting; along the inner border runs a verse from the Latin Office of St. Henry,<sup>4</sup> the corners being marked

<sup>1</sup> In Finland, the cenotaph of Henry was first made the subject of archaeological discussion by E. Nervander in *Finska Fornminnesföreningens Tidskrift*, vol. i (1874). Some illuminating comments on it have lately been published by Dr. K. K. Meinander in a paper 'Oeuvres d'art flamand du moyen âge en Finlande' forming part of a publication presented to the 12th International Congress of Art Historians at Brussels, in Sept., 1930.

<sup>2</sup> He visited Rome in October, 1412, when he was confirmed in his office by Pope John XXIII, and spent the following winter in Paris. About

1420 he went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and brought back to Åbo some magnificent church vestments which he had bought in Venice.

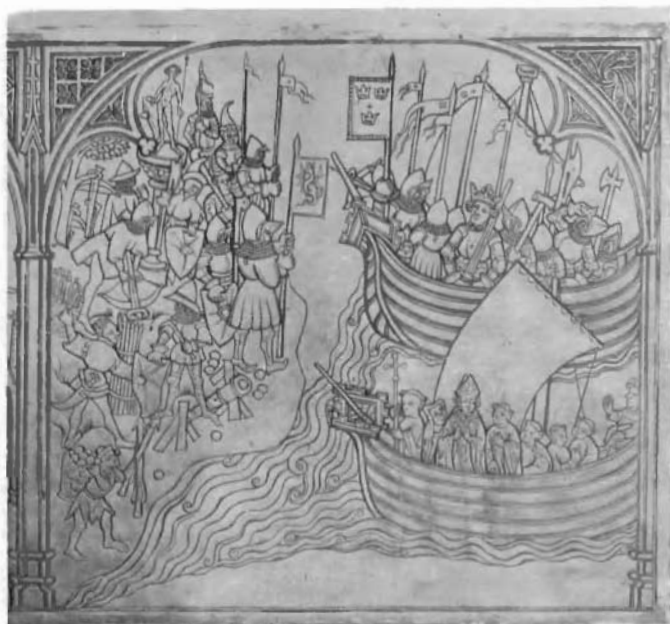
<sup>3</sup> The dimensions of the cenotaph are: top brass 2.14 by 1.01 m.; brasses on front and back 0.51 by 2.14 m.; brasses on sides 0.51 by 0.89 m.

<sup>4</sup> O vita commendabilis  
o mors desiderabilis,  
propterque venerabilis  
hic pontifex fit similis  
in gloria sanctorum.  
Commenda nos, amabilis  
pater et honorabilis  
martyr, regi celorum.

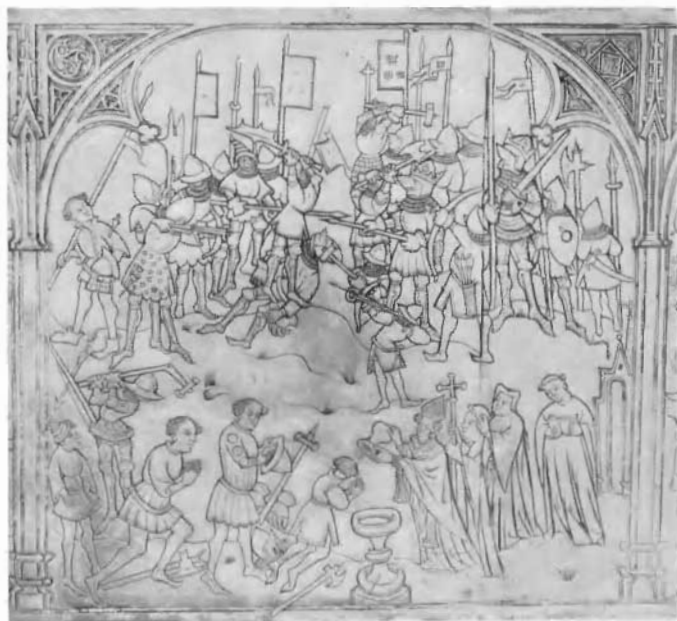
by the symbols of the evangelists, and the middle of the borders by two coats of arms—on the left that of the Bishop of Åbo, on the right that of the Tawast family (an arm in armour).

