



MITRE OF DAMASK WITH EMBROIDERED ORPHREYS.
Formerly in Beauvais Cathedral. Date, XIIIth Century.

NOTICE OF AN ANCIENT MITRE PRESERVED IN THE MUSEUM
AT BEAUVAIS.

DURING a recent visit to Beauvais, M. Mathon, one of the Conservators of the Public Museum in that city, was kind enough to afford me facilities for making a careful drawing of a mitre which that institution has now possessed for little more than a year. At the same time he communicated to me some interesting particulars respecting its history.

In bringing these particulars under the notice of the Institute, I have added a few observations upon some fragments of ancient textile fabrics, possessing analogies either of design or manufacture with the peculiar features of the Beauvais mitre.

It appears that when purchased for the Museum, at a sale of a collector of ancient reliques at Beauvais, there was a short notice appended to it, of which the following is a translation :—

“ This mitre, of somewhat ancient form, was nailed to the top of one of the presses in the sacristy of the Cathedral of Beauvais. The revolutionary devastations of the year 1792, and the years following, abandoned it as an object of too small value to be noticed. The bands *semées* of fleurs-de-lis, with which this mitre is ornamented, would appear to denote that it was the best of those mentioned by Philippe de Dreux in his will, and which he left to the church. Philippe de Dreux, grandson of Louis le Gros, was elected Bishop of Beauvais in 1175, and died in 1217.”

We find accordingly in the will made by this prelate, on the day after the feast of All Saints, the following directions :—“ Ego Philippus, Dei patientia Belvacensis Episcopus . . . lego Ecclesiæ B. Petri Belvacensis, præter textum aureum quem jam dederam, meliorem crucem auream meam, et calicem unum aureum, et navem argenteam, et missale et ordinarium tecta argento, et meliora sandalia, meliorem mitram, et omnes pannos meos senios (? *sericos*) quæ dependere

solent in Ecclesia, et quindecim cappas sericas, et decem infulas,¹ et octo dalmaticas."

It appears that the former possessor, above mentioned, was under a misapprehension when he imagined the term "*melio rem mitram*" to apply to the subject of the present notice. It is more probable, I think, that the expression would mean the *mitra preciosa*, of which every bishop possessed one or more. This latter was generally formed of plates of gold and silver, and was enriched with pearls and precious stones; and it was by no means an uncommon occurrence for a bishop to leave it at his death to his cathedral. In the inventories of the treasures of St. Paul's, London, and St. Peter's at York, several instances of this munificence of the deceased prelates are recorded, while the less costly mitres are stated to have been given by the gentry and persons of lower degree.

If this mitre ever did belong to Philippe de Dreux, (and from its form and armorial decoration this has been considered by no means improbable,) I think it must have been included in the "*omnes pannos meos sericos*" mentioned in the latter part of the extract from his will.

It is not very clear whether it must be classed with what was denominated the *mitra auriphrygiata*, which was to be "*aliquibus parvis margaritis composita, vel ex serico albo intermixto, vel ex tela aurea simplici*," or with the *mitra simplex*, which was without gold, made of simple damask, or even of linen.

This mitre, it will be perceived, partakes of both varieties, for it is formed of linen damask with embroidered orphreys. The fleurs-de-lys of these orphreys are worked in the common embroidery stitch, upon a ground of violet-coloured silk, strengthened by a double layer of strong canvas underneath; a small silk thread, formerly black, but now brown, is worked round each fleur-de-lys to define the outline. The orphreys and the linen damask were then sewn together, and the whole strengthened by a stiff piece of vellum, which in fact forms the body of the mitre. A lining of red silk concealed this from view, and formed a border by turning over the inner edge.

¹ By reference to Ducange, we find that the word *infula* has several significations:—1. A chasuble—which I think is its meaning in this case; 2. the labels

of a mitre; and 3, a covering for the head, and perhaps, occasionally, the mitre itself.

The *infulæ* or pendant labels have unfortunately disappeared, but if we may judge by the mitre of St. Thomas of Canterbury, preserved in the treasury of Sens Cathedral, and published by Mr. Shaw,² they would be of the same material as the mitre, and accordingly may have been of linen damask, lined with red, and terminated by violet fringes.

