



1

ST JOHN'S HEAD.



2

ST. JOHN'S HEAD.

By courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum, N.Y.



3

PIETA.

By courtesy Society of Antiquaries.

SOME UNPUBLISHED ENGLISH MEDIAEVAL ALABASTER CARVINGS.

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

The various panels described beneath have come under my notice since I had the privilege of reading a paper before the Institute in 1920 and, in view of the unusual character of the carvings, are, I think, worthy of being placed on record.

In the collection of the writer is an unusual panel, which was formerly in a St. Katherine reredos and represents the burning of the Alexandrine philosophers, and this piece which is surmounted by an attached gabled canopy, is evidently from the same set as the decollation of St. Katherine, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.¹ The panel is as follows. In the foreground are the heads of seven philosophers wearing caps, surrounded by flames, which are being fanned by bellows worked by a figure kneeling in the right lower corner, whilst above, another executioner thrusts down one of the martyrs with a two-pronged fork. On either side stand crowned figures of St. Katherine and the emperor Maxentius, from whose head emerges a dragon and in whose left hand is a sword. At the top are a group of seven little souls being borne away in a napkin by two winged angels emerging from clouds. The date of this panel is *c.* 1430, and it may be of the school of York (plate III, 3).

By the courtesy of M. Paul Comby I am enabled to publish a *Te Deum* panel in his possession, representing *The noble army of Martyrs*. This interesting carving corresponds very closely with the panel preserved in the vestry of St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich,² though that omits the figure of the blessed Virgin.

The specimen under consideration depicts ten female figures, wearing full cloaks and long robes, arranged in

¹ *Arch. Journ.* lxvii, 90, pl. II.

² *Arch. Journ.* lxxiv, 117, pl. lxi, 2.

three tiers, mostly facing to the left, arranged in the following order:—

(a) The Blessed Virgin wearing a triple crown or tiara, holding in her left hand a sceptre.

(b) St. Katherine crowned, holding a wheel in her right hand and a long sword in her left.

(c) St. Ursula crowned, holding a closed book in her right hand and a reversed arrow in her left.

(d) St. Margaret crowned, holding a long cross in her right hand and a closed book in her left.

(e) St. Barbara (?) with her cloak clasped across her chest, holding in her left hand a palm branch.

(f) St. Withburga (?), her hair bound with a fillet.

(g) St. Etheldreda, wearing a veil and barb, holding in her right hand a crosier and in her left a closed book.

(h) St. Helen, crowned and veiled, holding in her right hand the True Cross.

(i) St. Dorothy (?), bearing a palm branch over her left shoulder.

(j) St. Apollonia (?), her hair confined with a band, holding a palm branch in her left hand (plate x, 1).

The figure of St. James major in the writer's collection, which measures $21\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in height, is a fine example of alabaster carving of the close of the fifteenth century, possessing as it does, an individuality of treatment too often lacking in English work of this period (plate vi, 1).

The saint, who wears a long robe decorated with six golden whelk shells, over which is an ample cloak lined with blue, has upon his head a peaked cap of brown, upon which is a golden scallop shell (*Pecten Jacobi*)¹ On his left side is a brown scrip adorned with a gold scallop shell, which hangs from his left shoulder by a strap. St. James, who is represented with long flowing golden hair and a curly beard, has his feet bare, and holds in his right hand his bourdon, and in his left a red book with a golden clasp.

This figure is very similar to the smaller headless example in the Passion reredos at Chatelus-Malvaleix, though in that case the scrip hangs from the other shoulder.

¹ 'Thence joyfully they doe returne, beset with Skallop shelles.' Barnaby Googe, *The Popish Kingdome*, 1570, bk. iii. The scallop shell (*Pecten Jacobi*) was found in

large numbers on the seashore of Galicia, near Santiago de Compostela, and thus became the pilgrims' *signaculum*.



1 [P. 60, P. B. Chulwin]
THE ASSUMPTION.