We next come to the chronicle of the life and miracles of St. Henry as unfolded along the sides of the cenotaph. This is indeed the unique feature of the present monument : no other instance is known of narrative scenes thus disposed accompanying the main sepulchral brass. There are cases known of narrative scenes introduced into the big brass plaque, but none, as I say, of narrative compositions forming a frieze as they do here. I do not imagine for a moment that no other parallel case has ever existed : but it is undoubtedly a curious fact that the only surviving instance should be found in a small remote village church in Finland. The presence of this narrative series causes the cenotaph of St. Henry to assume the character of a veritable *châsse*, such as that of Charlemagne in the treasury of the Münster of Aix-la-Chapelle, with its bas-reliefs in silver on the lid, illustrating the life of Charlemagne ; or the *châsse* of St. Ursula at Bruges, with its sequence of paintings by Memling.

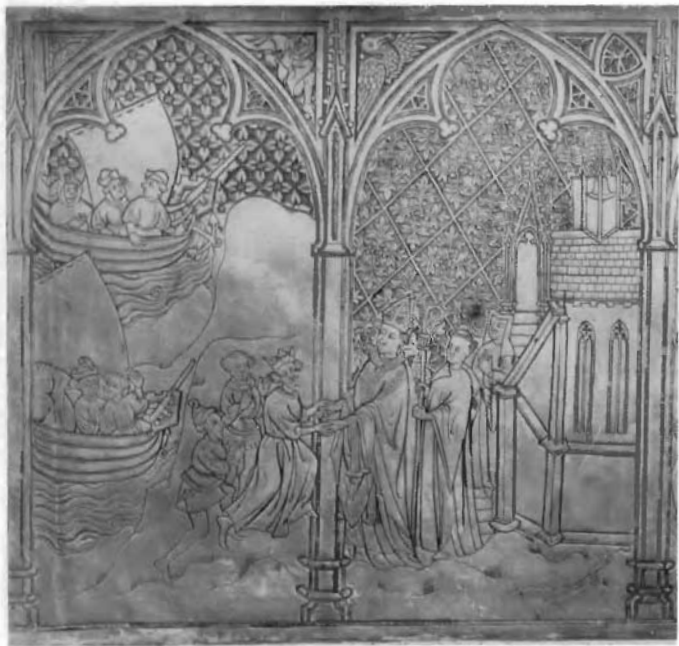
The series of narrative brasses—there are twelve of them, sometimes sub-divided into two scenes—begins with the arrival of the crusaders in Finland (Pl. iii A). There are two ships carrying them : one flying the banner of Sweden, holds the army, with St. Erik prominently seen, in armour, wearing a crown and holding a sword ; the other contains the ecclesiastics among whom St. Henry stands conspicuous, his hands piously joined in prayer. On the shore on the left, the Finns are preparing to resist the invasion ; a nude idol on a column indicates their pagan state, the dragon on the banner their barbaric condition—the attribution of this armorial device to Finland is, I may say, a free fantasy on the part of the artist, Finland never having had such a coat of arms—its present heraldic device, the lion rampant, being a creation of the sixteenth century. Among the many pieces of anachronisms in point of arms and armour in a scene



