

The Benedictines and Architecture at Subiaco.

A REVIEW BY "CRUX."

Last week I drew attention to Dr. W. J. D. Croke's admirable work on "Architecture, Painting and Printing at Subiaco"—a work in which he undertakes to show that Benedictines were the fathers of these three phases of progress in Italy. As I then stated, if such be the case, the author has produced a crushing refutation of all those calumniators of the Catholic Church, who glory in describing her as the mother of ignorance and who seek to make the world believe that, from every standpoint, the Middle Ages—which were the ages of Catholicity par excellence—deserved the designation of "Dark Ages." This week I purpose treating, or rather reviewing Dr. Croke's treatment of the subject of Architecture at the Benedictine monastery of Subiaco in Italy. Next week I will take up the question of Painting, and in the following week's issue I will close with that of Printing. It will be easily seen that these questions become more interesting as we advance with their consideration; especially that of Printing is clothed with an interest most pronounced for the readers of the present age. Without further preface I will now turn to the admirable work before me.

"The Pointed style of Architecture," says Dr. Croke, "was alien to Italy in spirit, not less than in form." So alien was it, that, though by far superior to the dull and purposeless Architecture prevailing in that country at the time of its development abroad, the record of its tardy introduction has been regarded as a piece

of loss information, in regard to which surmise must fill the place of certainty, while after its introduction and frequent employment on many important occasions and in many remarkable places, it never received any other than a stunted and incomplete realization. Indeed, despite the widest adoption, it may be said to have remained an uncongenial and exotic art, to which not even its happy combination with marble, mosaic and painting sufficed to give richness, harmoniousness or a full and organic development. So inadaptable was every non-Roman style of Architecture, that we find Symonds—in his "Renaissance in Italy"—speaking of the Lombard as "in a certain sense exotic."

In no way can all this take from the credit due the men who introduced and who deserved the application of the Gothic style in Italy. While there may be no inventive or creative spirit, on their part, and while they simply borrowed from "the splendid perfection of an art which had arrived at a high stage of potentiality and which awaited only the determination of individual choice and the strong indication of an adequate occasion for the production of its last and superior instances," still they must be recognized for their spirit of venture, of endeavor, of elevation above the barren taste which they found in possession all over the land, and of higher ideals and loftier aims. Nor can we forget that they had to contend with deep-rooted prejudices, with the absolute prevalence of Roman taste all through mediæval Italy, and that they were importing from France, England, or Germany

"something architecturally better than the relics of the Low-Latin Ages surviving in Italy, and especially in central Italy."

It appears that one of the cloisters in the abbey of Santa Scolastica is a complete specimen of Pointed Art. Opposite to the entrance of the Cathedral is an arch of large proportions, sculptured and decorated with statues and in the Pointed style, owing doubtless to a desire for conformity. From the "Subiaco Chronicle"—edited by D. Leone Allodi, O.S.B., in 1885—the author finds the following very important passage:—

"Thus Humbert, the twenty-seventh Abbot of Subiaco after our most holy Father, St. Benedict, though indeed a foreigner by origin, was remarkable for his great-mindedness and his prudence in the management of business, and, while he lived in peace with the neighboring rulers of towns, worked actively for the monastery (of Santa Scolastica) and for the entire abbey. So in the first year of his rule which was the 1052nd after the Incarnation, he put up a part of the inner cloister of the monastery of Santa Scolastica with marble columns; then on the foundations of the old and holy tower, he erected a lofty belfry, as we learn from the ancient marble slab inscribed with capital letters, etc. Beside the same tower, he completed the erection of an ambulatory for the comfort of the monks. He also built a larger dormitory; all and each of which works he brought to an end at untold expense, in a time, when there

was a dearth of corn in Italy and the greatest scarcity, etc."

Dr. Croke adds to the above:—
"The author of the Chronicle goes on to detail other evidences of the activity and spirit of Humbert, showing him to have been possessed of precisely the quality of temperament which we should have looked for in him, while in the passage quoted he is shown to have been a foreigner. He was a native of France where the Pointed style prevailed."

