

and men's conscience : Christ alone is the peace-maker, which straitly commands peace between brother and brother. And so long as ye use these ceremonies, so long shall ye use these significations<sup>t</sup>."

ALBERT WAY.

## SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE "DANSE MACABRE," OR DANCE OF DEATH.

IN EXPLANATION OF A PASSAGE IN "THE KNIGHT'S TALE" OF CHAUCER.

THERE is no subject in the whole range of mediæval art of greater interest, nor one, the origin of which is involved in greater obscurity, notwithstanding the vast amount of antiquarian learning which has been expended on its investigation, than the so called Dance of Death. Its history yet remains to be written ; and the learned dissertation of the late Mr. Douce, valuable as it must ever be to all inquirers into the subject, can, in spite of the great labour and erudition displayed in its pages, only be regarded as a collection of materials towards such history". May the following observations be considered no unworthy addition to the materials so industriously accumulated by my late accomplished friend.

They are intended in the first place to clear up a passage in Chaucer, which defied the ingenuity of Tyrwhitt, and thereby, in the second place, to shew that the Dance of Death was a subject perfectly familiar to the English at the time when the Canterbury Tales were written. The passage to which I allude is contained in "The Knight's Tale ;" and forms a portion of that in which Chaucer describes

"The portreyture that was upon the wall,  
Within the Temple of mighty Mars the redde."

Chaucer is represented both by Warton and Tyrwhitt as

<sup>t</sup> Burnet's History of the Reformation, Records, Book 1, no. xxi. See further, on the subject of the use of the Pax, the Hieroglyphicon, by Dom. and Car. Macer, Romæ, 1677 ; Durandi Ration. Div. Off. c. de pacis osculo ; and De Vert, Explic. des Cerem. de l'Eglise, tome iii.

<sup>u</sup> The curious collections of the late talented artist Langlois, of Rouen, with numerous illustrations unnoticed by previous writers, will shortly be given to the public, under the care of M. Pottier, Librarian to the city of Rouen.

having derived this beautiful story from the "Teseide" of Boccaccio. The accuracy of this opinion I much question : and at another and more fitting opportunity I hope to prove, as I believe I shall be enabled to do, that Chaucer is only indirectly, and not, as has heretofore been supposed, immediately indebted to Boccaccio for the story of Palamon and Arcite, although there are passages in the very portion of this tale, to which I am directing attention, which correspond almost word for word with Boccaccio's description of the Temple of Mars.

Boccaccio himself was however, in this part of his poem, an imitator of Statius; and Dr. Morell, in his excellent edition of this tale, being ignorant of the existence of the "Teseide," pronounces Chaucer's description to be "a fine copy of the beautiful original in Statius."—Lib. vii.

"Hic steriles delubra notat Mavortia Sylvas," &c.

As Tyrwhitt's edition is in every body's hands, and the excellent, but unfinished one of Morell is comparatively unknown, the quotation to which the reader's attention is requested, shall be given from the latter. It is as follows :

"Why schulde I not ek als well tell Yow all  
 The Portreyture that was upon the wall,  
 Within the Temple of mighty Mars the redde.  
 Al peynted was the Wal in lenthe and bredde,  
 Like to the Estris of the gresely Place,  
 That hyght the grete Temple of Mars in Trace,  
 In thylke northern frosty Regioun,  
 Thereas Mars hath his sovereign Mancyon.  
 Ferst on the Wal was peyntid a Forest,  
 In whiche there dwellyth neyther Man, ne Beste;  
 With knotty knavry bareyne Treis olde,  
 Of Stubbis scharpe and hideous to beholde,  
 In which there ran as rombilin a Swough  
 As thow a Storm schulde brestyn every Plough,  
 And downward from an hill under a bente,  
 There stod the Temple of Mars Omnipotent,  
 Wrought al of bornede Stele, of which th Entre  
 Was long and streyt, and gastely for to se.  
 And thereout came a Rage in swiche a wese  
 That it made al the Gatys for to rese.  
 The Northern Lyght in al the dorys schow,  
 For Window on the Wal ne was there now,  
 Throw whiche Men mighten any Lyght desserne,  
 The doris were of Athamante eterne,  
 I clenchede overthwerte and ende long,  
 With ilyn tough, and for to make it strong,

Every Pillere the Temple to sustene,  
Was tunne gret of Iryn bryght and schene.

There saugh I ferst the derke Imagynyng  
Of Felonye, and all the Compassyng;  
The crewel Ire, red as ony gledo  
*The Pikepurse* and eke the pale Drede;  
The smylere with the knyfe under the Cloke;  
The scheppen brennyng with the blake smoke.  
The tresoun, and the murdering in the bed;  
The open warre with woundis al bebled.  
Conteke with bloody knyfe, and scharpe Menace;  
Al full of chyrkyng was that sory place.  
The Sleer of himself yits saugh I there,  
His Herte blod hath bathede al his here;  
The nayl ydreven in the schode aryght;  
The colde Deth, with mouth gapyng upryght.

