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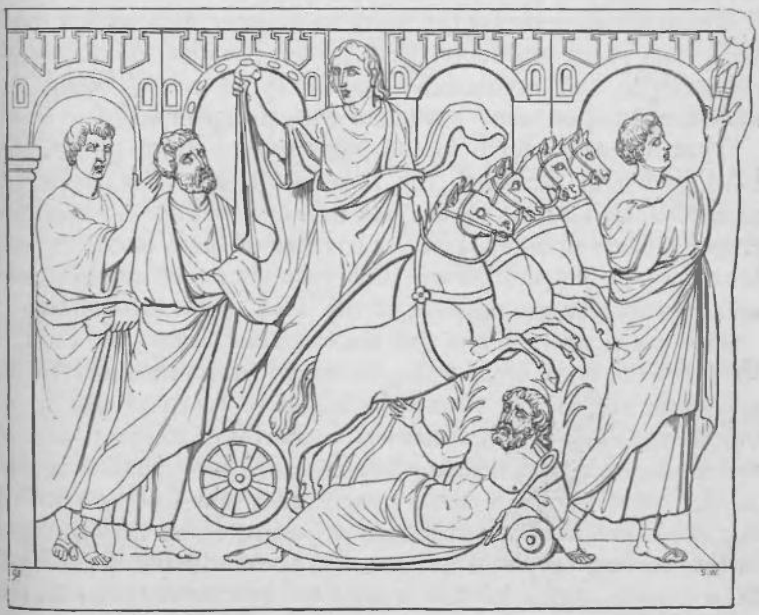
OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROGRESS OF THE ART OF SCULPTURE IN ENGLAND, IN MEDIEVAL TIMES,

AND NOTICES OF SOME ARTISTS, BY WHOM IT WAS PRACTISED.

Communicated by SIR RICHARD WESTMACOTT, R.A., *and read at a Meeting of the Section of Antiquities, at the Annual Meeting of the Archæological Institute, in York, July* 23, 1846.



The Ascension of Elijah, sculptured on a Sarcophagus at Rome.

As the Arts are intimately connected with the epochs in which they are practised, and mark the state and variations of civilization and manners, more forcibly than any other criteria of their age, I have ventured, as Sculpture holds a distinguished place amongst the medieval arts of England, to

submit a few observations on its progress in this country, and, where possible, on the artists by whom it was practised.

In tracing the history of the arts, generally, from their fall to their revival, the transition from pagan idolatry to the Christian religion, we are naturally induced to reflect on the similarity of causes to which they owed at once their destruction and regeneration.

We owe the revival of the arts wholly to religion; but Christianity, which had made great progress in the third century, notwithstanding its persecution, had scarcely ascended the throne of the Cæsars, when the Christians in their turn became the persecutors; these again became divided, new sects arose, and their consequent antipathies led to universal bigotry. A country so divided became an easy prey to the invader, and degeneracy in civil habits increased, until the pure principles of Christianity were lost in superstition.

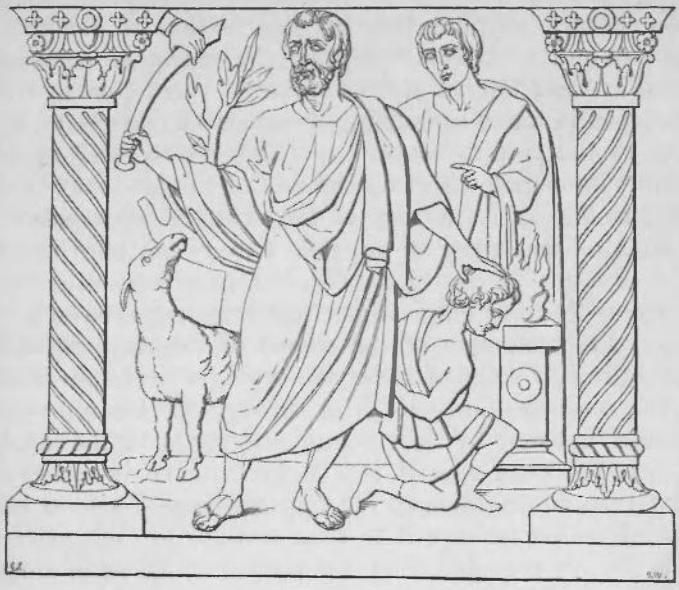
These dissensions are the more to be lamented, as Art, and Sculpture more especially, gave promise, under the first emperors who had embraced Christianity, if not of being restored, at least of being sustained with no mean effect.

