

A BUDDHIST VERONICA.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE origin of the Veronica legend is ultimately due to the natural desire among faithful Christians to possess a portrait of their Saviour, but, as we have observed in former articles on the subject,¹ there was a serious obstacle to the accomplishment of it in the strong prejudice of the church against all pictures and statues. This prejudice, inherited from the Jews, prevailed in the first and second centuries of the Christian era, and those sectarians and heretics who were opposed to the Jews were the most liberal in that respect. They did not oppose art, and so it is among them that we find the first pictures of Christ.



VERONICA.

Copper engraving of 1510 by Albert Dürer. Redrawn by A. Petrak.

Irenæus in the second century of the Christian era mentions heretics who believed in the transmigration of souls and the doctrine of universal salvation by a "passing from body to body." Says Irenæus:² "They style themselves gnostics. They also possess images, some of them painted, and others

formed from different kinds of material; while they maintain that a likeness of Christ was made by Pilate at the time when Jesus lived among men. They crown these images, and set them up along

¹ "The Vera Icon, King Abgar, and St. Veronica," *Open Court*, XXII, 663, 716.

² In Chap. 25 on the doctrines of Carpocrates.

with the images of the philosophers of the world; that is to say, with the images of Pythagoras, and Plato, and Aristotle, and the rest. They have also other modes of honoring these images, after the same manner as the Gentiles."



SS. PETER AND PAUL WITH THE SUDARIUM.

Copper engraving of the beginning of the 16th century. Attributed to Master M. (Passavant III, p. 89, No. 3, and also Anderson, pp. 33, 109).

To find a way out of this difficulty, images were produced which were claimed not to have been made by human hands but to have originated in a supernatural way. To explain the origin of one of them, the Edesseum, kept at Edessa and famous in the Greek church, the Abgar correspondence was invented presumably at the end of

the second century. In the meantime in the domain of the Roman church Christian art had developed a picture of Christ in its own way, and so when the type of the Abgar picture, claiming to be the only true picture (or *vera icon*), reached western Europe much later at the beginning of the Middle Ages, quite a similar version of the same motive took shape in the legend of St. Veronica.



VERONICA WITH THE SUDARIUM.
Painting by Master of Flemalle, 1450.
Preserved in the Städel Institute at
Frankfort on the Main.*

The supernatural origin of these portraits of Christ, of the *vera icon* so-called, naturally implied their miraculous power, and the stories connected with them always dwell on this point, that they cured the most hopeless diseases and conferred religious blessings, especially forgiveness of sins, upon all who would gaze at the picture in faith.

The Veronica legend incorporated into itself several other features. When the Jews began to be an object of persecution, a motive for the conquest of Judea was introduced which would make it appear as if Titus had laid siege to Jerusalem and had destroyed it with savage barbarity for the sole purpose of avenging Christ's death. The story of Berenike was superadded solely on account of the similarity of the name.³

In the development of ecclesiastical art the Veronica, or "true picture" of Christ, painted in the traditional Byzantine style, is very much in evidence. We find it

³ See *op. cit.*, 676-679.

* A drawing of it by Roger van der Weyden exists in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge and has been made accessible to the general public by

on surplices, Lenten veils, rood-cloths, palls, sepulchral garments, processional banners, and on altar pieces. It still continues in the history of modern art and affords even Protestant painters a motive for picturing the lugubrious. In addition to artistic representations of the Veronica motive, we here insert some examples of the different stages through which it has passed in the course of Christian art.

Veronica



menschen mit großer andacht vnd innig!
Venarchus der naturlich maister ein
 schichtbeschreiber noch zumal iung
 bey Seleucia der statt Cilicie gestorben
 sunder eintweders zu Alexandria oder zu

Veronica
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VERONICA.

Woodcut by Michael Wolgemut, inserted in the text of *Buch der Chroniken*. Nuremberg, 1493.

A peculiar version of the Veronica legends is found in an Anglo-Saxon manuscript of the eleventh century, preserved in the University Library of Cambridge, the title of which runs *Nathanis Judaei Legatio*, i. e., "The Message of the Jew Nathan."

Karl Pearson in his *Fronica*, Plate VI. The drawing differs in some unimportant details from the painting. The face expresses more firmness of faith than grief or sorrow and is certainly the work of a great artist, but in all essential points it remains a faithful copy of the original. In both the sudarium is translucent and the figure and posture are identical.



ST. VERONICA WITH THE SUDARIUM.

Illustration in a German breviary, Egerton Coll., British Museum.
 Beginning of 15th century. Veronica is dressed in a red robe and
 a blue mantle.



