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NOTICE OF THE CROSS-LEGGED SEPULCHRAL EFFIGIES, EXISTING AT CASHEL.

BY GEORGE DU NOYER, ESQ.,

Fellow of the College of St. Columba, county Meath.

At Cashel, in the county Tipperary, there have been preserved four monumental effigies which have not hitherto, as it appears, been brought before the notice of antiquaries. They are, however, highly deserving of attention as authentic and interesting examples of costume, illustrative of a period of mediæval sculpture, of which scarcely any works of a similar kind exist in Ireland, and entitled, on account of the taste, vigour of design, and masterly execution which they display, to rank amongst the best remains of the same age and description which are to be found in England. They present also this novel feature, that three of the effigies, representing females, are, as well as the figure of the knight which is preserved with them, cross-legged, a peculiarity of monumental design hitherto wholly unnoticed.

To persons who desire to study the mediæval remains which exist in Ireland, it will appear strange that, numerous as are the works which have been compiled on the subject of Irish antiquities, writers have confined themselves almost exclusively to those ecclesiastical remains which may claim a date more or less anterior to the coming of the English, or that they have theorised to an interminable extent upon the relics of pagan times which have been preserved in Ireland. The works of the mason or the sculptor, but more particularly the latter, which may be attributed to the Anglo-Normans, or were produced under their influence, have either been wholly overlooked, or examined in such a manner as would lead to the conclusion that the writers deemed them unworthy of serious

consideration. The Iconoclastic rage of the reformers of the sixteenth century has, indeed, left the ecclesiastical edifices of Ireland without one fair specimen of the numerous works of monumental sculpture by which they were once adorned, and the battering trains of Cromwell in the succeeding century, which only ceased to thunder and destroy, to be echoed, as it were, by the more powerful cannon of the Jacobites or the Hanoverians, swept from their very foundations many of the early military structures in that country, and not a few of those which were erected in later times by the Norman settlers, or the more powerful of the native chieftains. Still there exist many monuments of the thirteenth and succeeding centuries which are worthy of careful preservation; they may serve to illustrate similar remains in England, and supply evidences of the taste and skill of native Irish artists during those periods.

The four effigies to which I wish now to call attention, are to be seen built into the grave-yard wall of St. John's church at Cashel, and I have been enabled to gather the following particulars relative to their history. About seventy or eighty years since, when the Roman Catholics commenced the erection of a chapel at Cashel, the site which was given to them was that spot which was occupied by the ruins of the Franciscan abbey, founded and erected by William Hacket, during the reign of Henry III.[a] The workmen engaged in clearing away the ancient masonry discovered a crypt situated under the old abbey church, or, according to some, under a detached stone-roofed building, which adjoined the abbey. In this chamber, which was known amongst the Irish as the "room of rest," were found a number of stone coffins, with lids of the same material, upon which were sculptured effigies in high relief: of these several were destroyed, and the remainder were scattered about in wanton neglect. One stone coffin only was preserved, and is now to be seen in the Roman Catholic chapel, where it serves as a receptacle for holy water: of the effigies, four still exist, as also the fragment of a fifth, which is to be seen built into the exterior wall of the chapel. Some description of these memorials will be necessary in explanation of their peculiarities, to accompany the representations which are now submitted to the readers of the Archæological Journal.

[a] Camden's Britannia, III. p. 523. Archdall, Monast. Hib. p. 65.

Three of these curious effigies present a striking similarity in general design, costume, and execution; the form of the head-dress is the same in all of them, being a peculiar flat cap, which appears to have been a prevalent fashion of female attire during the thirteenth century. It here assumes nearly the same appearance as the cap of estate which at an early period formed part of the insignia of nobility; the precise mode in which it was arranged is not easily to be described, but it was placed over the reticulated caul, now termed in Southern Europe the *crespine*, in which the hair was confined on either side of the face. A broad band passed beneath this cap round the head, and under the chin; the hair was parted on the forehead. Examples of this peculiar fashion of the female head-dress appear in many works of sculpture and illuminations executed in the thirteenth century; a good illustration is given in the plate representing an effigy of a lady, in Romsey church, Hampshire[b], and the same attire is frequently introduced in sculptured capitals or corbels, such as those which have been given by Carter[c], from the chapter-house at Southwell, erected in the reign of Henry III.