That Art owes much to the pious regard which all nations have shewn to the dead, the Athenian states offer abundant examples, as also Rome and its colonies, whilst the vast necropolis, lately discovered in the country of the Volscii, the extent of which is yet unknown, displays a degree of magnificence and care for the preservation of the dead, quite astonishing.

This consideration was the more extraordinary, as, though their heroes, it is true, were canonized and presumed to be ever near them, the ethnic doctrines represented death as everlasting sleep; but, when the mysteries of religion became revealed to us, and resurrection assured, through the merits of our Saviour, a new sense arose and a new feeling towards the dead, and the subterraneous depositories, as may be seen in the earliest crypts of Italy, attest the early and firm belief in a future state, in the numerous representations of the raising of Lazarus.

The subjects most usually treated in these early monuments, are, Christ as the good Shepherd, Christ giving His commands to the Apostles, and the Sacrifice by Abraham.

Many of these works were produced by the best sculptors of the age, they are well composed, and executed with great freedom. The prevalent taste was indeed formed on the study



The Sacrifice of Isaac, sculptured on a Sarcophagus at Rome.

of those remains of ancient genius, which still continued, notwithstanding the destruction of the people who had given them birth, to govern the imaginations of succeeding ages.

The examples to which I would chiefly call attention are taken from sarcophagi in the crypt of St. Peter's at Rome, and are evidently applications of profane compositions to Christian purposes. In regard to these, as well as the adoption of profane symbols, frequently found on old Christian monuments, it may not be irrelevant to observe, that the early Christians, to avoid the persecution directed against them, symbolized their religious rites, borrowing for that purpose such of the usages of the pagan mysteries, with which many of them were acquainted, as they found suitable.

When St. Austin was sent to convert the Saxons, A.D. 596, the Pope, Gregory I., instructed him to accommodate the Christian forms of worship as well as he could to the previous customs of his disciples, to convert the heathen temples into churches, and to establish Christian, in the place of pagan, rites. This fact may serve to account for the preservation of many pagan symbols which are found in this country.

The history of the Arts at Pisa, from the tenth to the fourteenth century, supplies the best information on the state of Sculpture and Architecture in Italy. Pisa may be considered, indeed, as the cradle of the restoration. What the exact state of Art was in other countries, or rather the degree of civilization, to the twelfth century, it is difficult to ascertain; but the most immediate effect on the arts of England may be considered as having arisen out of the crusades, an event which had agitated and given an impulse to every northern nation.

The passions of men generally, but more especially of the nobility, whose only employment was war, had been much excited by the promoters of the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre, and they readily enlisted under the cross, in the hopes of those spiritual rewards offered to them through the Church. This, doubtless, assisted by their communication with the East, at that time the chief seat of arts and commerce, occasioned on their return an attention to the improvement of sacred buildings. Whether we owe it to their taste or to their fears, the fact is that we may date from the second to the sixth crusade, or from A.D. 1144, to 1228, the establishment of nearly six hundred religious foundations in our country. The more polished nations with whom the crusaders mixed, had attracted their attention to the sister arts, and Painting and Sculpture were called in to assist in the embellishment of these pious edifices.

The effect of this religious zeal may be seen in many churches of that age. About this period we may date the erection of Rochester and Wells cathedrals, in both of which we perceive, but more especially in the rich and fanciful foliage which decorates the great west door of Rochester cathedral, a strong indication of Saracenic arrangement; whilst the composition and treatment of the *rilievi*, within the arch, remind us strongly of the simple character of the compositions of the Greek, and early artists of Italy, of that period.