The colour of this linen damask has no doubt much altered from its original tone; at present the figures are almost yellow, and the ground brownish purple. In all probability the original colour was not far different from that of the coarser kind of napkins of the present day. M. Michel, in his "*Recherches sur la Fabrication des étoffes de soie, d'or et d'argent*," adduces a curious passage from the collection of "*Poesies latines antérieures au douzième siècle*," edited by M. de Meril, to prove that linen napkins were woven and in use in western Europe anterior to that epoch. Most probably this piece of linen came from Abbeville, which had a considerable reputation for the manufacture during the XIIIth century.

As to the rest of the precious bequests given by the piety of Philippe de Dreux to his church, M. Mathon states the following particulars :—

"I have spoken with old men who remember having seen all the copes, chasubles, crosses and pictures which were in the church and treasury collected into a great heap before the door of the church, and set fire to as a *feu de joie*, in 1793."

The mitre is described in the Museum at Beauvais as having belonged to Philippe de Dreux, and indeed generally attributed to him in that town. In regard, however, to the tradition, which would assign to that prelate this interesting example of a class of sacred objects of which very few, of early date, have been preserved, it must be admitted that certain doubts have arisen. Mr. Franks has kindly pointed out that, from the form of the fleur-de-lys, this mitre must be referred to at least a century later than the time of Philippe de Dreux, and that the armorial decoration may be accounted for by the fact, that kings and distinguished personages often gave, or left by will, their best garments to be made into sacerdotal vestments. I am afraid that Mr. Franks' objection extinguishes the claim of Philippe de Dreux to the ownership of this mitre. With regard to the latter fact a singular contemporary testi-

² *Dresses and Decorations*, vol. i., pl. 13.

mony is contained in the story of Martin Hapart in the "Nouveau recueil, Contes, Dits, et Fabliaux des 13, 14, 15 siècles. Par Achille Jubinal." Paris, 1839. Vol. II., p. 204.

" Il ne a riens de Saint Michiel
Fors les paroïs
Et l'ymage que le bian rois
Fist parer des ses vieux ORFROIS."

Considerable attention has been of late years bestowed by French archaeologists upon the class of fabrics of which such quantities were ruthlessly destroyed. In addition to the light thrown upon the subject by M. Michel, Le Pere Martin, in his "*Mélanges Archéologiques*," has engraved many interesting reliques, in which an oriental character of design is strongly imprinted; and, although it appears probable that the materials of the Beauvais mitre were French, there can be no doubt that the pattern of the fabric which forms its base was founded upon the traditions of Byzantine art, popularised throughout Europe through the Mahometan weavers, and their successors of the royal establishment in Sicily. To illustrate this connection I would notice some details relating to such manufactures.

Amongst interesting reliques of this class found in France may be mentioned the remains of a sacerdotal vesture, with Arabic inscriptions found in a tomb of a bishop of the XIIth century at Bayonne, opened in 1853.³ The original, with the crozier of Limoges enamel, and other objects, is preserved in the Hôtel de Cluny at Paris. There can be little doubt that they belong to that period when Europe generally was supplied with fabrics of gold and silk from the East through Jerusalem and Constantinople.

I may here also notice an example of what M. Michel calls the second period, when first the Sicilians, and afterwards the Italians, began to manufacture silk on their own account, so as to become independent of the East; but still, as might be expected, with a very strong infusion of Oriental taste in the designs.

It would appear that when the Normans conquered Sicily they found attached to the Palace of the Emirs of Palermo a very common state appendage of Eastern Monarchs,

³ Mr. Burges has very kindly presented to the Institute his beautiful drawings of specimens of ancient tissues, as also of

the mitre preserved at Beauvais, described in this Memoir.

namely, a manufactory of precious fabrics destined for the wardrobe of the king himself, or to be used for presents in the form so common in the East at the present day, namely, dresses of honour. The kings of Sicily of Norman race retained this manufactory, and Roger I. even increased it by transplanting to Sicily the workers in silk from the Greek towns sacked by his army. Many of the original artificers would be Mahometans, and we accordingly find Moorish patterns and even Moorish inscriptions in most of the Sicilian fabrics of that time. Thus the coronation garments of the German emperors, formerly preserved at Nuremburg, but now deposited at Vienna, have an entirely Eastern composition; the cope presents Cufic inscriptions, informing us that it was made in the city of Palermo, in the year 1133; while the tunics claim a little later date, 1181, but this date is inscribed in the Latin language.⁴