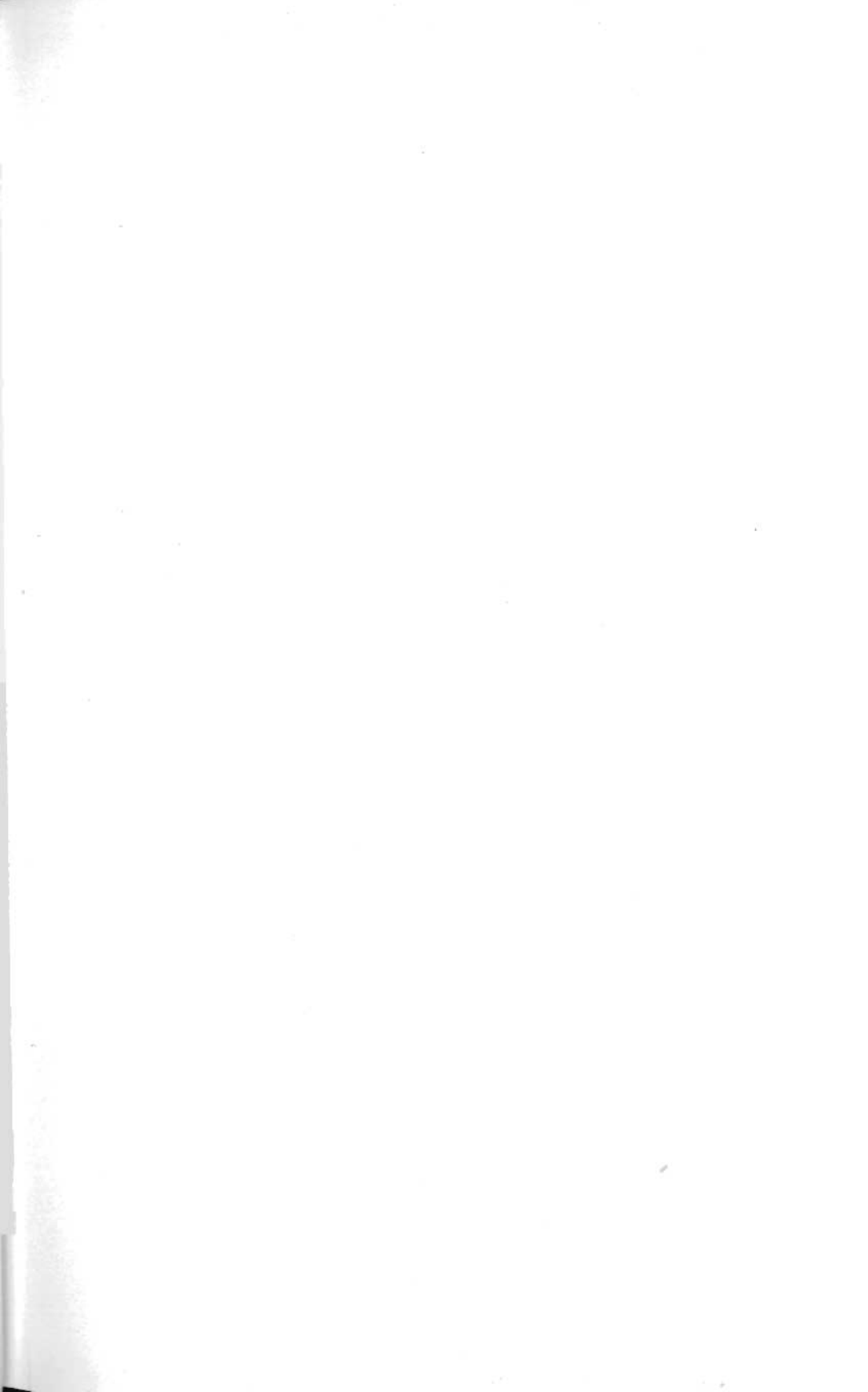
2
ZACHARIAS, MULBARTON.



3
MADONNA.



4
MADONNA.





1

THE BETRAYAL.



2

CHRIST CROWNED WITH THORNS.



3

ST. CATHERINE AND THE BURNING OF THE
PHILOSOPHERS.

It reminds us of the picture of the lymytour in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale* :

He went his wey, no lenger wolde he reste,
With scrippe and tipped staf, y-tukked hye ;¹

In the Metropolitan Museum, New York, is a panel measuring 15 by 10 ins., representing St. Anne presenting the Virgin to St. Joachim (plate ix, 1).

St. Anne wears a long robe and cloak and has upon her head a full veil and beneath her chin a barbe. The Virgin, who is crowned, wears a kirtle and cote-hardie, whilst Joachim, who is in a long robe and cloak, wears a curious head-dress with a short liripipe. The background is of gold with gesso knobs, whilst the ground is decorated with the usual flowers, interspersed with trefoil sprigs.

