



S. Werburgh and her Shrine

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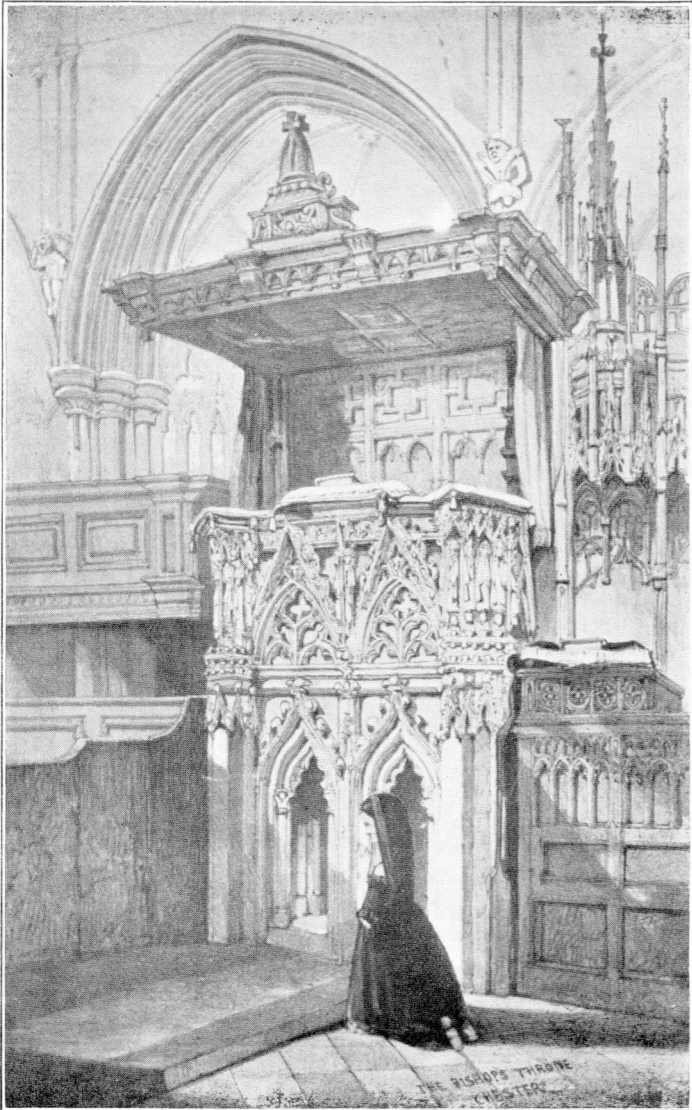
(Read 3rd February, S. Werburgh's Day, 1903)



WE owe our knowledge of S. Werburgh mainly to the metrical life of the Saint written by Henry Bradshaw, a monk of S. Werburgh's Monastery, who died in 1513, and was buried there. The full title of his work is "The Holy Lyfe and History of Saynt Werburge, very frutefull for all Christen people to rede." It was printed by Pynson in 1521, and was reprinted by the Chetham Society, as their Fifteenth Volume, in 1848. This reprint, reproducing the original black letter and quaint spelling, is most interesting. It extends to over 200 pages. This afternoon I shall only give you a short epitome of it, premising that it purports to be a translation into English verse from the original Chronicle or Passionary, stated by him to be preserved in the Monastery. He makes frequent allusions to the Venerable Bede (whom he styles his author), as also to "Master Alfrydus, William Malmsburge, Gyrarde, Polycronycon, and other mo(re)"; thus disclosing the sources (or some of them) from which he derived his information.

S. Werburgh was born about 650, and was the daughter of Wulfhere, King of Mercia (whose name is

Chester Cathedral



The Shrine, as the Bishop's Throne
(from a drawing by J. S. Prout, A.D. 1806—1876)

R. Newstead, Photo.

perpetuated in Wolverhampton) and Ermenhild his wife. She was thus descended from four royal families. Her father was the second son of Penda, King of Mercia, who claimed descent from Woden. Her mother was the daughter of Earconbert, King of Kent, and was thus a descendant both of Tytillus, King of East Anglia, and of S. Edwin, King of Northumberland. She was also connected with the Kings of France, as S. Ermenhild's grandfather and great-grandfather both married princesses of that royal house. We may say that she was of saintly as well as of royal lineage, for five of her grandfather Penda's children (pagan though he himself was) earned the title of Saint; whilst her mother's family included the names of S. Hilda, S. Etheldreda, S. Ethelburga, and S. Sexburga (her mother).

