

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES CONCERNING ENGLISH ALABASTER CARVINGS

By W. L. HILDBURGH

The following notes, dealing briefly with sundry matters connected with the medieval English alabaster industry, have as their common factor only their relationship, in one form or another, with that industry. They are here presented in order to place on record a number of carvings hitherto entirely, or very inadequately, published, as well as some fresh information of interest in connexion with the iconography of certain examples previously reported.

TWO 'SCOURGING' TABLES

The panel shown in Pl. i, A is, even in its present damaged state, of quite exceptional interest for the study of the history of the English alabaster industry. An example, and probably a very early one, of the type of panel produced industrially—as distinct from the production to special orders of the splendid tombs of great personages—and datable, according to Prof. Prior's provisional scheme (which has not, so far as I know, been seriously controverted), about the period 1340–1380,¹ it is the only one of that type known to me which represents the Scourging of our Lord. 'Type I' tables of several other Passion subjects have been cited by Nelson,² together with the suggestion, based on the analogy of the later altarpieces, that a corresponding table of the present subject might yet come to light.³ The carving of our panel is of the flat, cameo-like quality characteristic of the panels of the 'Type I' group, and its lack—so pleasing to our

¹ Cf. *Illustrated Cat. Exhibition of English Medieval Alabaster Work* (Soc. Antiquaries, 1910), London, 1913, 24, 26 seqq.

² Cf. 'Earliest Type of English Alabaster Panel Carvings,' in *Arch. Journ.*, lxxvi (1919), 90 seqq., 87 seq.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, 91.

modern taste for simplicity—of small details was doubtless masked by paint which has been completely removed through the severe weathering of the surface. The iconography of the panel is its principal feature of interest for us, because this differs in several points from that of the Flagellation tables of Prior's 'Type II' group (provisionally dated about 1380–1420). We have here only two torturers, instead of the four who appear even on the ('Type II') embattled tables,¹ each beardless, wearing a close-fitting cap from which emerges curly hair framing his face, a belt to which is attached a sword whose point hangs but little above the ankle, and long pointed shoes. One holds his scourge, of knotted twisted cords, in both hands, to give greater force to his blow; the other holds his scourge with one hand only, his left hand being engaged with the cord (now in part broken away) wherewith Christ's hands are bound. There are some fairly deep scratches, in X formations, on the upper garments of the torturers, which might possibly (in the present weathered state of the surface) be mistaken for an original feature of the design were it not that similar ones appear, although less markedly, elsewhere on the panel. Our Lord stands behind the pillar, to which He is closely bound, with one leg, excepting for the front half of the foot, completely hidden by the pillar. The back of the panel has had four (one now broken across) lead-filled holes carrying latten strips (about $\frac{5}{16}$ and $\frac{7}{8}$ inches wide) for attachment; and over the surviving lower corner there is a very thin layer, extending in a narrow (about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch) strip near the edge almost to the top of the panel, of what looks to be cement or mortar of some kind, the purpose (unless the seemingly unlikely one of making that part of the back level with the rest) of which is not clear. The panel is $14\frac{7}{8}$ by $10\frac{3}{8}$ in.

The second Scourging table, shown in Pl. i, B of about the usual dimensions, in excellent condition as to its original surface and its applied colouring, is much later in date and calls for very little comment;

¹ Cf. Nelson, 'English Alabasters of the Embattled Type,' in *Arch. Journ.*, lxxv, 324 seq.

its principal interest for us lies in its excellence as a representative example of the characteristic products of a particular workshop (or small group of workshops). Its pattern is one commonly used in fifteenth-century English alabasters, and the only feature of its iconography that is out of the ordinary is the showing of the binding of our Lord's feet, as well as His hands, to the column—a feature in keeping with the strongly dramatic style of the representation. Although the workmanship is coarse, and clearly that of handicraftsmen rather than of artists, the freedom of the carving, and the balance of the composition as a whole, indicate that the pattern was one to which the makers of the panel were well accustomed.

TABLE OF THE DEPOSITION

The panel representing the Deposition, from a Passion set, reproduced in Pl. ii, A is noteworthy for its treatment along sculptural lines rather than in the pictorial manner governing the treatment of most of the English alabaster panels made in the second half of the fifteenth century and in the early sixteenth. It is $21\frac{1}{4}$ by $11\frac{3}{4}$ in.

TABLE OF THE RESURRECTION

Pl. ii, B shows an embattled panel of the Resurrection of our Lord, unusual in that it has tourelles at its upper corners. Although the subject is a comparatively common one among surviving embattled tables—Nelson, writing in 1918, was able to cite sixteen examples of it¹—the present example is, with one exception,² the only one with tourelles known to me. The close resemblance, excepting for the position of the soldier in the foreground, between it and a large fragment reproduced by Nelson (*op. cit.*, Pl. vii, no. 3; *cf.* p. 320) suggests that the upper part, now missing, of that fragment probably also had tourelles. The position—almost horizontal, instead of the far more usual strongly inclined one—given the tomb in the fragment

¹ *Cf.* 'English Alabasters of the Embattled Type,' 319 *seqq.*, 332 *seq.*

² *Cf. ibid.*, Pl. xxv and p. 332. On some other panels of this rare type, see *Ant. Journ.*, viii, 58.



