

TWO BITS FROM BELLEFOREST

Charles II the Bald founded many churches and abbeys. [In A.D. 876] he brought to the Abbey of St. Denis one of the nails with which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, a big piece of the cross and some thorns of the crown and the other relics that Charlemagne, his grandfather, had brought from Constantinople and had put in the chapel at Aix, where he is buried; except for the Holy Shroud, which he put in the Abbey of St. Cornelius of Compiègne, which he had founded.

At this time [1399] the Count d'Estampes, who often ate and drank at the table of the Duke of Berry, while dining died suddenly of an apoplexy and his head dropped onto his arms that he had folded on the table; and when the Duke of Berry noticed it, thinking he had fallen asleep, said laughing, My noble cousin sleeps, raise him up. But they found he was dead. In this year some monks of the Order of St. Bernard brought the Shroud (*Suaire*) wherein our Lord was buried in the tomb, and they took it to an abbey of their order, named Cadouin, in the diocese of Cahors.

FRANÇOIS DE BELLEFOREST: *Les Chroniques et Annales de France....* Paris, 1573.

* * *

In 1928, after visiting Cadouin on the feast day of the famous "shroud", Don Noguier de Malijay published his research on this cloth still believed to be an authentic relic of Jesus' burial. *Spectrum* #18 (March 1986) presented Don Noguier's account through the XIVth century.

Fearful of the violence sweeping the region after Poitiers, in 1357 the monks sneaked the cloth to the safety of Toulouse. It was not to rest again in Cadouin until 1463 (see *Spectrum* #28/29, "To Tell the Truth", for a sketch of the trepidations and litigations reminiscent of the "Lirey Affair"). Some time after 1392, under "tight security", an archbishop and four monks took the cloth to Paris, where the troubled King Charles VI, the Beloved, had hoped to be cured of his "sick head" by laying upon it the veil that had covered the head of the Savior in the tomb.

In 1935, part of the decorative border turned out to be an inscription in Kufic characters. But is it true, as authors have been saying, that Kufic script was no longer written after the XIth century? All during the Norman *regnum*, vestments and mantles worn by the

grand lords of Sicily were richly embroidered with Arabic letters. A museum in Vienna conserves a fine silk mantle with an inscription embroidered in Kufic, saying it was woven in the royal factory at Palermo in 1133-34; that is, during the splendid reign of Roger II (1101-1154). Frederick II, Emperor of Germany, King of Sicily, *stupor mundi*, died in 1250 and was buried in Palermo dressed in a garment embroidered with Kufic characters.

Marvelous legends are the stuff of the *suaire's* history. It is recorded that at the dedication of the church of Cadouin, on 8 October 1154, St. Bernard — who once had parlayed with Roger II culled the occasion to preach to the crowds. Prodigious miracle! He had been dead for fourteen months.

CORRECTION

Many thanks to Père A.-M. Dubarle for calling my attention to a typographical error that had slipped past numerous proof-readings. On page 38 of the September/December issue, we read: "Anselme cites a letter of 15 October 1372, signed by King Charles VI...." In 1372, as we all know, the king was still the scholarly Charles V, who lived until 1380. Pierre de Villiers was one of the few who received the Oriflamme on two separate occasions, in this case from two kings, father and son.