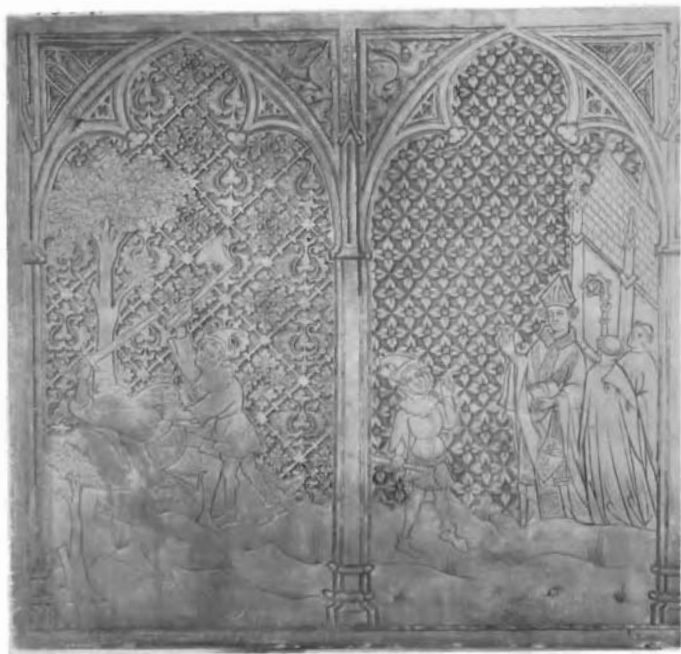
A. ARRIVAL OF THE CRUSADERS IN FINLAND  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



B. BATTLE BETWEEN SWEDES AND FINNS ;  
ST. HENRY BAPTIZING  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



A. ST. ERIK TAKING LEAVE OF ST. HENRY  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



B. LALLI SLAYING A MAN ; ST. HENRY IMPOSING PENANCE  
ON LALLI

(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



supposed to take place in the twelfth century, one may be instanced as particularly amusing—the presence of a cannon with which to ward off the invaders, there being also a plentiful supply of ammunition.

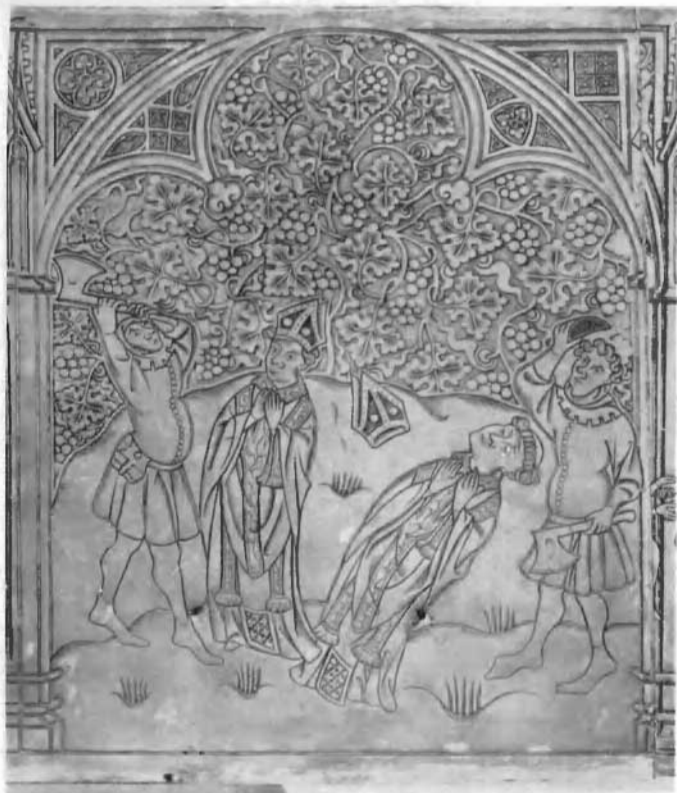
The next brass (Pl. iii B) shows two successive incidents, one above and one below : the battle between the Swedes and Finns, and the consequence of the victory of the former : St. Henry busily baptizing the Finns, by emptying over their heads a vase, replenished from the font seen in the centre foreground.

The next brass (Pl. iv A) introduces a feature which henceforth is to be a permanent one in the series, save for the last brass : the rich, various patterning of the backgrounds. We also find here for the first time a device which several subsequent brasses will show : the division of the space into two compartments by means of Gothic arcades. The scene is that of the leavetaking of St. Erik, who is about to return to Sweden in the vessels which are waiting for him at sea : the church behind St. Henry indicating the field of activity which he remains to look after in Finland. Clever use is made of the pillar in the centre of the space, across which the hands of the two protagonists meet in a long shake : it accentuates the fact that the King and the Bishop henceforth will be parted and each have their own sphere of activity.

