

DESCRIPTION
OF
The Engraving from the Randworth Screen,

CHIEFLY AS IT ILLUSTRATES THE ECCLESIASTICAL VESTMENTS
OF OUR CHURCH DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

TO DAWSON TURNER, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR,

It is a real luxury for once in my life to find myself beyond the regions of doubt and hesitation.

Five years ago, when I was almost a total stranger, you gave me free access to all your rich and varied stores of information. Whatever I know about our Norfolk rood-screens has been culled from your library: you first taught me their value as specimens of mediæval art: your kindness supplied the very drawing, an engraved copy of which is now before us; and therefore to you only can my brief explanation be properly or *safely* addressed,

“Ne moveat cornicula risum
Furtivis nudata coloribus.”

It is quite certain that a greater number of these panel-paintings are to be found in Norfolk alone than in all the rest of the kingdom put together. A few years ago I was able to enumerate *fifty* of our churches still containing painted rood-screens, either in a perfect or fragmentary state,* exclusively of those which may exist in obscure or distant parts of the county, beyond the range of my observation. *Three hundred* of these screens, at the very lowest

* See *Lecture on the Antiquities of Norfolk*, 8vo. 1844, p. 65.



Figure from the Rood-loft Screen in the
Church at Randworth, - Norfolk.

Day & Son, Lith. to the Queen.

estimate, must have fallen a prey to the superstitious rage of the Puritans, or to the neglect and false taste of more recent times. Yet still the Norfolk antiquary has ample means of study placed within his reach: he is even affluent by comparison: the meanest of the surviving rood-screens will sufficiently explain their original character; and, allowing for the unavoidable encroachments of time, a few remain almost exactly as they were before the Reformation.

Such *pre-eminently* are the screens which still exist at Worstead, and at Barton, and Marsham, and Aylsham, and Randworth, all in the immediate vicinity of each other; and we have now before us as faithful an illustration from the last of these as could be accomplished without the aid of colour.

As a specimen of mediæval art, it may fairly be allowed to speak for itself. Very possibly the reader may agree with me as to its merits or defects—as to the merits of natural genius, or the faults of imperfect study; but I have really no wish to bias his judgment or influence his taste. It is merely laid before him as a fair sample of what painting was towards the end of the fifteenth century. I ought, however, to remind him, that the *general* effect of the rood-screen *as a whole* was more desired and attended to than the elaborate finish of any separate part; that the designs were conventional; the space limited, and the means and appliances of art of a very inferior description. Should these hints dispose him to a lenient criticism, I shall have accomplished all that I can desire.

In our churches, *as they were*, architecture and tinted glass, panel-painting, sculpture, and embroidery, harmonised most beautifully with each other; and the figure before us in some degree helps to explain the secret. The eye was not arrested by the beauty of *detached parts*, but by the general effect of *the whole*, to which these parts were made subservient. Artists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centu-

ries chiefly relied on the opposition of *green and red*, in various shades, enriching them with gold. They possessed the other colours; *but they used them very sparingly*. Thus it is in a large majority of the existing rood-screens; and the figure which it is my province to describe furnishes no exception to this rule.

I must now do my best to tell the reader how the vestments are coloured in the original.

The back-ground is such as a modern artist might produce by blending together *Vandyke brown* and *burnt Sienna*—not one uniform tint, but of a clouded or marbled appearance, produced by various shades of the same colour. It is diapered with bunches of white flowers, stalked and leaved in gold.

The *Nimbus* is vermillion, bordered with gold, on which a pattern is outlined in some dark colour; an observation which applies to the mitre, the border, &c., of the chasuble, and the apparel in front of the albe.

The *Mitre* is of gold, lined and centred with a pale blue, heightened with white.

In the right hand there is a book, of white, shaded; and in the left he bears a *cross-staff*, the upper part being gold, and the staff itself of the tint of raw Sienna.

The *Chasuble*, or upper vestment, is of a rich green, lined with pink; the edging of its collar, the *Orfroy* round the shoulders and in front, and its border, being gold.

The *Dalmatica*, beneath the chasuble, is of a lighter green, fringed with alternate tufts of crimson and white.