A. THE SCOURGING



B. THE SCOURGING



A. THE DEPOSITION



B. THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

is almost the same as on the present panel; but, curiously, the two examples differ from each other in the very point which Nelson selected (*cf. ibid.*, 319) for the division of his two types of the subject, the soldier upon whom our Lord places His foot being shown in our panel resting on his elbow and facing the Risen Christ, while on the fragment he is shown asleep with his head supported on his right arm. The panel, formerly in the late Dr. Albert Figdor's collection, in Vienna, was sold at auction in September, 1930.¹

A GROUP OF EMBATTLED TABLES

The Musée van Stolk, formerly situated in Haarlem, was dispersed by auction at Amsterdam² in May, 1928. It contained a number of pieces of medieval English alabaster work,³ including a group formed of five embattled panels, obviously all from one altarpiece, depicting scenes from the Passion of our Lord. Groups of embattled panels are comparatively rare.⁴ The present group is of particular interest in that it contains two panels more than any embattled 'Passion' group recorded by Nelson in 1919,⁵ and two subjects not known to him, in embattled form, at that time. In view of the rarity of embattled groups, it has seemed advisable to reproduce here the whole of the present one, even though other examples of certain of its subjects have previously been published. The five panels, together with an Entombment of our Lord from another altarpiece, formed one lot in the sale catalogue; but, in the absence of a demand to the contrary, they were auctioned piece by piece, three panels going to one bidder and two to another. Happily, the group was reconstituted about a year after its dispersal, and now forms part of my collection.

¹ No. 139 of the second Figdor sale; it is reproduced on a large scale on Pl. lxxvi of Vol. iv of the *Figdor Sale Catalogue*.

² By Frederik Muller & Co.

³ Lots 144, 145, 146, 148. Lot 148, an image-panel of St. Catherine, has been reproduced and described

in *Ant. Journ.*, x (1930), Pl. viii and p. 39.

⁴ *Cf.* 'English Alabasters of the Embattled Type.'

⁵ *Cf. ibid.*, 324; the largest group then known to him was the one at Carcassonne containing the Flagellation, the Crucifixion, and the Harrowing of Hell (reproduced on Pl. xv).

Although at the sale, in 1928, nothing seems to have been known as to whence came the group, a fortunate chance has since revealed to us the exact locality. Some years ago I directed Dr. Nelson's attention to a set of plaster casts in the Madrid Museo de Reproducciones Artísticas. These casts so interested him that he obtained photographs of four of them,¹ and later published a description, without illustrations, of them.² Having read this description, I wrote to him, and learned that, as I had suspected, the Madrid casts had been made from the pieces which subsequently had come into my possession; and thus, that the group had come from the old oratory of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at Palma de Mallorca.

The descriptions of the panels (excepting that of the Betrayal) given by Nelson (*loc. cit.*), and the reproductions (Pls. iii, iv and v, A) herewith appended, make further description unnecessary. Some unusual features of the pieces are, however, worthy of special note. The Carrying of the Cross is, so far as I am aware, the only embattled example known; it differs from the later English representations in alabaster, which are not rare, mainly in its simplicity, its lack of crowding, and the absence of Joseph of Arimathea; for, besides Christ, only four persons—each a torturer of some kind—are shown. Of the Deposition, Nelson mentions in his earlier (1919) paper no embattled example; in his later (1927) paper he describes (115 *seq.*) an example additional to the present one. In the Crucifixion the swooning Blessed Virgin's hand is held, at a level just above our Lord's feet, by St. John, who is (as is usual) on the opposite side of the cross.

The panels are almost alike in size, each being about $17\frac{1}{4}$ by $10\frac{3}{4}$ in. As Nelson has already pointed out,³ the style of the workmanship indicates a close relationship between this group and the St. John Baptist set in the Marienkirche at Danzig.⁴ It seems probable, on the analogy of the later sets, that we have in our

¹ For some reason the cast of the Betrayal table was not photographed.

² *Arch. Journ.*, lxxxiv (1927), 114 *seq.* Cf., also, *Aut. Journ.*, vi, 307.

³ *Arch. Journ.*, lxxxiv, 114.

⁴ *Ibid.*, lxxv, 328 *seqq.* and Pls. xviii-xxii.



A. THE BETRAYAL

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B. THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

PLATE III.




A. THE CRUCIFIXION



B. THE DEPOSITION

five panels all the scenic-panels, without the terminal panels of saints which may well have accompanied them, of an altarpiece. Unfortunately, I know of no embattled 'Passion' altarpiece, in its original wooden framing, which we might use as a criterion, and the absence from our group of such usual Passion subjects as the Scourging and the Entombment suggests the possibility that the group does not contain all the scenes of the set to which its panels originally belonged.