The Kingdom of Mercia was of wide extent, for it was bounded on the north by the Humber and Mersey; on the east by the sea; on the south by the Thames; and on the west by a line stretching from Chester to Shrewsbury, and then by the Severn to Bristol. In the limits of this kingdom there were five episcopal sees.

Wulfhere and his queen chiefly lived at Stone, in Staffordshire, where S. Werburgh, under the care of her good mother, grew up. Bradshaw gives a very interesting picture of her early years, in which her religious disposition, fostered, no doubt, by her mother's influence and example, manifested itself in various ways. Thus:—

“ First in the morning to Church she would go,
 Following her mother the queene every day,
 With her boke and bedes, and depart not them fro,
 Hear all divine service, and her devocions say;
 And to our Blessed Saviour, mekely on her knees pray,
 Daily Him desiring, for His endless grace and pity,
 To keep her from sin, and preserve her in chastity.”

She was an only daughter, having three brothers. She listened with earnest attention to every word of instruction and advice; abjured giddy pleasures; and found her truest joy in contemplation of heavenly things, and holiest bliss arising from a pure conscience, chastened by fasting, and sanctified by prayer.

Without dwelling on the description which Bradshaw gives of her young days, and of her virtues (over which he seems to linger fondly), we may say that though she attracted many suitors, she courteously dismissed them all. Among these was the Prince of the West Saxons; and a full account is given of his interview with S. Werburgh, of his offer of marriage, and of all his worldly goods:—

“Landes, rentes and libertees all at your pleasure;
 Servantes every hour, your byddyng for to do,
 With ladyes in your chambre, to wayte on you also.”

She gently but firmly declines, saying:—

“But now I shewe you playnly my true mynde,
 My purpose was never maryed for to be;
 A lorde I have chosen, Redeemer of Mankynde,
 Jhesu the Second Persone in Trynyte,
 To be my Spouse.”

Then Werbode, a powerful Knight and chief steward in her father's household, urges his suit. He gains an evil influence over King Wulfhere, but Ermenhild and her sons do not favour his cause. He even induces the King to become, if not actually an apostate, yet at any rate distinctly hostile to Christianity. The King consents to the union, if only Werbode can win over S. Werburgh herself. She says she has vowed herself to God, and can have nothing to say to him; but her mother and brothers use stronger language, and revile him in no measured terms. Retiring in wrath, he plots

revenge. He persuades the King that his sons Wulfade and Ruffyn are plotting against him ; leads him into the forest, where they are found in S. Chad's cell, being instructed by the good Bishop in the Christian faith ; and then, in his blind rage, the King slays them both and rushes back to his castle. No sooner did he return than he is seized with sore pains, the mark of God's vengeance. Stung with remorse, he repented of his apostasy ; repaired to S. Chad ; professed his contrition ; promised to destroy all idols and temples in his realm, and to build monasteries ; and founded the Abbey of Peterborough, and a Priory at Stone :—

“ To the honour of God and these martyrs twayne.”

And now S. Werburgh begs her father to be allowed to become “ a religious,” and to enter the Abbey of Ely, where her great-aunt, S. Etheldreda (or Audry), was the Abbess. Wulfhere is reluctant and slow to consent, but at length he yields, and, when the matter was once settled, does it nobly. He ordered all his nobles to keep fast with him, and then all together to set out for Ely. When he came near, S. Audry came out to meet them with her following in state, and the two processions met. Then followed a royal feast, fully described by Bradshaw, with the company assembled ; the tapestries portraying scripture stories hung inside the tent ; and the classical songs wherewith the minstrels entertained the guests.

After her year of probation S. Werburgh made her holy profession with great solemnity, and her biographer holds her up to the ladies of his day as an example of virtue and humility.