The architectural articulation is used for a different purpose in the next brass (Pl. iv B) : namely for the setting out, diptych-fashion, of two successive incidents of the story. In the left compartment is seen Lalli committing the murder, in the right hand one the scene of the excommunication—the artist thus following the legend as distinct from the popular version of the life of St. Henry. And the dénouement follows immediately in the adjoining brass (Pl. v A), where, according to the method of continuous composition, two successive incidents are shown in immediate juxtaposition, without any transition : on the left, Lalli about to deal the fatal blow to St. Henry : on the right the deed is done, St. Henry collapses, his mitre falling from his head, and Lalli meanwhile places St. Henry's skull cap on his head. There is, it must

be owned, considerable ingenuity in this: for once the artist had committed himself to representing St. Henry in full bishop's robes, by falling back on the skull cap he saved himself from the ludicrousness of placing the mitre on Lalli's head. In the next brass (Pl. v B) we have the crucial episode of Lalli's return home. There are again two successive incidents: Lalli comes up to the door of his home, carrying the axe with which he committed the murder, and is met by his wife; next we have her dismayed by the way in which the scalp of Lalli adheres to his cap as he removes it from his head. Now follows the epilogue of the life of St. Henry: first his funeral procession which comes winding down a hill (Pl. vi A); then (Pl. vi B)—in a space subdivided by two arcades—the deposition of the saint, who is placed on a tomb which is interesting by showing, as far as I can see, various figures of 'mourners,' such as occur in a good many actual tombs of the same date.

The remaining four brasses set out various miracles connected with St. Henry. And first of all a brass (Pl. vii A), divided into two compartments: on the left, the parents of a dead child, struck with grief; on the right, the resuscitation of the same child, through the invocation of St. Henry. Next follows (Pl. vii B) one of the most interesting scenes in the whole series. It will be recalled that it was in the middle of winter that St. Henry was slain, when travelling across the frozen waters of Lake Kjulo. Spring came, and the ice on the lake broke up: a fisherman rowing his boat among the ice-floes, noticed one upon which a bird had alighted and was pecking something. This attracted the attention of the fisherman, and on closer scrutiny, he discovered that what was lying on the ice-floe was one of the fingers of St. Henry, cut off by Lalli's axe but preserved intact and still wearing the ring of the Saint. (In memory of this it may be mentioned that the chapter of Åbo cathedral to this day has as its armorial device a cut-off finger wearing a ring.) The brass, it will be seen, illustrates this pleasing legend in a composition of much naïve charm, the stylized trees by the water's edge suggesting



A. LALLI SLAYS ST. HENRY  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



B. LALLI'S RETURN HOME AFTER SLAYING ST. HENRY  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



A. FUNERAL OF ST. HENRY  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



B. THE DEPOSITION OF ST. HENRY  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)

effectively the immense woodlands of Finland, while the myriads of huge stars across the sky felicitously—though perhaps unintentionally—convey a sense of a Northern starlit night. An odd touch introduced for the purpose of emphasizing the effect of wilderness is the lion placed on the shore of the lake—such a one as never, I fear, be it in winter or summer, has yet been known to strike terror into the Finnish countryside.

Two further miracles wind up the story. One brass (Pl. viii A) shows St. Henry rescuing some sailors during a hurricane at sea, seal-fishers, the legend particularizes : *quidam homines in captura phocarum in medio maris existentes* ; and the other (Pl. viii B) relates the story of a priest who, during a meal, had spoken irreverently of St. Henry—we see him on the left at table—he is punished by being taken ill during the following night, invokes the aid of St. Henry, and recovers—as shown in the scene on the right. These two plaques are attached to the cenotaph by hinges, the idea being that they thus made it possible to place inside a hollow in the cenotaph, objects which were to derive benefit from the contact with the place where the bones of St. Henry had rested.

