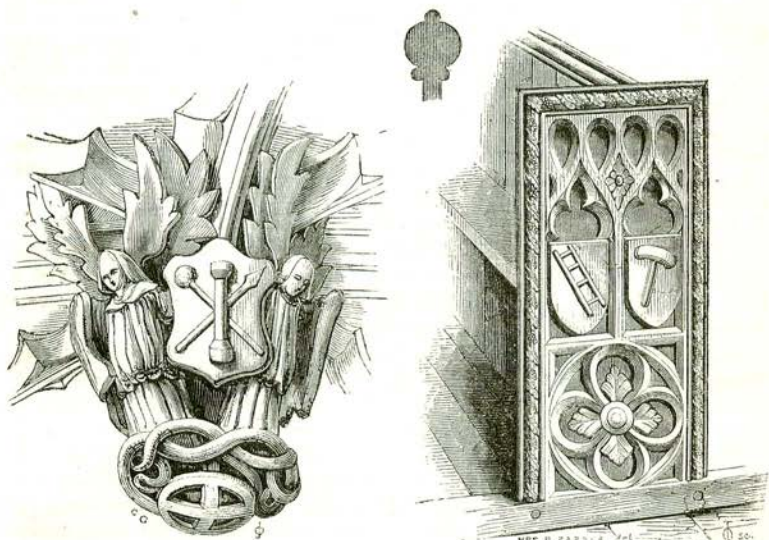


## ON THE EMBLEMS OF THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE ARMS OF THE PASSION.

*(The substance of a Paper read before the Cambridge Architectural Society.)*

THERE were few subjects more extensively used in the decorative arts of the middle ages than the series known as the "Emblems of the Crucifixion," or, as they are termed when charged heraldically upon a shield, the "Arms of the Passion." In our churches, especially, there is no part of the sacred edifice, whatever may be the nature of the material to be ornamented, in which they may not sometimes be found. They may be met with in stonework upon the boss, the pendant, the high tomb, the Easter sepulchre, the cornice, both external and internal, the capital, and



Pendant, with Emblems, Collumpton, Devon.

Ladder and Hammer, Bench-end, Branton, Devon.

the font; in flint-work they may be found in the eastern counties beautifully wrought in the external panelling; in wood-work they are common on the bench-end, the poppy-head, the pulpit, and the rood-screen; and in the noble wooden roofs of Norfolk and Suffolk the hammer-beams frequently represent angels bearing these sacred emblems either in their hands or displayed on shields; in painted glass they are generally employed to fill the small openings formed by the intersection of the tracery in the upper part of the windows; in brasses they occur generally charged on shields; they have been frequently brought to light in fresco-paintings, after having been hidden for centuries in a "penitential sheet of whitewash;" even the peculiar material of the encaustic paving-tile offered no impediment to their employment; and they may be seen on some of the few specimens of mediæval needlework which have come down to us. They are also frequently and appropriately introduced into the illuminated borders of the Service-books of the middle ages, especially in the pages devoted to Holy Week, and in the illumination generally assigned to St. Gregory's Day, March 12.

Considering, then, that they occur so frequently and so variously in the decorative arts of the middle ages, it is singular that, with the exception of

a short list in Neale's *Hierologus*, and a rather more extended one in the "Calendar of the Anglican Church," no attempt has been made to give anything like a complete catalogue of these interesting symbols. Several of them are by no means obvious, for so much ingenuity of invention and fertility of fancy were employed to extend the list, that church tourists are frequently puzzled to make out what many of them are intended to represent. It is therefore hoped that the following brief account of such as have come under the writer's notice may not be unacceptable, and serve to direct further attention to the subject.

Of course *the Cross* is the principal and foremost of the emblems of the Crucifixion, and occurs, either alone or in a series, more frequently than any other, and there is scarcely a church in which it may not be found; and when there are other symbols, the cross is never omitted, but all the others group around it, as if subordinate to it. When the arms of the Passion are charged upon a shield, it invariably occupies the centre, and is frequently crossed diagonally by the sponge on the reed, and the spear or the ladder. An example of this remains on a shield in the cornice which runs just below the west window of the church of St. Mary the Great, Cambridge; other examples may be seen on the font at Handborough, and the paving-tiles at Malvern. It is never a Greek or floriated cross when represented thus, very rarely a *tau* cross, but, as a general rule, a plain Latin cross. It is well known that, except when intended as the symbol of the Passion, the mediæval architects very rarely represented the simple Latin cross, which was regarded as the cross of shame, but employed all their ingenuity and fancy in devising those combinations and varieties of crosses, jewelled and floriated, budding and feathered, of which so many examples remain in illuminated MSS., and on gables and sepulchral slabs. These were intended to symbolize that the cross of shame had budded and brought forth fruit, and so become the cross of glory, "whose sound has gone out into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world."

