

SECOND LETTER FROM DAWSON TURNER, ESQ., V. P.

TO

HENRY HARROD, ESQ.

*Secretary of the Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society,*

UPON THE SUBJECT OF

THE CRUCIFIX,

AND

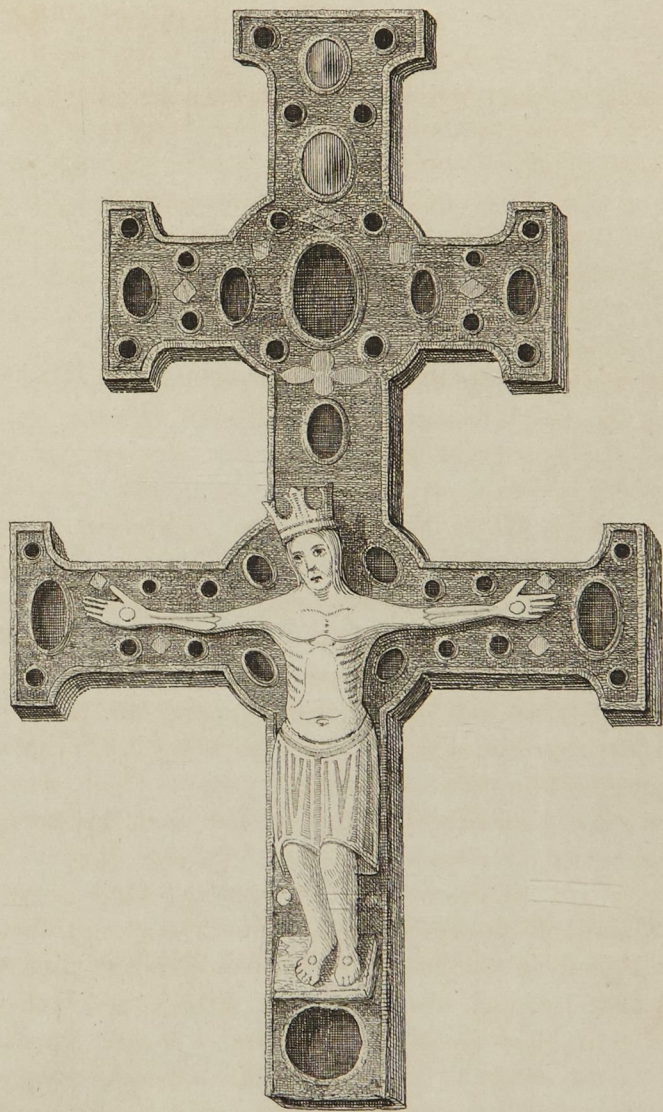
The Tablet representing the Martyrdom of St. Erasmus,

DISCOVERED AT BUCKENHAM.

MY DEAR SIR,

I did not expect, when I had the pleasure of sending you Mr. Beauchamp's kind contribution of the engravings from his Tablet of St. Erasmus, that I should thus soon be called upon to inform you of his having laid us under an additional obligation by a similar and in nowise less interesting present, in connection with the Crucifix discovered by him at the same time.

To the few remarks I have to offer upon this latter, I must prefix an acknowledgment of the assistance I have received in the describing of it from the Very Reverend F. C. Husenbeth—an assistance in such matters always of the highest value, and never imparted otherwise than with the most free and liberal kindness. The Crucifix, though now scarcely more than nine inches in length by six in width, was evidently much larger in its perfect state, and was then, most probably, of good proportions. At the same time it is impossible to speak with any certainty on this head; and thus much only may be said with safety, that we may fortunately rest secure that the whole which was



FOUND UNDER THE CHANCEL FLOOR

BUCKENHAM ST NICHOLAS. NORFOLK.

Drawn & Etched by H.Ninham.

of importance remains. The material is copper gilt; the drapery round the body of the Saviour is of curious enamel, and was originally, doubtless, distinguished with a variety of prominent colours, portions of which, more especially of the blue and green, are still discernible, however corroded and destroyed by time. There can be no question but that the smaller holes were fitted with jewels, or what professed to be such; while the larger in all probability contained relics beneath crystals, two of which yet remain, though the objects they were destined to protect have disappeared. On the subject of the use and destination of the Crucifix, my learned friend above quoted says: "It could not have been a processional cross, for which it was neither large enough nor of the right form. I am of opinion that it must have stood either on a small altar in the church, or somewhere in the sacristy. Its double form and shape render it remarkable. Still more so does the very unusual mode of representing our Blessed Redeemer; not crowned as usual with thorns, but with a regal diadem. I am therefore inclined to think it may have come from the East. Greek crosses are often so shaped and ornamented. Moreover, the double cross is the distinctive badge of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, called also of St. James of Jerusalem. There is a community now in England of Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, or Sepulchrians, who wear a similar cross in red upon their black habits."