The *Tunicella*, beneath the dalmatica, seems to me to be of an intensely dark green, though it is by no means easy to determine its exact tint. It is fringed with alternate tufts of pink and light green.

The *Albe*, beneath, is white, shaded with a sort of *neutral tint*, and *apparelled* in the lower part of its front with an oblong piece of gold embroidery.

The shoes are black; and he stands on an oblong of burnt Sienna, tufted here and there.

In the *flesh tints* we find nothing of that beautiful transparency which we observe in Nature, or in modern art, her expositor. The expression is bad; nor will all my antiquarian zeal allow me to praise the drawing and anatomy of the figure. But the draperies are extremely well managed: the painter has made the most of a very few colours; and, bearing in mind what has been said about *unity* and *subordination*, it may be fairly questioned whether a much higher school of art could have better achieved the purpose.

The total absence of either scroll or emblem has of course involved the *subject* in an utter and hopeless obscurity. There is nothing to guide; but, on the other hand, there is nothing to mislead or perplex. The *cross-staff* shows that he was a Metropolitan; the *nimbus*, that he was a Saint,† while it supplies a most valuable illustration of the vestments anciently used in our church. Among your illustrations from Randworth I might have found *several* far better in point of execution, and clearly defined by their emblems; but scarcely anywhere could I have found so *complete* an

† Saint Nicholas, *Archbishop* of Myra, had a reputation for sanctity which extended itself all over the world; and, *if we may believe his legend*, it was very justly deserved. On *the very day of his birth* he is related to have stood up in the bath for nearly half an hour: while he was as yet *an infant* he allowed himself only one meal on Wednesdays and Fridays; and (what is more to our purpose) he was chosen to this Metropolitan See *by Revelation*. Here then we have an Archbishop *κατ'ἔξοχὴν*;—his symbolical connection with the Episcopate *in the abstract* being no less clearly marked by the election of *the Boy-Bishop* on the day of his anniversary. In the *Catalogus Sanctorum* (Lugduni, 1542, fol. 4) St. Nicholas is represented in his pontifical robes *without any emblem*. He was, moreover, the Patron Saint of mariners, and as such must have been especially popular in a county which borders upon the sea. Should the reader reject this hypothetical solution, modestly thrust into a foot-note, I really cannot help it: he may go further; and, allow me to add, *he may fare worse*.

illustration of ecclesiastical costume, and this at once determined me in my choice.

An Archbishop or Bishop wore all these vestments, *because* the Episcopate was supposed to include within itself the seven orders of the ministry; not as a distinct order in itself, but the highest *degree* of the priesthood, of which it was said to be the complement—the plenitude—the perfection.

By the *Albe* and *Girdle* and *Amess* were represented the four *minor* orders—viz., Ostiary, Reader, Exorcist, and Acolyth—distinguished from each other by *office* rather than by *vestments*, which were common to them all.

The *Tunicella*, worn over the albe, was the distinctive vestment of a Subdeacon.

The *Dalmatica*, worn over the tunicle, that of a Deacon.

The *Casula*, worn over the dalmatica, that of a Priest.

The *Maniple* and *Stole* belonged to the two orders last mentioned; but with this difference, that the Deacon wore his stole only over the left shoulder, carried across like a belt and tied under his right arm, while that of a Priest was crossed over his breast saltier-wise, and, passing under his girdle, hung down in front.

Thus was a Bishop the very type of symbolical propriety; and he had, besides all these, the vestments peculiar to his own *degree*; viz., the mitre, pastoral-staff, ring, gloves, and sandals. There was also an ornamental addition (or rather appendage) connected with his girdle, termed the "*succin-gulum*,"—similar in appearance to the *maniple*; and the *encolpium*, or pectoral cross, hung before the breast.

The only difference between the vestments of a Bishop and Archbishop were the *pall*, worn by the latter over his chasuble on occasions of unusual solemnity, and the *cross-staff*, which he bore in his left hand, instead of the pastoral-staff or crook.

The engraving exhibits to us an Archbishop under the full

weight of his ecclesiastical dignity,—as he would have officiated at a Pontifical High Mass on Easter-day, in the year of our Lord MCCCC . . .