The cross is most generally accompanied by *the Crown of Thorns*, not often, except in late examples, twined round the four arms of the cross,



Crown of Thorns and  
Nails.

though occasionally found hanging over the upper portion. On shields, it generally occupies the angle formed by the transepts and the top of the cross, either on the dexter or sinister side, as at Handborough and Malvern, p. 166; in painted glass, it usually surrounds the three nails, the points of which meet in the base; but sometimes these pierce through the thorns, the points meeting in the centre. The circle which so frequently connects the four arms of gable and floor-crosses had its origin in, and is intended to symbolize, the crown of thorns.

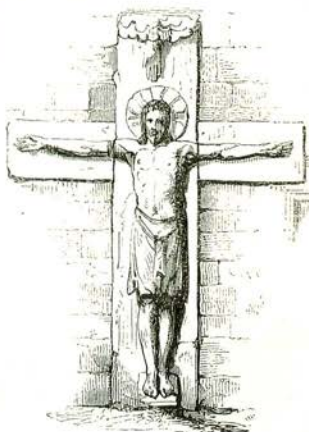
Though *the Nails* are thus frequently found in combination with the crown of thorns, they are as often found separate. Three is almost invariably the number represented; but in the priory church of Great Malvern<sup>a</sup> only two are used, and this not accidentally, for the same number

<sup>a</sup> In this church, judging by the portions that remain, the whole of the smaller openings formed by the tracery of the windows were filled with these emblems of the Passion, and the usual mediæval symbols of the Trinity, the Evangelists, the Blessed Virgin, &c. Fragmentary as it now is, it is probably the largest collection of such emblems in this kingdom: they are all represented on shields borne by demi-angels vested in amices; the date of the glass being c. 1460. It is much to be regretted that about thirty years ago the greater portion of them were removed from their original positions to make up a complete window in St. Ann's Chapel.



occurs in four separate and entirely different examples,—three on paving-tiles, and one in painted glass: this is not easily to be accounted for, for there is no tradition to the effect that only two nails were used at the Crucifixion, as this would, of course, leave the feet uninjured. In the very remarkable series of emblems from Ballinacarriga Castle, co. Cork, engraved in the *Journal of the Archæological Institute*, vol. xi. p. 80, there are also only two nails represented: one of these pierces one foot, and the other points towards the pierced hand. The

Western Church as a general rule adopts the tradition of three nails, and in most representations the right foot is drawn overlapping the left, one nail piercing through both; but in a sculpture of the Holy Rood at the east end of Romsey Abbey Church the two feet are separately nailed, so that four nails must have been intended here. They are occasionally met with in heraldry, under the name of Passion-nails. Thus Henry VI., on the 30th of January, 1448, granted to Nicholas Cloos, clerk, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, for his services in building King's College, Cambridge, that he should be noble, and in sign thereof should bear for arms, Argent, on a chevron sable three Passion-nails of the first, on a chief



From Romsey Abbey Church, Hampshire.

sable three roses argent, (*Cooper's Annals*, vol. i. p. 203).

*The Reed*, having at the top *the Sponge* which was soaked in vinegar and gall. This on shields is usually crossed diagonally by *the Spear* of Longinus, (the traditional name of the soldier who pierced the Redeemer's side, as at Collumpton and Cumnor); sometimes on painted glass, dashes of ruby and a sort of aquatint are represented dropping from the spear-head; rarely, the spear-head only occurs without the staff, as in the curious group at Ballinacarriga Castle, alluded to above.

*The Ladder* used in the descent from the cross is usually grouped with the last two emblems: on shields, it is sometimes in pale, crossed saltierwise by the spear and the reed; but when it occurs on one side of the cross, the spear and the reed generally correspond with it on the other side.