In this connection, it may be opportune to quote from Ferguson's "History of the Modern Styles of Architecture." At page 11, he says: "Italian Painting first took consistency under Cimabue and Giotto, in the thirteenth century, almost contemporaneously with the perfect development of the Pointed style in Northern Europe." Yet we find the date of the Abbot Humbert's introduction of this style into Italy to be the middle of the eleventh century,—one hundred and fifty years earlier.

There are three cloisters at Santa Scolastica. The first was built in 1580; the second, or inner cloister, was completed by the Cosmati family in 1235; the third, which is described as "beside the tower," and which was the middle cloister when it stretched across the entrance to the tower, and the lower story of which is pierced by Pointed apertures, similar in shape to windows, was constructed by Abbot Humbert. In order to show how this famous Abbot has been deprived of the merits of his enterprise, the author quotes Ferguson's

"Illustrated Handbook of Architecture," in which he says that "one of the earliest, or perhaps the first, Italian edifice into which the Pointed arch was introduced, is the fine church of St. Andrea at Vercelli, commenced in the year 1219, by Cardinal Guala Bicchieri." "The Gothic cloister of Abbot Humbert anticipated this cathedral at Vercelli by sixty-seven years," says Dr. Croke.

I must, however, presume to correct what is evidently a slip of the pen; the cloister of Abbot Humbert was one hundred and sixty-seven years old when the Vercelli church was commenced, Okoley, in his "Development of Christian Architecture," writes:—

"It is still more difficult to agree with the statement made by Mr. Ferguson, that one of the earliest, or perhaps the very first Italian edifice in which the pointed arch was introduced is the fine church of St. Andrea at Vercelli." Symonds claims that the first Gothic church in Italy was that of St. Francis at Assisi, and that it was designed by a German. Enlart, the great French authority, places the introduction of this style at the Cistercian Abbey Churches of Fossanova, Casamari and Santa Maria d'Arbona, from which last one it was introduced into Subiaco. Now the Church of Fossanova was built in 1208; that of Casamari in 1217; and that of Santa Maria in 1208.

The Chronicle shows that Abbot John V., of Subiaco restored the building erected by his predecessor

Humbert, and the text runs thus:—
"Wherefore, in the year 1075 after the birth of Christ, and the thirteenth or certainly the fourteenth of his own rule, he decreed that the small and poor church of the Sacro Speco should be restored suitably, nobly, and after a manner worthy of the place."

Commenting on this, Dr. Croke says:—
"The architectural form of the Church and monastery remains unchanged at the present time. It is according to the Pointed style. Consequently, we are justified in concluding that a second energetic superior of the prosperous abbey, following the example of the former, set the seal upon the use of the Gothic style of Architecture in Italy."

After a full examination of all authorities and records, we find that in 1052, Abbot Humbert completed his Gothic church, with the addition of its bell-tower. Consequently, 156 years before the Fossanova Church and that of Santa Maria, and 165 years before the Casamari temple, the Benedictine monks of Subiaco had introduced Gothic architecture. Authors may give credit to German, or French or other laymen, or even canons, but the fact remains that the monks of St. Benedict deserve to be recognized as the great innovators as far as Architecture is concerned, and that the Catholic Church, through one of its monastic bodies, gave the first impetus in this line to that grandest and most lasting of architectural styles in Italy.

WHAT OUR CURB-STONE OBSERVER THINKS OF THE MASTERPIECES OF THE WORLD'S LITERATURE.

For some time past I have been reading endless announcements made by the "Star Library Club," of a regular and universal library entitled "The Masterpieces of the World's Literature," which is at present in press, or possibly in circulation, and by means of which untold advantages are offered to the reading public. I was curious enough to enquire of the "True Witness" management if the "Star Library Club" had done the paper the courtesy of sending sample copies, or even sample pages of this extensive work; being answered in the negative, I thought I would secure for myself all the information possible concerning this universal literary production. As I was about to take the necessary steps, I was handed, by a friend, a four page advertisement purporting to come from "The American Literary Society, 112 Fifth Avenue, New York." I am yet at a loss to know whether the "Library" advertised by the "Star" and the one announced by the American Society be the same or not. At all events they bear similar titles and present almost similar features.