I shall now describe these vestments in their natural order; but it may be as well to premise, that (with the exception of the *albe* and *amess*, which were of fine linen) they were *all* of some rich material, such as silk, or velvet, or cloth of gold, elaborately adorned with needle-work, in which our ancestors attained to such excellence that "*Anglicum opus*" became proverbial all over the Christian world.

I would also observe that their *colours* varied according to the nature of the festival; as did also the *antependia*, *chalice veils*, and other draperies connected with the altar.

Green or *yellow* vestments were worn on ordinary Sundays or other days.

White or *blue*, on the festivals of Confessors, Virgins, or Angels; and from the vigil of Christmas-day to the octaves of the Epiphany.

Red or *purple*, on the solemnities of Apostles, Evangelists, and Martyrs; and from the vigil of Pentecost to Trinity Sunday.

Violet, on days of fasting and humiliation, and from Advent Sunday to the eve of the Nativity.

Black was very rarely (if ever) employed in connection with ecclesiastical vestments in the middle ages; but in the modern Church of Rome I have seen vestments of black velvet and gold on a Good Friday, and also at masses for the dead. In the Melford Catalogue we read of "*a red silk cope*," which used to be worn upon Good Friday.

COLOURS had anciently a *symbolical* meaning. WHITE signified *purity*; YELLOW, *wisdom*; VIOLET, *mourning*, or *penitential sorrow*; while GREEN, BLUE, and RED were, respectively, the emblems of *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*.*

THE ALBE was a long white tunic of fine linen with tight

* See my Letter in the *Norfolk Chronicle*, Friday, April 30, 1847.

sleeves (*en gigot*.) It was not open in front like a surplice, but was passed over the head and shoulders, and girded round the loins. Sometimes it had a richly embroidered collar and cuffs; and also an oblong piece of embroidery upon its lower extremity in front, (as represented in the engraving) in which case it was termed "*Alba Parata*," (an *apparelled albe*); and these ornamental additions were termed by our ancestors "*Apparrelles*." On great festivals I have seen an *albe* formed almost entirely of that very beautiful material, *point lace*.

THE GIRDLE was composed of fine flax, plaited, and tasselled. A Bishop's girdle was gradually enlarged towards the ends, presenting an embroidered flat surface; and this ornamental addition was termed "*succingulum*."

THE AMESS was composed of fine white linen, and might be used to cover the head and shoulders, as represented on *the Percy tomb* in Beverley Minster; but it was generally rolled back, so as to be only slightly visible under the chin. It was crossed over the breast of the *albe* and fastened with two strings to the *girdle*.

THE STOLE, ("called in Latin *Orarium*, and *Stola*) was a long narrow vestment, often richly embroidered, and in *shape* like the scarf worn in our Reformed Church. A deacon wore the Stole over his left shoulder, thence passed across the breast and back, and tied with tassels under the left arm; while in the case of Priests, Bishops, or Archbishops, it was crossed over the breast and hung down in front.

THE ENCOLPIUM, or pectoral cross, which was of gold and often richly gemmed, hung over the breast of the ALBE, under the vestments hereafter to be described.

THE MANIPLE (*sudarium*) was an oblong piece of embroidered silk or velvet, like a miniature stole. It was folded double, passed over the left wrist, and hung down.

THE ENCOLPIUM and GIRDLE would have been of course concealed by the upper vestments; but in the engraving we

might have expected to find some slight indications of the *Amess* round the neck—to have seen the ends of the *stole* hanging down in front, and the *maniple* entire. Such, however, is not the case; and in these three respects it must be acknowledged that the illustration is not complete.

THE TUNICLE (or *subtile*), the distinctive vestment of a sub-deacon, was cut at each side, about half way up to the arm, bordered and fringed. It had two narrow stripes of some rich material in its length, and a sort of square *capucium* at the back. Its *narrow, strait* sleeves terminated a little above the elbow. In the engraving, the lower part of the *tunicle* is seen immediately over the albe.