TABLE OF THE VIRGIN AND CHILD

A considerable number of images of the Virgin and Child, in high (but generally not in full) relief and flat-backed, made by the English alabastermen, still survive. Curiously, however, the panel form, so commonly used for the presentation of other subjects, seems rarely to have been employed for that of our Lady with the Child alone; indeed, the only example of such presentation which I recall is the one reproduced in Pl. v, B. It has, unfortunately, suffered many injuries, including the breaking away of large portions about the upper corners, so that its present form approximates to that of the images made without backgrounds; nevertheless, what remains seems clearly to indicate that the piece originally was rectangular. The size, $13\frac{1}{8}$ by $6\frac{5}{8}$ in., suggests that it was—as were most of the English alabaster images of the Virgin and Child—intended for display alone rather than as a part of an altarpiece. Our Lady, crowned and holding a sceptre, is seated with the Infant—Who holds in His right hand the Orb and has His left hand raised and open—upon her knee. The Child is, as almost invariably in the English alabastermen's presentation of the subject, supported by her right hand instead of, as in the majority of Continental Madonnas, by her left. Traces of the original applied colouring remain, as do also the wire loops for attachment at the back. In the back a mark, somewhat of the form . has been scratched.¹

¹ Concerning marks cut in the backs of English alabaster panels, cf. E. Maclagan, in *Burlington Mag.*,

xxxvi, 64 seq., and *ibid.*, 54; also, *Ant. Journ.*, i, 229; iii, 26; iv, 376 seq.; x, 40.

TABLE OF THE VISITATION

Pl. vi, A reproduces a table, presumably from a set showing scenes from the life of the Blessed Virgin, representing Mary's meeting with St. Elisabeth. The postures of the two figures are those ordinarily to be seen in the surviving English alabaster tables of the subject, which seemingly are few as compared with those of a number of other scenes from her life. The object retains a large proportion of its original applied colouring and many of its small gesso bosses; these, until recently, were partly covered by modern paint, almost all of which has been removed. On the back is a mark resembling Z, scratched in the stone.

THE PSYCHOSTASIS WITH THE BLESSED VIRGIN

In the *Antiquaries Journal* for January, 1930, I reproduced two examples in alabaster of the curious—and, so far as I have been able to learn, peculiarly English—subject of St. Michael weighing souls in judgment and the Virgin Mary saving them by means of a rosary which she has placed upon the balance-beam in order to weight the balance in their favour. In my discussion (*cf. ibid.*, 34–37) of the representations of that subject, I referred to a number of other examples in various materials, amongst which alabaster was included. I am able now to record two further examples in alabaster; both, when I saw them, in private ownership, the former in Paris, the latter in Rouen. The Paris one is a panel, of about the usual dimensions, the stone of which, though its original carved surface (and, of course, the paint formerly thereon) has been weathered away, is practically complete as to its sculpture. As on the Louvre's panel previously referred to (*cf. loc. cit.*, Fig. 3), St. Michael is at the spectator's right; the Blessed Virgin has a nimbus, while St. Michael has not; and a scroll is beside the Virgin. The present panel has an additional scroll at St. Michael's side, unfortunately, all traces of its former painted inscription, as also those of the inscription on the Virgin's scroll, have disappeared. A considerable part of the rosary's beads



A. THE RESURRECTION

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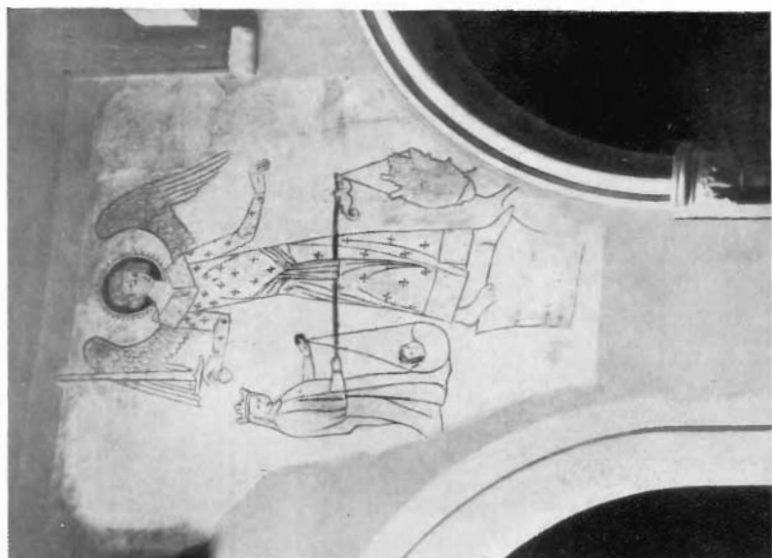


B. THE VIRGIN AND CHILD

PLATE V.



A. THE VISITATION



B. PAINTING (RESTORED) IN CATHERINGTON CHURCH

remain, on or near the beam of the balance ; beyond them is a break in the stone, and then the rosary's terminal tassel.

The other example is a fragment of a panel, and was shown (no. 8) in the exhibition of ancient religious art lately held in Rouen in connexion with the centenary celebrations of Joan of Arc. The figure of St. Michael, which was (as on my own table, shown in Fig. 4 of the paper above referred to) at the spectator's left, is missing from the fragment, leaving remaining only the Virgin and a portion of the balance, and leading to the cataloguing of the piece as 'La Sainte Vierge couronnée pesant une ame.' The rosary is, very clearly, resting upon the beam. Two souls are shown sheltering beneath Mary's mantle.