Wells cathedral presents noble specimens of sculpture, and these, I have no doubt, were the works of Englishmen, assisted, probably, as the composition of several of the statues, and the cast of the draperies would intimate, by foreign workmen associated with them. The heads and other extremities mark that deficiency of knowledge which may be readily allowed for in a rude age and people, with whom Art was in so incipient a state.

We must consider the revival of Sculpture to have been formed on the remains of Grecian and Roman Art, whilst there was a constant struggle with native genius to banish the Lombardo Gothic, which, owing to German influence at that period, and to the skill which German artists had exhibited, was established throughout Italy.

A misunderstanding, which arose in the year 1250, between the Emperor Frederick II. and the people, but more especially with the sculptors employed in building the church at Milan, contributed greatly to effect this object. These artists, being distributed about the country, not only improved their style by studying the works of Arnolfo and Niccola Pisano, but it appears that several Lombards and Germans were employed in assisting Niccola, both at Orvieto and Florence.

The example which I here offer, is the representation of a head in my possession, a work of the thirteenth century, formerly in Hereford cathedral. I find by a drawing made by my late friend, Mr. Phillips, at Rouen cathedral, representing a specimen of sculpture applied in like manner to the springing of an arch, precisely the same style and feeling; shewing that both countries were supplied from the same source, and I believe that every one conversant with Art, will agree with me that the specimen before them is of the Pisan school.

Sculptured Head from Hereford Cathedral.

The character of Anglo-Saxon art, which prevailed to the year 1189, may be considered as having changed gradually through the times of the Plantagenet family to the reign of Henry III., A.D. 1216 to 1272, when the Decorative style of architecture gave full employment to the sculptor, and demanded greater efforts of his art. This period, including about 180 years, from the reign of Edward I. to the latter part of that of Henry VI., may be regarded as the Augustan age of Art in England.

Notwithstanding the check which ecclesiastical authority had received so early as the reign of Richard II., the Church yet exercised an exclusive control over the construction of religious edifices, as it appears, in regard to the magnificent buildings of antiquity, that the priests or hierophants had controlled the erection of all works of a religious character. We find by a papal bull, prior to the year 1200, an authority to the heads of churches to build temples to the divinity, attaching to them, as the magnitude or elegance of the structure required, a certain number of "liberi muratores," or Freemasons, to direct and execute the ornamental parts of the fabric.

During one century not less than five priors of Canterbury made architecture their study, and there can be no doubt that the cathedrals and monasteries, erected from the Conquest to the thirteenth century, were in greater part designed by ecclesiastics, who, during the slow work of years, had by the time of their completion formed another and a very different class of artists. It was a school in which the *cementarii*, or masons, acquired that scientific knowledge which had been elaborated by the churchmen in the solitude or seclusion of the cloister, and this they again transmitted to their apprentices. To this class of artificers we may add the goldsmiths, who, like their Italian brethren of the same and later periods, generally practised as architects, modellers, or painters.

Ample as the information is which relates to other circumstances of the period, the records of the state of Art during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are so scanty, that it is not possible to offer any extended notice, either of the works themselves, or the practice of the artists.

To the munificence of Henry III., the first monarch of England who paid attention to the Arts, may be ascribed the most beautiful works of the medieval age which we possess; indeed the monumental statues of Queen Eleanor, of Henry III., and of Aveline, countess of Lancaster, may be ranked with the productions of any country, of the period. Henry repaired the castles and other royal edifices, and by the introduction of foreign talent, established a taste, and developed the genius of his countrymen.

There are works of this period highly deserving the attention of the archæologist, or lover of beautiful art. The Last Judgment, over the west door of Lincoln cathedral, may be

cited as a specimen of the first quality, either for composition or feeling. The *alti-rilievi*, in the chapter-house at Salisbury[a], have been suggested by very able compositions, and the scroll ornaments in the chancel of the church at Stone, in Kent, are amongst the most beautiful specimens of their age. An example of goldsmith's work of this early period may merit notice, namely, the "pulchra Mariola," or image of the Blessed Virgin, mentioned by Matthew of Paris as the work of Walter of Colchester.

