

SOME FURTHER EXAMPLES OF ENGLISH MEDIEVAL ALABASTER TABLES.

By PHILIP NELSON, M.D. F.S.A.

Some two years ago I read a paper to the Institute on English Medieval Alabasters, since which occasion I have had several hitherto unrecorded specimens brought to my notice, and I therefore take this opportunity of placing them on record. The alabaster tables, which are all of the fifteenth century, include several examples which either from the subjects represented or from their method of treatment are previously unknown, the Jesse tree, Christ before Herod, the Ascension, and the St. John's heads being perhaps the most remarkable.

These tables are as follows :

The two fragments of a *Jesse tree* and an *Annunciation*, which, from their style of treatment, would appear to date from the fifteenth century, were discovered some years ago, built into a wall beneath a window in a church in the neighbourhood of Hadleigh, Suffolk.

The Jesse fragment (plate 1), which measures $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width by $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches in height, shows us a headless figure of Jesse, clad in a voluminous cloak lined with scarlet and edged with gold, wearing on the feet scarlet shoes. Jesse, who is seated with his feet to the right, has his knees much drawn up, whilst his body is turned towards the spectator : he apparently rested his head upon his right hand, the *Radix Jesse* proceeding from his chest. Behind Jesse is a prophet, standing within a loop of the vine, clad in a long robe which reveals his feet, and in a long full cloak edged with gold and lined with scarlet, who bears in his right hand a short staff and in his left a closed book having a prominent clasp. This fragment is in the collection of the writer.

No subject in the middle ages was accorded a greater measure of popular regard than the Jesse tree, which gave

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PLATE I.



FRAGMENT OF A JESSE TREE.

in pictorial form the ancestry of our Lord as recorded both by St. Matthew and St. Luke.

From Jesse's root behold a branch arise,
Whose sacred flower with fragrance fills the skies :
The Ethereal spirit o'er its leaves shall move,
And on its top descends the mystic Dove.

—Pope's "Messiah."

Representations of this subject occur from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries in painted glass, whilst examples of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries exist in wood and alabaster,¹ the general plan of the latter being as follows :

At the base of the panel rested the seated or recumbent form of Jesse, from whose side proceeded the vine, which contained within oval spaces, formed by its flowing branches, various kingly figures, the maternal ancestors of our Lord, each of whom was accompanied by prophets who had foretold his coming. The line of ancestors, which invariably included David, playing upon the harp, terminated with the crowned figure of the Holy Mother supporting the Divine Child on her right arm, whilst in her left hand she held a sceptre, and among those who had foretold the coming of Christ, Moses and St. John the Baptist may be the most readily recognised.

The vine and its branches in the above panel are enhanced with gold, whilst the ground is of olive green, strewn with daisies having red centres and five white petals. Judging from the fragment which remains, one would conclude that there had formerly been another prophet at the feet of Jesse, whilst the size of the complete panel might be judged to have been about 12 inches by 26. This Jesse panel would of course have formed the large centre piece of an Easter or Virgin retable, which would include in addition panels of the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Magi, the Assumption and the Coronation of the Virgin.

The fragment of the *Annunciation* (plate 11), which is illustrated herewith, and was found at the same time as the preceding panel, I am enabled to describe by the

¹ Examples of Jesse trees in alabaster of the fifteenth century occur in France at Vernon and in the de Reisset collection, whilst a fragment of the reclining figure of Jesse is preserved in the York museum.

kindness of Mr. J. S. Corder. This panel, which measures $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width, has a green background adorned with daisies having red centres and six white petals. Upon the right is a square pillar rising from a plinth, covered with a cloth, on which rests an open book, behind which is the kneeling figure of the Blessed Virgin, habited in a long robe girt about the waist, over which is a long flowing cloak. The Blessed Virgin turns, with hands raised in adoration, to regard the winged archangel, who, habited in an alb, holds a scroll, doubtless originally inscribed with the Divine message. Between the two figures is the water-pot, which our Lady was carrying at the moment of the arrival of St. Gabriel, from which proceeds her emblem the lily.¹

In the spring of 1776, during the execution of repairs within the church of St. Andrew, at Freckenham, Suffolk, there was discovered, face inwards, near the north door, an alabaster panel representing *St. Eloi*, which, if the illustration in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1777, is a faithful representation, must have suffered considerable mutilation since that date. The panel (plate III), which measures $15\frac{5}{8}$ inches by $11\frac{3}{4}$, may be thus described :

Upon the left hand stands St. Eloi, mitred, wearing an alb and a cope lined with scarlet, behind a brown anvil, upon which rests the fore-leg of a horse, which the saint holds with his left hand, whilst he applies the shoe by means of a hammer held in his right. In the centre is the forge, upon the hood of which hang two pincers and a hammer, whilst another hammer rests at the foot of the anvil. On the right-hand side of the panel is a heavy open frame,² coloured brown, having a slanting roof, within which, upon three legs, stands a horse, its near fore-leg having been amputated at the shoulder, leaving a raw

¹ The *Protevangelion*, chap. ix :

7. And she took a pot, and went out to draw water, and heard a voice saying unto her, Hail thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee ; thou art blessed among women.