In my paper cited above I referred (pp. 35, 37) to a curious rayed object appearing, in the panel of my Fig. 4, under the Virgin's mantle and just above the heads of two of the sheltering souls, and I suggested that it might be the representation of a star serving as emblem either of the Blessed Virgin herself or of St. Dominic. I have now some reason to think that this object may possibly represent the back of the head of a third sheltering soul ; in alabaster representations of the Gate of Heaven, such as the one shown in Pl. vii, A *infra*, the back of the head of an entering soul may occasionally be shown in a very similar way.

In that same paper I mentioned (p. 36) a fifteenth-century wall-painting in Catherington church, Hampshire, which presumably showed the same subject as our alabasters, but (at least in the reproduction on which I had then to rely) not clearly enough to make judgment thereon certain. Through the courtesy of Mr. G. C. Druce, F.S.A., I am permitted to reproduce in Pl. vi, B a photograph of this painting from a negative which he made in 1901. In view of the numerous existing examples of the biasing of St. Michael's balance by the Virgin's use of her rosary, I think that we need hardly doubt that a 'restoration' of the painting was attempted, and wrongly carried into effect, at some time before 1901. I think that we may

justly believe that St. Michael's forearm was originally directed toward the handle of the balance, which occupied (as commonly shown) the place now held by the overhang of his girdle, that the amorphous porcine object carrying the delicate outlines of three minute human faces was originally a scale-pan containing evil things (and, very probably, pulled upon by a demon), and that the Blessed Virgin held in her left hand a rosary hanging upon her end of the balance—the version shown in our reproduction, with the Virgin holding the strings of one scale-pan is practically meaningless, and a close examination of the photograph seems to show that the 'restorer' has prolonged the beam, beyond its original termination, so that she may touch it (in accordance with a medieval story enshrined in *The Golden Legend*) with her hand, and that the scale-cord nearest to her was bent, about halfway between its pan and the beam, out of its proper and original line in order that it might come to her left hand instead of to the original junction with its companion cord.

TABLE OF THE GATE OF HEAVEN

An attractive subject, of which several medieval English examples in alabaster are known, was the entry into Heaven, after judgment, of the souls of the blest. The panel reproduced in Pl. vii, A gives an excellent, if somewhat naïve, representation of contemporary popular ideas—not improbably influenced by the mystery-plays of the period—concerning it. In the upper part of our panel appears the Almighty Father, between two angel musicians, above the battlements of Heaven, while below the battlements St. Peter, with his key (? or two keys) stuck through his girdle, stands at the gate prepared to admit three naked souls who have passed St. Michael—shown as accompanying them—while the back of another soul ascending the stairway just within the gate is to be seen. The leading one of the three souls has his right hand upraised and open (in the same way as on other tables of the subject) and in his left an object which is



A. THE GATE OF HEAVEN



B. GENERAL RESURRECTION



A. ST. THOMAS LANDING AT SANDWICH



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grasped by St. Peter—it is not clear whether St. Peter is receiving or presenting it—which is shaped somewhat like a large lemon with a stout stem pointing downwards. From St. Peter's right hand ascends a scroll, the painted lettering of which has vanished; it ends, perhaps by chance, perhaps symbolically, a little above the heavenly battlements. The back of the head of the soul within the gate appears as a circle with a series of wavy lines running horizontally from a central wavy line set vertically, recalling somewhat—although not with complete parallelism—the star-like object under the Virgin's mantle and above the faces of the sheltering souls, in my table of the Psychostasis of which I have spoken above. There are three holes cut completely through the panel; one on either side of the head of the ascending soul, and one (for no reason at the moment apparent to me) through St. Michael's right wing. On the back four lines have been cut, presumably to show the position of the panel in the altarpiece for which it was made. The panel was bought at Amsterdam, in 1930, without any indication of whence it had come. It is $15\frac{1}{2}$ by $9\frac{7}{8}$ in.

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is the lower part of a panel which presumably was in general form very similar to our present panel.¹ In this there are four souls (the leading one an ecclesiastic) outside the gate, and one ascending the stairway within, while St. Peter stands with a great key in his right hand and with his left (now missing) outstretched, and St. Michael holds the same situation as on our panel. The upper part of the panel, which showed figures in Heaven, has been broken or cut away. In the British Museum is the lower part of a table of the same sort,² similarly cut off at the battlements, which displays only St. Peter and three souls seeking admission, neither St. Michael nor the soul within the gate being shown. A complete table of the subject, whose present whereabouts I do not

¹ Cf. Nelson, in *Arch. Journ.*, lxxxii, 31 seq. and Pl. xi.

² Cf. Prior and Gardner, *Medieval Figure-Sculpture in England*, Cam-

bridge, 1912, 82, Fig. 78; Nelson, in *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.*, lxxix (1917), 86 and Pl. iv.

know, shows St. Peter, with two keys, at the gate, seven souls, shepherded by St. Michael, ascending steps to the gate, and six souls about the Father in Heaven.¹

TABLE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Accompanying the British Museum's table of the Gate of Heaven, just mentioned, is the lower part, of similar size and from the same altarpiece, of a table representing the lost entering Hell.² Seemingly from the same altarpiece is the incomplete panel reproduced in Pl. vii, B, representing the Resurrection of the Dead for the Last Judgment, and showing a king and a bishop amongst those arising from their tombs. This panel, obtained in Paris and without further history, is 10 in. in width.

