

PLATE I.



A XIVTH CENTURY ENGLISH ALABASTER
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

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THE alabaster carving of the Blessed Virgin and Child, which forms the subject of this paper, is of English workmanship and, prior to its acquisition by me, was in a church in Brittany. Many English alabasters are still to be seen in Brittany, and that there was a very considerable trade in alabaster-work between England and Brittany, countries in close commercial and court connection, is evidenced by the export to Nantes of the tomb of John IV., duke of Brittany, the first husband of Joan, second wife of Henry IV. of England, in 1408, at which time a safe conduct was granted to John Guychard on the occasion of its export to that country by the following bill of Privy Seal :

Rex universis & singulis Admirallis &c. ad quos &c. Salutem. Sciatis quod nos ad supplicationem carissimæ Consortis nostræ, quæ ad quandam tumbam alabastri, quam pro Duce Britannia defuncto, quondam viro suo, fieri fecit, in bargea de Seynt Nicholas de Nantes in Britannia, una cum tribus ligeorum nostrorum Anglicorum, qui eandem tumbam operati fuerunt—videlicet, Thoma Colyn, Thoma Holewell, & Thoma Poppehowe—ad tumbam prædictam in ecclesia de Nantes in Britannia assidendum & ponendum, ad præsens ordinavit mittendum, Suscepimus in salvum & securum conductum nostrum Johannem Guychard, mercatorem, Magistrum bargeæ prædictæ, ac decem servitores suos, marinarios in comitiva sua, ad Britanniam, ut prædictum est, transeundo, & exinde in regnum

nostrum Angliæ mercatorie redeundo, necnon bargeam prædictam, ac bona et hernesia sua quæcumque; Et ideo vobis mandamus quod ipsum Johannem, & servitores ac Marinarios suos prædictos, versus Britanniam transeundo & exinde in regnum nostrum Angliæ mercatorie redeundo, necnon bargeam prædictam ac bona & hernesia sua quæcumque, manuteneatis, protegatis & defendatis, non inferentes eis seu quantum in vobis est inferri permittentes injuriam, molestiam, dampnum, violenciam, impedimentum aliquod seu gravamen, Et si quid eis forisfactum vel injuriatum fuerit id eis sine dilacione debite corrigi et reformari faciatis. Proviso semper quod ipsi quicquam nobis vel populo nostro seu dicto regno nostro aut aliis dominiis et potestatibus nostris præjudiciale colore præsentium interim non attemptent seu faciant quovis modo. In cujus &c. usque festum Nativitatis Sancti Johannis Baptistæ proximo futurum duraturas. Teste Rege apud Westmonasterium xxiiij die Februarii [1407-8].¹

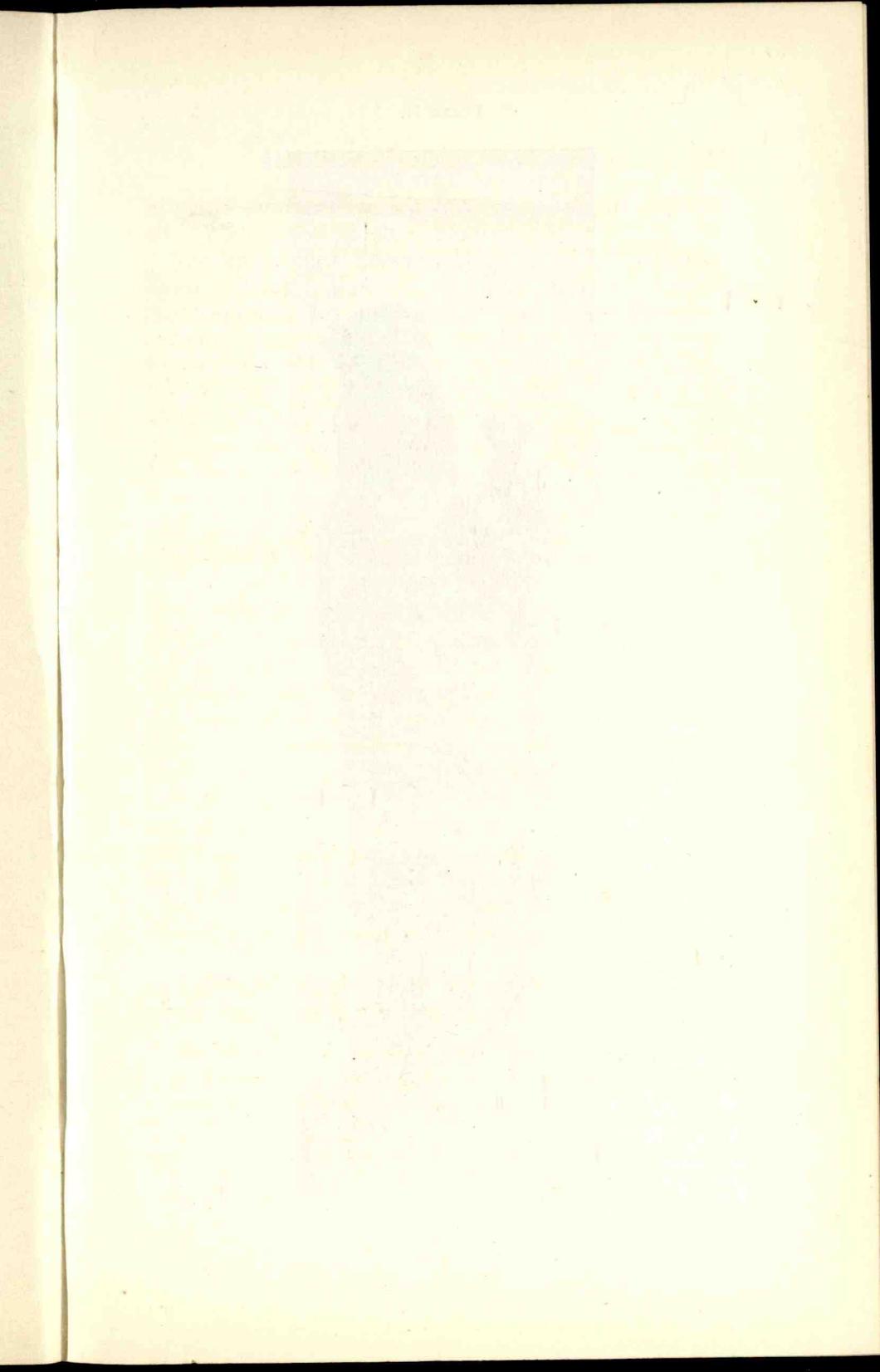
This statuette measures 16 ins. in height. The back is hollowed out and provided with two latten wire loops, for attachment to its wooden "housyng." The design may be thus described: The Holy Mother, who rests her weight upon her right foot, wears a long white robe edged with gold, over which is draped a white cloak lined with scarlet and edged with gold. On her head is a tall elaborate open crown and in her left hand she holds a very long sceptre enriched with leaves.² Upon her right arm she supports the Divine Child, clad in a white robe and cloak, both edged with gold, who holds in both hands a bird.³