ST. VERONICA WITH THE SUDARIUM.

A German colored woodcut preserved in the Huthbibliothek. This picture was published in Königshofen's *Cronik von alten Königen und Kaisern*, printed by Bemmler, Augsburg, 1476. Cf. Karl Pearson's *Die Fronica*, p. 109, where it is stated that in the copy of Königshofen's *Cronik* in the British Museum this cut is missing.

It relates that Tiberius suffered from leprosy and no physician could cure him until a certain Jew of Venice by the name of Nathan informed him of a miracle-working garment of Christ. That the city of Venice did not yet exist in the days of Christ does not in the



THE VERONICA ON A GARMENT.

Preserved in the Court Library of Munich. See Delaborde (*La Gravure*, p. 47, plate X) who dates it in 1406.

least disturb the author of the story who goes on to say that two kinsmen of the emperor, Vespasian and Titus, were thereupon sent to Jerusalem to bring the matron Veronica, the owner of the garment, into the presence of the imperial patient. Otherwise the story

is about the same as other Veronica legends; however it is noteworthy that in this version only Veronica and Tiberius were able to see the portrait. We here reproduce a picture of an old print which is dated 1460 and is preserved in the Court Library of Munich.

We see that the healing power of Christ's picture is always insisted on with great emphasis, and we find the same idea in a Buddhist parallel which is remarkable on account of some similarities in details.

During the second German expedition to Turfan, Prof. Albert Grünwedel discovered in the caves of Qyzyl near Kutcha four fres-



VERONICA.

Copper engraving by Daniel Hoppfer, 1514. The angels who support the sudarium hold in their other hands the cross and the pillar of flagellation. See Bartsch, VIII, p. 476, No. 16.

coes representing the miraculous recovery of the sick king Ajata-satru at the mere sight of a picture illustrating the life of Buddha. The Buddhist legend tells us that after the evil days of his younger years the king had become converted to the Buddhist faith and was a most devout worshiper of the Buddha. According to a Tibetan legend it happened that when the Buddha passed into *paranirvana*, into that final state of bliss where nothing bodily remains—which means, as we would say of other mortals, when he died—King Ajata-satru happened to be critically ill. Maha-Kasyapa, one of the great disciples of Buddha, knew of his master's demise on account of the

earthquake which always takes place when a Buddha makes his final entry into Nirvana, but he did not dare to break the sad news to the king for fear that the shock would prove fatal to him. So

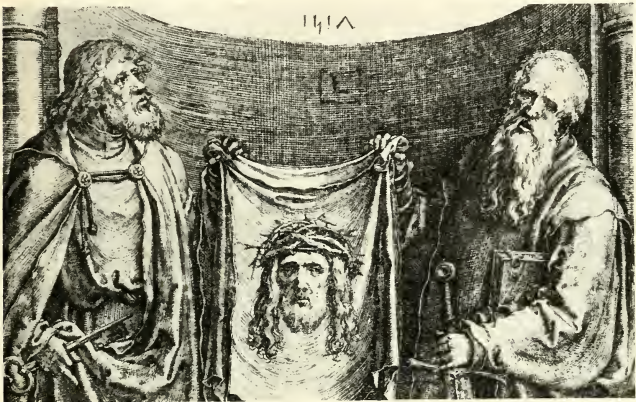


ST. HELENA AND ST. VERONICA.

Preserved in the Collection of Copper Engravings at Munich. About 1400.

Maha-Kasyapa invented the plan of communicating the news to the king by means of a picture which should show that the work of salvation so auspiciously begun and carried on by the Buddha had now been completed. He requested the Brahman artist Varshakara to paint the Buddha's birth, the temptation, his sermon in Deer Park, and his final entry into Nirvana.

In the left lower corner of this picture we see the birth of Bodhisattva in the grove of Lumbini. Queen Maya stands in her traditional posture, supported by a woman, perhaps her sister Prapajati, and holding herself up by her hands to the branches of a tree,



SS. PETER AND PAUL DISPLAYING THE SUDARIUM.