FIGURE OF ST. PAUL

The *Antiquaries Journal* for 1924 reproduced (Pl. li) photographs of four flat-backed figures, in high relief, of Apostles. In the text accompanying these reproductions I identified those figures as having belonged, very probably, to the set which supplied six figures of Apostles to the reredos of the church at Saint-Avit-les-Guespières. Of the original twelve figures, two remained unaccounted for. I am now able presumably to account for one of the two—the St. Paul shown in Pl. ix, A—which has now joined the four already in my collection; the whereabouts of the figure of St. Peter, which certainly formed part of the set, is not known to me. That the present figure represents St. Paul is indicated by the characteristic arrangement of the hair of the head, as well as by the sword; the latter, it may be noted, is also employed as the emblem of the St. Matthias of the same set.³

¹ Cf. Nelson, *Arch. Journ.*, lxxxii, Pl. xi and p. 32.

² Cf. Prior and Gardner, *op. cit.*, 82, Fig. 78; Nelson, *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.*, lxix, 86 and Pl. iv.

³ Cf. P. Biver (who speaks of the figure as that of St. Paul), in *Arch.*

Journ., lxxvii (1910), 70 and Pls. v and vi; R. P. Bedford, 'An English Set of the Twelve Apostles, in Alabaster,' in *Burlington Mag.*, xlii (1923), 133; Nelson, in *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.*, 1920, Pl. facing p. 55. In the South Kensington set (cf. Nelson, in *Arch. Journ.*,



B. THE DECOLLATION OF ST. JOHN



A. ST. PAUL



A. TABLE OF ST. JOHN'S HEAD, IN ORIGINAL HOUSING



B. CROWNED ST. MARY MAGDALENE
(plaster cast)

The height of the figure is $21\frac{1}{4}$ in., slightly less than the 22 to $22\frac{1}{4}$ in. of the four mentioned above;¹ and on the back of the figure there has been cut an X, presumably to indicate that it was the tenth piece in the original arrangement of its set.²

TWO TABLES FROM A ST. THOMAS SET

When, at the end of February, 1929, Professor Borenus read before the Society of Antiquaries his first paper on 'The Iconography of St. Thomas of Canterbury,'³ he mentioned⁴ the rarity of English alabaster tables which could with certainty be assigned to sets depicting the life of that saint. He was at that time able to cite only four tables of the Martyrdom, and one of the Council at Northampton, as certainly belonging to St. Thomas sets; and a few representing the birth, the consecration, or the burial of an archbishop, or the meeting of an archbishop and a pope, which seemed as if they might well have belonged to St. Thomas altarpieces. By a fortunate chance, entirely unrelated to the paper above referred to, two panels unquestionably belonging to a St. Thomas set appeared in Paris in March of 1929, and I was able to secure them for my collection. These two panels, shown in Pl. viii, represent St. Thomas before the Pope at Avignon and St. Thomas landing at Sandwich on his return from France. The many resemblances between the panel of Pl. viii, B, and the one reproduced by Nelson⁵ and cited by Borenus indicates with a considerable degree of certainty⁶ that the latter panel

lxxvii [1920], Pl. v; Bedford, *op. cit.*), St. Matthias has no emblem; there is no St. Paul. In the set of Apostles on the alabaster Ap-Thomas tomb [1446] at Abergavenny St. Matthias is shown with an axe as his emblem (*cf.* Nelson, in *Arch. Journ.*, lxxxiii, Pl. iii and p. 37).

¹ *Cf.* *Ant. Journ.*, iv, 374 *seq.*

² The ones reproduced in *Ant. Journ.*, iv, are marked 7, 8, 11 and 12 respectively.

³ See *Archaeologia*, lxxix, 29-54.

⁴ *Cf.* *ibid.*, 43, note.

⁵ *Cf.* *Arch. Journ.*, lxxv (1918), Pl. xxiv and p. 332.

⁶ The English alabaster carvers often used standard dispositions of figures and accessories, developed out of the frequent repetitions of subjects commonly demanded, for the representations of other subjects which were seldom called for—*e.g.* the nativity of a saint less popular would be likely to follow the pattern of a Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, or the burial of a saint that of the Entombment of our Lord—so that likenesses of pattern may not always assure unquestionably the meaning of a scene in alabaster.

represents a scene in the life of St. Thomas rather than one in that of St. William of York.¹ Although the panel reproduced by Nelson, being of the embattled type, is presumably somewhat older than our panel, its pattern is fairly closely paralleled by that of our panel—the principal differences are that on our panel the four minor personages are grouped less closely, the archbishop has his mitre at his knees instead of upon his head, the pope's throne lacks the series of steps up to it, and a court jester is shown. Three parallel lines, roughly scratched in the back of our panel, probably indicated that the panel was the third of the scenic panels in its altarpiece. The panel representing the landing of St. Thomas depicts him about to step on shore from a carpet (or, perhaps, a plank) laid near the stern of his ship, and a happy welcoming group. On the back of this panel are six lines. The two panels, which retain considerable amounts of their painted decoration, are almost alike in size, each being about $16\frac{3}{4}$ by about $9\frac{1}{2}$ in.