Were it not for the fact that it relates events at a far greater distance of time, and through the work of a foreign artist, one might call the cenotaph of St. Henry the Bayeux tapestry of Finland. Like the Bayeux tapestry, it illustrates a series of events of the greatest importance for the history of two countries, with expeditions across the sea, invasions, battle, etc., very much to the fore alongside episodes derived from passing life, having a definitely local colour—the winter storms sweep the archipelago of the Baltic where the seal-fishers follow their dangerous calling ; the fisherman ventures out on the big inland lakes at the earliest possible moment after the ice has broken up, and so forth. And as we have seen, and as in the Bayeux tapestry, the story is told all through with great point and vividness.

As to the atelier in which this remarkable work was executed, Flanders was, as is well known, the principal centre for the production of engraved brasses in the



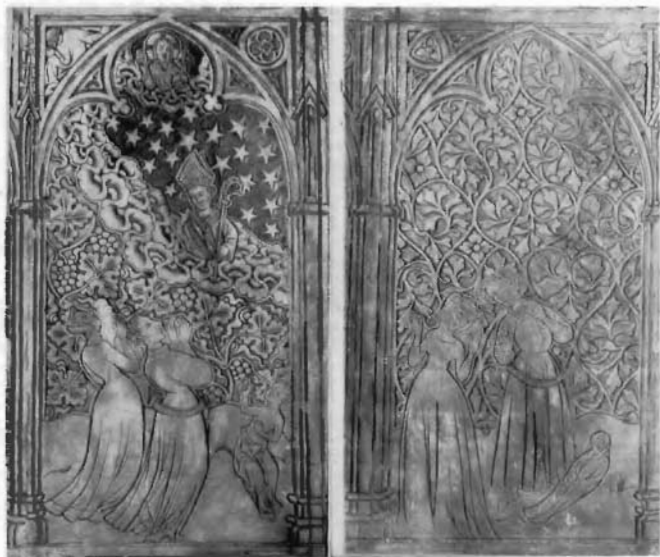
fifteenth century, and an unmistakable affinity to Flemish work is certainly present in the Nousis cenotaph. Another great centre for the production of such work—profoundly influenced by Flanders—was Lübeck: but until now the individual characteristics of these two schools have not yet been fully investigated. It may be hoped that after the publication of the monograph which a German scholar, Dr. Hans Eichler, is preparing on the subject of mediaeval engraved brasses, it will be possible to settle definitely the question as to the origin of the Nousis cenotaph. Of brasses in England the one which is most nearly akin to the Nousis cenotaph is perhaps the great Braunche brass at Lynn St. Margaret, considerably earlier though it is (1364)<sup>1</sup>: it is not only a matter of the framework of the main plaque, for that is more or less a commonplace, but there is something in the character of the frieze of the 'peacock feast' below, with its background of big stars, which comes very close to the Nousis cenotaph.

As an exposition of the iconography of St. Henry, the Nousis cenotaph ranks as by far the completest series of which we have any knowledge. In the churches of mediaeval Finland, the image of the saint is, however, of very frequent occurrence, either as a wallpainting, a panel picture or a statue in carved wood; and occasionally the image was accompanied by narrative compositions.<sup>2</sup> I give (Pl. ix A) an illustration of a watercolour, made in the seventeenth century by an eminent Finnish antiquary, Elias Brenner, and reproducing the back and front of a wing of an altarpiece formerly in the church of Storkyro (Western Finland) and probably dating from the time about 1450. Here we see on the left the figure of St. Henry in the pose which we know already from the Nousis cenotaph and which indeed may be regarded as the standard type of the representation of

<sup>1</sup> See E. M. Beloe, jr., *Monumental Brasses in Norfolk*, 1890-91.

<sup>2</sup> The iconography of St. Henry has been very fully treated by Dr. K. K. Meinander in *Finskt Museum*, vol. vi, 1899, pp. 45-48, and in

*Medeltida Altarskap och trasniderier i Finlands Kyrkor*, Helsingfors, 1908, pp. 155-7, 259-261. It is upon the results of his investigations that the following survey of the cult and iconography of St. Henry is based.