On the death of Wulfhere, his widow, Ermenhild herself repaired to the Convent at Ely, where her mother,

S. Sexburga, had succeeded her sister, S. Audry, as Abbess, and vied with her daughter in her piety and devotion. Wulfhere was succeeded as King by his brother Ethelred, to whom, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, is due the building, in 689, of the Monastery of S. John the Baptist in Chester. Ethelred fully appreciated his niece's character, and, seeing her holy conversation, made her Lady and President at Weedon, Trentham, and Hanbury; thus making her ruler of the nuns within his realm. He himself also took the vows and became a monk, resigning the crown to his nephew Cenred, S. Werburgh's brother, who, after a short reign of five years, followed his uncle's example; went to Rome the year of grace 708, and was "professed to Saint Benette's relygion," and "frome this lyfe transytory, with vertu departed to eternal glory."

Bradshaw goes on to describe "the gostly devocion of Saynt Werburge, and vertuous governans of her places"; and, if the chronicler is to be trusted, she showed a marvellous capacity for ruling her abbeys. Her behaviour and character is thus described:—

"She was a minister, rather than a mistress;
 Her great pre-eminence caused no presumpcion,
 Serving her systers with humble subjection.

 Piteous and merciful and full of charity
 To the poor people in their necessity.

 She never commanded systers to do anything
 But it was fulfilled in her own doing."

Various miracles are ascribed to her agency. Her life was mainly spent between Weedon, Trentham, Repton, and Hanbury; and it was at Trentham she died, enjoining that her body should rest at Hanbury. When she felt her end approaching, she gave orders as to her

successors and officers in the monasteries; and calling the sisters round her, gave them her last exhortation: to live in temperance, obedience, and love; recited the Creed; received the Blessed Sacrament; and

“The third day of February, ye may be sure,
Expired from this life, caduce and transitory,
To eternal blyss, coronate with victory,
Changing her lyfe, miserable and thrall,
For infinite joy, and glory eternal.”

This was probably in the year 699 A.D. The people of Trentham buried her in that place, watching over the body lest it should be removed. However, the people of Hanbury came, and a deep sleep having fallen upon the watchers, the Hanburgenses were enabled to carry the body safely to Hanbury, where it was first interred in the chancel, beneath the floor; but nine years after her death, in the summer of 708, it was moved from the grave to a shrine with great pomp, in the presence of her cousin King Ceolred, the Bishops, and Clergy. Here, says the chronicler, the body remained whole and substantial “for nearly 200 years, till the coming of the pagan Danes,” when “it was resolved and fell to powder lest the wicked miscreants with impious hands should dare to touch it.”

It was then, in 875 A.D., that (to save it from violation by the Danes, who had already destroyed Weedon and Trentham, and had come as far as Repton) the people of Hanbury were inspired to bring the body to Chester, and

“The relique, the Shryne full memorative,
Was brought to Chestre for our consolacion,
Reverently receyved set with devocion
In the mouterh Church of Saint Peter and Paule
(As afore is sayd) a place most principall.”

A full description is given of the solemn reception of the shrine, and also of the gifts wherewith rich and poor vied with each other to enrich it:—

“The people with devocion and mynde fervent
 Gave divers enormentes unto this place ;
 Some gave a cope, and some a vestemente,
 Some other a chalice, and some a corporace,
 Many albes and other clothes offered ther was,
 Some crosses of Golde, some bookes, some belles,
 The poor folk gave surges, torches, and towelles.”

Where this Church of S. Peter and S. Paul exactly was it is impossible to say. Ethelfleda, daughter of King Alfred, built a separate minster for S. Werburgh, joining it to the east end of the older Church. This building (rebuilt, we are told, by Leofric,¹ Earl of Chester) gave place to the Norman structure of Hugh Lupus, in the erection of which he was assisted by the advice of S. Anselm. But, through all these changes and vicissitudes, the name of S. Werburgh was associated with the dedication of the Church, and her shrine must have found its home there. We are justified in feeling regret that this old connection was severed, in one respect, at the foundation of the See by Henry VIII., when this Church was constituted the Cathedral Church of the Diocese, by the name of “The Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chester.” There are still some nine Churches in England where the dedication to S. Werburgh remains, and six of these are within the boundaries of the Kingdom of Mercia, as given by Bradshaw. One of these is in Cheshire, at Warburton (Werburgh Town), thus preserving in the name of the place and of an honoured Cheshire family, the memory of our Saint.