8. And she looked round to the right and to the left [to see] whence that voice came, and then trembling went into her house, and laying down the water pot she took the purple, and sat down in her seat to work it.

9. And behold the angel of the Lord stood by her, and said, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour in the sight of God.

² This framework or travis is still in use in France for the purpose of shoeing oxen, and was also employed in this country, within living memory, for shoeing refractory horses.

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PLATE. II.



THE ANNUNCIATION.



ST. ELOI.
(Freckenham, Suffolk.)

[G. C. Druce, phot.]

bleeding surface. Beyond the horse stands an attendant, who wears a round cap and long pointed shoes. Upon the background of the panel are painted eight horse-shoes.

St. Eloi, or Eligius, was bishop of Noyon, circ. 650, and, like St. Dunstan, attained to considerable eminence as a worker in metals, and in consequence of the occurrence of the following incident became the patron saint of farriers and of horsemen.

The legend of the saint, whose feast day was December 1, is as follows. Upon a certain occasion a horse possessed of a devil was brought to St. Eloi in order that it might be shod. The steed, however, refused to submit to the operation, but plunged and reared with such violence that the onlookers fled in alarm. The saint, however, undismayed by the misbehaviour of the horse, cut off its leg and, placing it upon the anvil, proceeded to affix the shoe at his leisure, after which, making the sign of the cross, he re-joined the limb, to the great surprise and satisfaction of the beholders.

The saint appears to have enjoyed a considerable vogue in the middle ages, in evidence of which it may be remarked that Chaucer twice mentions him in the *Canterbury Tales*. Thus speaking of the Prioress :

‘ That of hir smyling was full simple and coy ;
Hir gretteste ooth was but by seynt Loy,’

whilst in the *Friar’s Tale*,

‘ That was wel twight myn owene lyard boy !
I pray God save thee and seynt Loy !

Several representations of the saint occur in England, among which the following are the more important. At Durweston and Wincanton are bas-reliefs. Mural paintings occurred at Shorthampton and at St. Michael’s church, Highworth, Wilts. : the latter, now destroyed, was on the north side of the eastern pier between the north transept and the nave. Other representations are to be seen at Ugborough, Westminster abbey, Potter Heigham, Totnes, and Wolborough, the last being painted upon the screen ; while the same subject forms the poppy-head of an oak bench-end of the fifteenth century, in the possession of the writer.

My thanks are due to Mr. G. C. Druce, F.S.A., for the photograph which illustrates the above panel.

The group representing *The Blessed Trinity* (plate iv), preserved in the central niche of the east window of the chantry of St. Catherine, in Kinlet church, Salop, measures 26 inches in height by $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width.

The Almighty, who is crowned, is depicted bestowing the benediction with his right hand, whilst he supports between his knees the crucified figure of our Lord. The Dove, formerly on the top of the cross, is now missing. At the foot of the cross are two winged angels, who kneel in adoration, very similar in treatment to those in the group in the collection of the writer, illustrated *Arch. Journal*, vol. lxxi, p. 164.

No trace of the original colouring now remains on this group, which, after being placed against a tomb, early in the last century, has now been replaced in what was probably its original location. For the photograph which is illustrated herewith I am indebted to Mr. F. T. S. Houghton.

St. John the Baptist Heads (plate v). 1. In the centre is the head of St. John the Baptist, the hair being parted along the middle line, which, as is the case with the beard and moustache, falls vertically, and like them is gilt. The head, upon which the wound over the left eye is indicated in colour, rests upon a charger adorned with black sprays, whilst upon the rim is a line of scarlet. Above is an angel whose face looks out from over the discus, whose hair, centrally parted, is coloured with yellow and whose wings are red with black spots. Beneath the charger is a white couchant lamb with black feet, above the back of which is a gilt cross formée, carved in relief, and behind is a closed red book having a darker red clasp. The background of the panel in the lower part is of green, strewn with large flowers having white petals and red centres, whilst in the upper part it is enriched with black sprays. The panel measures $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 5.

2. This panel, which measures $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches by $7\frac{1}{2}$, has a dark green background, adorned with flowers, having white petals and red centres. In the centre on a charger is the head of St. John the Baptist, the hair, which is golden and treated in a forked manner, is bilaterally



[F. T. S. Houghton, phot.]

THE BLESSED TRINITY.
(Kinlet, Salop).



1



2

HEADS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

PLATE V.