The number of artists in England during the reigns of Henry III. and Edward I. must have been considerable. It may, however, be questioned whether native painters and sculptors, of sufficient talent, could have been readily found in the provinces by the sheriffs, or other king's officers, usually appointed to direct the construction or repairs of public buildings. But if we consider the partiality of Henry for foreigners, the constant communication with Rome, and that a considerable portion of the benefices in England were held at that period by foreigners, it may appear reasonable to assume, that these circumstances must have materially influenced the employment of the artists of southern Europe; I have little doubt, from the peculiarities of taste which arose at that time, not only in England, but generally throughout the north of Europe, that it was induced by their introduction.

It was about this period that the separation of the artists employed in the Pisan School took place.

I am far from desiring to derogate from the fair claims of my countrymen; I am, however, disposed to think that, in the good Art of those ages, although the greater part may have been executed by English artists, the taste and direction was due to foreigners; indeed, from the intercourse which subsisted in the thirteenth century between England and Italy, I must candidly state my opinion, that we owe the finest examples of our monumental sculpture to the taste and suggestions of Italians. It is clear, from the general accordance and similarity in the character of Art, that these works can only be attributed to those men who had received their education, and perfected their style, in the school of Italy.

Abbot Ware is said to have brought, about the year 1260, certain workmen and rich materials for the shrine of the Confessor at Westminster Abbey, and reference is also made to

[a] See representations in Britton's Salisb. Cath., pl. xxiii.

mosaics, and other ornamental materials, brought to England by Edward I.[b] There is no mention certainly of any artists employed, but we may fairly presume that men who understood the application of these decorative accessories, were sent with them.

Mr. T. Hudson Turner, who has devoted much time to the examination of the records, has been unable to supply more ample information on the names of artists employed in the public works in England during the middle ages.

The records inform us that the design of the effigy of Queen Eleanor at Westminster, was furnished by Master William Torell, goldsmith, the canopy of the monument being painted by Walter de Durham. Mr. Hudson Turner suggests, and I am of his opinion, that Torell's name was Anglicised from Guglielmo Torelli. He was contemporaneous with William the Florentine.

It appears that there were two statues of Queen Eleanor, the second being a fac-simile of the first, taken probably from the model of that by Torell at Westminster, and placed over the viscera of the queen in Lincoln cathedral. There were also other smaller statues, three of which were made by William de Suffolk, others by Master Alexander de Abyngton, and one by Dymenge de Legery, or "de Reyns," destined for the tomb in the church of the Black Friary, London, in which the queen's heart was deposited.

The crosses at Northampton, Stony Stratford, Woburn, Dunstable, and St. Alban's, were the work of John de Bello, or Battle; and John de Pabeham, in one instance, is mentioned as his "socius;" these were the "cementarii," or builders: the statues were the work of William de Hibernia, who executed also fifteen other statues, assisted by Alexander, called the "Imaginator."

Waltham cross, the most splendid of the works of this character, has by some been ascribed to Nicholas Dymenge, a foreigner; Roger de Crundale and Alexander the "Imaginator" being employed in the decorations.

The cross at Westcheap appears to have been of a more costly character; Michael de Canterbury, called "cementarius," is the only name mentioned in the records relating to its construction.

[b] Compare Weever, Funeral Mon. 485; Walpole's Anecdotes of Painting, vol. i. c. 1.

The following list comprises the names of artists which I have been able to collect from public documents :—

William Torel, or rather Torelli.
Dymenge de Legeri, called Nicholas Dymenge de Reyns.
Odo, a goldsmith.
Richard de Crundale.
Roger de Crundale.
Michael Crundale.
Master Alexander de Abyngton, le Imaginator.
William de Hibernia.
Alexander de Hibernia.
William the Florentine.
John de St. Omers.
Robert de Amory, a Florentine.
Richard de Stowe.
Walter de Durham.
William de Suff.' (Suffolk.)
John de Pabeham.
Adam de Shoreditch.
Michael de Canterbury.

The scantiness of this record of names of artists may be easily understood, if it be considered that the "cementarius," who engaged for the execution of the work, was alone named in the warrant, with one exception only, in which John de Pabeham is termed "socius" with John de Bello, or Battle, and, as the artists were employed under the "cementarius," their names were consequently unnoticed [c].

