

SCULPTURES IN LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL.

By JOHN HEWITT.

THE Lady Chapel and Presbytery-aisles of Lichfield Cathedral—works of the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century—are surrounded by arcades, the foliations of the arches being filled in with sculptures. Human figures, zoomorphic monsters and grotesques are the chief subjects ; but, interspersed are the most delicate groups of flowers and foliage that can be imagined, bringing forcibly to mind the similar contrast between the figures and foliation of the older days of Norman and pre-Saxon design. Some of the figures are humorously acrobatic, but in no case have our masons overstepped the bounds of decorum. To the personal overseeing of good Bishop Langton, who commenced and largely executed these works, we may perhaps attribute this pervading propriety.

Among the various subjects of the arcade sculptures we find, on the north side of the presbytery-aisle, a number of musicians and a lady dancing, of which we offer a slight sketch. The first performer (of our group) exhibits on the Tabor and Pipe. This music is specially interesting to us Midlanders because it is still in vogue among our villagers for the annual dance at Christmas and the Wake. And for such festivities it is far preferable to the fiddle : its tone is more rustic and less squeaky ; and it has this special advantage, that the measured beats of the drum better mark the cadence of the dance, and keep the Strephons from treading on the toes of the Phyllises. At the festal times to which we have alluded, our tympanist is in great request—only we don't call him tympanist : he goes by the more familiar name of "Tabboring Jemmy" or "Tabboring Tommy," as the case may be. Whatever his name, he has to be engaged for weeks beforehand, to be served with the best that cellar and larder can supply ; and note, that he will neither play newfangled tunes (in which he includes all since "When forced from dear Hebe"), nor will he allow his own *répertoire*



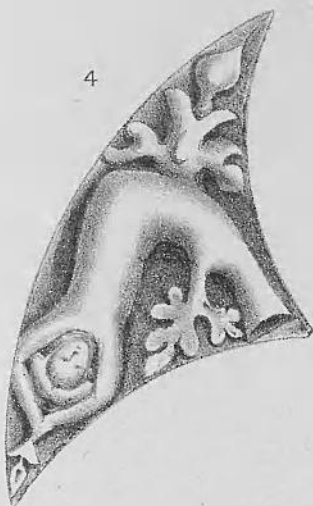
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to be disparaged. Should any aristocratically-disposed farmer's daughter venture on any such disparagement, the probabilities are that, on standing-up for the after-supper dance, the minstrel-boy to the war is gone, and the annual festivity is brought to a premature close. By the obliging consideration of a leading taborist of these parts, I have had the opportunity of examining his instruments—the exact counterparts, as it seems to me, of the tabor and pipe of the thirteenth century. And on this point it is worth while to contrast the music in question with the Organ of early times. Six hundred years have passed over the Tabor and Pipe, and it is still unchanged in form; evidence, surely, that it was a perfect instrument from the first. Can this be said of the Organ? Have we not seen any number of mediæval Saint Cecílias holding an apparatus which it has puzzled us all to imagine how she manipulated? and which bears as little resemblance to the organ of the present day as Westminster Abbey to a proto-Keltic wigwam. I have a Cecilia before me at this moment improvising on an instrument of eight pipes. The organ now in our Cathedral has 2,500 pipes, many a one of which would conveniently hold Saint Cecilia and all her belongings. The tabor which I examined is a foot in diameter, 3 inches in depth from parchment to parchment, the hoop $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep and adorned with a gay succession of party-coloured ribbands. The pipe is of boxwood, a foot long, and has, near the end, two holes on the top and one on the under side. To my inquiry how, with only three holes, the performer managed to produce such an abundance of notes, the old man replied, “Oh, you see, it's done by the breath.”—“And pray what's the highest note you can make?”—“Lor, sir, I've no notion.”

The second performer plays upon the Little Clarion or Clarionette, an instrument that, from its medial character, has maintained its position in the orchestral *respublica* to the present day. It is the *tibia dextra* of classical times, and was blown from the top; the flute, that instrument blown from the side, being, I believe, of quite modern date. In a search made some years ago at the request of an archæological friend, I was unable to find any earlier example of the side-blown pipe than the one in the “Triumph of the Emperor Maximilian;” but further inquiry may have given better results.

In fig. 3 we have the Harp, pure and simple ; portable, of small size, with few strings, unprovided with semitones. But the form is nearly that of its modern, gigantic successor, and the diagonal strings are similar. It is singular that this instrument, the special symbol of the Royal Psalmist, mentioned constantly in our service-books, figured abundantly in our church decorations, whether of stone, wood, or glass, is yet quite disused as an accompaniment to sacred song. Some years ago I was at a church festival in France, where, at one part of the service, a young lady came forward and sang a solo, accompanying herself on the harp. At first the novelty excited a smile among our English group, but soon the excellence of the performance and the appropriateness of the combination forced us to confess that nothing could be more reverent and graceful. Should this be tried in one of our English churches, however, it is probable that the inevitable six parishioners would speedily assemble in vestry, to protest against the reintroduction of King David and his harp.

No. 4. This figure of a lady dancing will bring to mind the similar examples in Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes." His Chap. 5, section 5, gives us a picture of the thirteenth century, closely resembling our *danseuse*, even to the head-dress. But this tumbling-dancing was of much earlier vogue. The Anglo-Saxon *tumbian* implied both exploits : thus, Bosworth gives "*tumbian*, to tumble, to dance." And where our version of St. Mark, chap. 6 says : "the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him," the Anglo-Saxon version tells us that she "tumbode and hit licode Herode." (Strutt, chap. 5 ; and see other passages and other figures illustrating this subject in the "Sports and Pastimes.") If Herod and his courtiers liked this mode of dancing so much, we may suppose that others viewed it with similar approval ; and we must not forget that, even in this refined age, there seems a tendency in some of our dances to revert to the gymnastic phase of the art. In Turner's "Tour in Normandy" will be found a *tumbere* from a sculpture of the church of Bocheville. She is attended by a band of eleven minstrels, whose music accompanies her performance. (Vol. ii., p. 12.) This example has been copied in Fossebrook's "Cyclopædia of Antiquities," page 675. Musgrave's

"Ramble through Normandy" gives us another specimen, closely resembling the Lichfield figure. It is from a sculpture over the north-west door of Rouen Cathedral, and represents Salome dancing before Herod. The engraving occurs at page 518 of Mr. Musgrave's volume.

No. 5. Whatever may have been the feeling among Midlanders of the thirteenth century relating to the bagpipe, it is certain that this instrument has lost all charm for the denizens of this locality at the present day. I believe that the whole county of Stafford could not furnish a single bagpipe: indeed, I may include the whole diocese. For this we are properly thankful. How then comes it that this instrument figures so prominently on our church walls? Well, our first Bishop (of the Mercians) was "one Duina, a Scot." He then must have had pipers in his train, just as the Duke of Athol has at the present day. That this music should have held its own till the thirteenth century may excite surprise, but let us remember that the Scotch are very persistent.¹

Another figure among our sculptures plays upon the dulcimer; but this example having been "restored," I do not venture to present it. It will scarcely be necessary to intimate that the curved form seen at the top of Nos. 3 and 5 is the point of the hood. No. 3, the Harper, wears the purse and dagger of the time; No. 5, the Scotchman, limits his outfit to the purse.

¹ Our late respected member, Dr. Buckland, was once lecturing at Edinburgh on the foot-prints of the Chirotherium, when a pert Athenian requested to know how it was that the foot-marks were all in the same direction. Posed

for a moment, the doctor was soon equal to the occasion. "Sir," said he, "Chirotherium was a Scotchman, his foot-marks led to England—and he na came back again."