The rest of the costume of these figures is equally characteristic of the thirteenth century; the loose robe confined at the waist by a narrow strap and buckle, and falling so low as to envelope the feet entirely in its folds, the mantle kept in its place by a narrow strap crossing the breast and held in the left hand, the square cushion under the head, are all fashions observable in the monuments of that period. The fashion of closing, by means of a circular brooch, the vent or *fente*, which was made in the upper part of the robe, in order that it might fit more closely around the throat, may be seen in several monumental effigies, especially those of Berengaria the queen of Richard I., and Isabel d'Angoulesme, the queen of John[d].

[b] Monumental Effigies of Great Britain, by Thomas and G. Hollis.

[c] Ancient Sculpture and Painting, vol. ii. pl. lxxx. p. 109. See also Carter's Ancient Architecture, Part i. pl. lxxviii. Amongst numerous illuminated MSS. which supply representations of this head-dress, may be noticed Harl. MS. 1527, executed apparently in France about the middle of the thirteenth century. From this MS. Strutt has given a good example. See his Dresses, vol. i. pl. xli. The fashion appears to have been more common in France than in England; Montfaucon has given two interesting examples, furnished by the monumental effigies of the wives of Erard de Trainel. Date 1236—1250. Mon. Franc. ii. p. 169, pl. xxxiv. The same head-dress may be noticed at Notre Dame, Paris, in subjects sculptured about the year 1257; in one of these, representing the murder of the Innocents, there is a figure in mailed armour, precisely similar to the Cashel effigy, as regards the head.

[d] Stothard's Monumental Effigies.

The dimensions of these female effigies are as follows: I. length of the figure, 6ft. 6in.; width of the coffin-slab at top, 2ft. 2in., at the foot, 1ft. 11in. II. length of the figure, 6ft. 6in.; width of the coffin-slab at top, 2ft.; it becomes somewhat narrower towards the foot. III. length of the figure, 7ft. 3in.; width of the slab, 2ft. 4in.

As has been already remarked, these three figures are cross-legged, and from the peculiarity of this attitude, hitherto regarded as exclusively appropriate to knights, as also from their somewhat masculine forms and proportions, the sex of these singular effigies might appear a matter of doubt, were not this question sufficiently determined by the character of the head-dress, the absence of mustaches, and the costume generally when compared with the male costume as illustrated by the effigies of the period.

Effigy of Richard de Burgo. Abbey of Athassel, co. Tipperary.

An interesting example of the civil costume of the nobility in Ireland, during the early part of the fourteenth century, which may also serve to shew the usual fashions of the preceding age, is supplied by the effigy of Richard de Burgo, earl of Ulster, surnamed "The Red," which still exists at the abbey of Athassel, co. Tipperary, founded about the year 1200, by William Fitz Adelm de Burgo[e]. This effigy is not cross-legged, it represents the earl clothed in his civil robes, and without any cap or covering on his head; the hair is divided on the forehead, and falls over the ears in short curls, whilst on the upper lip are seen mustaches. The dress consists of a loose robe girded around the waist, and falling to the ancles in straight folds; the shoulders are covered by a small cape or tippet, which is fastened on the breast by a circular brooch of a form well known to have been in common use in Ireland, as likewise

[e] It may deserve record, as an example of the value of oral traditions, as preserved in Ireland, that this effigy of Richard the Red is known and designated by the peasantry as the figure of "Earl Rua," Anglice the "Red Earl." Archdall, in his Monasticon, thus mentions the death of this nobleman:—"A.D. 1326. Richard, earl of Ulster, commonly called the Red Earl, who had chosen this priory (Athassel) for his retirement, died on the 28th of June, and was interred here."

in England, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; this cape is apparently attached to a mantle, which falls over the left shoulder; the left hand is bare, and grasps the mantle, to keep it from trailing on the ground, while the glove is held in the right hand, which rests upon the chest. The costume of this effigy, when compared with that of the three cross-legged figures, is so dissimilar, that we could hardly for a moment suppose that the latter, differing so much in attire, are intended to represent persons of the same sex.