¹ He must have been a great Church builder, for he rebuilt Much Wenlock Priory as a semi-monastic foundation.

Though I have detained you long enough already, I cannot refrain from giving you (before turning to the second part of my subject) an appreciation of S. Werburgh from another source.

“She was such a mistress towards those under her that she rather seemed to be their servant; she made herself equal to, or, rather, placed herself beneath the lowest, preferring, if possible, the lowest to the highest place. She carried all as her own bowels; instructed them more sedulously by example than by command. She was wholly possessed by love, and kindness, and peace, and joy. Her bounty towards the poor was most ready; her devotion towards the afflicted most compassionate. Adversity she smiled at in her patience, overcame it by faith, and trod it down by heavenly joy. Prosperity she accepted, to be turned to account for heavenly wisdom. She preferred abstinence to luxury; watching to sleep; labour to pleasure; prayers and holy reading to banquets; whilst her body moved on earth, her soul was in heaven.”

Now as to the Shrine. Strictly speaking, we do not possess the *Shrine* of S. Werburgh. The word shrine (derived from the Latin *scrinium*, a case, chest, or box) signifies a box or receptacle, specially one in which are deposited sacred relics, as the bones of a saint. Shrines were often made of the most splendid and costly materials, and enriched with jewels in profusion. Perhaps one of the most celebrated and sumptuous is that of the Three Kings, at Cologne, where the value of the jewels is said to be £240,000. What the shrine in which the remains of S. Werburgh were preserved was made of we do not know.¹ It is called, by Bradshaw, in one passage,

¹ In Dean Howson's Guide, on the last page, mention is made of the *silver* shrine; but no authority is given for the statement.

“a riall relique” (royal relic); and in another we are told that—

“The Citezens offered to the sayd Virgine
For the great miracles among them wrought
Many riall gyftes of jewels to the Shrine.”

It was portable, for it was not only brought here, as we have seen, from Hanbury, but it was carried about in processions, and in times of danger and emergency. It was thus “set on the towne walles for help and tuicion”; to save Chester from the attacks of the Welsh; and again—

“The devout Chanons sette the holy Shryne
Agaynst their enemies at the sayd Northgate,”

“when innumerable barbarike nations purposed to destroye and spoyle the cite.” Similarly, Bradshaw tells us “howe in 1180 a great fire, like to destroye all Chestre, by myracle ceased when the holy shryne was borne about the towne by the monkes.”

Doubtless, there was a particular resting place for this Shrine in the Church, or, rather, in the successive Churches where it was placed. As there is no trace of the original Church, and the remains of the Norman one are not extensive, we cannot tell where it was placed in those edifices, nor whether the structure which contained it was of a solid and ornate character. Nor does the plan of the Monastery, in the Randle Holme Collection in the British Museum, give any indication as to the position of the Shrine at the time of the dissolution of the Monastery.

It will be convenient in what follows to allude to the structure now standing at the west end of the Lady Chapel as “the Shrine.” The late Canon Blomfield, in a Paper read on February 1st, 1858, expressed the opinions that the eastern extremity of the Norman Choir

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The Shrine, as the Bishop's Throne, as restored by Canon Slade

R. Newstead, Photo.

was occupied by the Chapel and Shrine of S. Werburgh; that the original position of the Shrine was, probably, preserved when the Lady Chapel was built at the end of the 13th Century, but instead of being in a separate Chapel to the east of the Choir, it now fell within the Choir itself; and that this position was believed to have remained until the Reformation, when the Shrine was removed, and the lower portion converted into a Throne for the Bishop. Hanshall, however, in his history, states that it "formerly stood in the Chapel of the Virgin, at the east end of the Choir," in which case it has now been erected on the site it then occupied.

It has been moved several times, as old prints show, though I have not come across any records of these various removals. It stood, for instance, under or near the middle arch of the south side of the Choir, where the Bishop's Throne now stands. This may have been its position when it was first reconstructed as an Episcopal "Cathedra," on the foundation of the See. It was moved one bay westwards by Dean Anson, when the Choir was moved in that direction, so as to include the space under the central tower.¹ When the present Throne was erected, in conformity with the beautiful woodwork of the Choir Stalls, it was erected temporarily in the south Choir Aisle, and was moved thence to the Lady Chapel in 1888.