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symmetrical, the moustache grows only from the outer end of the lip, and the beard is short. Beneath the head is our Lord's Pity, displaying his nude form, wearing the torse; his left hand rests upon the moulded edge of the tomb whilst with his right hand he indicates the wound in his side. On either side of the panel are kneeling figures habited in albs and copes: that on the left is St. Peter, who holds in his right hand a large key and in his left a closed book; that upon the right is St. William of York, mitred, who bears in his left hand his archiepiscopal cross-staff and in his right hand a closed book. Above St. Peter is St. James Major, wearing a pilgrim's hat, an alb and a cope, who holds in his right hand a bourdon, and in his left hand a closed book. On the opposite side is St. Anthony, who supports a closed book with his right hand and a crutched-staff from which depends a golden bell, with his left. At the top is a small figure, a soul, uplifted within a napkin, which is supported by two winged angels who wear albs.

3. This panel, which measures 12 inches by 8, has in the centre the head of St. John the Baptist on a charger, the hair being cut straight across the forehead, falling in simple strands on either side: the moustache and beard are short and like the hair are adorned with gold. Beneath the charger is our Lord's Pity, his naked figure wearing the torse: his hands, which touch in the middle line, are placed in front of the moulded tomb. Upon each side of the panel are standing figures wearing albs and copes: that upon the left is St. Peter, holding in his right hand a key, and in his left hand a closed book; that upon the right is St. William of York, who supports with his left hand his archiepiscopal cross-staff and with his right hand a closed book. Above St. Peter is St. James Major, wearing a hat, cope and alb, holding in his left hand a closed book and in his right hand his bourdon, whilst upon the other side is St. Anthony, bearing in his left hand a staff and in his right hand a closed book. Above the discus are two winged angels wearing albs and amices, who hold up a rayed vesica, within which is a small kneeling figure, the soul, which faces the spectator and has its hands raised in adoration.

These three St. John panels, which are believed to

have been found in Wells, are in the collection of the writer.

The Ascension (plate vi). This panel, measuring 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 14 $\frac{1}{2}$, which was discovered in Chester, I am enabled to publish by the kindness of its owner, Mr. E. Kirby. In the foreground are six kneeling figures, with the Blessed Virgin and St. Peter in the centre, behind the latter being St. John the Divine. Above, on either side of the ascending figure of our Lord, who disappears into the clouds, are three apostles, separating whom is a rocky mound. The background was originally adorned with gold enhanced with gesso pellets, whilst the ground was of dark green, strewn with daisies. The crown and hair of the Blessed Virgin were of gold, as was also the case with the hair and beards of the various apostles, and likewise the borders of their garments. All the figures save one wear long cloaks and robes, but strange to say none of them bear emblems, as we find in such examples as those in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and in one in the writer's collection.

The next panel, which measures 24 inches by 13 $\frac{5}{8}$, represents the *Trial of St. Peter* before Agrippa (plate vii, 1). St. Peter, above and in front of whom is a long scroll proceeding from his right hand, is dressed in a flowing robe over which is a long cloak: both his hands are uplifted, and on his right shoulder rests a large key. In front of the saint, seated in a chair of state, is his judge Agrippa, who wears a long robe having a tippet, and upon his head a round skull-cap, from whose left hand passing downwards is a long scroll. In the background above the judge is the crowned bearded figure of the emperor, Nero, who is listening with asses' ears¹ to a bearded legal personage, who impresses his points with the index finger of his right hand placed upon the left. Above and behind the saint are three soldiers in full plate armour, mail and salades, who carry halberds, two of whom, from their devotional attitudes, may be the centurions, Processus and Martinianus, converts of the Mamertine prison.

¹ The bestowal of asses' ears on Nero by medieval artists is difficult of explanation. It is probably due to confusion with king Midas. There is, in the hall of the manor-house at Great Chalfield, Wilts,

a hollow mask with open mouth and eyes, forming a window-opening from a gallery, which represents a king with asses' ears and wearing a crown.



THE ASCENSION.



I. TRIAL OF ST. PETER,



Another, the companion panel to the above, measures $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $13\frac{1}{2}$, and depicts *the Decollation of St. Paul* (plate vii, 2). In the right lower corner is St. Paul, clothed in a long robe and cloak, kneeling with hands outstretched, beneath whom lies his severed upturned head, from the lips of which issues a small scroll. Above him is his executioner, who has upon his head a round cap turned up at the edge, girt round the waist with a belt from which depends a gypciere, and clad in a short full garment, holding in his right hand a long straight sword. In front of the executioner is a small kneeling female figure, St. Plautilla, who holds in her hands the veil she had provided for binding the eyes of the saint, whilst behind the headsman stand two guards bearing halberds. In the upper right-hand corner is the crowned bearded figure of the emperor Nero, clad in a long robe and tippet, who holds in his left hand a roll of parchment, whilst he attends with asses' ears to the words of a lawyer, identical with the one in the previous panel. These two tables, formerly Lord Stafford's, and which are now preserved in the British Museum, are of unusually large size and would appear to have formed part of a retable from an altar dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul.