For those of our Society who may wish to take a more enlarged view of the subject, I know not where to refer them so well as to Mr. Pugin's noble *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume*. They will there find the different kinds of crosses described and illustrated in that satisfactory manner, which every one who has the good fortune to be acquainted with him might naturally expect from his zeal and ability and learning. He classes them as follows: 1. Altar Crosses. 2. Processional Crosses. 3. Roods

on Lofts. 4. Reliquary Crosses. 5. Consecration Crosses. 6. Marking Crosses. 7. Pectoral Crosses. 8. Spire Crosses. 9. Crosses pendant over Altars. To the first of these divisions the relic before us clearly belongs; but even here we are met with a difficulty in the outset; for, while "every altar is required to be furnished with a cross and the image of our Lord crucified," it is expressly declared in the *Ceremoniale Episcoporum*, that such cross must not only be equally high as the candelabra, but must overtop them; and every one, in the least degree conversant with the interior of Roman Catholic churches, will know that this requires no little height. The injunction runs: "In medio candelabrorum locabitur crux præalta, et æquet altitudinem vicinorum candelabrorum, et crux ipsa tota candelabris superemineat, cum imagine Sanctissimi Crucifixi ad exteriorem altaris faciem." Many of these crosses, Mr. Pugin adds, had figures of the Virgin Mary and St. John at the base. He at the same time speaks of others which he expressly terms "small ones," and which probably agreed with ours from Buckenham in size, though not in form. Upon the subject of crosses in general, he dwells much at length; and not the least interesting portion of his account of them, is the extracts he gives from the Inventories of Lincoln and Winchester Cathedrals, of York Minster, and of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, descriptive of those they contained. It will be remarked of these, that by far the greater number were likewise studded with precious stones of various dimensions and value; and that in a considerable proportion of them were encased relics, not uncommonly portions of the Holy Cross itself.

In continuation of the subject, I may be allowed to remark, that the custom of ornamenting the holy symbol of our faith with gold and silver and jewels and relics, was in olden times occasionally transferred to the covers of manuscripts, on which crucifixes also sometimes appeared. Mr.

Astle, in his Paper on Stone Pillars, Crosses, and Crucifixes, in the *Archæologia* (XIII., p 220), adduces several instances, and among them the famous *Textus Sancti Cuthberti*, now in the Cottonian Library, and two *Gospel Books*, enumerated in the Inventory of Queen Elizabeth's jewels, plate, &c., made in the sixteenth year of her reign; and "a booke of golde enameled," in the Secret Jewel-house in the Tower, "clasped with a rubie, having on the one syde a crosse of dyamants, & th'other syde a flower de luce of dyamants, & iiij rubies with a pendaunte of white saphyres & the Arms of England, which booke is garnished with small emeraldes and rubies hanging to a cheyne pillar-fashion, sett with knottes, everie one conteyning iij rubies." In treasures like these, as far as I have heard or read, the Royal Library at Munich seems to bear the palm; and Dr. Dibdin, in his *Bibliographical Tour* (III., p. 262 et seq.), describes several of those there preserved, and dwells upon their attractions with the warmth of words and feeling so characteristic of his literary zeal. Yet even these, however transcendent in taste and elegance, as well as in workmanship and costliness of materials, are not, I apprehend, to be compared for their antiquity or as matters of intrinsic curiosity, with the cases of the Irish MSS. figured by Sir William Betham in his *Antiquarian Researches*. For my own part, I certainly never saw any thing of the kind "aut simile aut secundum" to the latter. In the Royal Library at Paris and the Imperial at Vienna, it must be inferred from the silence of Dr. Dibdin that there are either no specimens of similar binding, or none that call for particular notice. Of Italy I can speak more positively from my own knowledge; for there I made particular inquiries, as well in the Vatican as at Venice and Milan, and was in all cases met with a negative. To turn nearer home, our own county, I am happy to say, can show four fine ones in the volumes in the Holkham library purchased by Mr. Roger Wilbraham

for the late Earl of Leicester. These, however, and I could almost persuade myself every other of those above enumerated, would, in the eyes of the *real Antiquary*, "hide their diminished heads," before the Psalter at Stowe, of which an account is given in the *Bibliographical Decameron*, (p. liv. *note*); and with the following extract from that account I will close my letter. "There is a tradition founded upon Powell's *Repertory of Records*, 1631, 4to., p. 123, that this was the book upon which the Kings and Queens of England took their *coronation-oath* previously to the Reformation. It belonged once to Martin of Palgrave, who lent it to Madox; and the latter told the former, he believed in the original application of it to the use here stated. In the Exchequer it was originally entered as 'a little booke with a crucifix;' and such is the estimation in which it is justly held by its Noble Owner, that, when the Duchess of Oldenburgh visited Stowe with her imperial brother, Alexander, on their return from Oxford, she was shown this sombre little volume as a relic of inestimable value; and she afterwards placed it in the hands of her brother in a manner the most emphatic possible, telling him to consider it as the book which had been pressed by the hands of Alfred. The brass crucifix yet remaining upon the exterior cover betrays evident marks of its having lost an outer, and probably precious coat, from something like *oscular* attrition." Who that reads these lines will not lament with me that my poor friend that wrote them is at this moment on his death-bed? Who will not be ready to say, in the words of perhaps the most touching hymn ever traced by mortal pen:

"Juste Judex ultionis,  
Donum fac remissionis  
Ante diem rationis?"

I am, my dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

DAWSON TURNER.