The notice before me is printed in red and black, and runs thus:—
"Masterpieces of the World's Literature: The latest and best Library of the Master Productions of the Great Authors of the World; Edited-in-chief, Harvey Thurston Peck, A. M., Ph. D., L. H. D., Eminent Scholar, Critic, Editor, Author, and Cyclopaedist; Associate Editors, Frank R. Stockton, the well-known author and Short Story writer, Julian Hawthorne, the noted Journalist and Novel writer, the late John Russell Young,

Librarian of Congress, Diplomat, Journalist and Author; 20 Royal Octavo volumes, nearly 12,000 pages; published by the American Literary Society, 112 Fifth Avenue, New York." The sheet also claims that this is the latest, best arranged, best edited, best illustrated, best indexed library in existence. It contains the master productions in Biography, Science and Philosophy, History, Poetry, Romance, Oratory, Wit, and Humor, Drama, Theology, and Pulpit Oratory. In fact the whole notice, if printed in gigantic characters, would serve as a splendid model for a circus advertising agent. There is absolutely nothing omitted—from the earliest known author down to the last writer of this closing decade of the nineteenth century.

I am a lover of literature, and can claim in my humble way, to be a reader; consequently I feel pleased whenever I notice any fresh undertaking whereby the men of our generation may be easily brought into touch and communion of thought with the great minds of the past. There is not one person alive who can more fully appreciate the importance of such a work as that above described; but that is not to the point. I would like to know if the "Star's" library of "The Masterpieces of the World's Literature" be exactly the same in every particular as the one that the New York, or rather the "American Literary Society" announced. No matter what the answer may be it in no way can detract from the merit of the "Star Library Club," nor from the credit due that organization

for its enterprise and commendable energy in taking in hand such a vast work and assuming all the labor and expense that are necessarily attached to the successful carrying out of the undertaking. I am curious on the subject, but for a very different reason than the one which might suggest itself to the minds of my readers.

I said, just now, that in the advertisement now before me, there is absolutely nothing omitted; but I made a slight mistake in using that phrase. I should have said that there is "apparently" nothing omitted. Judging from the extensive programme, that I now glance over, I find that there is not a single great Catholic author—in any branch of the world's literature—mentioned. On the contrary I notice the names of some of the most pronounced infidels, the most anti-Christian authors, the most dangerous and pernicious "literateurs," given as indexes of what may be expected in the twenty volumes. Considering the elaborate wording of the advertisement, I must conclude that the persons who prepared it have taken pains to lay before the intended purchasers, or subscribers, the very best of what they have to offer. It is clear that only a few names taken from a mass of authors can be mentioned in a general notice—no matter how minute it may be. Judging from the names selected it is not difficult to form a correct estimate of the views, opinions, principles, and ideas of the compilers of such a colossal work.

In the domain of science and philo-

sophy we are informed that "The truths of science have been popularized by such men as Huxley, Tyndall and Agassiz . . . the great thinkers and philosophers—from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, to Spinoza and Darwin." Certainly, as a Catholic, if I were called upon to select books for the education and instruction of the less learned, or the less advanced, I would never suggest even the names of Huxley, and Tyndall. Alone the works of Huxley constitute one long and determined struggle against Christianity, against revelation, against the idea of a God. Nor in the domain of philosophy would I advise even the reading of Darwin. This is not the place, nor have I the time or space at my disposal, to enter into an analysis of the pernicious and soul destroying works of even the three or four authors already mentioned. Suffice to say I would need some better and more reliable, less dangerous and less fallacious writers to represent the important studies of science and philosophy, before I would care to recommend to any Catholic the reading of that section of "The Masterpieces of the World's Literature."

Take the section of history as another example. I do not suppose that all the most reliable historians, and all the Catholic writers of history, are intentionally and systematically ignored. There must be some of them in the list, but not one of their names appears upon the prospectus. Herodotus and Julius Caesar are safe enough—considering that they are classic works, pagan if you will, but

none the less great and imperishable. The same cannot be said of Victor Hugo, who is cited as one of the great recorders "of patriotism and of the struggles for religious and political liberty." A wonderful writer was Hugo—in every branch of literature he was essayed—but a greater perverter of truth, corrupter of principles and teacher of a godless philosophy scarcely ever held pen. Heaven protect the generation that would grow up under the influence of his magic style; informate the country that would fall under the power that he sought to substitute for legitimate authority. Yet he is one of the great authorities that this "Library" purposes holding up before the world as a model for its imitation and an example for its practice.

