

## Alabaster Carving in West Barsham Church, Norfolk,

COMMUNICATED BY THE

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This interesting Carving in Derbyshire alabaster (14 ins. by 12 ins.) was found resting in the piscina of West Barsham Church, Norfolk, when I became Vicar of the parish in 1891. I am unable to discover how long it had remained in this position. The subject appears to be an exposition of the Infant Saviour to St. John the Baptist and his mother Elizabeth. One of the figures in the background, no doubt, represents Joseph; another figure bears a lighted candle, which may suggest the true light of the world. The upper portion of the carving represents the Heavenly Father with the Dove and the Angelic Host.

The composition shows great artistic merit, and expresses forcibly the feelings of all present, which one cannot fail to recognise, although the faces are much mutilated. The background seems to suggest the Church of Christ rising from the ruins of the old Temple of Jerusalem. The work is perhaps by an Italian artist resident in England, as it lacks some of the characteristics of pure Italian work. As the Vicarage of West Barsham was appropriated to the Priory of Castleacre, it is quite possible this carving may have been brought from that place at the time of the dissolution, as there is nothing to indicate that it originally belonged to the church of West Barsham.

The wooden frame in which it is fixed evidently dates from the sixteenth or early part of the seventeenth century, and the date (1407) cut on the alabaster looks like a seventeenth century forgery.





ALABASTER PANEL FROM WEST BARSHAM CHURCH,  
NORFOLK.