The fourth effigy preserved at Cashel represents a knight in the cross-legged attitude, and is interesting as exhibiting two well marked features of the military costume of the middle ages, not often found associated together, which, in a great degree, characterise the period extending from the reign of Henry III. A.D. 1216, to that of Edward III. A.D. 1327.

They are, the complete suit of mailed armour, the head and throat being protected by the chaperon of mail, and the roweled spur. A narrow band passes over the mail around the head of the figure, just above the brow. The shield is suspended by the guige, covering the left arm, and there is no appearance of any sword or sword-belt. Chain mail, employed as defensive armour, fell wholly into disuse in the reign of Edward III., when the light plate-armour of Southern Europe came into almost general adoption, whilst on the other hand the earliest example of a roweled spur occurs upon the great seal of Henry III.[f] Certain minor peculiarities may deserve notice in the examination of this effigy; around the wrist of the right hand there appears to pass a narrow strap, which increases in width towards the verge of the slab on which the figure reclines, so as to suggest the notion that something had been attached to it. There is a strap which

[f] Carter, in his Ancient Painting and Sculpture, (plate lvi. p. 76,) has given a representation of the curious subject which formerly served to ornament the base of the tomb of Edmund Crouchback, earl of Lancaster, in Westminster Abbey. He died in 1296. The use of the roweled spur here appears, according to Carter's drawing, the armour being wholly of mail, but some doubt may arise as to the accuracy of the details given in his plate, and the original has totally perished.

passes over the instep of the left foot in a singular manner, intended, as it might be conjectured, to serve as a stirrup-guard, and the position of the left foot, which is doubled under itself, is unusual. This effigy measures in length 7ft. 6in., the width of the slab at the top is 2ft. 5in., and at the lower extremity 2ft[g].

The inscription which is observable upon the cushion, and adjoining part of the slab, on the left side of the head of the effigy, No. II., may, I am disposed to think, be regarded as of a subsequent period to the date of the sculpture itself. The last letter is placed upon the bevelled edge of the slab, the letters are badly formed, and it is now impossible to decypher the inscription, a part of which appears to run as follows :—I : HACKET : FILIA.

I will now offer a few general remarks on all these monumental figures. The first impression which they convey to the mind is, that the area of the slabs upon which they have been carved was not sufficient to comprise and give proper effect to the sculpture. Thus, on examination of the effigy, No. I., we find that the fold of the long mantle which falls over the place where the left foot would be found in crossing the right, projects beyond the bevelled edge of the slab, whilst the right elbow of the figure has manifestly been mutilated, and part of the cloak has been cut away, independently of the injury which it has sustained from accident.

No. II. Here we find that the slab has been cut away at the top till it became level with the flat band surrounding the head; and, as may be distinctly perceived, close to the right elbow of the figure the bevelled edge of the stone has been waved, to adapt it as much as possible to the folds of the mantle, the same contrivance being also observable lower down on the same side near the left knee.

No. III. This figure has been much injured near the part where the right foot should be found in crossing the left, and perhaps if we were to trace the direction of the line in which the mantle would fall, between the left shoulder and the feet, we might find that several inches of it have been removed.

[g] One other cross-legged effigy only has been described as existing in Ireland. It is the figure which is to be seen on the south side of the nave in Christ Church, Dublin, supposed to be the representation of Richard de Clare, surnamed Strongbow, earl of Pembroke and Striguil, lord of Leinster by grant from Dermoc Macartmore, with the assent of Henry II. He died at Leinster A.D. 1176, and was buried, as some writers state, at Kilkenny.