*The Pillar* to which our Saviour was bound, generally with *the Cord* by which He was tied twined round it. They are rarely, but sometimes, found separate, and one example has the cord without the pillar at all. This pillar is frequently useful, in connection with other characteristics, in determining the date of the series, as it usually has the details of the contemporary architectural style.

*The two Scourges*, or *Flagelli*, generally either saltierwise on a shield, or one on each side of the cross. They are frequently of two different types,—the most common having usually knotted thongs, with sometimes stars of metal at the ends; the other form being very much like a rod: both of these varieties occur on Abbot Ramridge's tomb in St. Alban's



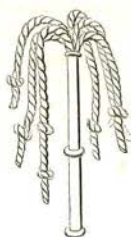
Cumnor, Berks.



Pillar and Cord  
St. Alban's



Scourges,  
Abbot Ramridge's tomb, St. Alban's.



Hammer, Pincers,  
and Dice, Cumnor.

Abbey, as well as in the cut of St. Gregory's Mass, where the thongs are not knotted.

The *Lantern* carried by the band of men and officers accompanying Judas at the betrayal. Though the passage in St. John (chap. xviii. ver. 3) speaks of lanterns in the plural number, more than one is never represented.

The *Hammer and the Pincers*.

When the series is drawn upon shields, these generally occur

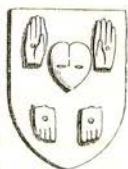
on the same shield, either separate, or crossed in the middle, with the nails at the top, as at Malvern, or the three dice, as at Cumnor.

The *Five Wounds*. This symbol is one of the most frequent in this country, and on the Continent is the emblem met with more than any other, and often occurs quite alone: it is especially adopted by the Franciscan Order, in remembrance of the stigmata said to have been miraculously impressed upon their great founder. In

this country it is represented in several ways, the most common being that remarkable form which all must have noticed, consisting of a heart in the middle of a shield, the two hands at the top, and the two feet at the bottom,



From Porlock Church, Somersetshire.



From Cumnor  
Church, Berks.

each pierced with a single wound. Another common form is the heart only, pierced with five wounds, one in the centre, and one at each corner<sup>b</sup>. A third variety, not quite so usual, represents a shield charged with five horizontal wounds, with the blood falling from them: these are also arranged in saltier,—i. e. one in the middle and one in each corner of the shield. Examples of this latter form occur in painted glass at Great Malvern, and on a shield on the brass of Provost Hacombleyne, lying in the interesting chantry which bears his name on the south side of King's College Chapel, Cambridge. In painted glass, the wound representing the pierced heart has sometimes drops both of blood and water falling from it: a curious and singular form of this symbol may be seen on the brass of Thomas Hylle, priest, in New College Chapel, Oxford, where he is represented holding in his hands, in the usual place of the chalice, a small tau cross marked with five wounds—one on each of the arms, and three, equidistant, down the centre-piece. Another unique example occurs on a boss in the groined roof of the porch of Great Malvern Priory Church—a heart pierced with one wound, and surrounded by the three nails, as the instruments of the other four wounds. A very remarkable way of representing the wounded heart appears in the curious series of these emblems, before alluded to, in Ballinacarriga Castle, in which the heart is transfixed with

<sup>b</sup> Six wounds are represented on a heart in the hands of Robert Beauner, on his monumental brass at St. Alban's, date c. 1470: this number has not yet been explained. Seven wounds symbolize the seven dolours of the Blessed Virgin.



three cross-hilted swords (not nails), piercing at the back—one on each side diagonally, and one at the top vertically, the three points coming out in front through the centre: it is difficult to say what phase in the Passion or legend connected with it this unique emblem refers to. It may here be noticed, that the arms of the ancient kingdom of Jerusalem, which were a large cross potent in the centre of the shield, between a smaller one in each corner, and the peculiar charge of the ancient see of Lichfield and Coventry, which is very similar, heraldically symbolize the five wounds.

*St. Peter's Sword*, with which he cut off the right ear of Malchus. This is generally drawn as a sort of falchion, with a broad blade, slightly curved, as in the margin, and in the cut of St. Gregory's Mass: it sometimes has the ear of Malchus adhering to it. Very liable to be confounded with this emblem is another, not quite so common,—

*The two Swords*, mentioned by St. Luke only, (chap. xxii. ver. 38,) which were shewn by the disciples to our Saviour when He said, "It is enough." These are always represented as straight pointed swords, and usually cross each other diagonally.