From such a reredos comes the panel in the possession of Lt.-Col. G. B. Croft-Lyons, F.S.A., which measures 24 inches by 13, depicting *the Martyrdom of St. Peter* (plate viii).

Here we find the saint crucified head downwards, being bound by ropes to the inverted cross by four executioners. The emperor Nero and the accuser are again prominent personages.

This panel, which, like the others of this series, is exceptionally large, was discovered some years ago on a rockery in the vicarage garden at Brampton, Suffolk, which accounts for its present weathered condition.

I have to express my indebtedness to Col. Croft-Lyons for permission to reproduce this panel.

There is preserved in the Museum at Saffron Walden a remarkable panel which, by kind permission, I am enabled to reproduce (plate ix). This piece as it exists to-day measures $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $15\frac{1}{2}$, the height of the central figure being 11 inches. When I first saw the

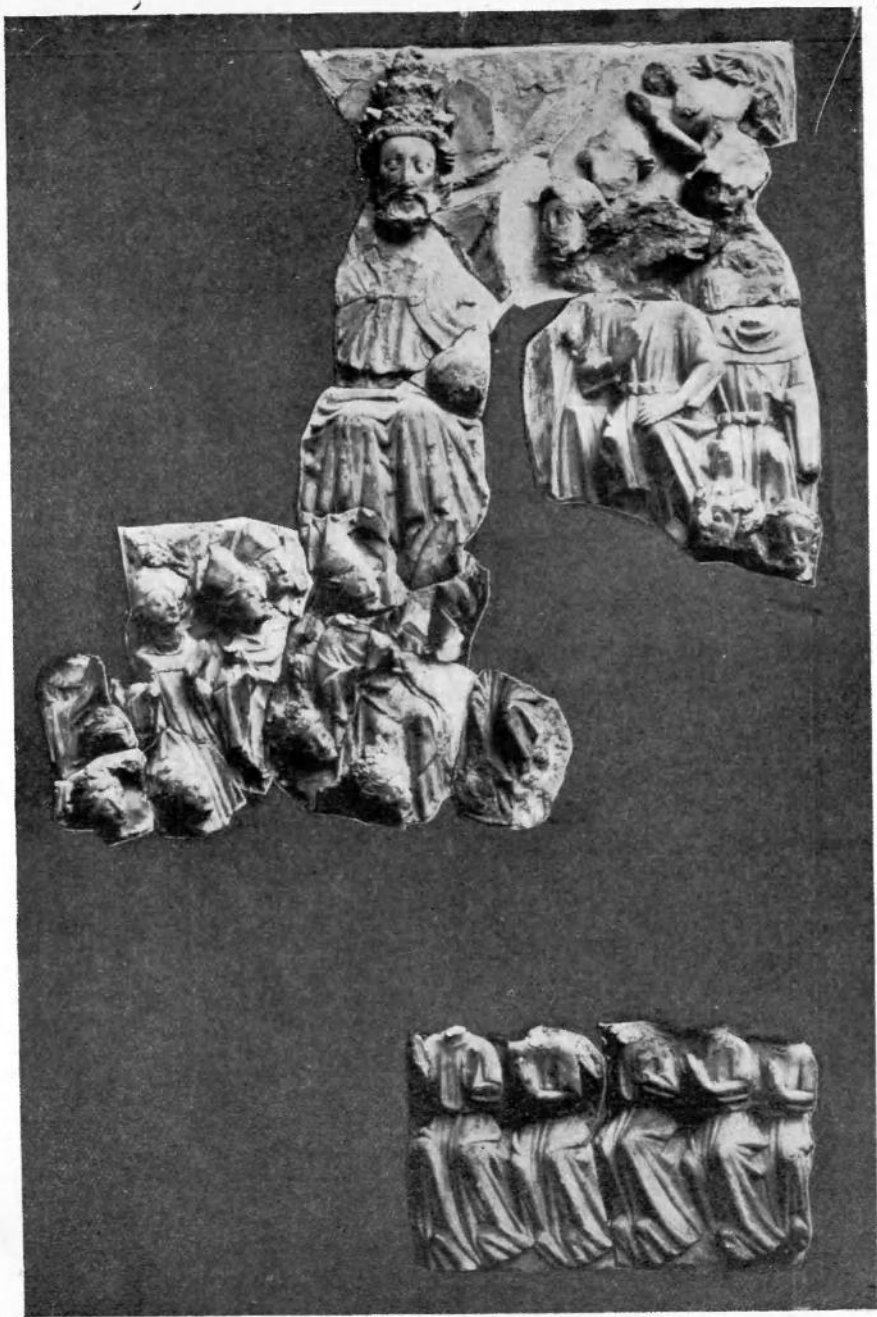
picture of this group, it at once occurred to me that the various figures were faultily arranged, and this turned out to be the case, for on writing to the curator, Mr. Guy Maynard, who has most kindly afforded me every assistance in regard to this panel, I discovered that at some past time the grouping was very different, and this is proved to have been the case from the existence of a photograph showing the previous arrangement. The illustration (plate ix) has been made from a photograph which I have rearranged upon the original lines, which shows us our Lord in Majesty wearing a triple crown and holding an orb, surrounded by various figures in attitudes of adoration. At the upper corners there were originally censing angels emerging from clouds, and upon our Lord's left are large seated figures of Apostles, whilst upon a lower plane on the opposite side are six figures of ecclesiastics and the heads of five kings, the latter wearing crowns elaborately carved, opposite to whom are the remains of another figure vis-à-vis. Below and to the right of the panel are five small seated headless figures. The various figures still retain considerable traces of their original colouring, red and gold, which is best preserved in the deeper parts of the carving and on the edges of the robes. The original size of this panel would be about 24 inches in height by $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width.