TABLE OF THE DECOLLATION OF ST. JOHN

In Pl. ix, B is reproduced a table ($15\frac{1}{4}$ by $9\frac{1}{2}$ in.) representing the Decollation of St. John, one of a set depicting incidents in the martyrdom of the Baptist. The table was purchased in Paris some years ago, completely isolated from the others of its set and without attached history of any kind. The Baptist's martyrdom, together with the events leading to it and those dependent upon it, must have formed a fairly common subject for English alabaster altarpieces, a number of which are still represented each by several panels which have remained associated in a group² or by isolated panels³ such as the present one.

¹ Nelson's suggestion that the scene might be from St. William's life rather than from St. Thomas's was based only on Nottingham's situation in the diocese of York.

² E.g. the embattled five at Danzig (cf. *Arch. Journ.*, lxxv, 328 seq.), the five in a triptych at Yssac-la-Tourette (cf. Biver, *op. cit.*, 69 and Pl. iii; Prior and Gardner, *op. cit.*, Fig. 13 and p. 464; Nelson,

in *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.*, 1920, Pl. facing p. 50), and the three from Genoa formerly in Dr. Nelson's possession (cf. *Arch. Journ.*, lxxxiii, 33 seq.). We may recall, in passing, that there were also English alabaster altarpieces representing, as shown by a number of existing panels, earlier events in the history of the Baptist.

³ E.g. the embattled Decollation

On our present panel St. John kneels beside the beheading-block and in front of the executioner who is about to strike with a sword (a part of whose blade is still to be seen above his head) ; behind the Saint is a jailor with keys¹ of the prison at whose gate he stands ; beside the executioner, prepared to take the head when it has fallen, is Salome with her charger ; and in the upper part of the panel are three angels, holding a napkin in which to receive the Baptist's soul. A curious detail worth noting is that the Saint's long hair is held by the executioner, perhaps in order that the head should not fall to the ground ; analogously, the Danzig Decollation panel shows the head held by the forelock, and the British Museum's panel a similar arrangement.²

The resemblances between our Decollation table and the St. John's Head table shown in Pl. x A, are of considerable interest, in that they seem to indicate that the two tables were made in the same workshop ; the little tourelles of the two are closely similar,³ and the three angels of the Decollation are paralleled closely by the two angels with a soul of the other panel, while there is a general likeness in style and details between the two panels. Whether that workshop was at Nottingham or at York is an interesting question. The little tourelles on the prison gate are very like those to be seen on certain panels of the 'embattled' type ;⁴ and the form of embattling accompanying them suggests a further close relationship—presumably fairly immediate, by descent in the same town, if not in the same workshop—with tables having an

in the British Museum (*cf. Arch. Journ.*, lxxv, 331), the Shrewsbury Preaching of the Baptist and Baptism of our Lord (*cf. Arch. Journ.*, lxxxii, 37), and the Preaching recorded in *Ant. Journ.*, x, 41 *seq.*

¹ The British Museum's Decollation, whose arrangement of participants differs from the present one, shows the jailor at the gate and holding an object similar to the one held by the jailor of our panel, but so corroded that it has been mistakenly recorded as a mace (*cf. loc. cit.*).

² It may be that the intention in all

the above examples was the stretching forward of the neck ; in the period when queues were worn by the Chinese, a victim's head was drawn forward, by an executioner's assistant standing in front of the victim and pulling his queue.

³ Another St. John's Head table resembling in many ways the present one is reproduced in the *Illustrated Cat.* of the 1910 exhibition of English alabaster work ; *cf.* no. 51.

⁴ *Cf.* Nelson, ' . . . Embattled Type,' Pl. x, 2, and Pl. xxv ; *supra*, Pl. ii, B.

embattled heading, and with the St. John's Head table of Pl. x, A. Now, Sir William St. John Hope, writing in 1913, gave as his opinion that although the earliest of the St. John's Head tables may possibly have been carved at York,¹ yet the later ones seem clearly to have been made at Nottingham.² Nelson, writing some years later, suggested³ that York may well have been the town where the tables of the embattled type were made. Since our martyrdom panel is not of a very early type, and since it has a number of minor characteristics associating it with carvings generally assumed to have been made at Nottingham, I am inclined to assign it to that centre rather than to York; and the more so because it is by no means unlikely that, even if York carvers were the first to make the embattled panels, the Nottingham alabastermen adopted or adapted popular patterns for the supplying of their own trade.

ST. JOHN'S HEAD TABLE

Comparatively few⁴ of the very many existing St. John's Head tables retain the original painted wooden cases in which many, if not all, of them were 'housed.' The one shown in Pl. x, A, long in the home of a local family and now in the museum of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society—from whose Hon. Secretary, Mr. George Eyre Evans, I received the photograph⁵ herewith reproduced, with permission to publish it—is therefore well worthy of notice here. The pattern of the panel is one quite commonly to be met with, but the presence of St. Paul (instead of the far more general St. Peter) as one of the flanking figures

¹ Cf. *Ill. Cat. cit.*, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 10.