*The Seamless Vest*, of course represented "without seam, woven from the top throughout." It is usually represented with sleeves, and having an opening in front at the neck, like a shirt.

*The Cock* which crowed to warn St. Peter. At Ballinacarriga it is represented standing on a tripod-pot, one of the conventional ways of representing the vessel containing the vinegar mingled with gall; but Mr. Du Noyer observes that it is explained by a singularly strange local tradition, according to which it was supposed that the bird was one which had been killed, and was actually being boiled in the high-priest's kitchen, but in order to mark the crowing of a cock at that particular time as a miracle, it was restored to life, and, issuing from the caldron, crowed to fulfil the prophecy.—(*Archæological Journal*, vol. xi. p. 81.)

*The Bag or Purse of Judas*. Generally drawn with thongs or strings to close the opening, like the *gyppièrè* on the merchants' brasses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It occasionally has, as at Great Malvern, coins in it, protruding from or foaming over the top. When thus represented, it has been supposed the coins are meant for the thirty pieces of silver; but at Malvern, where the example is in painted glass, the coins are coloured, so as to represent gold or brass, and silver, and are therefore intended for the common fund of which Judas had charge.

*The thirty Pieces of Silver*. These are sometimes met with piled up in a heap, but usually in three rows, of ten in each, as in the cut of St. Gregory's Mass: each distinct coin may generally be counted,—the number thirty being very scrupulously observed.

*The Ear of Malchus*. Of course, always the right ear. It is sometimes, as before mentioned, represented adhering to the middle of the blade of St. Peter's falchion.

*The Dice*. Generally three, rarely two. They are frequently dotted, but it does not appear that any traditional number is observed on the uppermost squares. They vary, from being quite blank, up to the number six: this may occur from the liability of the dots to be effaced.

*The Fire of Coals* at which St. Peter stood with the servants of the



St. Peter's Sword,  
from a MS.



Purse, Cock, and  
Vest, Cunnor.

high-priest to warm himself. Represented as burning on a stone or hearth, never in anything like a grate.

*The Vessel* which contained the vinegar mingled with gall. Usually a sort of tripod-pot, or bowl, sometimes a bowl without legs, sometimes a vase. On one of the Malvern tiles, p. 166, it is a small vessel of a cruciform shape.

*The Reed* which they put into the Saviour's right hand as a mock sceptre, and with which they afterwards smote Him on the head. It is represented as a bulrush, with flag-leaves, and the black, spongy plumed top. This is not a common emblem. It sometimes crosses the reed and sponge, and sometimes the spear.

*The three Spice-boxes* for the embalming. Generally of a pyramidal shape, as in the cut of St. Gregory's Mass. They are frequently introduced in early paintings in the hands of the Myrrhiferes, or three Marias, at the sepulchre.

*The Basin* in which our blessed Lord washed the feet of His disciples, *the Pitcher* from which He poured the water, and *the Towel* wherewith He wiped the feet, represented as hanging from a ring. These three emblems are rare. When the basin is not accompanied by the pitcher and towel, it may possibly refer to that in which Pilate washed his hands before the multitude, to shew his innocence. Sometimes this is represented catching water gushing from a lion's mouth, with two hands washing themselves in the stream.

*The Weapons* mentioned in St. John xviii. 3. These are not often met with, and when they occur they usually represent contemporary weapons, rather than those likely to have been used at the time of the Crucifixion. Thus at Great Malvern Church one occurs amongst the arms of the Passion on a paving-tile, and is the peculiar weapon known as a glaive, or bill, fastened to a long handle, (see p. 166.) There are two others in painted glass in the same church,—one representing a mediæval maul, or mace, which was a heavy mass or lump of metal set with thick spikes, and fixed into a short handle; the other was the weapon termed a morning-star, and consisted of a metal ball studded with sharp-pointed projections, and attached sometimes by a short chain to the end of a wooden staff. Similar weapons may be seen in the hands of the well-known giants Gog and Magog, in the Guildhall of London. A wooden bat-shaped club is sometimes introduced as one of the weapons.

*The Torches*, also mentioned in St. John xviii. Usually two common torches crossed; sometimes a Roman-shaped lamp suspended at the end of a long handle.