It would appear probable that we have in the Saffron Walden Majesty the centre piece of such a *Te Deum* retable as is referred to by Prof. Prior in his work on *English Mediaeval Figure Sculpture*, as being the work of the Norwich school. Side panels from such a retable formed the subject of a paper by the late Dr. W. T. Bensly to the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, the illustrations from which I am, by kind permission of Mr. Leonard G. Bolingbroke, able to reproduce herewith, in addition to another of the same series, no. 34 from the exhibition of alabasters at the Society of Antiquities, 1910, for which I am indebted to the permission of that Society.

It will be observed that the various panels of this series are of varying sizes and are therefore not derived from a single retable, though doubtless they are derived from a common original. In these it will be noted that the various figures in each group face in one direction, that is either to the right hand or to the left, and their gaze would



MARTYRDOM OF ST. PETER.



THE MAJESTY.
(Museum, Saffron Walden.)

of course be directed towards the central panel, which would be either that of *Christ in Majesty*, a very frequent subject in art in the middle ages, or the *Blessed Trinity*, as in the example at Genoa.

I. There is preserved in the Palace at Norwich a panel carved with the nine choirs of angels, which measures $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $9\frac{3}{4}$, and is as follows (plate x, 1) :

All the figures face to the left and have their hair gilt and their wings painted red, enhanced with spots, whilst the background is adorned with gold and the green foreground with flowers having five white petals and red centres. The figures are arranged in three tiers, there being two in the upper, four in the middle, and three in the lower one. They are placed as follows :

1. A seraph, depicted as wearing a diadem, an alb and an amice, supporting in the right hand a lighted cresset.

2. A cherub, represented as diademed and wearing an alb and amice, bearing in the left hand a closed book upon the cover of which is an incised cross.

3. A throne, shown as crowned and habited in an alb and amice, holding in both hands a throne.

4. A principality, depicted in plate armour and knightly belt, having upon the head a bascinet : in the left hand is grasped a long red spear, the right hand being placed upon the chest.

5. An archangel, represented as a feathered figure, diademed and wearing an amice, having in front of the body a heater-shaped shield upon the right arm, whilst in the left hand is a sword held over the shoulder.

6. An angel, shown as wearing an alb and amice, having upon the head a chaplet of flowers ; the right hand is laid upon the chest, whilst in the left hand is held a sprig bearing four roses.

7. A virtue, portrayed as wearing a diadem, amice and alb girt about the middle, bearing in the right hand a casket, upon which is depicted a red chalice ; the open left hand is raised.

8. A power, represented as crowned and wearing an alb beneath a long flowing cloak, having a tippet, whilst round the neck is an amice. The right hand is open, whilst the left hand grasps a short staff.

9. A dominion, depicted as crowned and wearing an

alb, beneath a cloak lined with red, which is held in position by a transverse cord. In the right hand is held a sceptre, whilst the left hand is raised, the index finger being extended. This represents 'To thee all angels cry aloud.'

II. In the possession of the Rev. W. T. Moore, M.A. is a portion of a panel which measures 13 inches by 11 and represents 'the glorious company of the Apostles' (plate x, 2).

Here are standing figures of Sts. Peter, Paul, Andrew and John the Divine, the last headless, facing to the left; they bear their respective emblems, viz. a key, a sword, a saltire cross and a palm branch. In the upper left-hand corner are remains of other figures now unfortunately lost.

III. In the vestry of St. Stephen's Church, Norwich, is preserved the following panel, which measures 16 inches by $10\frac{3}{4}$ inches (plate xi, 1). This panel, the background of which is gilt, represents nine bearded figures facing to the right, arranged in two rows, there being four in the lower row and five in the upper. All with the exception of St. John the Baptist wear long full robes and head-dresses. In the upper row Isaiah may be recognised by the golden saw,¹ and Moses from his having horns² and his carrying in his right hand a staff and in his left the tables of stone. In the lower row are St. John the Baptist bearing on his left hand the Agnus Dei lying on a book, clad in a camel's skin, his legs being bare, behind whom is a figure, perhaps Jeremiah, holding in its right hand a roll, clad in a robe adorned with elaborate dark red quatrefoils, upon whose head is a head-dress painted red. The next figure, perhaps Gideon,³ is stroking his beard with his left hand, whilst his right hand is placed on the hilt of his faulchion. These figures of prophets are evidently those who had foretold the coming of our Lord. This portrays 'the goodly fellowship of the Prophets.'