³ Cf. ' . . . Embattled Type,' 311.

⁴ Nelson mentions (cf. *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.*, 1920, 57) six examples known to him; namely, the ones in the Ashmolean Museum and the Leicester Museum, the one described by Lt.-Col. Croft-Lyons (cf. *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, xxv, 17 seq.), the

one reproduced in colours in *Archæologia*, lii, Pl. xxiv, the one now owned by Sir William Burrell [and for a considerable time on loan in the Victoria and Albert Museum] (cf. *Arch. Journ.*, lxxvii, 213 seq. and Pl. ii), and one formerly in the possession of Messrs. Harding.

⁵ From a negative by Miss Wight, made for the Society.

is an unusual feature;¹ the openwork heading, of which only fragments now remain, was doubtless of the regular triple-gabled kind. Although much of the applied colouring is still on the alabaster, there is no trace of the forehead-wound often present on the English St. John's Heads. The housing, which is practically in its original condition, is 14 in. high, and 15½ in. from edge to edge of its open wings.

TABLE OF OUR LORD IN GLORY AND (?) ST. MATTHEW

The panel reproduced in Pl. xi is, so far as my experience goes, unique. The greater part of it is occupied by a large oval having an angularly undulating edge, within which is Christ enthroned, crowned and holding an orb, surrounded by heads presumably (although without accompanying wings) representing angels; below the oval are what look like rays or pendant flames. At our Lord's right, but outside the oval, stands a bearded saint holding in one hand a pole-axe and in the other a small cylindrical object resembling a box. At either edge of the panel is a pillar surmounted by a capital, above which is conventionalized ornament. The panel, which has lost all of its original applied colouring, has been stained—probably by smoke—brown. Its present height is 14 in.; its width 9¼ in. It seems probable that the standing figure represents St. Matthew, who often is portrayed with an axe as his distinguishing emblem, and the cylindrical object in its hand a money-box—in allusion to Matthew's profession of publican, or gatherer of taxes for the Romans—for in a number of existing English medieval representations St. Matthew is depicted with a money-box or a money-bag (or bags) as an emblem. It seems probable, therefore, that the

¹ This is the only example I recall as having St. Paul replacing his companion Apostle, who is an all-but invariable occupant of the place at the dexter side of the charger carrying the head (*cf.*, for numerous examples, W. St. John Hope, 'On the Sculptured Alabaster Tables called St. John's Heads,' in *Archaeologia*, lii

[1891]). Hope cites (*op. cit.*, 700) a drawing of a St. John's Head table having St. Paul in the place of the archbishop commonly on the sinister side of the charger, but in connexion therewith mentions the possibility of the substitution having been due to a misapprehension on the part of the recording draughtsman.

panel was made in illustration of the words of Matthew, xvi, 27, 'For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels'; and possibly as the central panel of a set of panels referring to the last Judgment.¹

A TERRACOTTA RELIEF

The relief of terracotta, with remains of applied colouring, shown in Pl. xii, is the only thing of the kind I recall having seen. The man from whom I bought it in Paris told me that it came from Normandy, and he applied to it a term at present often used in France with reference to the English alabaster carvings, namely, 'Anglo-Norman'—a term due to the coming to light in Normandy of very large numbers of such carvings. The object seems quite clearly to have been based on an English alabaster relief representing the Betrayal. While we may reasonably suppose the terracotta to have been modelled in France rather than in England, it is difficult at present, in the absence of data upon which to found an opinion, to say definitely whether it was made by a Frenchman or by one of the many Englishmen in Normandy when it was produced. It is now the property of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Some few years ago I exhibited before the Society of Antiquaries, and subsequently reproduced and discussed in the *Antiquaries Journal*,² a fine English alabaster image which I took to represent St. Mary Magdalene. My attribution was at that time strongly disputed by a number of scholars, on the ground that, even though the figure was shown holding a tress of hair in a way characteristic of medieval English representations of the Magdalene, it was crowned,

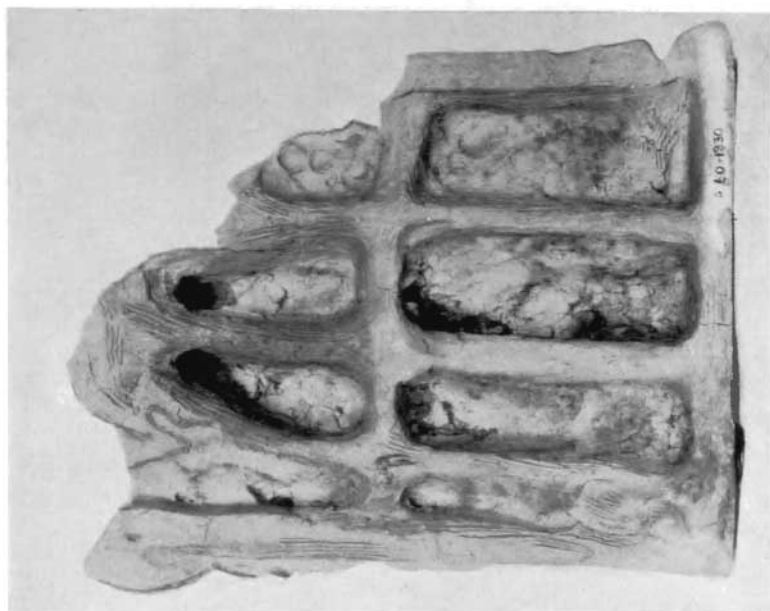
¹ Cf. Nelson, 'A Doom Reredos,' in *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.*, 1918, 70. Also, Pl. vi B, and Pl. vii A, B, and accompanying text, *supra*. Possibly (but, I think, less probably) our panel may have been the central