It will be well to say something about its appearance (so far as can be gathered from old prints and photographs) in these various positions. We may say, then,

¹ It was when in this position that it was restored by Canon Slade, in 1846, in memory of his father-in-law, Bishop Law. The following inscription was on a brass plate affixed to the Throne:—"In gloriam Dei hanc cathedram reficiendam curavit A.D. MDCCCXLVI. Jacobus Slade A.M. hujus ecclesie Canonicus hecnon in piam memoriam Georgii Henrici Law S.T.P. per XII. annos Episcopi Cestriensis dein Bathoniensis."

that the lower portion was exactly the same in each place, and represents, or rather is, the pedestal or sub-structure of the Shrine as erected in the 14th Century. The only variation I have come across is this: in the plate in Hanshall's *History of Cheshire* it stands upon the ground, without that platform or base of plain stone which we now see. The plate is not very elaborate, and the absence of this base may be due to the inaccuracy of the artist. We have, however, Prout's beautiful and, probably, correct representation, from which it seems that the Throne was placed close to the Stalls on the south side, and that the eastern Stall, with a raised desk, was used for the Chaplain. On the centre of the canopy, in the front, is a mitre, which does not appear in the illustration in Hanshall. On this pedestal was placed what we may call the crown of the Shrine, round three sides, the portion on the south side (which we must suppose was there originally) being removed so as to form an entrance (approached by a flight of steps) to the Bishop's seat. The part thus removed was probably destroyed, and is not likely to be recovered. The inner surface of the space thus enclosed was, I imagine, encased in wood, the panelling at the back or south side being raised sufficiently high to support a canopy. In the earliest prints of the Throne, as thus constructed, which I have seen, this canopy seems to be of the date of Bishop Bridgeman, or the early part of the 17th Century; it may, of course, have been older still, or it may have taken the place of an older one; or, in the first instance, there may have been no canopy at all. To the east and west were curtains, depending from this projecting covering. The Bishop's chair would be at the west side, and his prayer-desk on the north.

In a pamphlet published in 1749, Dr. Wm. Cowper (a native of this city, and Mayor in 1754) gives a full

description of "this piece of antiquity." I have not been fortunate enough to come across this pamphlet.¹ It is, however, freely quoted from by Hanshall, Hemingway, and others; and we gather from it that "around the upper part" of the Throne "is a range of little images, designed to represent the Kings and Saints of the Mercian Kingdom. Each held in one hand a scroll with the name inscribed." The figures had been sadly mutilated, as well as the labels; and Hemingway makes merry over the restoration of the former, when a mason being employed to mend their majesties put Kings' heads on Queens' shoulders, and *vice versa*. Dr. Cowper gives the number of figures then existing as thirty, saying that, originally, there were thirty-four, and that four had been lost, two at the west and two at the east. At that time the names on seventeen of the scrolls seem to have been perfect; on six only a few letters appeared; and seven were altogether blank. Closer examination has not revealed any inscription, so that if the names were cut and not painted the hollows have been now filled in. The names thus given show that the figures were intended to represent Kings and Saints of the Mercian line, and thus nearly related to S. Werburgh. Hanshall tells us that the inscriptions were in Latin, and in old English letters.

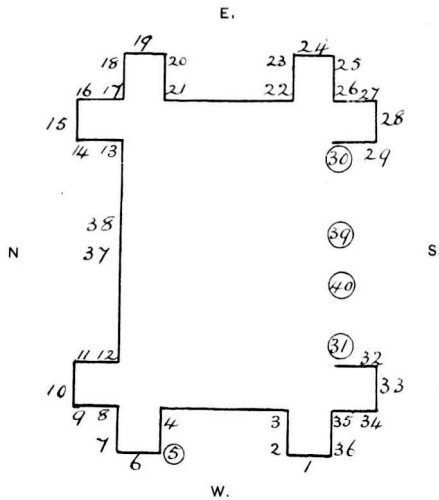
Dr. Cowper gives two lists: first the names as they appeared, and then another with a brief description of the personages. From the latter we gather that these were—

1. Creoda, founder of the Kingdom of Mercia about 584;

¹ Since this was written I have obtained a copy of "A Summary of the Life of St. Werburgh, with an historical account of the Images upon her Shrine." This may be a later edition of Dr. Cowper's tract; at any rate the figures correspond to those given in Hanshall and Hemingway.