¹ P. Comestor, *Hist. Scolast.* (Patrol. cxcviii, col. 1414).

² Moses in medieval art was represented as horned owing to the faulty translation in the Vulgate: 'The skin of his face (i.e. of Moses) shone' (Ex. xxxiv. 29). Lit. 'The skin of his face emitted rays of light.' The Hebrew word used is קרן Qaran = 'to emit rays of light.' קרן = Qaran is also (in a meaning not certain, but probably 'to shoot upward, or be prominent')

the root of the noun קרן — Qeren which means 'Horn.' The Vulgate incorrectly translated קרן Qaran in above context 'cornuta,' i.e. 'was horned' or 'provided with horns' (instead of 'shone' or 'emitted rays of light'). Hence the representation of Moses with horns!

For this explanation I am indebted to the Rev. S. F. Frampton, B.A.

³ Isidore, *Allegor.* (Patrol. lxxxiii, col. 116).



I. THE NINE ORDERS OF ANGELS.
(Palace, Norwich.)



2. THE APOSTLES.



THE PROPHETS.
(St. Stephen's, Norwich.)



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THE VIRGINS AND MARTYRS.
(St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich.)

IV. There is in the vestry of St. Peter's Mancroft, Norwich,¹ a panel measuring $16\frac{1}{8}$ inches by 11 (plate xi, 2), which depicts nine female saints facing to the left, arranged in two rows, there being four figures in the lower and five in the upper, which are as follows. In the upper row are :

(a) St. Barbara, wearing a dark bandeau, holding in her right hand a tower adorned with red and gold.

(b) A saint, possibly St. Withburga, whose hair is confined with a red band, her right hand raised.

(c) St. Etheldreda, wearing a veil over which is a crown, bearing in her right hand a crosier and in her left a book.

(d) A saint, perchance St. Sexburga, her hair adorned with a fillet.

(e) A saint, perhaps St. Eormenilda ; her hair escapes from under a band, her left hand raised.

Lower row :

(e) St. Catherine crowned, holding in her left hand a sword, the point of which rests upon the ground.

(f) St. Ursula crowned, holding in her right hand an arrow reversed, painted red and black, whilst in her left hand is a red book.

(g) St. Margaret crowned, transfixing with a cross-staff through its mouth a black dragon.

(h) St. Helena crowned, holding in front of her the true cross, upon which is hung the crown of thorns.

All the figures wear long flowing robes over which are full cloaks. The background is of gold enriched with dots and flowing branches, whilst the ground is green, strewn with daisies having white petals and red centres.

This depicts 'the noble army of Martyrs.'

V. The last panel of the Te Deum retable (fig. 1) is that which formed exhibit no. 34 in the exhibition of English alabasters at the Society of Antiquaries, 1910, and is as follows. Facing to the right are two tiers of standing ecclesiastics. In the lower row from right to left are a pope, a cardinal, a king, St. Edward the Confessor holding in his right hand the pilgrim's ring, an archbishop, whilst

¹ In reference to this panel the following extract from a Norfolk will is of interest :—'Four marks to purchase a

table of alabaster of nine female saints for St. Peter's church, Norwich" (*Archæologia*, xii, 94.)

above are a bishop, a priest, a deacon and subdeacon, and since the panel is broken at the left top corner it is very probable that the head of an acolyte may also have been present, which, like other panels of this series, would then contain nine figures. This, which measures $10\frac{3}{4}$ inches