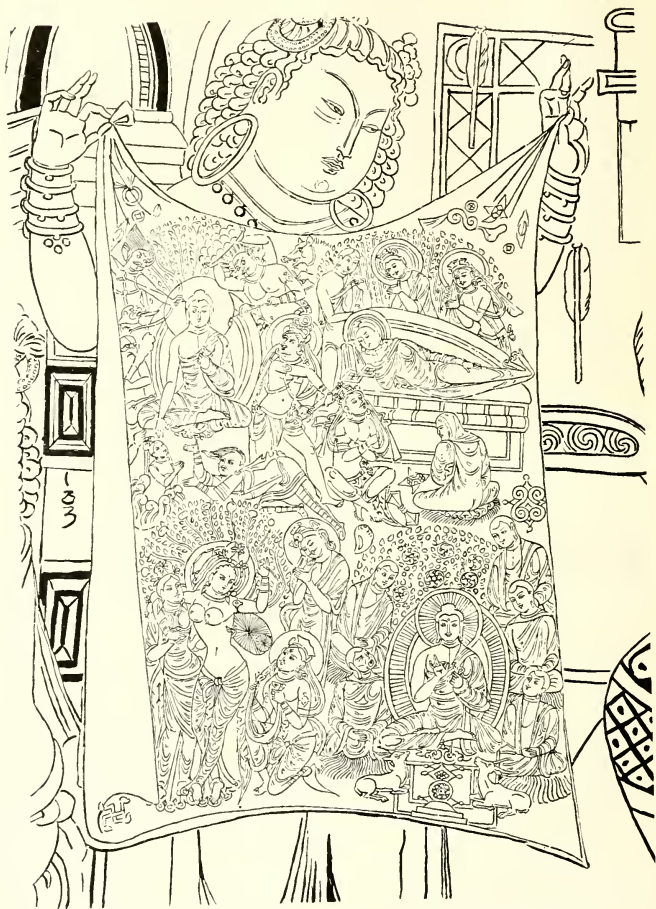
Copper engraving by Lucas van Leyden, 1517. See Bartsch, VII, p. 393, No. 105.

while Indra in a worshipful attitude is ready to receive the infant in a cloth. Brahma stands in the background with folded hands. The infant comes forth from the left side of his mother wrapped in an oval halo, the head being indicated by a star surrounded by an aureole.

The second scene, the temptation of Buddha, is in the left corner. We see the Buddha seated under the Bodhi tree in the traditional Buddhist posture. Mara, the evil one, gaudily dressed, is just retreating while some of his army still continue the attack. The goddess of the earth at the feet of Buddha raises her hand in testimony of the good works done by Buddha, ensuring his victory.⁴

⁴ *Gospel of Buddha*, Chap. XI.

The third scene in the lower right-hand corner, is Buddha's first sermon to the five ascetics in the Deer Park. Before him stands



THE HEALING PICTURE OF BUDDHIST LEGEND.

the symbol of the Buddhist religion, a pedestal bearing the trisul and the wheel, of which the trisul represents the three gems, the Buddha,

the Dharma and the Sangha, also called the Buddhist trinity, and the wheel is the symbol of the Good Law. The deer on either side indicate that the scene is situated in the Deer Park. The five monks surround the Blessed One in worshipful attitudes.⁵

Buddha's sermon in the Deer Park has been called the Buddhist Sermon on the Mount because, like Christ's, it contains the program of the religion taught therein. The description of this sermon is the subject of one of the most famous books of the Buddhist canon and bears the title "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness."

The wheel as the symbol of the kingdom of righteousness appears on the throne upon which Buddha is seated and the disciples who listen to the proclamation of the new doctrine are five in number in accordance with Buddhist tradition.



SEAL OF THE MAHA BODHI SOCIETY.

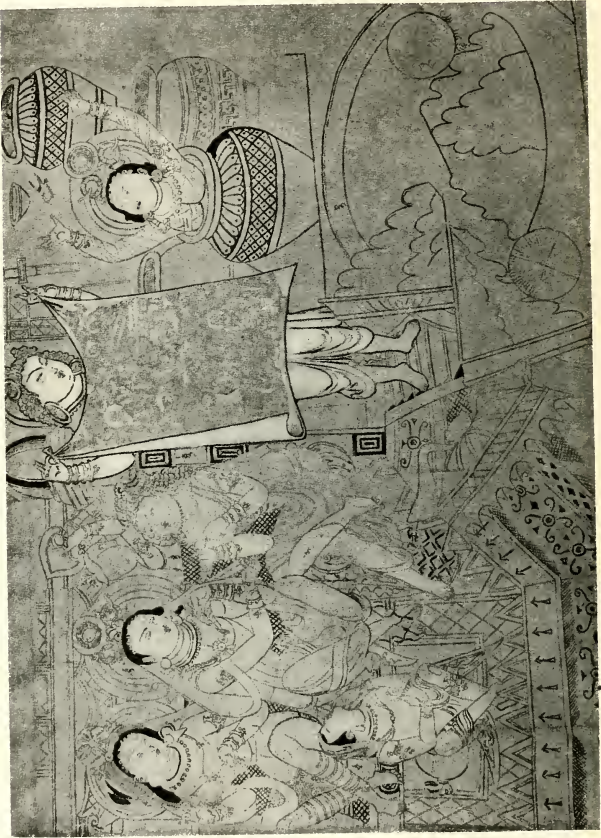
The importance of Buddha's first sermon at the Deer Park can be seen from the fact that the abbot of the ancient Maha Bodhi temple at Buddhagaya has adopted the emblem of the wheel surrounded on either side by deer as the crest of his monastery. Above the wheel we see the three gems, symbolizing the Buddhist trinity, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, covered by the outlines of a dagoba and worshiped on either side by a deva. This device was found on a seal when the British Government had the temple restored, and the Anagarika Dharmapala uses it now as the seal of the Maha Bodhi Society.

