

III.

NOTES ON A FIFTEENTH CENTURY MANUSCRIPT OF "THE MIRROR OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST" IN THE ADVOCATES' LIBRARY. BY W. K. DICKSON, SECRETARY.

The manuscript described in these notes is of interest both as a work of art and as a heraldic record. It is a copy, written and illuminated in England in the latter half of the fifteenth century, of the *Mirroure of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, a free translation into English of the *Meditationes Vitæ Christi*, attributed to Cardinal Bonaventura. The English version is perhaps best known as being one of the books printed by Caxton; there is a copy of his version, printed about 1488, in the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow. Editions were also printed by Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde. There appears little doubt that the translator was Nicholas Love, Prior of the Carthusian house of Mount Grace, Yorkshire. In 1410, as appears from a Latin note appended to this manuscript, the translation was submitted to Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, and received his approval "*ad fidelium edificacionem et hereticorum sive Lollardorum confutacionem.*" It was very popular; Mr Lawrence F. Powell, who has recently published an edition of the text, states that he has traced twenty-three manuscript copies in various libraries, public and private, besides that now described.

The book is an outline of the Life of Christ, paraphrased from the Gospels and arranged in seven parts, for reading on the seven days of the week. Part I., for Monday, deals with the Annunciation, Nativity, and Circumcision; Part II., for Tuesday, with the Flight into Egypt, the Youth of Our Lord, and His Baptism; Part III., for Wednesday, with the Fasting and Temptation, the Sermon on the Mount, and the earlier miracles; Part IV., for Thursday, with the Transfiguration, the later miracles, and the Entry into Jerusalem; Part V., for Friday, with the Passion; Part VI., for Saturday, with the events between the

Crucifixion and the Resurrection; and Part VII., for Sunday, with the Resurrection and Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. A concluding chapter treats "Of that excellent and worthiest Sacrament of Cristis blessed body."

The manuscript in the Advocates' Library (MS. 18. 1. 7), which is on vellum, is a volume measuring $13\frac{1}{4}$ by $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and consisting of 164 leaves, including two fly-leaves. Each leaf contains two columns of thirty-four lines each. It has been rebound in dark brown calf, apparently in the eighteenth century. It contains the seven parts above enumerated, divided into sixty-four chapters and prefaced by a detailed table of contents.

It is written in red and black, in a good English hand of the fifteenth century. Its chief interest, however, is in its illuminations, and in the miniatures with which it is adorned, which are fine examples of English work of the period.

At the beginning of the volume is a heraldic page containing a coat-of-arms of many quarterings, a beautiful piece of fifteenth century decorative heraldry. There are two coats impaled. The first is—Quarterly, first and fourth, barry of six argent and azure, in chief three torteaux; second and third, quarterly, first and fourth, or, a maunch gules; second and third, barry of eight argent and azure, an orle of ten martlets gules. The second coat is—Quarterly, first and fourth, or, a lion rampant azure; second and third, gules, three lucies or pikes haurient argent. Crest, a wyvern, or, on a cap of maintenance. Motto—*Soli Deo honor*. The motto is repeated over an elaborate diapered background of red and gold.

When I first examined the manuscript some years ago I sent the blazon of these arms to my friend Mr J. H. Stevenson, Unicorn Pursuivant, and received from him the following note regarding them: "The coat-of-arms in the *Mirroure* seems to be—First coat, quarterly, first and fourth Grey de Ruthyn; second and third, quarterly, Hastings in the first and fourth, quartering Valence in the second and third. Roger, first Baron Grey de Ruthyn, married Elizabeth, daughter of John, second Baron Hastings, and his first wife, Isabel, sister and co-heir of

Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke. The second coat is, quarterly, Duke of Brabant and Louvaine in the first and fourth, quartering Lucy in the second and third, as still borne by the Duke of Northumberland. Edmund, fourth Baron Grey de Ruthyn, created Earl of Kent in 1465, married Lady Katherine Percy, daughter of the second Earl of Northumberland, and died 28th May 1489." The date of this marriage corresponds with the period of the execution of the MS., and thus we have a clear indication of its original proprietorship.

This heraldic page is placed at the beginning of the table of contents. In the body of the book there are sixteen fine full-page miniatures. Of these the first represents St Bonaventura in his Franciscan habit, engaged in the writing of his book, his cardinal's hat being placed on the desk beside him; below kneels a red-winged, golden-robed angel bearing a shield of the impaled arms above described, while above two similar angels bear the separate coats. The next miniature is the finest in the book. In a circular medallion in the centre is depicted the Coronation of the Virgin. The central picture is surrounded by sixteen panels filled with figures in adoration, Dominations, Principalities and Powers, Cherubim and Seraphim, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and Confessors. At the four corners of the design appear the symbols of the Evangelists, and underneath are the kneeling figures of the fourth Lord Grey de Ruthyn and his wife, the original proprietors of the book. The remaining miniatures represent respectively the Nativity, the Flight into Egypt, the Baptism, the Temptation, the Sermon on the Mount, the Disciples plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath Day, the Feeding of the Multitude, the Agony in the Garden, the Crucifixion, the Virgin and the Apostles in the Upper Chamber, the Appearance of Christ in the Garden after the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and a Procession of the Blessed Sacrament. Generally speaking, one miniature is placed at the beginning of each of the daily sections of the book and one in the middle of the section. In addition to the miniatures there are throughout the book a large number of splendidly decorated initials and borders. The

execution is very fine, especially as regards the decorative work ; gold is lavishly employed throughout. A notable feature of the book is the extensive employment of secondary colours, such as lake and pale green, in addition to the strong primary colours which are more familiar in the illuminated work of the period. In the miniatures the drawing of figures and animals, while exceedingly vigorous and effective, is sometimes rather crude ; the decorative work, on the other hand, is very delicate in finish. The backgrounds are often very beautiful, especially the skies, in which a pure ultramarine blue heightened with gold is largely used. Some of the figure subjects, notably the Crucifixion, are relieved against diaper backgrounds of gold and colour, very minute and elaborate in design. The miniature of the Agony in the Garden has unfortunately been seriously damaged, the greater part having been torn away, but with this exception the miniatures are complete.

It, along with most of the other mediæval manuscripts in the Library, has recently been examined in detail, collated, and described by Miss Catherine R. Borland, who during the past two years has been engaged in preparing a Calendar of the Mediæval MSS. in the Library, and to whose notes I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness.