

From Monthly Chronicle.

SCULPTURE IN ENGLAND.

Was there ever a period in the history of English art which promised a bright day to native sculpture? It was to perpetuate an affirmative answer to this question that Lady Chapel, at St. Peter's Abbey, Westminster, which contains the shrine of Henry VII.'s tomb, was erected at the beginning of the sixteenth, and has been suffered to exist till nearly the middle of the nineteenth century. For the previous 400 years the arts of writing and illumination, of carving and tapestry, of painting and sculpture, had been systematically and liberally encouraged and successfully cultivated in England. The twelfth century had hardly closed when the magnificent and tasteful sculptures which still adorn the west front of the cathedral of Wells were executed by native artists. At that time the cathedral of Amiens, the home of French sculpture, and the cathedral of Orvieto, the pride of Italy, had no existence. Cimabue, the restorer of painting, was hardly out of his cradle, and Nicolas of Pisa had but commenced the practice of an art in which his Tomb of St. Dominic, at Bologna, has rendered him so celebrated. The sculpture of Egypt existed 1000 years in a state of progressive advancement, and from the dawning of art in Greece until it was engulfed in Rome, a period of 900 years was allowed for the gradual development of the sculptor's power. What hopes, then, might not have been entertained of English art, had the three periods, of which the first began with Wells and ended with Westminster, been suffered to elapse without interruption, and in the continued practice and encouragement of statuary?

It must be conceded that the love of high art is not native, nor has it ever been, perhaps, the passion of this people. The works of the Britons in imitation of Roman art, even in columns and tessellated pavements, are poor in design, and of no high character in execution; but it must be remembered that the school existed little more than 200 years: for a century at the beginning and end of the establishment of the Roman period in England, is not too much to allow for an entire absence of British co-operation, above the line of mere labour. The statues and enriched altars of that period are barbarous, and are often hardly distinguishable from the rude effigies of the Saxons in the tenth and the Normans in the eleventh century; but the rapid progress of a taste for Roman refinements, and the general diffusion of imitative art—of temples, and baths, and altars, and edifices of various character—is remarkable, when contrasted with the torpor of Egypt when the Ptolemies fell, the apathy of Greece when absorbed in Rome, and the deathful repose of Italy after the inburst of the Barbarians. We must not forget either that the teachers of art to the Britons were not professors, but legionary soldiers, ill instructed, and incapable of inculcating, by their coarse practice, the principles of art. These things considered, and allowing for a burial under the earth for upwards of fourteen centuries, the rude efforts of the British sculptor are very wonderful works indeed. They have been found in greatest quantity in the Roman province of Valentia, along the line of the Roman wall, and probably the most important collection of these works is to be found in the museum of the Antiquarian Society of Newcastle-on-Tyne.

They were all foreigners who ministered to the taste and pride of the Saxon prelates; they were skilled in architecture, but their use of sculpture was limited and impure. The British converts to Christianity were content to wonder at the creations of art, and gazed with mingled awe and indifference on the remains of Roman art, on the works of the foreigners, who adorned their churches, and on the taste and skill of the Normans, who used them slavishly in the formation of their great works. Yet the strangely sculptured obelisk, called *Sveno's Stone*, near Elgin, and the richly carved monumental stones near Brechin, and at Meigle, are probably of this period.

From the Third to the Eighth Henry, however, was the period of English sculpture, and the profusion of statues which existed just before the Reformation can hardly be believed. Edifices, domestic and ecclesiastical, were adorned with them, and with them were the way-side shrine and frequent cross enriched. Many thousands remain to this day. There are more statues in Henry VII.'s chapel, the produce of one period, than had been produced in all England, during the last twenty-five years. It was in 1533 that Henry VIII. ordered the removal from the churches of all images which had been worshipped, or to which idle pilgrimages had been made; and in 1541 the Duke of Somerset commanded all statues or pictures, and "images," to be thrown down and destroyed, without distinction; but, even in 1650, the work of desolation was far from complete; for then the puritan council commanded the destruction of the crosses, the greatest ornaments of England at the period; and, notwithstanding the wide-spread rage of destruction, the freedom granted to every man to destroy or take away, the positive commands of authority to waste and spare not, and although this iconoclastic spirit had been maintained for upwards of 100 years, thousands of statues still survive the indiscriminating persecution and the blind rage of destruction to which all the works of art were subjected. What then must

have been their multitude? and, as we have a right to suppose that the most idolized were the most celebrated, and at least, in all probability, the best wrought; and, as these were certainly the first destroyed; how able must have been the English chisel, when the works we now so much admire were, of course, vastly inferior to those which, on account of that very superiority, perished in the first assault!

As no great good is unaccompanied by evil, so the light of the Reformation was greatly darkened by this barbarous crusade against all that was great in art. The staturist fled to countries where his humanising craft was not proscribed, and foreign lands now taunt England with the works of her banished children. The appeal to reason had overthrown the empire of the imagination, and the affections were chilled in the process. It is to be regretted that a waste of the accumulation of years, and a check to the progress of the fine arts, such as they may never recover, were the result.

It is true that the sculpture of that day was not the great—the abstract—the ideal. Portraits of kings, and queens, and saints, and celestial or infernal personages, the telling of a tale, or the unfolding of an allegory, were the subjects most in use. Yet it was so with the ancients also. History and mythology were the elements of the arts. The heathen temple and the Christian church were consecrated to similar ideas on similar principles; and the architecture, and sculpture, and painting, which adorned them, differed only in their degree of cultivation, in the circumstances of climate, and the greater or less civilisation of the people. The remains of the fifteenth century, if studied with a liberal spirit, and the due allowance made, will bear comparison with what is left of Greece and Rome. The chaste severity and clear understanding of the antique, founded on a more perfect science and a more wisely directed study of nature, would be sought in vain among the great works of the West in the middle age; but the latter are equally true to their destined purpose, and not less productive of their intended effect. Their principles, although less pure, are equally well understood, and no less rigidly applied: and in variety and profusion, and the magnificence of combination and contrast, they excel. The progress of sculpture in England was interrupted just when it began to aspire after excellence, and when it had attained the first step in the progress to perfection. As anatomy and geometry began to be studied, and experimental science diffused, the mechanical excellence and the poetic imagination of our sculptors would have been directed to the perfection of form, and with critical knowledge would have come purer taste and more correct judgment, and a Banks and a Flaxman would have found all prepared that they had to create for themselves. The Rysbachs and Roubilliacs, who engrossed the little employment offered in England to the sculptor from the Reformation to civil war, were unequal to our own Cibber; and nothing worth the name of art, either foreign or domestic, was produced among us till Banks, the first fruits of the Royal Academy, having escaped the vitiated taste of the then prevailing school of Bernini and Paget, drank at the pure fountain of Michael Angelo; and, although ungifted with great genius, produced works of classic taste and fine feeling, such as may be said to have begun the restoration of art in England. Flaxman was incomparably his superior. The Shield of Achilles, at the British Museum—the Venus and Cupid, at Mr. Knight's, in Portland Place—the Fury of Athanas, at Ickworth House, Suffolk—his Cephalus and Aurora, at Mr. Hope's—and, above all these, Michael and Satan, at Petworth,—have secured to his fame an immortality, which the patient industry, indomitable energy, simplicity, and benevolence, that set off in their true light his great talents, eminently deserve. Flaxman did not scorn to be employed by Wedgewood in suggesting forms for his various vessels of earthenware—a truly classic occupation. He served the princely merchants trading to the East Indies, and found in them tasteful and liberal patrons; the nobles failed not in some degree, although certainly not to the due extent, to enrich their mansions with his works; and, at the latter end of his career, the royal favor promised him a wider field of exertion, and a nobler foundation for his well-earned fame; but the nation and the government, as bodies, were alike indifferent to his talents or the glory of encouraging them; and the people possess none of his works, except his monuments in the churches. Among these, the most remarkable are the monuments of Nelson, Howe, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, in St. Paul's; of Lord Mansfield and John Kemble, in Westminster Abbey. Had England possessed a Pericles, she might in her Flaxman have found a Phidias; but George III. had no idea of sculpture; and his successor, though well-inclined towards the arts, from his magnificent and somewhat fastidious spirit, was miserably devoid of taste. In his reign much was done and spent; and had equal pains been taken to do well and lay out wisely, architecture and sculpture would have advanced indeed. To work for St. Paul's, in memory of the heroes of his country, was now the privilege of the English sculptor; but opportunity and inspiration were controlled by narrow views and limited means: few works possessing a character of true greatness are found within those walls. The real cause of this failure was, perhaps, the absence of all foresight and confidence on the part of those at whose disposal were the national monuments. Had such a man as Flaxman been en-