A. A MIRACLE OF ST. HENRY  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



B. MIRACULOUS REDISCOVERY OF ST. HENRY'S FINGER  
AND RING  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



A. A MIRACLE OF ST. HENRY AT SEA  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)



B. A MIRACLE OF ST. HENRY  
(Cenotaph of St. Henry of Finland, Nousis)

this saint: in full vestments, trampling upon the scalpless Lalli. It will be noted that St. Henry is bearded—as a rule he is, however, represented beardless. On the right, the other face of the wing shows two scenes from the legend—above, Lalli slaying St. Henry in the presence of a third figure, armed with a spear; and below, Lalli, accompanied by the man with the spear, welcomed at the door of his house by his wife who looks on terrified, as the scalp comes off his head. Of single figures of St. Henry, I am illustrating one, in carved wood, formerly in the church of Ackas in Central Finland (Pl. ix B)—artistically one of the most notable of the series (now in the National Museum, Helsingfors). Dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century and probably the work of a Lübeck woodcarver, it shows St. Henry in the pose which we now know so well: and it will be noticed that the saint is represented beardless. The inclusion of the figure of Lalli, though very frequent, was not absolutely *de rigueur*, and it is held to be a correct inference to interpret all beardless figures of bishops in Finnish mediaeval churches, not designated by any special emblem, as representations of St. Henry.

Outside Finland, the cult of St. Henry was very widespread in Sweden during the Middle Ages—he ranked as one of the patron saints of Sweden, in addition to being the patron saint of Finland; and renderings of St. Henry by mediaeval Swedish artists are correspondingly frequent. Through the legend of St. Henry being intertwined with that of St. Erik, certain incidents of the former legend automatically became included in the picture chronicles of St. Erik's life produced for the adornment of Swedish churches: they are mostly scenes which we know from the Nosis cenotaph, but there is in addition the scene of the Coronation of St. Erik, with St. Henry officiating. Further north, his cult penetrated into Norway—we know, for instance, that in 1493 the Bishop of Åbo was in correspondence with the Archbishop of Norway at Nidaros (Trondhjem) concerning the exchange of relics of St. Henry for relics of St. Olof, the patron saint of Norway—though I have no

information of any representations of St. Henry in that country ; on the other hand, there is evidence of the existence of two altarpieces, containing figures of St. Erik and St. Henry, which, in the earlier part of the fifteenth century, came into the possession of a Carmelite Monastery of Danzig. These two saints who had been contemporaries and friends were indeed frequently represented in altarpieces as companion figures, as may be seen from the example here reproduced (Pl. x A), to give one more instance from Finnish territory, a late fifteenth-century shrine formerly at Tövsala, a coastal parish in south-west Finland (now National Museum, Helsingfors), where we have on the right St. Henry trampling on Lalli, and on the left St. Erik wearing royal insignia and trampling on a foe slain by him. It is with a Carmelite Monastery, too, that is associated the only record—discovered by Dr. Montague James—which connects the cult of St. Henry of Finland with mediaeval England. This is a passage in William of Worcester (1415–1482 ?) which refers to an inscription in honour of St. Henry in the chapel dedicated to that saint, belonging to the Carmelite Brethren of Yarmouth (*ut in tabella capellae Sancti Henrici fratrum carmelitarum Jernemuthiae patet*).<sup>1</sup> It was probably contact with Finland by means of the overseas trade, which caused the cult of him to spring up in two great harbour cities like Danzig on the Baltic and Yarmouth on the North Sea coast.

The Reformation, which in Sweden and Finland began in 1527, led to the curtailment of the evolution of the iconography of St. Henry in these countries—it was to some extent a case comparable to that of England's great national saint during the middle ages, St. Thomas Becket, even though for obvious reasons the iconographical eclipse of St. Henry was not accompanied by the circumstances of ignominy heaped upon St. Thomas Becket. Indeed even after the Reformation, St. Henry would now and then be represented in churches in Finland—there exists, for instance, a painting of him on the balcony parapet in

<sup>1</sup> William of Worcester, ed. Nasmyth, p. 346.