The male figure still more remarkably exhibits the peculiarity I have endeavoured to describe, for the right foot has been cut away as far as it was practicable without injuring the corresponding leg: the shield is merged into the slab, and the upper part of the head projects over the cushion, beyond the field of the stone, more than a couple of inches.

I.

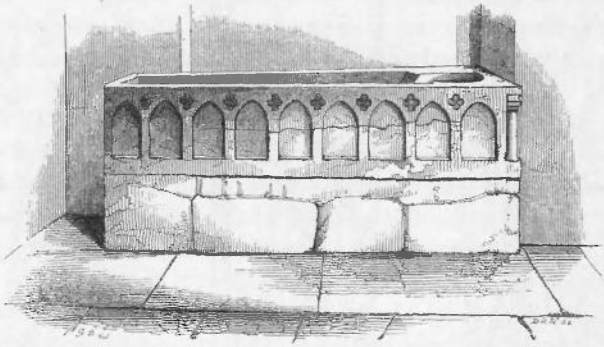
II.

III.

From the foregoing considerations, combined with the general character of their design, and the style of workmanship, I am inclined to conclude that these effigies are of the thirteenth century, that they were the work not of Irish, but of Anglo-Norman artists, and that they were not executed in Ireland, but sent from England as they were required, in order to ornament the tombs of the English nobility who died at Cashel or in its neighbourhood. That they are thus designedly mutilated may be accounted for on the supposition that the coffins, being too cumbrous for transportation, were constructed in Ireland, and that their sculptured lids were imported from England, and being found on their arrival too large for the coffins, were, at the expense of the design, pared down till they agreed in size.

The stone coffin found with these effigies, and already

alluded to in this notice, has been formed out of the black marble of the district, and, as a piece of workmanship, is rude, although well designed. The side is ornamented with a blank arcade of pointed arches, or rather of sunk panels, which appear to be of the Early English style; a quatrefoil is introduced between the springing of each arch. The angle at the head is ornamented with a column, having a simple capital, but wanting a base, whilst, at the corresponding angle at the other end, there is the commencement of a similar column, which has never been completed.



The coffin slightly lessens in height towards the foot[h], as measured externally, and the arches diminish both in height and width in the same proportion, so as to make the last arch almost an equilateral one. Another peculiarity in the details may also deserve notice. The quatrefoil nearest the head of the coffin is perfectly geometrical, and carefully executed, and is divided by slight diagonal lines, which connect its cusps. The next in succession is less carefully executed, and the diagonal lines are slightly indicated, whilst the succeeding quatrefoils bear evident signs of having been hastily executed, as if the sculptor became tired of his occupation: indeed throughout the whole work there is a want of care or skill in the carving, sufficient to shew that the work must have been done without knowledge or definite design. This inconsistency and imperfection in the art is curious, and characteristic of Irish mediæval remains. I have observed it in many ecclesiastical buildings, and in the tombs, crosses, or other ornamental accessories

[h] The following are the dimensions of the coffin:—Length, 6 ft. 8 in.; width, at the head, 2 ft. 4 in.; at the foot, 1 ft. 2 in.; depth of the internal cavity, 1 ft. 3 in.

associated with them. This difference of treatment appears to constitute part of the general contrast which Irish architecture and sculpture exhibits when compared with English work of the same period. It may I think be safely asserted, that had this coffin been the work of the same school as that which produced the effigies, we should have had more precision in the design of its ornaments, and more skill and care in their execution. These considerations lead me to believe that the coffin is Irish, whilst the effigies may be regarded as specimens of Anglo-Norman art.