In the museum at Falaise (Calvados), is a wide panel of the Annunciation, which is in many respects remarkable. The Virgin, who is crowned and nimbed, wears over a close fitting robe a long cloak and held in her left hand an ascending scroll. She is represented as seated,² which attitude so far as I am aware is not otherwise represented in English alabaster-work of the fifteenth century. The archangel Gabriel, who is clad in a long robe and cope, has a mitre-like head-dress and holds in his right hand a sceptre and in his left a descending scroll, which twines about the lily. Above is the Almighty emerging from clouds, holding in His left hand the orb, whilst from His mouth proceeds the Sacred Dove, which flies towards the right ear of the Virgin, above whom is a censuring angel (plate vii, 2).

It has always been matter for surprise that no Passion reredos was known containing a panel depicting our Lord being crowned with thorns by Pilate's soldiery and it is fortunate that such a carving has now come to light. This panel, which measures 23 ins. high by 11 ins. in width, was recently discovered in France and has since passed into my collection. It apparently dates from the close of the fifteenth century, and its unusual height, about the same as the panels from a reredos to the honour of St. Peter and

¹ Chaucer, *Cant. Tales*, D. 1736, 1737.

² And becoming afraid, she went away to her home, and set down the waterpot ; and taking the purple she sat on her seat and spun it. And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood before her, saying, Fear not,

Mary, for thou hast found favour before the Lord of all, and thou shalt conceive from His word (Gospel of James, ch. xi, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, ed. Harris Cowper, 1910, p. 13).

St. Paul, illustrated in *Arch. Journ.* lxxiv, 112-114, pl. vii and viii, make one think that it may have come from the same atelier, a conclusion which details in the carvings would appear to support (plate III, 2).

Upon the back of the panel is incised IIII, indicating its original position as fourth in the reredos, which must thus have included at least nine scenes, with the Crucifixion as the taller centre-piece. The reredos from which this carving came was extraordinarily large and must have been about twelve feet in width and have thus exceeded the size of the altar-piece at Naples which is some ten feet across.

The panel, which follows very closely the description of the incident as recorded in St. Matthew xxvii, 27-31, retains considerable remains of its original polychrome decoration. The faces of the soldiers were swarthy, their garments, lined with scarlet, were edged with gold, their round flat hats were respectively black, scarlet, and white, this last slashed. The chaperons of those in the lower row were grey and black, whilst the hood of the figure in the foreground was of scarlet. The right hand upper figure wears a slashed doublet, and the soldier beneath wears a large cod-piece.

Seated, with hands bound cross-wise, is our Lord, upon whose brows four soldiers press down a large torse, of the *Spina Christi*, two in the upper row by means of straight staves, two in the next row with a long flexible rod, above in the centre a fifth strikes our Lord with a reed. In the left lower corner is a stooping figure, who, grimacing the while, places in Christ's left (*sic*) hand a reed. Our Lord is clad in a white robe and cloak, this latter fastened across the chest by a golden morse. From this it would appear that the carving portrays the moment after the removal of the scarlet or purple cloak, when His own garments had been replaced.¹ In the background is painted brickwork, doubtless to suggest the Praetorium, where this scene occurred.² The foreground was of green dotted with the usual flowers with small double twigs in addition.

In conclusion I would suggest that the reredos from

¹ Matthew xxvii, 31; Mark xv, 20.

² Mark xv, 16.