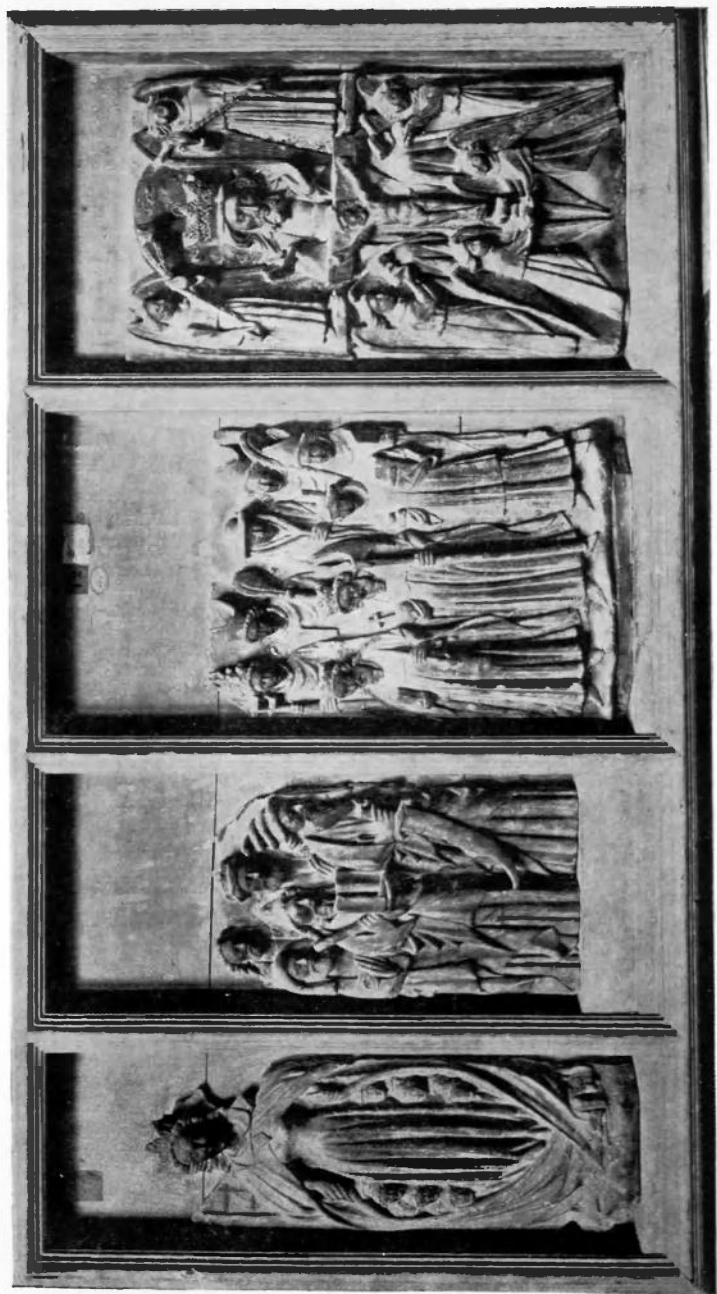


FIG. I. THE HOLY CHURCH.
(By permission of Soc. Antiq. London.)

in width, represents 'the holy Church throughout all the world.'

In further illustration of the *Te Deum* reredos I am able to illustrate, by kind permission of the Director, the remains of a triptych now preserved in the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa, which is as follows (plate XII).

The central taller panel shows us the Blessed Trinity



TE DEUM TRIPYTYCH (GENOA).

of the usual type, with six attendant angels, two of whom are censuring, whilst the remainder hold chalices.

The panel of the goodly fellowship of the Prophets now contains five figures, of whom Gideon, Moses and Esdras may be recognised.

'The holy Church' was evidently on the right-hand side of the triptych, since the figures face to the left. It shows only eight figures, viz. a pope, a bishop, cardinal, an abbot, St. Edmund holding an arrow and book, St. Oswald (?) holding an axe and an orb, and St. Stephen holding a book and some stones.

The last panel, half the width of the others, depicts 'our Lady of Mercy' crowned, hiding within her ample cloak ten little souls. Its vis-à-vis would be St. John Baptist. This triptych would originally consist of a tall central panel of the Trinity flanked on either side by two panels and a single narrow image panel, all of which would be beneath detached alabaster canopies, whilst across the entire wooden frame, which would close up, would stretch an open-work cresting such as occurs in the retable at La Celle, whilst beneath would be painted explanatory inscriptions.

Another example of 'the holy Church' is a fragment in the possession of Dr. W. L. Hildburgh, F.S.A., which contains three headless figures facing to the right, viz. St. Edward the Confessor, holding a ring and sceptre between a cardinal and an archbishop very similar to fig. 1. This panel is of much interest in that it bears a 'sculptor's mark' chiselled on the back, viz. a circle, $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches in diameter, containing a band of nine vertical lines above which are two rows of dots, six and seven, and below two other rows of nine and seven dots.¹

Christ before Herod (plate XIII, 1). This panel shows us our Lord standing bound before Herod; the former, whose face is white and lips scarlet, is clothed in a long flowing *gorgeous* robe, here represented as of gold, as are also his hair and beard. Herod, who holds a sceptre in his right hand, is seated upon a throne, beneath architectural details supported upon pillars² and has upon his head a

¹ E. MacLagan, *Burlington Magazine*, no. ccciii, p. 64, fig. 1.