Between this stone coffin and similar remains in England, there will be found a certain general similarity, but only just so much as we should expect to find on comparing an Irish cathedral of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries with an English structure of a similar age; namely, a general accordance in the design and style, while there is a great difference in the treatment and finish of the decoration. When compared with the tomb in Westminster abbey, given by Carter[1], (an example offered more for the value of the general features of style which it displays, than for its details,) the stone coffin of Cashel will present a sufficient similarity to enable us, aided by the traditionary evidence, to come to the conclusion that it is of equal age with the effigies, and may be regarded as a work of the thirteenth century.

The foregoing critical remarks suggest here the statement of this general rule, that, with very few exceptions, the mediæval ecclesiastical remains in Ireland, from the twelfth century downwards, are remarkably devoid of ornament, as compared with edifices in England; and that, whenever English architecture has been borrowed, it has been used only in the principal doors and windows, and the work, from its appearance, has evidently been executed hurriedly, without any previous fixed design, or else has not been completed. It would appear therefore, that those who then followed the decorative arts, had, even while secluded within the comparatively safe precincts of a cloister, so imbibed the restless spirit then abroad in the land, that they could not calmly sit down to perform a work requiring both patience and study to accomplish: or that they attempted to carry out their designs only to a small extent, fearing, that before

[1] Part ii. pl. vi. Ancient Architecture of England.

their labour could be satisfactorily concluded, some destroying hand would come, and with the sword leave their works to posterity only as a tottering ruin, or the memorial of a bloody conflict. But, be this as it may, we can assert that the decorative arts, as applied to the beautifying of ecclesiastical buildings and sculpture in particular, were prosecuted with greater vigour and more ability in England, from the twelfth to the conclusion of the fifteenth century, than they were during the same period in Ireland. Doubtless, however, there was sufficient intercourse between the English and their turbulent Milesian neighbours to impart to Ireland the various fashions or styles which prevailed in England during that period, whether such fashions related to dress, manners, customs, weapons, or architecture with its attendant decorations. And thus, although the unsettled state of political affairs in Ireland effectually barred all advancement in the cultivation of taste and feeling for appropriate ornament as applied to religious edifices, there was sufficient general knowledge diffused among the people to give to the works of the native artist in that country a general similarity in style to such as may have been produced contemporaneously in England.

The Franciscan monastery at Cashel, on the site of which the remarkable effigies which have been described were found, was commonly called Hacket's Abbey, and strange as it may appear that the memorials of the invader and his wives or kinswomen should have been preserved in times when popular feeling was subject to no control, there can be little doubt that the knight whose portraiture has been brought before the notice of our readers, was either William Hacket, the founder, or one of his immediate descendants. The period to which, by comparison with monumental effigies in England, this figure may confidently be assigned, is the middle of the thirteenth century, and the singular effigies of ladies are doubtless of the same age. It may be observed that several writers in recent times have stated that cross-legged female effigies exist, an assertion which is grounded, perhaps, only on the observation of Mills to that effect, substantiated by no example or authority[k]. Wadding, who wrote early in the seventeenth century, declares that he had in vain sought to discover the period of the foundation of Hacket's Abbey; having only

[k] Hist. of the Crusades, vol. ii. p. 8, note.

ascertained that Urban VI. in the year 1381, had commissioned the guardian of that house to excommunicate all the Irish in the province of Munster, who should acknowledge the authority of Clement VII. He asserts that in the church, of which only the walls then remained, many tombs of the founder's and other noble families were to be seen. "Situm est (cœnobium) extra urbis muros, circumducto forti vallo universo ambitui. Vulgariter vocatur Monasterium Hackettorum, fortassis quia gens ista fundavit et protexit. Pleraque horum et aliorum nobilium conspiciuntur adhuc in ecclesiâ sepulcra marmorea. Soli supersunt nunc parietes." Ware, however, asserts that the founder lived in the reign of Henry III., and his statement has been copied by Stevens and Archdall[1].

[1] Wadding, Annal. Minorum, vol. ix. p. 47; Ware's Antiquities of Ireland, p. 104; Stevens, Monasticon Hibernicum, p. 275.