one of a *Te Deum* altarpiece; cf. Nelson, in *Arch. Journ.*, lxxiv, 113 *seqq.*

² Vol. viii (1928), 64-67 and Pl. xviii, Fig. 5.



OUR LORD IN GLORY AND (?) ST. MATTHEW



B. TERRACOTTA PANEL (BACK)



A. TERRACOTTA PANEL (FRONT)

wherefore the cylindrical object in the left hand more probably stood for St. Barbara's tower than for the Magdalene's ointment-pot. I pointed out, in support of my attribution, that—contrary to my opponents' contention that she, being neither a martyr nor commonly thought to be of royal blood, was never given a crown—the Magdalene was occasionally, although rarely, shown crowned, and I cited two examples (one French, the other Catalan) of this. In a later volume of the *Antiquaries Journal*¹ I cited another Catalan representation of the Magdalene with a crown. I am now able to point to three more crowned representations, two of them Germanic, the other English. One of these is in a painting,² now at Berlin in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, by the Swabian master Bernhard Strigel (1469–1528), where the Magdalene is shown with a light crown round her head-dress. The second is a large wooden figure, by a Tyrolese artist of the early sixteenth century, (no. 2031) in the same collection, long-haired, richly clothed, wearing a light crown, and holding a cup-like object representing the ointment-vessel.³ The third (see Pl. x, B) is a small image, English of the fifteenth century, a plaster cast of which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum,⁴ one of the large collection presented to the museum in 1916 by the Architectural Association; it belongs to a group of related objects (including, besides similar images of other saints, a Holy Trinity and an Assumption of the Virgin), the material and the present situation of which are not recorded in connexion with the casts, but whose workmanship proclaims their close relationship with the products of the English alabaster industry. In view of these examples there should, I think, no longer

¹ Cf. x (1930), p. 45.

² The picture (no. 563A), showing the Magdalene and St. John Baptist, has been reproduced in one of the picture books of the Series 'Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,' *Die Gemäldesammlung: Die deutschen und altniederländischen Meister*, Berlin, 1929, p. 132. Unfortunately the crown, placed over the cloth headgear, is hardly visible in the reproduction. The painting has been reproduced

also, but on a smaller scale, in *Königliche Museen zu Berlin: Die Gemäldesammlung des Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums*, p. 43 (with description of colouring on p. 42).

³ Reproduced on p. 283 of T. Demmler's *Die Bildwerke des Deutschen Museums: Die Bildwerke in Holz, Stein und Ton (Grossplastik)*, in the series 'Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,' Berlin and Leipzig, 1930.

⁴ No. A2516–1916.

remain any question as to there having been serious objections to showing St. Mary Magdalene crowned whenever it suited an artist so to represent her.

On several occasions¹ I have drawn attention to the characteristic small boss on the tower held as an emblem in English alabaster images of St. Barbara, but without finding a satisfactory explanation of it, although I have suggested that it might possibly represent the holy wafer which in Continental art forms, together with a chalice in which it stands, one of St. Barbara's emblems. I have now two further suggestions to offer, although—in the absence of corroborative evidence for either—with great diffidence. One is that the curious boss perhaps represents one of her breasts—shown set against the tower because her hands are filled, one by the tower, the other by the palm-branch of martyrdom—for *The Golden Legend* (Caxton's translation) tells us that 'Then commanded the judge to the hangman that he should cut off with his sword her paps, and when they were cut off . . .',² and severed breasts have served as an emblem of at least one other favourite saint—St. Agatha. The other—which to me appears, on what little evidence we have, the most plausible one which yet has presented itself—is that the boss, which is in low relief and is shown, in more than one instance, with dark green as what seems to be its original colour, represents a cross-section of a stream of water. Although Caxton's edition of *The Golden Legend* does not tell us of the incident, we may read elsewhere how, when St. Barbara wished to be baptised, miraculously 'une source d'eau vive jaillit devant elle,' and St. John himself came to baptise her in it.³

¹ Cf. *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, xxxii (1920), 121 seq.; *Ant Journ.*, iii (1923), 25 seq.; *ibid.*, iv, 376; *ibid.*, vii, 66.

² Life of St. Barbara.

³ Cf. L. Du Broc de Segange, *Les saints patrons des corporations*, ii, Paris, 1887, 521.