In myddis of the Temple sat Myschaunce,  
With Discomfort and sory Countenaunce.  
Yit saugh I Wodeness laughing in his rage,  
Armid Compleynt, Outes, and fers Corage  
The Careyn in the bosch with Throte yeorve,  
A thousent sleyn and not of Qualm ystorve.  
The Tyraunt with the prey be Force yraft,  
The town destroyed, there was nothing laft.  
There saw I brent the Schepis Hyposterys;  
The Hunter stranglede with the wilde Berys;  
*The Sowe fretyn the Child ryght in the Cradil,*  
*The Cook yscaldit for al his longe ladel.*  
Nought was forgottin by the informe of Mart;  
*The Carter over redyn with his Cart,*  
*Undir the Whel full low he lay adown."*

There are some lines in the foregoing description of the very highest order of poetry; while on the other hand there are some which, if perused without that key to the allusions they contain, which it is the object of the present communication to furnish, seemed to Tyrwhitt so unworthy of the rest, that in spite of his prejudice in favour of Chaucer, he felt bound to confess their inferiority, and his own ignorance of their meaning. "The Pikepurse," he observes in one of the notes, "I am sorry to say is Chaucer's own." In another, he goes on to remark, "I know not what to think of the two following lines:

"The sow fretynge the child right in the cradel,  
The Coke yscalded, for all his long ladel."

"Was Chaucer serious, or did he mean in this and some similar passages, to ridicule the minute and often incongruous

description of the old Romancers. The lines are in all the MSS."

And well they may be. For I think there are few of my readers, who have made the Dance of Death the subject of their attention, however cursorily, who will not remember how frequently the pick-purse, the cook, "the carter over ridden with his cart," &c. figure in that remarkable pageant-like work of art; who will not see that in describing the paintings which decorated the temple of Mars, Chaucer drew not merely from Statius, or Boccaccio, but also from his memory of some Dance of Death which he well knew would be recognised by his readers.

Read by this light we may point to the passages in question as being 'Chaucer's own;' not indeed in any apologetic spirit, but with a feeling of admiration for the poetical and graphic skill with which he has contrived to graft so popular a representation on so classical a fiction\*.

I am at present unable to state, that any work, such as the painting in the church-yard of the Innocents at Paris, or the Dance of Death pictured in "Poule's<sup>y</sup>," positively existed in this country at the period when Chaucer wrote<sup>z</sup>; Mr. Douce, however, has expressed an opinion on the authority of a poem ascribed by him to Walter Mapes, that it is not unreasonable to infer that paintings of the Macabre dance were coeval with that writer, though no specimen that now remains will warrant the conclusion. He pointed out, however, an allusion to the dance in question, in the vision of Piers Ploughman,

"Deeth cam dryvyng after,  
And al to duste passed  
Kynges and Knyghtes  
Kaysers and Popes, &c." (l. 1424. ed. Wright.)

and I may add, that when on the eve of the publication of his learned dissertation, I called his attention to the existence of this striking allusion to a Dance of Death in one of Chaucer's

\* I have not considered it necessary to occupy space by referring to the various series of the Dance of Death, in which figures of the thief, cook, waggoner, &c. severally occur. They will readily be found upon reference to the dissertation by Mr. Douce to which frequent allusion is made in this paper.

<sup>y</sup> Engraved by Hollar in Dugdale's

Monasticon Anglicanum, Ed. 1673, vol. ii. p. 368.

<sup>z</sup> There is a painting of the Dance of Death on the screen of the choir of Hexham church, Northumberland, executed apparently about the time of Henry the Seventh. This curious relic is worthy of an engraving.

most admired productions, I well remember his expression of surprise that while travelling far and near in accumulating his extensive materials for the history of the Dance, he should have entirely overlooked so evident a description, as that which he at once recognised in Chaucer's lines.

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## DECORATIVE PROCESSES CONNECTED WITH THE ARTS DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

### ENAMEL.

A VERY interesting field of enquiry presents itself to the student of mediæval antiquities, in the artistic processes, now obsolete or imperfectly practised, which formerly contributed to give to the decorations, utensils, and various objects of sacred or ordinary use, a character of originality and elegance, devoid of any high perfection in proportion or design, but sufficient to render the examples, which have been preserved to our days, in no slight degree attractive. The investigation of the origin and progress of these arts during successive centuries is a research not merely curious in itself, shewing how they were derived by more remote tradition from Greece or Egypt, or in more recent times from the East, from Italy, or other countries, through the medium of commercial and political intercourse; but taken in an extended view, it may assist the student in forming a just apprehension of the progressive influence of those international relations, and their power to modify the prevalent tastes and character of nations. Amongst the artistic applications of ornament, there is none perhaps more deserving of attention than the art of the enameller, on account of the high antiquity of its origin, its attractive character, and the infinite variety of purposes, connected with the refinements of progressive civilization, to which it was applied.

The specimens now to be found are for the most part defaced and mutilated; the best works were at all times executed on the precious metals, and these, on account of the intrinsic value of the object, have almost totally disappeared and been