I

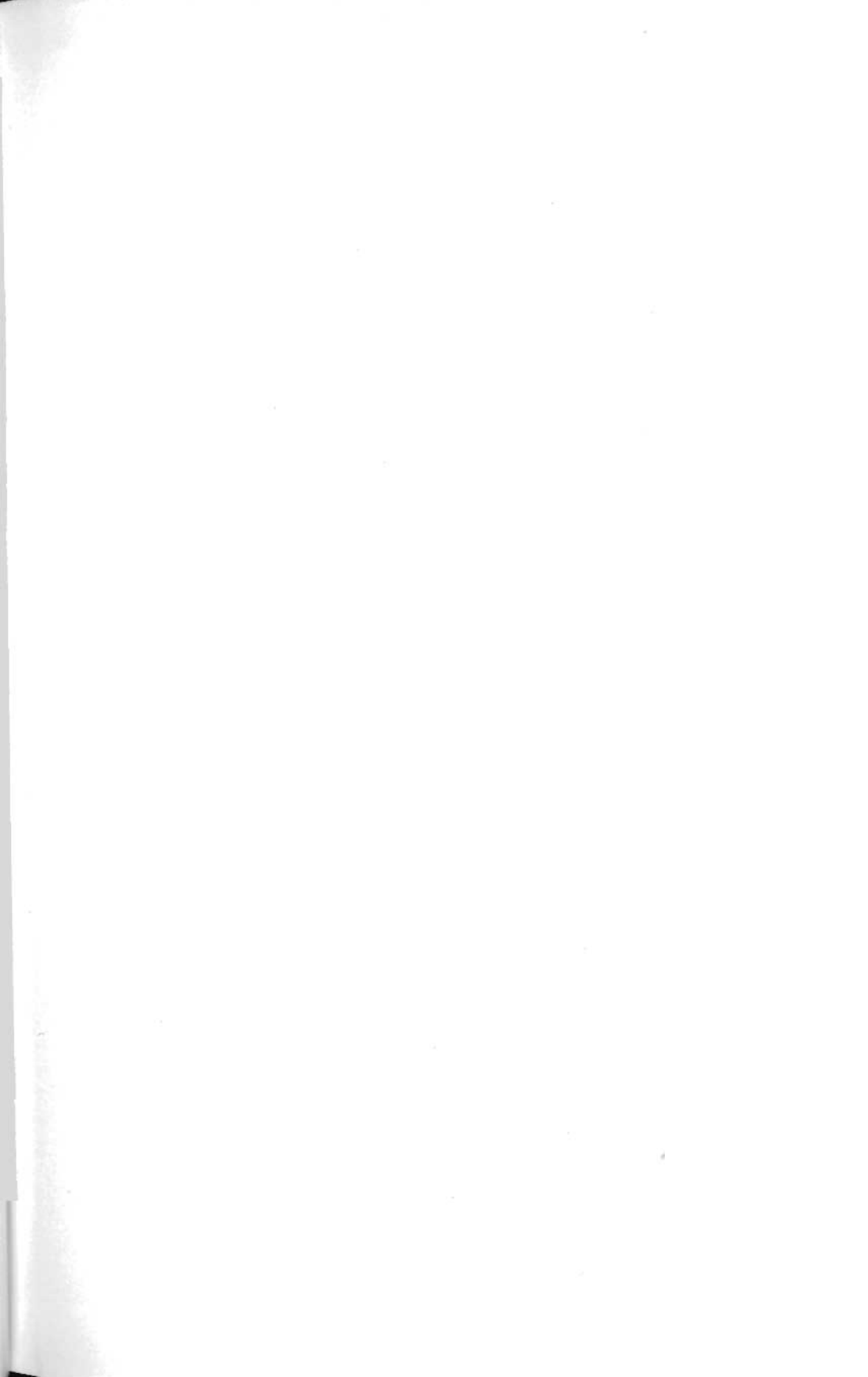
THE BAPTISM OF LAZARUS AND MARTHA.



II



TOFT, ALABASTER CARVINGS.





ALABASTER CARVINGS AT OSCOTT COLLEGE.

[Photo, P. B. Chatwin.]

whence this panel came was probably constituted as follows :

(1) The Agony in the garden.¹ (2) The Betrayal. (3) The Trial before Pilate. (4) The Crowning with thorns. (5) The Crucifixion. (6) The Deposition. (7) The Entombment. (8) The Resurrection. (9) The Apparition to the Magdalene.¹

In the museum at Rouen, no. 84, is an unusual panel of the Resurrection.

In the centre is the nimbed figure of Christ just emerging from the moulded tomb, surrounded by a rayed mandorla. Above on either side are the other two Persons of the Trinity, whilst kneeling in the foreground are three angels with hands upraised. The wings of the angels exhibit a small spine on their inner aspect to differentiate the primaries.

The two following carvings, which measure 16 ins. in height, I am permitted to illustrate by M. Mori of Paris. Each would originally be a terminal figure from a fifteenth-century reredos.

A. St. Paul. This panel, the earlier, represents the saint as partly bald, with flowing hair and beard. He is clad in a long robe and cloak, holding in his right hand an open book and upon his left shoulder he carries a drawn sword. The background bears a painted leaf ornament, whilst the foreground is of green strewn with the usual flowers interspersed with sprays (plate vi, 3).

B. St. Bartholomew. This figure shows us the saint with a short curly beard and long hair, wearing a long robe and ample cloak. He holds in his right hand a closed book and in his left a large knife, whilst over his left arm carries his flayed skin, shewing the face and hands (plate vi, 1).