*Hands pulling the Saviour's Hair*. Sometimes the entire head is represented, with hands rudely grasping the hair and beard; in other examples the head is omitted, and hands apparently tugging at locks of hair only occur. Occasionally, hands are met with alone, sometimes open, sometimes closed: these probably refer to the passage in St. Matthew, they "buffeted Him," and "smote Him with the palms of their hands."

*The Saviour's Head blindfolded*. A beautiful example of this occurs at Great Malvern, where it can hardly be termed blindfolded, as the calm, sorrowful eyes are open, and seen, as it were, through the transparent veil which binds them: evidently so drawn intentionally, as if to shew the impossibility of blinding the All-seeing Eye.

*The Spitting upon Christ*. Represented by one or two heads squirting saliva from their mouths.

*The Kiss of Betrayal*. Two heads: that of the Saviour, distinguished



by the usual cruciform nimbus; and that of Judas, rather repulsive in its aspect, and in the act of kissing the cheek of the Divine Master.

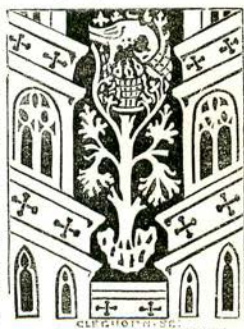
*Judas hanging.* Usually the head only, swollen and distorted, suspended by a cord.

*The Sudarium,* or sacred veil of St. Veronica, with the head of our Saviour crowned with thorns represented upon it. This is generally held open by St. Veronica, but sometimes occurs displayed by itself, without the aid of the saint. According to the legend, St. Veronica was the daughter of King Herod, and had become a believer in our Lord; though other versions make her the woman who touched the hem of our Saviour's garment, and who, following with the multitude which accompanied Him to His crucifixion, as He was toiling up Mount Calvary under the weight of His cross, wiped the perspiration from His brow with a napkin, or veil, which then miraculously received the impress of the sacred features. It is curious that the real name of the woman is entirely lost, and that of this legend of the *Vera Icon* appropriated to her. This emblem, though commonly found among the series of emblems of the Passion on the Continent, is not often met with in England: there is a good example in painted glass at Malvern.



From a MS. in the Bodleian Library.

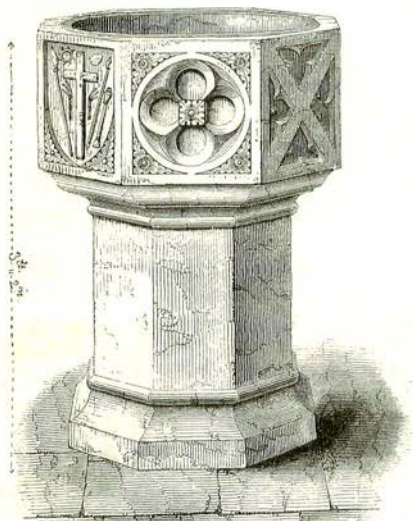
*The Pelican,* vulning herself in her nest, with her brood feeding upon, or being sprinkled with, her blood. This is more really symbolical than any of the symbols of the Crucifixion, which, with this exception, are entirely derived from the various incidents and instruments appertaining to the events connected with the Passion of our Lord, from the washing of the disciples' feet to the embalment. It is not of frequent occurrence as an emblem of the Passion, but is met with in a series at Cirencester and at Malvern. The wild and beautiful legend is well known, how the pelican, after slaying her brood, mourns over them three days, and then, wounding her breast, restores them to life by sprinkling them with her blood, with which she is also supposed to feed them. It may thus be used as symbolical of the Holy Eucharist, and also of the restoration of the human race to life by means of the blood of Christ. As an heraldic symbol, the pelican appropriately forms part of the arms of the colleges of Corpus Christi both at Oxford and Cambridge. The nest is supposed to have reference to Job xxix. 15, "I shall die in my nest."



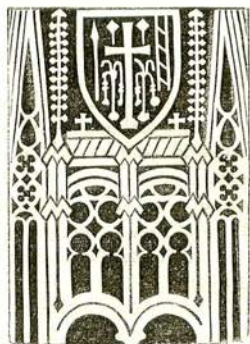
Pelican, Great Malvern.