2. Penda, grandson of Creoda ;
3. Wulfhere, son of Penda, father of S. Werburgh ;
4. Ceolred, nephew of Wulfhere and son of Ethelred, *husband* of S. Werburgh ;
- 5.
6. Offa, the great King of Mercia ;
7. Egbferth, son of Offa ;
- 8.
9. S. Kenelin, son of Cenwulf King of Mercia ;
10. S. Mildburga, daughter of Merewald, fourth son of King Penda, who founded the first religious house at Much Wenlock ;
11. Beorna, King of the East Angles ;
12. Ceolwulf, uncle of S. Kenelm, and King of Mercia ;
- 13.
14. S. Ermenhild, mother of S. Werburgh ;
15. Rex . . . us ;
16. Rex [Etheldred]us, paternal uncle of S. Werburgh (who became a monk, and afterwards Abbot of Bardenay) ;
17. St^a. Keneburga, paternal aunt of S. Werburgh ;
18. S. Kenredus, a pastoral staff in hand, brother of S. Werburgh, who resigned the crown to Coelred, *and accepted of an Abbacy*, but died in the Monastery of S. Peter at Rome ;
- 19.
20. Baldredus, Governor of the Kingdom of Kent ;
21. (S.) Merewald, fourth son of Penda ;
22. Wiglaf, King of Mercia ;
23. Bertwulph, brother of Wiglaf ;
24. Berghredus, tributary King of Mercia ;

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Plan of the Crown of the Shrine, showing position of the figures

Number of figures when the Shrine was complete, 40.

Number of figures at present, 35.

(Those numbered 5, 30, 31, 39, 40, are missing).

Number of figures with heads, all male and crowned, 3.

(These are numbered 12, 37, 38, on the plan).

The figure No. 16 has a mitre, but the head underneath has disappeared; it holds a staff, as also does No. 18, where a mark will be found showing that there has been a crown or mitre. The bosses under the figures 16, 18, 25, 26, and 27, are specially noticeable.

The numbering of the figures on the plan is suggested as, *possibly*, corresponding to those given by Dr. Cowper in his list. It is, of course, quite conjectural; but if it is correct it will be seen that the uncle of S. Werburgh, Etheldredus (No. 16) and her brother Kenredus (No. 18) each carry a pastoral staff, they having resigned their crowns, and become Monks and eventually Abbots.

- 25.
26. S. [Etheldr]eda, aunt of S. Werburgh ;
- 27.
- 28.
29. Rex Ethelbertus, supposed to be Ethelbert, first Christian King of Kent, and great-grandfather of S. Werburgh ;
30. S. Mildrida, daughter of Merewald and cousin of S. Werburgh.

It is, perhaps, not possible to identify any of the existing figures with these persons, as at present no names can be deciphered ; but of this presently.

The next alteration in the position and appearance of the Shrine (or Throne) was under Dean Anson, when it was moved one bay westward, and was re-erected by Canon Slade, as a memorial to Bishop Law. The wooden canopy was removed ; "the crown" was lifted up and supported on Gothic architectural stone-work, and surmounted by pinnacles of the same character ; the lower compartment, enclosing the Bishop's seat, being filled up with panels of a similar description. Some present will, no doubt, have a vivid recollection of the Throne as thus reconstructed.