By the courtesy of M. Mori I am also enabled to illustrate the panel depicting the Martyrdom of St. Thomas of Canterbury, which dates from 1460.²

The murder of archbishop Becket took place in the north transept of Canterbury cathedral, 29th December, 1170. In the south-west angle of the north transept were the altar and chapel of the Blessed Virgin, St. Thomas' patroness, and within the eastern apse was the altar of St. Benedict : and it was about here that the archbishop

¹ As at Ecaquelon, *Arch. Journ.* lxxvii, 68. pl. 111. ² Now the property of Frank J. Gould.

was slain by the four knights, Tracy, Fitz Urse, Brito and de Morville, the last named, however, taking no active part in the actual deed. This panel is very similar to that preserved in the museum at Rouen, and like it, depicts the scene as taking place before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, unlike that in the British Museum, which depicts the event as occurring at the altar of St. Benet (plate x, 2).

The carving follows very closely the description of the murder as given in the Icelandic Saga.

'Now that God's man, archbishop Thomas, seeth that his life-day is waning—for his enemies shake their swords over his head—he turneth to the east, towards that altar of our Lady, God's Mother, which was nearest to him, and whereat he had stood in those steps of the Holy Ghost which we mentioned before. He bendeth down on both knees before the altar with these, the last words that could be heard through the loud noise of God's enemies, saying: "Into the hands of Almighty God and of His most blessed Mother, the holy Mary, and of the Patrons of this church, the holy Dionysius, and all Saints, I commit myself and the cause of the Church."

'Next to this, spring forward the wild wolves on the gentle herd, the degenerate sons, on their own father, the cruellest murderers, upon the innocent victim of Jesus Christ. First among them, William of Traci dealeth a blow to the Archbishop, aiming at his head: but inasmuch as the clerk Edward standeth in dauntless faith nearest to his lord in this war-storm, the blow falleth on the arm of him, cutting it nearly through, and then on the head of the Archbishop, who received the less of it that the clerk had taken off the greater weight of the blow.'¹

Of the four knights, who are in complete armour, three carry swords: the fourth, probably Hugh de Morville, carries a halberd. Two only appear to attack the saint, William de Tracy, in the foreground, being represented as having struck the fatal blow, whilst the other thrusts his sword down into the skull of St. Thomas, who, fully vested, kneels before the altar of the Blessed Virgin. Upon the altar is a veiled chalice and above upon a bracket is a carved group of the Blessed Virgin holding on her lap the swaddled Child. At the foot of the altar is the mitre of

¹ *Thomas Saga Erkebys Kups*, vol. I, p. 543 Magnusson Rolls, series.



1

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.



2

ST. JAMES MAJOR.



3

ST. PAUL.







I

THE MOCKING.



Becket, which has been dashed off by Fitz Urse. In the background stands the faithful clerk, Edward Grim, holding a book and the archiepiscopal cross-staff.¹

There is preserved at Coughton Court, Warwickshire, an interesting panel of the Nativity, which I am enabled to reproduce by the courtesy of Mrs. Throckmorton, from a photograph kindly taken by Mr. Philip B. Chatwin, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A. The carving which is well executed measures 16½ ins. in height by 14½ ins. in width, and retains much of its original colouring. The scene is represented beneath a gabled building, the background being of gold dotted with flower ornaments of gesso knobs. The Holy Mother, who is crowned, wears a close fitting robe, beneath an ample cloak, and kneels in adoration before the Divine Child, Who is represented as nude within a mandorla, bestowing His blessing. Behind her is one of the midwives and above The Child are St. Joseph and the ox and the ass. St. Joseph, who holds his hat in his right hand and a cross-staff in his left, wears a girded robe and tippet. In the left upper corner is an angel, who holds a scroll, doubtless once inscribed *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (plate VIII, 1).

In the museum at Orleans is a unique panel depicting the baptism of St. Martha and Lazarus, and my thanks are due to Mr. Eric Maclagan, C.B.E., F.S.A. for the photograph which forms the illustration (plate IV, 1).

This apocryphal incident is referred to in the *Legenda Aurea*, 'She (Martha) with her brother Lazarus and her sister Mary, also St. Maximin which baptised them.'²

In the centre, in a font, the bowl of which is enriched with two bands of double battlements, are the nude half-figures of Lazarus and St. Martha, their hands raised in prayer. Upon the head of the former St. Maximin is conferring the rite of baptism, whilst behind is St. Mary Magdalene, with long golden hair, who holds in her left hand the box of ointment. In the background is an ecclesiastic holding in front of him an open book.

In the Metropolitan Museum, New York, is a panel, measuring 13 by 10 ins., representing the reception of the Just by St. Peter at the gate of Paradise. Upon the left

¹ Henry of Auxerre, the actual cross bearer, was not present at the death of the saint.