The productions of Sculpture, during the reign of Edward II., demand little notice; the statue, however, of that prince at Gloucester may be ranked with the good productions of the preceding age.

Until the fourteenth century, the English, as I conceive, had enjoyed few opportunities of cultivating the arts of peace; they must have depended in a great degree on communication with Italy, and, probably, on the alliances of their princes, for many of the arts of civilization. Until the reign of Edward III. we can scarcely recognise an independent style of Sculpture in England. The revolution in costume in that prince's reign produced a vast influence on Art; the flowing draperies, and beautiful arrangement of the dresses of females, with the fine chain-mail, which adapted itself to the movements of the figure, and was so favourable to the exhibition of natural forms, were then discarded. The light plate armour introduced by the Italians, and adapted to German taste, together with the less graceful costume of females adopted at that period, checked the advancement of Sculpture, and left little scope for the aspirations of genius. The good principles

[c] See the accounts of the executors or administrators of the affairs of the deceased Queen Eleanor, published by Mr. Botfield in the "Illustrations of Household Expenses in England," presented to the Roxburghe Club, and fully noticed in Mr. Hunter's curious paper in the Archæologia, xxix. p. 167.

of taste were irremediably checked, and never again appeared in their original strength; at the same time, remarkable examples of science or skill in the mechanism of Art were occasionally produced. The statue of the Black Prince in Canterbury cathedral is a splendid memorial of the ability of the age, and it is as successful a work of its character, in metal, as could have been produced. This statue was gilt, and some of the accessories were tastefully enamelled.

The statue of Edward III., in Westminster Abbey, is a very dignified specimen of Art, and, with the statue of Edward of Hatfield, in the same church, is worthy to be placed in rank with the productions of the best period of English Sculpture. I have not been able to discover the names of the artists who executed either of these works. Amongst those employed in St. Stephen's chapel, mention is made of Michael, a sculptor, and of the following painters, Master Walter, John de Sonnington, Roger de Winchester, and John de Carlisle. About the time of Henry VII., the prevalent character of Sculpture was vigorous, and, although rude in execution, it was by no means deficient in feeling or expression.

The effigies of bronze, representing Richard II. and Anne of Bohemia his consort, were fabricated, A.D. 1395, by Nicholas Broker and Godfrey Prest, citizens and coppersmiths of London, who also provided the enamelled scutcheons, and other decorative accessories. The fine altar-tomb of Corfe marble was sculptured by Henry Yevele and Stephen Lote, masons of London [d].

By a document published in Rymer's Fœdera, under the year 1408, we find that British artists had even acquired a character on the continent. Thomas Colyne, Thomas Holewell, and Thomas Poppehowe, obtained from Henry IV. a safe conduct, in order to carry over to Brittany an alabaster monument, which they had executed to the memory of John IV., duke of Brittany, deceased A.D. 1399, and they erected it in the cathedral at Nantes [e]. This work was performed by direction of the queen, Joan of Navarre, who had been the consort of the duke of Brittany, previously to her marriage with Henry. A still more extraordinary fact has been noticed by the historian Henry, recorded in another document given by Rymer, that Richard II. granted to Cosmo Gentilis, the pope's collector in England, at a period even when Art was returning on Italy

[d] See the curious Indentures for these works, Rymer, vii. pp. 795, 797.

[e] Rymer, Fœd., viii. p. 510; 9 Hen. IV.

as in a flood, permission to carry out of the realm three great alabaster images, representing the Virgin Mary, St. Peter, and St. Paul, and a small image of the Holy Trinity, without any payment of duties for them[f]. The license included a large quantity of household utensils, tapestries for presentation to the pope, cloths and garments of English manufacture.

The statue of gilt brass, representing Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, who died A.D. 1439, in the chapel founded by him, at Warwick, is another fine specimen of the fifteenth century[g]. The name of the artists, Bartholomew Lambespring and William Austen, employed on this work, have been recorded. There exist many other works of great merit, which the limits of this paper will not allow me to notice.