When, under Dean Howson, the Choir was moved back to the eastern side of the crossing, the Shrine found a temporary resting place in the south aisle of the Choir, the lower portion being once more rebuilt, whilst the crown was simply placed in pieces upon it. The modern additions were dispersed, and may be seen (or some of them) in the garden of Mrs. Wiseman, Dee Banks. I have been told that a complete reconstruction of the Shrine was at that time contemplated by the Dean,

but that he was dissuaded from undertaking it. It was at this time that some fragments of the old Shrine, as it originally existed, were recovered. I give the account of this discovery, taken from the *Cheshire Observer* of June 21st, 1873 :—

“The vaulting of the North Aisle was begun in 1872, and has been brought to its completion, where it abuts on the restored *Roman (sic)* arch at its western extremity. In taking down the partition wall which used to conceal this arch, a discovery of much interest was made. Some fragments, of great beauty, which had been used in the construction of this wall, were found to be portions of S. Werburgh’s Shrine, and to correspond with other portions employed in the making of the Bishop’s throne. It is remarkable that this discovery took place about the time when the Shrine of S. Alban in S. Alban’s Abbey was brought to view.”

Though no mention is made here of any figures, and the fragments were, therefore, most probably mainly architectural, giving the height of the crown from the pedestal, yet Mr. D. B. Jones (who, as a boy, was present when the discovery was made) has a distinct recollection of one or more figures being then found. These recovered fragments were placed near the Shrine, as it stood in the south Choir Aisle.

I may here interject a very brief account of the Shrine of S. Alban, called by G. G. Scott “the crowning glory” of that great Abbey, and constructed of Purbeck marble. “The Shrine has been re-constructed from more than 2000 pieces of which it was composed, which were found built up in a wall, designed,” says Mr. Scott, “to secure, within the walls of the Abbey Church, and upon the site of five desecrated altars, a convenient covered playground for the grammar scholars of S. Alban’s Town. These pieces were carefully put together in 1872. The Shrine proper, or *feretrum*, which was borne in the

processions, stood on the top of the pedestal, and was covered by a wooden canopy, which could be raised or lowered by means of a rope running through a pulley." [Whether there was a similar arrangement here, or whether the *feretrum* was small enough to be taken through the openings of the arches at the side or ends, we cannot now say]. "The watch gallery on the north side is of carved oak, and in it a monk was posted to keep continual guard over the Shrine."

In the autumn of 1888, under the present Dean, the Shrine was moved to its present position, the site accorded to it originally in Hanshall's History. The recovered parts enabled Sir Arthur Blomfield to determine exactly the height of the crown from the pedestal; but no attempt was made to restore it, so to speak, by putting in fresh carving, plain stone being inserted where it was necessary to do so to preserve the true proportions. You will all be familiar with the beautiful drawing of the Shrine by Mr. Railton, in the Dean's delightful little book, *Chester Cathedral*. Father Dallow has also sent an exact reproduction of it from a photograph, taken from the same point of view, the north-west. This latter shows the recovered pieces, which definitely settled the height of the crown from the pedestal.

A few words may be added as to some of the features of the Shrine. We may notice first the ogee arches in the pedestal, a mark of the Decorated style; though it continued to be used throughout the Perpendicular period. It is very common over niches, tombs, and small doorways (you will find two over the *awmbries* in the Choir here); but the difficulty of constructing it securely precluded its general adoption for large

openings. This fixes the date as 14th Century. The openings formed by these arches probably became receptacles for the votive offerings made by visitors, whether originally intended for this purpose or not. There are similar openings in the Shrine of S. Alban.