² Caxton, *Golden Legend*, ed. Ellis (*Temple Classics*), iv, 135.

stands St. Peter in a long robe and cloak, who holds in his right hand a large key. He receives a group of four nude souls, to the first of whom, a bishop, he extends his left hand. Behind the blest stands a tall winged figure, St. Michael, clad in an alb, wearing a cruciferous head-dress. In the centre of the panel is an arched recess, within which, ascending the staircase, is a nude form. This panel may be compared with one in the British Museum¹ (plate xi, 1).

Very similar to the previous panel is another in the possession of Mr. Lionel Harris, by whose courtesy I am enabled to illustrate it. This piece, which measures 17½ by 11 ins., is as follows:—Beneath a cusped and crocketed canopy stands a large figure of St. Peter, clad in a long robe and full cloak, holding under his right arm two large keys. With his right hand he gives his blessing to a group of seven nude souls, who are presented to him by St. Michael, one of whom he welcomes with his left hand. Above St. Michael and behind the heavenly battlements are six of the blest, in the centre of whom is the Almighty, who doubtless bestowed His benediction (plate xi, 2).

Another remarkable carving in the possession of Mr. Lionel Harris represents Christ being mocked. This piece, which like the preceding retains much of its original colouring, came from Spain.

The upper part of the panel is unfortunately missing, but what remains is somewhat similar to the only other example that I know of this subject, viz. that in the large reredos in the Museum at Compiègne. The carving is as follows:—Seated on a throne in the centre clad in a long robe, with His hands bound before Him, is our Lord, across whose eyes a figure on either side holds a thin cloth with a single hand, whilst with the other they would smite Him with the palms. From the head of the figure on the left emerges a dragon, the usual evidence of turpitude. Behind were two other figures who plucked at His hair. This scene follows the account of this incident as related by St. Mark, and took place on His trial before Caiaphas. It might be remarked here that the present order of the panels in the reredos at Compiègne is incorrect: the mocking should, of course, precede the trial of Christ before Pilate (plate vii, 1).

¹ *Medieval Figure Sculpture in England*, Prior & Gardner, fig. 78.



I

[Photo, P. B. Chatwin.]

THE NATIVITY.



2

THE ENTOMBMENT.





I [By courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum, N.Y.]

ST. ANNE PRESENTING THE BLESSED VIRGIN.



St. John's Head. This panel which is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, measures 7½ by 6 ins., and is remarkable in that it is of the simplest possible type. It represents the head, the hair and beard of which are markedly forked, lying on the *discus*, upon which is inscribed

Caput iohannis baptiste (plate I, 2).

The ground is of green adorned with the usual flowers.

St. John's Head. This panel is in the Museum at Orleans and only the lower part of the carving remains.

In the centre is the head of the Baptist resting on the *discus*, supported by two feathered cherubim, whilst beneath is the *Agnus Dei* with reverted head, above which is a scroll. A small fragment of a similar panel is in the Ashmolean Museum (plate I, 1).

In the chapel at Cookhill priory, Worcestershire, is a tall narrow panel of the Assumption of the Virgin, which measures 20 by 12 ins., which I am able to publish by the courtesy of the owner, Mr. Philip Antrobus. The Blessed Virgin, who is habited in a long cloak and robe, wears a large crown and is lifted up within a rayed mandorla by ten little angels. At her left foot kneels the donor, an ecclesiastic, from whose upraised hands ascend a scroll, whilst to her right kneels St. Thomas, across whose arms rests her girdle (plate II, 1).

By kind permission of the owner, M. Stora of Paris, I am able to illustrate a large Pietà in his possession which is 28 in. in height (plate I, 3).

The Virgin, who wears pointed shoes, a long robe girt at the waist and an ample cloak which passes over her head, supports on her knees the dead Christ wearing the torse and loin-cloth. This piece is somewhat similar to the example at Yarnton, Oxon. and probably dates from the earlier years of the fifteenth century.

The next three panels are interesting as being treated on lines reversed from the normal type.

I. The Betrayal. This, which is in the British Museum, shows the soldier who is seizing Christ as having his sword hanging on his right hip (plate III, 1).

An example in the Willett collection also shows the figures of Christ and Judas transposed.

II. The Entombment. In this St. Mary Magdalene

is seated at the head of the tomb, which is on the right of the panel. This panel is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Another example somewhat similar is in the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris (plate VIII, 2).

III. The Resurrection. This panel, which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, shows our Lord stepping out of the tomb towards the left with His left foot, not with His right leg as is the rule (plate IX, 2).