I now approach the last period of medieval art in England, in which the florid style of architecture, then adopted, demanded all the powers of the artist, and of the sculptor more especially, to contribute to the exuberance of embellishment displayed at that time in religious edifices.

We owe the most splendid monument of that period, in England, the Chapel of Henry VII., rather to the fears of that prince, than to his taste or feeling towards the Arts. Happily that edifice was projected at a moment, the most favourable to the development of genius; England, speaking generally, had, it is true, profited little by the extraordinary revolution in Art, then progressing towards maturity under the auspices of the Medici, and other princes of Italy, by the efforts of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michael Angelo, yet the vast increase of artists of every description, encouraged by more extensive employment for their skill, had occasioned emigrations to Germany and the north of Europe; and we may reasonably suppose that many, at the period of the construction of Henry the Seventh's chapel, had found employment in England, and become associated with our own artists. The Flemish artists, in one class of workmanship, at this period, during the times of Pius III. and Julius II., equalled, if they did not surpass the Italians, in the execution of dies, for striking medals, or of matrices of seals.

Mr. Britton, to whom we are, perhaps, more indebted for archæological information, than to any person in this kingdom,

[f] Rymer, Fœd., vii. p. 357; 5 Ric. II., 1382.

[g] See the accurate representations of this striking effigy given by Charles Stothard, and Mr. Blore. The contracts for the tomb are given by Dugdale.

does not appear, in his catalogue of names of artists employed on Henry the Seventh's chapel, to have noticed the name of any foreigner engaged on that work, with the exception of Torregiano. He mentions master Pageny, who supplied a "patrone" for the marble tomb, Lawrence Ymber, carver, Humfray Walker, founder, and Nicholas Ewen, copper-smith and gilder[h].

Torregiano appears by the records to have been employed nearly five years on the bronze tomb of Henry only, placed within the chapel[i]. We may, however, reasonably conclude, from the character and draperies of the minor statues, and other decorations of that magnificent production, that the native artists had profited by the presence of so experienced a man.

Statues from the entrance porch of the Guildhall.

[h] See Britton's Archit. Antiqu., vol. ii. In the same document, cited by Britton, mention occurs of Drawswerd, sheriff of York, apparently an artist of the same period, and James Hales who made a wooden "patren" for an image of copper, for the earl of Derby.

[i] Agreements between the executors and "Peter Torrysarry" of Florence, graver, A.D. 1516: Archit. Antiq., ii. 23.

From this period we may date the extinction of medieval Art; the taste which followed, adopted simultaneously in every country in Europe, was of a mixed character, ingrafting the Italian and German manner with the old, and it left nothing either in architecture or sculpture to compensate for the innovation. Henry VIII., although without the genius to improve, had the judgment to select the best, offered at that period to his choice. He was a distinguished patron of merit in all classes of artistic productions, and Vertue, in his catalogue of artists of the period, enumerates fifty, the greater part of whom were in the employment of that prince.

As choice examples of the union of Italian with English feeling, towards the early part of the sixteenth century, I would notice, in conclusion, four statues, representing Discipline, or Religion, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance, formerly preserved at Devereux House, in the Strand, and removed a few years since from the Guildhall of the city of London. They were presented to Thomas Banks, the sculptor, and were included by Carter amongst the most valuable specimens of sculpture in England.

ON SOME ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HANGING OF BELLS IN CHURCHES WITHOUT TOWERS.

Perhaps no part of the ceremonial requisite for the due celebration of Divine Service has given rise to so much ingenuity and so great variety of design as the hanging of the bells. It is hardly necessary to observe that this is the primary purpose for which church towers were built, though they were often applied to other purposes also; in hundreds of instances in most parts of the country, but especially in Kent, the lower part of the tower is vaulted, and used as a porch, and evidently built with that intention. The various forms, positions, and materials employed for bell-towers, open a wide field for investigation; but this is no part of the purpose of the present paper, which is chiefly to call attention to some of the modes adopted in small and poor country churches to save the expense of a tower, and for this purpose to refer to a few out of the very numerous examples that have been observed in different parts of England. One class, which are properly called bell-turrets, in which the bell is enclosed in a small