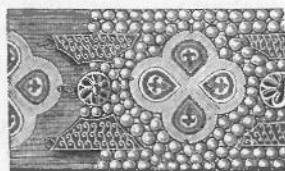
The piece of stuff, to which I have adverted, was discovered in the tomb of the Emperor Arrigo or Henry VI., who died 1196. It would appear originally to have been of that colour called in the inventory "*Diarhodon*" and which, we are told, "strikes the look with the appearance of fire." This at the present day has faded into a reddish *murry* colour. Lighter than this was the *Rhodinum*, or rose colour, and a still more delicate tint of the same colour was the *Leucorhodina*. The inventory of the *Capella Reale*, taken in 1309, presents a vast number of sacerdotal vestments made of silk and gold figured with lions, parrots, peacocks, wheels, antelopes, &c.; so much so, indeed, that we almost appear to be reading again the accounts of Anastatius of the riches of St. Peter's, at Rome, in the IXth century. Among the items the inventory describes "*cappam unam vetustam deauratam super seta rubea, ad aviculos et alias operas*," a description which might almost serve for the

⁴ Representations of these remarkable vestments were published in a work produced at Nuremburg, by M. d'Ebnér, in 1790; one of the tunics is given by Willemin, in his "*Monuments Inédits*," pl. 21. The inscription records that it was "*operatum felici urbe Panormi*," in the reign of William, King of Sicily. Gally Knight, "*Normans in Sicily*," vol. ii., p. 242, states that a learned Italian antiquary, by careful examination of the Saracenic inscriptions on the ceiling of the *Capella Reale*, built by King Roger,

and finished in 1132, ascertained that they are identical with the inscription on the robe of honour, above-mentioned, wrought for King Roger in 1133, and carried away by the Emperor Henry VI. It was subsequently used as the Imperial coronation robe, and was ultimately conveyed to Vienna. The Saracens of Sicily wrought another robe, and presented it to the Emperor Otho, whom they desired to conciliate. It came into the possession of Frederic II. and was found in his tomb.

tissue found in the tomb of Henry VI. I have only to point out the drawing of the animals, which is particularly Eastern, and indeed bears considerable resemblance to that on the hunting-horn of ivory preserved in the *Trésor* at Aix-la-Chapelle, and said to have been given by Haroun Alraschid to the Emperor Charlemagne.⁵

Sicily at this time was celebrated all over the world, not only for its stuffs of gold and silk, but for the application of precious stones to embroidery. A contemporary historian quoted by M. Michel, says,—“*Margaritæ quoque aut integræ cistulis aureis includuntur, aut perforatæ filo tenui connectuntur, et eleganti quadam dispositionis industria picturati jubentur formam operis exhibere.*” One piece of this manufacture has come down to us and is preserved with other things, including the piece of the garment of the Emperor Henry VI., in the Duomo at Palermo. (See woodcut.) It is the border of the dress of Constanza, the consort of Henry, and is composed of plates of gold, alternately decorated with *cloissonnés* enamels and filagree work,



Border of the Robe of the Empress Constanza, size of the original, and one of the enamelled ornaments, enlarged.

sewn on linen, the interstices being filled up with pearls—“*perforatæ filo tenui.*”⁶ Most of the pearls, however, have now disappeared. An enlarged representation is here given of one of the enamelled ornaments; the colours, red, blue, and white, are varied; in two of the segments composing each quatrefoil, the central ornament is red, surrounded by blue and a white margin; in the other pair, blue, surrounded by red, with a blue margin. The Empress, who died in 1198, was interred in a tomb of porphyry in the Duomo.

WILLIAM BURGESS.

⁵ Representations of the remarkable reliques found in the tomb of Henry VI., as also in those of Roger, King of Sicily, who died in 1154, and of the Empress Constanza, may be seen in the “*Regali Sepolcri del Duomo di Palermo*,” pub-

lished at Naples, 1784, fol.

⁶ See full-sized representations of this rich decoration, as also of the jewelled diadem and other very interesting reliques found in the tomb of the Empress, “*Regali Sepolcri*,” Tav. M. and N.