In the museum at Oscott college, Birmingham, are preserved five alabaster carvings, presented thereto by Augustus Welby Pugin, which are as follows (plate V):—

1. A fragment of the Blessed Trinity of the usual type, the head and the hands of the Father, the arms of the Son and the Sacred Dove are lost.

2. Figure of St. Anthony, 19 ins. high, wearing cowl, scapular and habit. From his girdle hangs a paternoster, in his left hand is a closed book, whilst in his right was a crutch-staff. At his feet is a pig with a large bell suspended from a collar.

3. Fragment of a small end-panel of St. Philip, head missing. He holds in his left hand three loaves and in his right a closed book. He wears a long robe and a full cloak. Height 11½ ins.

4. A double panel, 16 by 11 ins., of St. Jude and St. James Minor. Each saint holds in his right hand a long scroll, doubtless originally inscribed with appropriate sections of the Apostles' Creed, whilst in their left they support their emblems, respectively an oar and a fuller's bat.

Each saint wears a long robe and full cloak, St. James Minor is girt about the waist and has his cloak held in place by a cord across his chest.

This carving and the following are perhaps from the same reredos as the panel in the possession of Dr. W. L. Hildburgh, F.S.A. described by him in *Antiq. Journ.* i, 230, fig. 4.

5. St. Bartholomew. This figure, 16 ins. in height, is very similar to St. Jude in 4, and, like him, holds a long scroll in his right hand. In his left hand he holds a large knife, whilst from his arm hangs his flayed skin. This figure is the right half of a double panel: its left fractured edge proves this to have been the case.



I

TE DEUM : THE NOBLE ARMY OF MARTYRS.



2

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY.





1 [By courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum, N.Y.]

THE JUST ENTER PARADISE.



From these various panels it is possible to reconstruct the arrangement of the reredos from which these carvings came, and which I suggest to have been as follows :—

- (a) St. Peter and St. Andrew.
- (b) St. James major and St. John.
- (c) St. Thomas and St. Philip.
- (d) St. Matthew and St. Bartholomew.
- (e) St. Jude and St. James minor.
- (f) St. Simon and St. Matthias.

There are preserved in a recess on the south side of the chancel in the church of Toft, Cambs. a number of fragments in alabaster, including two nearly perfect full-length figures of ecclesiastics, which are as follows (plate IV, 2) :—

1. A bishop, clad in an alb and chasuble, the latter lined with scarlet and edged with gold, wears black shoes and a fine *mitra pretiosa*. He held in his left hand his crozier, whilst with his right he bestowed his blessing. The ground is green and flowered in the usual manner. It measures about 27 ins. in height.

2. St. Hubert, whose head is missing, is clad in a long white robe, girt about the waist by a blue looped belt enriched with gold ornaments and buckle, over which is a long white mantle, lined with scarlet and edged with gold; above it is an ermine tippet. From his belt upon the left depends a paternoster of twelve beads, the terminal ones of gold, whilst upon the right hangs a green gypciere. In the saint's right hand is a golden sceptre¹—the top missing—and in his left a closed book, the cover, which is of blue, enriched with eight white ornamental squares. His shoes, which are black, rest upon the usual green flowered ground, and at his feet there are, to the left and right, a white hart with golden antlers and a coronet about its neck, and a large brown hound.

These of course refer to the well-known hunting incident which brought about the conversion of the saint. The figure is about 23 ins. in height.

3. St. Christopher. The lower portion of a figure of

¹ St. Hubert, eldest son of Bertrand, duke of Aquitaine (727), upon the death of his father, gave up the duchy to his brother,

Eudes (Baring Gould, *Lives of Saints* Nov. pp. 73, 74).

the saint, showing his feet and the palm tree submerged in blue-green waves, which are rippling over them. Ground green and flowered.

4. The Resurrection. The lower 1/10 of a panel. Nelson type ii. It shows the pole-axe, the gauntleted right hand, and right foot of the recumbent soldier and the feet of the soldier at the foot of the tomb.

5. St. Eloi. A fragment from the top of the panel,¹ showing the chimney and the hood of the furnace, on which are one and three horse-shoes.

6. The Coronation of the Virgin. This shows the bust and head of Christ crowned and nimbed, also a portion of the nimbus of the Virgin, 8 ins. high.

7. The middle half of an angel, having the usual peacock-feathered wings, swinging a censer with his right hand. This may perchance belong to no. 6, in which event the panel would closely resemble that illustrated in *Arch. Journ.* lxxvi, pl. iii, p. 135.

