

MEDIÆVAL SIGNACULUM OF SAINTS EDWYN  
AND ECGWYN.\*

SUPPLEMENTAL AND CORRECTIONAL NOTE.

*By Henry Ecroyd Smith.*

---

THIS remarkable relic, having become known to an enlarged circle of antiquaries and students of our national history, has excited no little interest in many quarters, resulting in my receipt of several communications of value, some in further elucidation of the subjects broached, whilst others are corrective of statements obtained, in most instances, from well-known authors, and held to be reliable. I gladly avail myself of the opportunity to place these additional remarks where they will be published contemporaneously with the original paper, rather than insert a separate communication in a succeeding volume.

Upon good authority I am assured the Holy Chrism is not, neither has ever been, used in the rite of Extreme Unction; likewise that no evidence exists to show that the signs termed Ampullæ were ever used to *contain* this holy oil. In fact there appears strong ground for doubting their special connection with the sacred vessel at Rheims. From a very early period in the history of the Christian Church, down to our own times, a custom has prevailed of abstracting oil from the lamps sustained before the tombs of martyrs, and the shrines of confessors and virgin saints, for devotional purposes. When occasion required the transmission of such oil to any distance, it was enclosed in phials of *glass*. A less fragile material was, however, necessary for the use of pilgrims who often collected the oil at every shrine they reached in the course of their journeyings. Hence lead or pewter came to be employed for these receptacles. The use of this variety of Pilgrims' Signs proves to have been by no means confined to France and England, inasmuch as several of those pub-

\* *Vide* p. 165.

lished by Mr. Roach Smith bear an unmistakably Byzantine character. Though, perhaps, generally manufactured and sold at the shrines chiefly resorted to by pilgrims, examples exist which conduce to a belief in their occasionally being made for the devotees of consequence, instance those in the collection of M. Forgeais, at Paris,\* impressed with the arms of Charles VI and his Queen, Isabel of Bavaria, the Dukes of Orleans and Burgundy, the Constable Du Guesclin, and other persons of rank. One, published in the *Archæological Journal* some years ago, bears a crowned W, thus likewise betokening a personal character and a special manufacture.

In addition to Mr. Roach Smith's notices of kindred relics, some interesting information is supplied by the Rev. Thomas Hugo, M.A., in a communication to the Society of Antiquaries, entitled "Notes on a Collection of Pilgrims' Signs, of XIII, XIV, and XV centuries, found in the Thames," and published in the *Archeologia*, Vol. xxxviii, p. 128.

In connection with the extract from "*The Vision of Piers Ploughman*," it appears that the pilgrim really bore by his side a *bowl* and a bag, and a hundred of ampuls, upon his hat being set signs of Sinai and shells of *Galiccia* (from the shrine of St. James of Compostello); his cloke was studded with *crosses*.

*St. Paulinus*.—Baines incorrectly states this missionary and first bishop of York to have been exiled from Northumbria in 625, this being the year in which he was consecrated; his banishment from the kingdom dates from 633 to 635.

*St. Edwyn*.—The battle in which Edwyn lost at once his army and his life, has in designation been confused by some writers with the victory achieved by his successor, Oswald, near Hexham. There can, nevertheless, be little doubt that Hatfield Chase near Thorne and Doncaster, anciently called Hæthfelth, is the veritable scene of the frightful carnage consummated by Cadwallo and Penda. Broken swords and

\* *Revue Archæologique*, 1861; *Mai*, p. 338.

other relics of the encounter have been found at a considerable depth by peat cutters.

*St. Ecgwyn*, "*Bishop and Confessor*."—The latter title has no connection with the rite of confession of sins; it designates one who has suffered much for the Church, *short of death*.

I have continued the orthography of the names of the last-named Saints, selected as believed to be the correct Saxon. Diversity of opinion exists, more especially as regards Ecgwyn. It is contended that *Eadwine* and *Ecwine* can alone be correct, *wyn* and *wine* (the former meaning friend, the latter joy) being perfectly distinct elements of the language. In the following remarks, which he very courteously allows of my quoting, the latter name is alluded to among other points of historic interest and value, by the Rev. D. H. Haigh,—

"The *Vita-per Brithwaldum Monachum Glastoniensum*, Anno 731, I had hitherto regarded as originally contemporary, but containing additions of the time of King Edgar. Now, having read it again, I am convinced that it is entirely of the latter time, but probably founded on an earlier work. I do not, therefore, regard it as of such authority as I once did, and discard the spelling of the name (Ecgwyn or Æcgwyn). In one part, what regards the vision and the foundation of Evesham, the bishop is introduced speaking in the first person, and this I think may be derived from a writing of his own. The most important documents for his history are the commendatory letters of Pope Constantine and the Charter of Cœnred and Offa, documents the genuineness of which I do not see any ground for disputing. Written in Rome, but under the auspices of two English kings, and intended to have effect in England, it is by no means surprising that they are attested after the English custom. Both are dated in A.D. 709, at Rome, and signed by the Pope, St. Ecwine, Cœnred, and Offa. Both allude to the vision. The former states that St. Ecwine had visited Rome in a previous year. In the latter Cœnred says that they had travelled to Rome together in 703. This is very important. We only know from *Ven. Beda* that Cœnred went to Rome in 709, and that he became a monk and died there. But the *Vita* states that Cœnred and St. Ecwine

“*went to Rome and returned together.* This would be true of the earlier journey, and there are circumstances which render it probable that this took place in 703, as Cœnred’s accession is usually dated in 704, the date of the abdication of Æthelred. But three MSS of the *English Chronicle* state that Cœnred became king of the Southumbrians in 702, and these, with all the rest, record his accession to the kingdom of the Mercians in 704. He was, therefore, consistently with the statement in the *Vita*, king in the year in which the charter says that they visited Rome, and I think that Æthelred’s abdication in his favour, immediately followed his return. Further it is said that St. Wilfrid consecrated Evesham. St. Wilfrid returned from his last Roman journey in 704, and remained in Mercia until 705, because he was forbidden to enter Northumbria. Æthelred, his friend, was still king, but on the point of retiring, having chosen Cœnred his successor. The fact that St. Wilfrid had exercised metropolitan authority in Mercia in former years, when banished from his own diocese, accounts for his having officiated as metropolitan at the consecration of Evesham in the presence of the metropolitan of Canterbury. It seems to me clear, therefore, that the consecration of Evesham occurred in 704. The legend on the seal says ‘three kings gave gifts’ on the occasion. These would be Æthelred, Cœnred, and Æthelheard king of the Hwiccas (people of the district now called Worcestershire); they are represented sitting together.”

*Seal of Evesham Abbey.*—Since the publications of Dugdale and Tanner, early impressions in sufficient number have been discovered to enable sigillarists to effect a complete restoration of this remarkably curious seal. The inscription around the herdsman and his house, on the reverse, reads correctly thus—

“ EOVES . HER . WONEDE . ANT . WAS . SWON .  
FORPI . MEN . CLEPET . PIS . EOVIŠHOM . ”

The modern English of which is simply—

“ Eoves here dwelt, and was a swain,  
Therefore, men call this Eovisham.”

The Latin circumscription proves to be, “ DICTIS . ECGWINI .  
“ DANT . REGES . MVNERA . TRINI . OMNIBVS . VNDE . PIE .  
“ NITET . AVLA . SACRA . MARIE . ”