A. BACK AND FRONT OF THE WING OF AN ALTAR-  
PIECE, FORMERLY IN THE CHURCH OF STORKYRO  
(c. 1450)



B. ST. HENRY OF FINLAND TRAMPLING ON HIS  
SLAYER LALLI. STATUE IN CARVED WOOD, EARLY  
SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

(National Museum, Helsingfors)



A. ALTAR-PIECE, LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY  
National Museum, Helsingfors



- A. S. Henricus Anahus Vrsalia in Suecia Archiepiscopus, a<sup>o</sup> Adriano P.P. III. Angli, Noruegia Apostolo missus, Finlandos conuertit, inde Aboe archiepiscopus, idem Christi Sanguine obsignat suo
- B. S. Achilles Londæ in Suecia F. m. natione Anglus, saxis obruitur
- C. Cantuariæ Angliæ metropolis, a Danis inijs capta incendiis, magna Christianorum edita cæde in eius tempore Saluatoris nunciato.

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B. MARTYRDOM OF ST. HENRY OF FINLAND, ETC.  
Engraving from the fresco by Niccolò Circignani,  
formerly in the Ven. English College, Rome

the church of Sund (Åland Islands) which was executed in 1672 by one Abraham Myra<sup>1</sup>; in 1682 a figure of St. Henry was ordered for Åbo Cathedral from 'Master Johan, Carpenter'<sup>2</sup>; and in the church of Sagu in S.W. Finland a balcony parapet dating from the eighteenth century contains among others a representation of St. Henry.<sup>3</sup> However, such cases were naturally bound to be somewhat exceptional. At the beginning of the nineteenth century (1813) the sculptor Erik Cainberg then represented St. Henry baptising the Finns in one of the rather primitive bas-reliefs he executed for the hall of Åbo University; and about forty years later, St. Henry was once more commemorated with great éclat by a Finnish artist. The painter in question, Robert Wilhelm Ekman, illustrated—not very happily—the same scene as Cainberg in a large wall painting belonging to the series with which he, between 1849 and 1854, decorated the chancel of Åbo Cathedral—the very church where St. Henry's bones had reposed so long.

Outside Scandinavia there was one spot where the memory of St. Henry of Finland, as of all English saints, continued to be kept green, and that was the Venerable English College at Rome. In the series of scenes of martyrdom, painted about 1582, in the college, by Niccolò Circignani (il Pomarancio), the death of St. Henry was not omitted. The whole series is now destroyed, but the individual compositions are known to us from old engravings by J. B. de Cavalleriis:<sup>4</sup> the martyrdoms depicted are in many cases such as to put the nerves of the looker-on to a pretty severe test, but the composition into which St. Henry has been introduced is a very innocuous one (Pl. x B). He is being slain with a dagger in the foreground of a landscape, where St. Eskil of Strengnäs is being stoned a little further back, while the distance shows the Danes sacking Canterbury. It is decidedly

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Aspelin, in *Finskt Museum* vol. vi, 1899, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Åbo Domkyrkas Rakenskaper*, 1634-1700, Helsingfors, 1901, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> E. Nervander, *Den kyrkliga*

*konsten i Finland under medeltiden*, vol. ii (Helsingfors 1888), p. 13 sq.

<sup>4</sup> *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea*. Rome, 1584, pl. 24.

curious to realise the Michelangesque heroics and generalities, into which Pomarancio has here translated the grim drama of a winter's day amid the ice and snow of Finland, of which the popular version of St. Henry's life, in all its terseness, gives such an impressive picture.

St. Henry is not the only English ecclesiastic prominently associated with mediaeval Finland. Some sixty or seventy years after his death—in 1220—another Englishman, one Thomas, a member of the Dominican Order, then only just founded, was appointed to the vacant see of Abo. A man of uncommon energy and thirst for action, Bishop Thomas remained at the head of the church in Finland for twenty-five years, when he relinquished his office—very much under a cloud from offences which in themselves reflect the character of the man—and withdrew to the island of Gotland, where he died in 1248. In Finnish art, Bishop Thomas has, however, left no trace whatsoever. The main contribution made by Finland to mediaeval iconography is that which centres round St. Henry; and I hope the material concerned offers sufficient novelty and interest to justify my having ventured to call attention to it at such length.