8. Hand of Christ bestowing His benediction: part of no. 4, the Resurrection.

9. Lower part of a small draped figure.

10. Upper half of a figure, clad in a white robe with full sleeves, whilst over the face is the cowl, an ellipse with pointed ends.

In a glazed recess in the south wall of the chancel of Sandy church, Beds. is the right hand top corner of an alabaster panel, found in the chancel wall 1859. This fragment, the colouring of which is most extraordinarily perfect, depicts two soldiers, in salades and gorgets, *c.* 1480, and armed with halberds, looking over a wattled fence. This is possibly part of a Betrayal, since below the fence is what may be part of a cruciferous nimbus of red and green.

There is preserved in the vestry of Mulbarton church, Norfolk, a large portion of the first panel from a reredos of St. John Baptist, which, so far as I am aware, is not otherwise known. It measures about 18 by 12 ins. The carving, which had an embattled band across the top, represents two separate scenes which are as follows:—

(a) The Annunciation to Zacharias.

Zacharias, who is headless, and is clad in a cope and alb,

¹ *Arch. Journ.* lxxiv, 108, pl. iii.



I

ST. JOHN BAPTIST PREACHING



2

THE TRINITY, MADONNA AND DONOR.
ST. MARY'S CHURCH, SHREWSBURY.



3

THE BAPTISM IN JORDAN.



elevates in his hands a wafer before an altar, upon which rests a chalice. Above hovers the archangel Gabriel, who holds a long scroll descending towards the altar, which is covered by a cloth and has three arches painted upon its side (Luke, i, 5-20.)

(b) The Nativity of St. John Baptist.¹

Lying upon a draped couch is St. Elizabeth, with head missing, behind whom are three headless females, the first of whom holds the swaddled child, whilst the third holds a scroll passing downwards to the bearded Zacharias, who, clad in a long robe, is seated writing upon a scroll (Luke i, 59-63) (plate II, 2).

In the south-east chapel of St. Mary's church, Shrewsbury, are three panels from a St. John Baptist reredos, which are as follows:—

1. St. John preaching in the wilderness. In the centre stands the Baptist, at whose feet is the *Agnus Dei* standing upon a closed book. On each side were figures in attitudes of respectful attention, one of whom bears a book. In the foreground, on either side, is a lion sejant,² between whom are two shrubs, each with two leaf-pads³ (plate XII, 1).

2. The tall central panel, which measures 19½ by 9 ins., represents a kneeling ecclesiastic bearing two intertwined scrolls, which proceed upwards to two groups of figures, that upon the left the Blessed Trinity, that upon the right the Blessed Virgin and Child (plate XII, 2).

3. The baptism in Jordan. In the centre stands our Lord, nude to the waist, in front of whom flows the conventional river, whilst to the left is the Baptist, who is in the act of pouring water over His head. Upon the right is a bearded figure holding in front of him the divine garments. In the foreground is a shrub having three leaf-pads. It measures 15½ by 10½ ins. (plate XII, 3).

In the church at Broughton-in-Craven, Yorks, are preserved the remains of two groups of the Blessed Virgin and Child, which were found in the churchyard in 1863, and are as follows:—

1. A seated headless figure of the Virgin, 30 ins. high

¹ *Arch. Journ.* lxxvii, pl. 1, p. 213.

² Lions were still to be found in the valley of the Jordan as recently as the twelfth century (*The Apocryphal Gospels*; ed. Harris Cowper. 1910. p. 76).

³ These curious leaf pads also occur on the panels depicting the signs preceding the last Judgment (*Transactions. Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. lxx).

by 16 wide, who holds the Child on her right knee. She is clad in a long robe and an ample cloak, both edged with gold and lined with scarlet, the latter held in place by a golden cord looped across the chest, and held a sceptre in her left hand. The Child holds in His left hand an orb, whilst with His right hand He bestows His blessing. The foreground was of green with the usual flowers, whilst the back of the image was hollowed out and was fitted with two latten wire loops (plate II, 2).

2. Seated on a throne is the crowned figure of the Virgin, clad in an ample cloak, which is held in place across the chest by a double cord of gold having a terminal floral-tassel pendant beneath her right arm. Under this she wears a close-fitting robe, decorated with floral patterns in black, which is drawn in about the waist by a golden girdle. Immediately beneath the cloak-cord is an oval recess, which would formerly contain a relic or jewel. Seated on her left knee is the Child, which she is suckling, supporting her breast with her right hand, on which our Lord rests His left hand. This group is 27 ins. high by 14 ins. wide (plate II, 1).

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