gaged to form a grand plan which should be gradually carried out, for the adornment of St. Paul's, and the commemoration of the war and our victories, the pettiness and absurdities which degrade both might have been avoided. Had not the Capella Sistini been placed at the disposal of Michael Angelo, that boast of modern art would never have existed: but example is lost upon us. The absence of any ædile power—the want, perhaps of a minister of public works in England, prevents in great measure, the development of any grand idea. What we resolve to do is done at once by individual means: and, the steady pursuit—for long years, and under changing government—of one established plan, either in architecture or the sister arts, is barely known. Lately, a better spirit has arisen in street architecture, which will doubtless have its effect on sculpture; but, to insure the accomplishment of any great work, the supremacy of one directing mind must never be disputed. Had Sir Christopher Wren been allowed to carry out his plan of improvements in the city,—and, still more, had he lived later with that power, every year adding its portion to the pre-arranged work, and every new erection happily subordinate to the general effect,—the many pleasing parts would have tended to one magnificent whole, which would now have been developing its beauty.

To be continued.

STORMING OF SERINGAPATAM.

DEATH OF TIPPOO SAIB.

From Sir James Alexander's Life of the Duke of Wellington.

The breaching battery, on the morning of the 30th, was opened on the bastion. Upon the 2nd of May, another battery was established, in spite of the enemy's fire, and played upon the curtain to its right. Both with the supporting battery, kept up a terrific cannonade, the thunder of which reverberated loudly among the hills, and seemed to shake both the fortress and the camp, as the shock fell heavily upon the walls; and, as if to render the effect complete, as described by an eye-witness, a magazine of rockets suddenly blew up in the fort, sending the fiery devastation far and wide. Volumes of flames, bursting with the loud crash, pierced high into the sky, instantly illuminating the before darkened heavens, and shooting their forked lightnings through the war-clouded air. Upon the 3d of May a practicable breach was at length announced, in the *fausse braye* wall, and on the night of the third, the main rampart became a heap, presenting only a yawning ruin. On the morning of the 4th the troops destined for the storm were placed in the trenches before daylight, and all continued silent for some time within the city. The hour fixed upon for the assault was during that sultry, overpowering heat of the afternoon, when repose becomes almost a necessity, and the extreme lassitude, peculiar to the climate, creeps over all the senses. Scaling ladders and all other materials for the assault had been early provided for; the heat became intense, a numbing silence hung upon the massy walls of the fortress, and a stillness, no less awful was preserved in the trenches. It was at this moment that the brave Sir D. Baird, addressing the men he was leading to the storm, cried, "Now, brave fellows, follow me, and prove yourselves worthy the name of British soldiers!" A sudden rush from the trenches broke the pervading calm; it was that of the forlorn hope as it hastened forward to open the way, followed with equal alacrity by the column destined for its support. The width and rocky channel of the Cauvery, its exposure to a hot fire, the imperfect breach, added to the strength of the place and the courage and skill of its defenders, presented obstacles, such as only the force and courage of his men could have justified an able commander in attempting to overcome. But, regardless of a tremendous fire, the troops, rushing through the bed of the river, reached the opposite bank, and in less than ten minutes the British colours were planted on the summit of the breach. In a few more, it was thronged with men, who, filing off right and left, by General Baird's directions, entered upon the ramparts. In fact, the fortress was won. Meantime, Tipoo Sultan had displayed greater valor and resolution than skill. He had neglected to cut a trench so as to insulate the angle of the fort in which the breach had been effected, and the ramparts were soon cleared.

That morning he had risen early, as usual, and went to visit the outer rampart, from which he could observe what was passing on both sides. There he remained till noon, when he took his customary repast under a pandal or awning. Having left strict orders with Meer Goffar, a favourite officer, to keep a strict guard, he had scarcely left the spot before he was informed that Meer Goffar was killed by a cannon ball. "Well," he replied, "Meer Goffar was never afraid of death;" and directing his attendants to load his carbines, he instantly ordered the troops under arms. Hastening towards the breach, he met his troops in flight, and saw the van of the assailants scaling the walls. He tried to rally the fugitives, both by his voice and example, repeatedly firing on the troops as they mounted the breach. Almost alone, he retreated to the north ramparts, where surrounded by numbers of his bravest troops, he continued to dispute the traverses one after another, smitten by the enfilading fire from