XI.—*On an Ebony Pax bearing the Legend of St. Veronica.* By PROF. DR.
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IN the early Church the *kiss of peace*, the simplest of all symbolisms, was a holy ceremony in public worship reverently kept up. Its use lingered on to the Middle Ages. In the twelfth century, when the separation of the sexes began to fall away, the custom came in of the priest kissing a carved ornament instead of his brother-minister, and this in its turn was saluted by the whole congregation. This substitute of any material, costly or simple, even of wood or glass, and generally small in size, after use was returned to the altar. In the West it bore many names—the *Pax*, *Osculatorium*, *Deosculatorium Pacis*, *Osculare*, *Tabula Pacis*, *Asser ad Pacem*, *Paxillum*, *Paxilla*, *Porte-Paix*, *Porte-pax*, *Pax-brede*, *Pakys-bred*, *Pax-bord*, and so on.

In England we are not sure that it was introduced before the thirteenth century. It continued among us down to the Reformation, and even in the Reformed Church itself, but afterwards disappeared. It is now extinct also in the Roman Church, with some exceptions. "The custom of giving the kiss of peace before the communion, in the more solemn service of the Roman Catholic Church called the *High Mass*, is still kept up among the officiating clergy, as likewise among the men and the women of the different religious orders. It is performed by the parties placing their hands upon each others shoulders and bringing their left cheeks nearly in contact with each other."^a Thus its use is very circumscribed, and it is most perfunctorily performed.

Such small articles of church furniture as the pax would usually be melted down or otherwise destroyed. Specimens, indeed, are found in some of our

^a Milner, in *Archæologia*, vol. XX., London, 1824, p. 535.

EBONY PAX BEARING THE LEGEND OF ST. VERONICA.

Full size.

European museums, but they are not many. Several have been preserved as examples of high art. One, probably from the fifteenth century, is figured to illustrate the paper "On the Use of the Pax in the Roman Catholic Church," by the Rev. John Milner, D.D., F.S.A."^a This piece is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches high by about 2 inches broad, of silver, bluntly pointed at the top, and has a projecting leaf or handle behind, on which it might rest nearly upright when placed on the altar. It is about $\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch thick, and is the more perfect of two such then existing in the north of England. On it are embossed the Crucifixion, the Virgin below on one side, and St. John on the other. At the foot of the rood are a skull and bones.

In the *Archæological Journal*, vol. ii., London, 1846, p. 149, is engraved a second specimen, apparently from the last quarter of the fifteenth century. It is preserved in New College, Oxford, is of silver parcel gilt, about $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $3\frac{1}{16}$ inches, with a handle. To Albert Way's excellent article thereon, as well as to the paper of Mr. Milner, I refer my readers for further information.

Every pax known to me is carved with some scene from the life of Christ, or bears the figure of some saint. I have never seen or heard of one with any subject from the Apocryphal Gospels. The one here engraved (Plate IX.) is the first of this class, as far as I know.

It is here given full size, chemityped by Professor Magnus Petersen, the distinguished Danish antiquarian artist. As we see, it slopes off on each side, being about 1 inch thick in the centre. I added it to my museum in March 1877, by purchase at Copenhagen. It is impossible to say whether or no it be of Danish workmanship, for such things wander strangely about, but I know no reason to the contrary. It is deeply and boldly cut in the hard wood, and is in excellent preservation.

The scene is from the Cross-fastening. The principal figure, Christ, is under a tree on his way to Calvary. Behind, on the left, is Saint Veronica (or Berenice), usually looked on as the woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, and who came near Jesus, and touching his garment was healed. In his last painful march to death she had pitied our Lord, and reached him her veil or kerchief, with which to wipe his bleeding face. When he gave it back, it bore the impress of his features, and became the *Vera Icon*, the miraculous portrait. It is here held by St. Thaddeus, on the front left of Christ. The Saviour, apparently, is pointing to

^a *Archæologia*, vol. XX., London, 1824, p. 535. Pl. 24.

this, and saying to his mother, who is on her knees to the right, "See what this woman hath done for me!"

This touching and poetical fable is of great antiquity, was widely known in the Middle Ages, often used in works of art, and is even now not quite forgotten. It was further employed in connection with the legend of Abgarus, whom St. Thaddeus healed by the help of this Veronica veil, as some traditions assert; though others say it was carried by Velosianus to Rome and there cured "Tiberius, the Emperor."

These stories underwent continual modification, as they passed from mouth to mouth, or from copyist to copyist. Thus, in the charming old-English poetical homily, "De Abgaro Rege," by Archbishop Ælfric, of York (A.D. 1023—1051), the Apostle Thaddeus heals Abgarus at Christ's command, by merely touching him:—^a

Tatheus cwæð þa gyt
to þam wanhalan cyninge:
Fordi ic sette mine hand
on þæs Hælendes naman
ofer þe untrumne!

And he swa dyde,
and se cyning weard ge-hæled sona,
swa he hine hrepode,
fram eallum his untrumnyssum,
þe he ær on þrowode.

*Spake now Tatheus
to the sickly sovereign:
"My hand therefore lay I,
in the name of the Healer,
on thy wasted body!"*

*When, as he did so,
the King was straight whole,
thus cur'd and cleansed
of all the sicknesses
he erewhile suffer'd.*

In other versions again, as in old-Swedish,^b Abgarus in his zeal to see Christ, sent his own painter to Jerusalem to take a portrait of the healer. But the Divine face was too bright for the eyes of the artist, and the Saviour pressed his own kerchief over his countenance, and gave it to the errander stamped with the Heaven-King's image.

This is the first pax found in Scandinavia. Its date would seem to be late in the fifteenth century, but it shows no peculiarity of dress or style which can exactly fix where or when it was produced.

^a G. Stephens. *Tvende Old-Engelske Digte*. (Indbydelsesskrift til Kjöbenhavns Universitets Fæst, 1853, 4to.), p. 19.

^b G. Stephens. *Ett Forn-Svenskt Legendarium*, vol. i. Stockholm, 1847. 8vo., p. 232.