The last scene is Buddha's final entry into Nirvana with the dying Buddha in the center. At the head of Buddha's couch stands Ananda, his favorite disciple, the Buddhist St. John. Behind are two gods, presumably Indra and Brahma, standing with folded hands. Buddha's attendant, Vajrapani, the bearer of the thunder-

⁵ *Gospel of Buddha*, Chap. XV.

bolt, has thrown down his thunderbolt (*vajra*), and sits with arms crossed on his breast.

When the picture was completed, Maha-Kasyapa requested the



A BUDDHIST VERONICA LEGEND.

king to come out into the garden where he had several baths prepared for him, among which was one of *ghi* (melted butter) and the last one of sandal-wood powder. He foresaw that the king would swoon on hearing the news, and he was then to be passed from

one bath to another, and when placed in the sandal-wood powder the picture would be presented to him and a miraculous cure would thereby be effected.

The legend must have been a favorite story among the Bud-



THE SUDARIUM ACCORDING TO CORREGGIO.

dhists of Qyzyl, for there are four illustrations of it. One of these is sufficiently well preserved to admit of an outline drawing which has been made by the artistic hand of Professor Grünwedel himself. The scene to the left represents a king and queen enthroned in royal state; before them kneels a servant, and behind stands a

courtier fan in hand. The king is addressed by some person of high dignity, presumably Maha-Kasyapa, who asks him into the



WU TAO TZE'S NIRVANA PICTURE.

garden where the several baths are prepared. In the lower part of the section on the right hand we see the earthquake represented by the tottering of Mount Meru and the disturbance of the courses of the sun and moon. The king has passed through three tubs and sits now in that of powdered sandal-wood where the picture of the life of Buddha is presented to him. He raises his arms for joy at the contemplation of the salvation thus gloriously consummated and is henceforth cured of his ailment.

* * *

In spite of the many differences in the Christian legends of both King Abgar and Veronica and of the latter's appearance before the Roman Emperor as compared with this Buddhist story of King Ajatasatru, there are so many similarities in the very details of the drawings that one might feel inclined to think that both the idea of the miraculous cure and the motives of the drawings might have migrated from the east to the west or the west to the east, and yet we do not believe in any historical connection. We believe that these legends, the Buddhist one and the several Christian stories, originated in perfect independence and their similarities are due merely to a similarity of conditions.

The legend of the miraculous curative power of a pictorial representation of Buddha's life originated in a country where pure Buddhism had been considerably mixed up with exorcism and belief in miracles. Accordingly the cure which Maha-Kasyapa accomplished was not without additional magic incantations. At the left of the man holding the cloth we see a sword stuck half its length into the ground, and two arrows. Both of them are plainly visible in the larger outline picture of the detail of the cloth, while they are obscured in our illustration of the whole fresco. We see further a dish containing some medicine, and an object which, according to Professor Grünwedel, is the head of a goat, presumably an offering for magical purposes.

The four detailed scenes of the picture itself follow in all respects the traditional type of the illustrations of Buddha's life, and their type has remained classical throughout the history of Buddhist art. Later on the number of these scenes increased to eight, as we know them from Wu Tao Tze's Nirvana picture.⁶

We do not venture to assign a date to this Buddhist Veronica, but according to Professor Grünwedel many of the frescoes of the

⁶ Published as a photogravure by the Open Court Publishing Co. with full explanations of the Chinese text. See also *The Open Court*, XVI, 163.

Buddhist caves of Qyzyl antedate any one of the similar representations of Christian art. While it is not impossible that the idea of the healing picture might have traveled westward from India in the same way as Æsop's fables and the story of Barlaam and Josaphat, we have no doubt that the Veronica legend was of an independent origin, and may therefore be considered as a remarkable instance of parallel formation in religious lore.