It would be of interest if we could identify the atelier from whence came this carving, and there

¹ Rymer's *Fœdera*, viii., 510-511 (from Treaty Roll 91, m. 15).

² The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.—Psalm xlv., 6.

³ In regard to the presence of a bird in the hands of the Child I would hazard the suggestion that this may refer to the miracle of the twelve clay sparrows made on the Sabbath, which became endowed with life upon Christ clapping His hands.—Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew, xxvii.; Gospel of Thomas, ii.; The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, xxxvi.





THE FLAWFORD VIRGIN
(Nottingham Museum).

is some evidence which may assist us in arriving at a conclusion in this matter.

We know that Edward III., in 1367, purchased from Peter Mason of St. Mary's Street, Nottingham, for the sum of £200, an alabaster reredos, doubtless one consisting of large separate figures, for the chapel of St. George at Windsor, which required for its conveyance thither in 1371, ten carts.

Again, during the priorate of John Fossor of Durham, 1341-1374, he gave to the cathedral, "Imagines sanctæ Trinitatis et beatæ Virginis, de alabastro, cum tabernaculis, cum aliis ornamentis, pretium 22.l."¹

Subsequent to this (in 1374), John, lord Neville of Raby, in conjunction with Prior Fossor and others, gave the sum of £700 for the purchase of "illud opus super altare quod vocatur La Reredos;"² and from the *Rites of Durham* we learn that "right over the said hye altar were artificially placed in very fine Alabaster the picture of our Lady standinge in the midst, and the picture of St. Cuthb: on the one side and the picture of St. Oswald on the other beinge all richly gilded."³ This reredos, though it was shipped in cases from London, was as regards the imagery doubtless of Nottingham workmanship.

In 1779 there were found beneath the floor of the church at Flawford, Notts., three large alabaster images of the Blessed Virgin, St. Peter and a bishop, which may be dated as *circa* 1360. These, as is also true of the Pieta at Breadsall, Derby, may be considered as of Nottingham

¹ *Historiæ Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres* (Surtees Society, 1839), p. 131.

² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

³ *The Rites of Durham* (Surtees Society, 107), p. 7.

origin, and give us the clue as to the character of the sculpture produced there at that period. The Flawford Virgin (Pl. 2) is very similar to the large figure at Cadillac-sur-Garonne (Pl. 3), and, like it, exhibits that marked swaying of the figure, *hauchement*, which, perhaps derived from the workers in ivory, was a method of treatment one associates rather with the French school than with the English.

The statuette (Pl. 1), the subject of this paper, has a close connection with the Cadillac figure, but lacks the graceful sway which it exhibits, while the folds of the drapery are treated in a much simpler manner and it thus comes into relationship with the English alabaster image of the Virgin, preserved in the church of St. Seurin, Bordeaux.¹

In all these examples the Child is depicted as uncrowned, for it is only in figures of the late fifteenth century that we find Him crowned, in addition to the Mother.

I would suggest, therefore, in conclusion, that this statuette was wrought at Nottingham, *circa* 1380, not improbably in the workshop of Peter the Mason.

My thanks are due to M: J. A. Bruitails for his kind permission to reproduce the photograph of the Cadillac Virgin (Pl. 3), and to the Society of Antiquaries for the use of the block (Pl. 2), of the Flawford Madonna.

¹ J. A. Bruitails, *Album d'Objets d'Art existant dans les Églises de la Gironde*, pl. xii., fig. 2.

PLATE III.



THE CADILLAC SCULPTURE.