² This no doubt is meant to represent

the old Maccabean palace, where Herod Antipas was in residence and where the trial of Christ took place.

golden crown, about which is woven a white turban. The king wears a long white robe with a tippet, both edged with gold and lined with green, beneath which are to be seen his legs clad in red hose, whilst upon his feet are black shoes, which rest upon a white cushion adorned with golden tassels. The face of Herod is dark brown and deeply lined, the bridge of his nose is depressed, his eyes and lips are red, whilst his hair and curly beard are black. Behind the king is a scribe, who wears a white robe with an edging of gold, girt round the waist with a golden belt, over which is a long white coat, lined with scarlet and edged with gold, his hat and shoes being black. The face of this figure is dark brown, the hair and beard black, the lips and eyes being relieved with scarlet. He appears as standing and vehemently accusing our Lord, the index finger of his right hand being extended in his direction, whilst in front of his face is a scroll, from which, however, the inscription has disappeared. The attendant, who apparently holds the end of the rope with which the captive is bound, has his back to the spectator, turning to regard Judas, who, with downcast mien and averted gaze, appears to be about to hasten from the trial. The attendant wears a full white coat, lined with green, girt about the waist with an elaborately worked belt; his legs appear to have been encased in scarlet hose, and upon his feet are black shoes. Judas, who is standing in the upper right-hand corner, has his face, hair and beard black, and wears a small round black hat turned up with red.

The introduction of Judas into this scene would appear to be quite in order, as will appear from Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus*, vol. ii, p. 573: 'It is in the interval during which Jesus was before Herod, or probably soon afterwards, that we place the last weird scene in the life of Judas, recorded by St. Matthew.'

This panel, which measures $15\frac{5}{8}$ inches by $13\frac{1}{2}$, has a dark green background, upon which are painted sprays of foliage in white. The subject, *Christ before Herod*, is, so far as I can discover, unique in alabaster-work of English workmanship, whilst the treatment of the subject follows very closely the account of the incident as given in the Gospel of St. Luke and in that gospel only.

The Adoration of the Magi (plate XIII, 2). This panel,



I. TRIAL OF CHRIST BEFORE HEROD.

To face page 120.



PLATE XIII.

2. THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.
(By permission of Soc. Antiq. London.)

golden crown, about which is woven a white turban. The king wears a long white robe with a tippet, both edged with gold and lined with green, beneath which are to be seen his legs clad in red hose, whilst upon his feet are black shoes, which rest upon a white cushion adorned with golden tassels. The face of Herod is dark brown and deeply lined, the bridge of his nose is depressed, his eyes and lips are red, whilst his hair and curly beard are black. Behind the king is a scribe, who wears a white robe with an edging of gold, girt round the waist with a golden belt, over which is a long white coat, lined with scarlet and edged with gold, his hat and shoes being black. The face of this figure is dark brown, the hair and beard black, the lips and eyes being relieved with scarlet. He appears as standing and vehemently accusing our Lord, the index finger of his right hand being extended in his direction, whilst in front of his face is a scroll, from which, however, the inscription has disappeared. The attendant, who apparently holds the end of the rope with which the captive is bound, has his back to the spectator, turning to regard Judas, who, with downcast mien and averted gaze, appears to be about to hasten from the trial. The attendant wears a full white coat, lined with green, girt about the waist with an elaborately worked belt; his legs appear to have been encased in scarlet hose, and upon his feet are black shoes. Judas, who is standing in the upper right-hand corner, has his face, hair and beard black, and wears a small round black hat turned up with red.

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The Adoration of the Magi (plate XIII, 2). This panel,

which measures 17 inches by 10, is remarkable not only for its singular state of preservation, but also for the occurrence of several unusual features in its execution.

In the centre, sitting up on a bed, beneath an embattled and turreted celure, from which depend curtains lined with ermine, is the Blessed Virgin, holding in her hands the Infant Jesus, draped about the middle, who stands upon her knees.¹

At the foot of the bed is the bearded figure of Balthazar, kneeling on one knee, dressed in a short robe, girt about the waist, over which is a long cloak having an ermine collar. He holds in his left hand his crown, whilst with his right he presents a chalice of gold, on which the Infant lays his left hand. Behind the bed are Caspar and Melchior, both nimbed and wearing crowns, who point with their right hands to the star over the Child; Caspar, who is represented as young and beardless, holds a standing vase, whilst Melchior, who is bearded, holds an oblong covered box, in place of the usual navette. In front of the bed are the ox and the ass, feeding from a moulded trough, whilst in the left lower corner is St. Joseph, seated in a chair, holding in his left hand his staff, whilst his head sunk in slumber rests upon his right hand. Much of the original polychrome decoration is still preserved, the green foreground being adorned with daisies, coloured red and white.

¹ In Adoration panels of English workmanship there appear to be three methods of representing the Saviour, viz. completely clothed, partially clothed and quite nude. The first and last varieties were illustrated *Arch. Journal*, vol. lxxi, pp. 161, 162. The last type would appear to be derived from the incident recorded in the First Gospel

of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, chapter iii, 1-10, of which v. 2 reads thus, 'Then the Lady Mary took one of his swaddling clothes in which the infant was wrapped, and gave it to them instead of a blessing, which they received from her as a most noble present.'