There are a few other emblems, of which solitary examples have been noticed, and which seem to have been introduced amongst the symbols of the Passion rather as a fancy on the part of the artist than as belonging conventionally to the series; such as—a pair of manacles; a chalice; the heads of the three disciples, asleep; a hand holding a broken piece of bread; a dead lamb; two hands (Christ's?) joined in prayer.

Mention has been made of the frequent occurrence of several of these emblems charged heraldically upon a shield; this combination is termed, in mediæval documents, the "Arms of the Passion." Thus, "in the reign of Edward IV., Margaret Lady Hungerford bequeathed a pair of silver candlesticks, 'pounced with the arms that longeth to the Passion;' and an earlier instance of this singular imitation of heraldry in allusion to things sacred may be noticed in the curious inventory of the valuable effects of Henry V., printed in the Rolls of Parliament," (*Nichols's Encaustic Tiles*). It does not appear that any emblems peculiarly appertained to this coat-armour of the Passion, except that the cross was, of course, always one, and the most prominent of them: this was usually accompanied by the reed and sponge, the spear, the crown of thorns, one or both of the *flagelli*, and the ladder. The font at Handborough, Oxon, is a fair example of the ordinary method of displaying them. The shield, before alluded to, at the west end



Font, Handborough Church, Oxon.



Tiles, Great Malvern.

of St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, shews another way: here the ladder and the spear surmount the cross saltierwise, and the crown of thorns is just over the top of the cross. In the two examples from encaustic paving-tiles at Great Malvern, two nails, as before mentioned, only occur; and one of the tiles contains no less than eleven different emblems, including the rare weapon called a glaive, and the vessel which contained the vinegar mingled with gall, of a cruciform shape. It is evident, from these and numerous other examples, that the arrangement of the shield and the selection of the emblems was quite arbitrary, and depended upon the taste and fancy of the artist.

Another form in which these emblems of the Passion frequently occur as a series, is in the curious subject, already alluded to, known as "St. Gregory's Mass," or "St. Gregory's Pity." It does not so often occur in



church decoration as the arms of the Passion, but examples of it are to be found on the brass of Roger Legh, in St. Michael's Church, Macclesfield, and in sculpture in a chantry chapel in Exeter Cathedral. Others probably exist, but as it was a subject which would be peculiarly obnoxious to the early Reformers and Puritans, many have no doubt been destroyed by their iconoclastic zeal.

This curious subject is founded on a legend in the life of St. Gregory the Great, though there are many others very similar among the miraculous tales of the middle ages, intended to bring forward divine authority in favour of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. According to the golden legend, a widow who provided the hosts for the mass was about to partake of the holy Sacrament, but as St. Gregory offered it to her, she smiled incredulously, and upon being asked why, replied that it was impossible what she had made with her own hands could become the body of our Lord; whereupon St. Gregory prayed that she might be confirmed in the true faith, and anon they saw upon the altar the holy Sacrament in figure of "a pyece of fleshe as grete as the lytull finger of an honde;" after which the woman and the people were more firm in the faith. This appears to have been the original legend, but as it presented a great difficulty to the artists in treating it literally, they treated it symbolically, so as to make it more impressive upon the uneducated minds to whom such representations were addressed: and in order to do this they substituted for the "pyece of fleshe" a figure of the Saviour standing upon the altar, displaying His five wounds, and surrounded by the symbols of His Passion; and in some instances inclosed in a sort of aureole, formed by the heads of the saints and popes, and kings and bishops, who had in various ages testified to the doctrine of the Real Presence.

This treatment of the subject is very common in illuminated and early-printed Service-books of the middle ages, where an illustration of it is usually given under the date of St. Gregory's Day, March 12.

The above engraving is from a beautiful fourteenth century MS. in the Bodleian Library, and represents the cross, the ladder, the reed and sponge, the spear, the pillar and cord, the three dice, the two different kinds of *flagelli*, the pincers, the hammer, the thirty pieces of silver, the three nails, St. Peter's sword, the lantern, and the three spice-boxes for embalming.

There are probably other emblems of the Passion besides those noticed in this brief account, and as it is desirable to obtain as complete a list as possible, it is hoped that the readers of this article who have notes of other examples will kindly correspond with SYLVANUS URBAN on the subject.



The Mass of St. Gregory,  
from a MS. in the Bodleian Library.