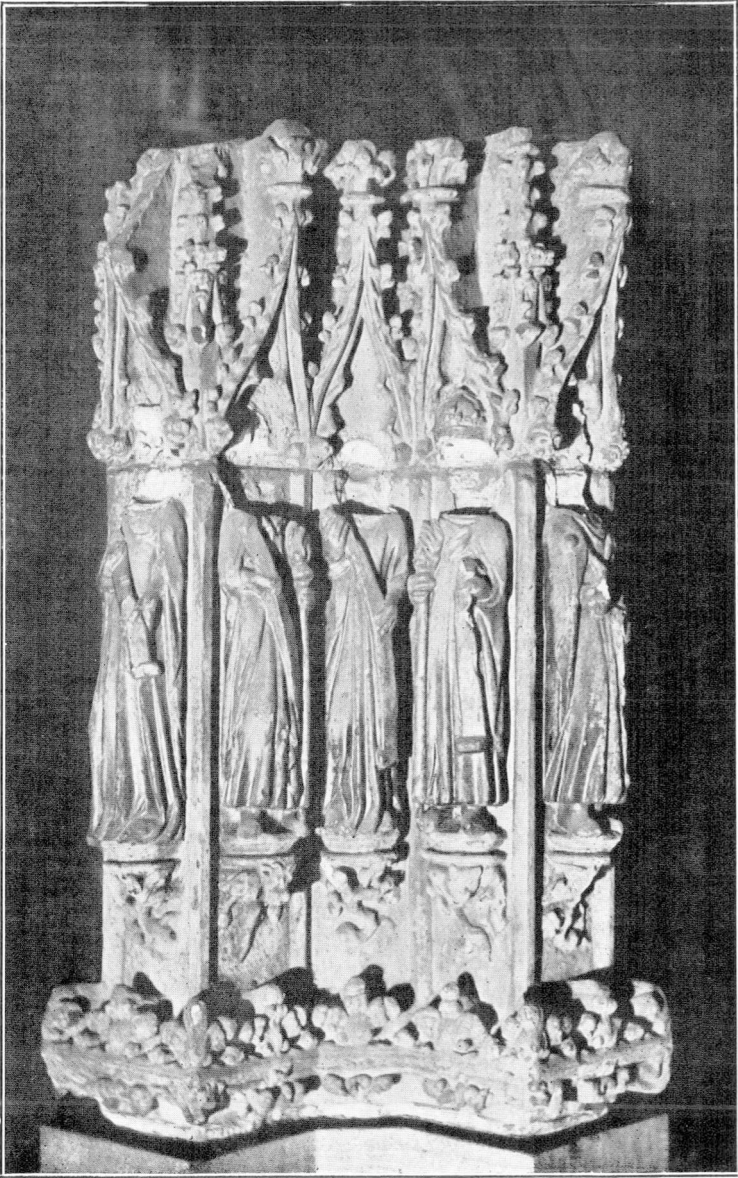
A closer inspection in a favourable light will reveal some interesting and beautiful details. The bosses forming the pedestals for the figures are elaborately carved, and of varied form. Sometimes they represent foliage; sometimes an animal or monster; these occurring alternately in the south-east and north-east corners.

There are thirty-five figures, with three vacant spaces, not counting the two which may be supposed to have existed in the missing portion of the crown on the south side. This would bring the number of figures, originally, up to 40. Two of these vacant spaces are where the panelling would be fixed at the back of the Throne, and the figures were probably removed to make way for this; the other is in the inner-angle at the north-west corner. Dr. Cowper only speaks of thirty figures; whether the other five are modern, or old ones recovered, I cannot say.

Only three figures, all on the north side, have heads, each being bearded, and wearing a crown. Two of these are in the centre between the arches. In one case the crown remains, but the head has gone;¹ and this figure, at the north-east corner, is holding a staff; whilst next but one to it, and further east, is a figure also holding a staff, and with traces of a crown having been attached to the masonry above. I suggest, with some

¹ A closer examination, and the photograph by MR. NEWSTEAD, seems to show that the crown is really a mitre, and may confirm the suggestion that the figure represents Ethelred. The figure is No. 16 on the plan.

Chester Cathedral



North-east Corner of the Crown of the Shrine

R. Newstead, Photo.

diffidence, that these *may* represent Ethelred and Cenred, both Kings of Mercia, who resigned the crown for the cowl, and became monks.

Much of the gilding seems comparatively modern, and, as has been already said, if the lettering was ever cut on the labels, the incisions have been filled in with plaster or other material, as the surfaces of the labels are now quite smooth.

On the top are holes for dowels, where the pinnacles have been secured. The appearance of the crown suggests that there must have been pinnacles, originally, at the corners, and not only when Canon Slade reconstructed the throne.

I have detained you already too long a time; I only hope I have not wearied you, but that I may (with some at any rate) have increased your interest in this beautiful relic of the past, and in the Saint whose name it bears. Much of her life may be shadowy, and obscured by legend and fable, but enough remains to illustrate and hand down to posterity the character of a saintly, strong, unselfish woman, who used in the service of her Master the talents entrusted to her. We, her descendants and successors in the same faith, cannot do better than follow her favourite precept and common saying: "Please God and love Him, and doubt not anything."