THE DALMATICA (or deacon's vestment) was almost exactly similar to the *tunicle*, with the exception of its very *full* sleeves. A representation of St. Lawrence in *the National Gallery* (quare, if No. 179), at the south-west corner of the principal room clearly exhibits the ancient form of this vestment; and in the illuminated MS. of Froissart* (in the British Museum) Bishops, vested in the wide sleeved *dalmatica*, may be seen assisting at the coronation of Pope Boniface; and also at the coronation of King Henry IV. In more modern times the sleeve has been reduced to a sort of *epaulette*, falling about half way down to the elbow. In the present instance the *dalmatica* may be seen over the *tunicle*.

THE CHASUBLE (*casula*) in its *ancient* form, if laid flat upon the ground, would have appeared like an *oval* more or less pointed, with a hole in the centre, where the longer and shorter diameters intersect. Through this aperture the head of the officiant was passed. It fell down before and behind about as low as the knees, sloping off to a point, and covered the arms about as low as the elbows. In modern times it is rounded before and behind, and cut to the shoulder, so as to give full play to the arms. This was the principal vestment

* The illuminations of this precious MS. have been published in fac-simile.

worn by a priest when he celebrated mass. It had always a rich border; sometimes also a collar, as in the engraving. There was a broad stripe in front, and a Latin cross on the back, extending throughout its whole length and breadth; each being of the same embroidered pattern or rich material; and, like some of the other vestments mentioned, it was not unfrequently *powdered* with flowers of gold. The ancient form of the *chasuble* (immediately over the *dalmatica*) is clearly exhibited in the engraving before us.

THE PALL (*pallium*) worn by the Archbishop immediately over his chasuble (on occasions of unusual solemnity) was sent by the Pope as a confirmation of the metropolitan dignity. It was of fine white wool, bordered, and ornamented with crosses *patée*, fitched at their lower extremities, and will be found emblazoned on the arms of the Sees of Canterbury, &c. In the present instance, we have an *exact* representation of its *general form* in front of the chasuble; and, although the ornaments do not correspond with the above description, still when I look at the *cross-staff*, and recollect that it was an *infallible* token of metropolitan dignity, I am inclined to believe that this arose from a provincial artist's notion of a vestment which he had never seen. The mere embroidery over the shoulders and in front of the chasuble frequently exhibited much the same appearance. But this engraving *most decidedly* represents an *Archbishop*; and I have never yet met with an instance either on panel, or vellum, or glass, in which this *most* important badge has been omitted. However, the reader must of course judge for himself.

I need not say anything about the *cross-staff*, the *mitra preciosa*, the *sandals*, and the *ring*, which will also be found represented in the engraving. The tomb of Bishop Goldwell in Norwich Cathedral, notwithstanding its deplorable mutilation, still beautifully illustrates the form of the episcopal sandals. This is also the case with the tomb of John de

Sheppey in Rochester Cathedral, an engraving of which may be seen in the *Archæologia*. (Vol. XXV. p. 122, &c.) The effigy last mentioned is almost in a *perfect* state, and presents an illustration of ancient vestments and their embroidery unequalled in this country. The episcopal gloves, richly bordered and gemmed, are especially deserving of attention from their extreme rarity.

And now—to bring my “*verbosa et grandis epistola*” to an end—should the above account of vestments *immediately connected with the mass*, prove at all interesting to our friends, I shall be most happy, at some future time, to complete my subject by describing the Cope, Rochette, Mantaletta, Mozetta, Cotta, Biretum, and other articles of Ecclesiastical Costume which do not strictly belong to the same category.

At a very early period I gave my attention to this branch of Archæology, and have ever found it a most valuable help in the *interpretation* of paintings, and sculptures, and other memorials of the past; our richest stores being of a purely ecclesiastical character. I am only too well aware that Norfolk possesses many antiquaries of much greater skill and experience; but my offer is addressed to those *who know a little less than I do*, either because they have had not the same amount of industry or the same opportunities of study, or because their leisure has been in an *inverse* ratio to their zeal; and there is so much *bonhommie* among us, that I shall not be charged with presumption because I have thus volunteered my *extra* services as a guide.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

RICHARD HART.