Here is what we are to expect in the sphere of theology. "The Library" begins at the very foundation of religious thought as expressed in the oldest existing manuscripts. Most of this material can be found nowhere except in rare or expensive books. Selections from the earliest existing religious writings of China, Japan, Persia, India, and many other countries, are given. This is very general and harmless, delightfully vague and possibly meaningless. But what is most interesting to our generation is the following announcement:—
"The greatest theologians of the Christian era—Luther, Erasmus, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and many others—are represented by their loftiest and most inspiring utterances." Now, in my humble opinion, this simple list should suffice to settle any Catholic's mind as to the

extent of usefulness these volumes contain, as far as he is concerned. "The Angel of the Schools" finds no place in the midst of that assembly of theological eccentricities. Imagine Luther ranked as one of the greatest theologians; no matter what his abilities in other lines may have been, one has only to study Bossuet's "Variations" to learn how slender was his stock of theological knowledge.

It may be asked why I should take so much pains to refer, in a lengthy manner to this great compilation of the World's Masterpieces. Well, my reason is very simple, and can be told very briefly. I wish to point out to the readers of the "True Witness" how inconsistent and how inconsiderate we Catholics generally are. We are eternally complaining that we have no literature, no writers, no newspapers, no mouthpieces, to voice our interests, assert our rights and defend our principles. Yet we cannot find the means nor the heart to encourage our own literature, to give a living to our writers, to support our newspapers; but we can find the necessary funds to aid and encourage all manner of schemes and undertakings, great and small, that are either non-beneficial or actually detrimental to ourselves, to our children, to our nationality, and to our church. Hundreds of our people will secure such a literary library as I have described, but they would not subscribe a single dollar in the cause of Catholic literature. In other words we are supporting those who are constantly pushing us to the wall; but we neglect those whose lives, whose talents, whose acquisitions are perpetually at our service.

PROMOTERS, DIRECTORS AND INVESTORS.

Now that myriad corporations are organizing and inviting the public to buy shares, the extent to which promoters and directors are legally liable assumes new importance, and special interest attaches to the effort being made in England to amend the companies acts for the protection of investors.

Enormous losses have been inflicted upon the American people in the past through the existence of corporate directors who do not direct. Men of financial standing lend their names to figure as directors in the advertisements and reports of companies about which they know nothing. When a man's name appears as a director in

each of a score of corporations it is manifestly impossible that he should be acquainted with the affairs of all. He goes into the board of one company after another not so often for the directors' fees or the incidental opportunities to profit as to merely oblige a friend.

The appearance of his name as a director serves to attract the confiding investor, but when something goes wrong the figurehead director throws up his hands and protests that he never really knew anything about the company's affairs. As evidence of the laxity of law and practice in this country touching the responsibility not only of directors, but even

of executive officials, one has to recall a few glaring instances.—Reading, which voluntarily paid full dividends on all classes of its income bonds and twenty days later was acknowledged to be hopelessly bankrupt; Atchison, which, being unable to longer borrow money, went into receiver's hands and revealed the fact that its annual reports for a series of years had been fabricated; the Cordage Company, which paid enormous dividends up to the moment it collapsed like a house of cards.

These are unpleasant memories, and we believe that corporations as a whole are managed to-day more honestly and in a more business-like way than ever before. The fact that the officials identified with the wreck of the companies all went free and unpunished—even assuming that none

actually profited in speculation by the downfall of his own company—demonstrates the need of enacting more rigorous laws for the protection of investors. This is what they are trying to do in England. The looseness of the British laws touching the flotation of limited liability companies has entailed enormous losses upon that portion of the community least able to bear them. During the seven years ended with 1897 the British public lost no less than one hundred and forty million dollars in companies which prove unsuccessful, not to mention those that were privately wound up. The demand for reform led to the drafting of a bill on behalf of the Board of Trade, but this was introduced three successive years in the House of Lords, and as often suppressed by that body. This year it was again introduced,

and it has at last been reported. The outspoken utterances of such men as the Lord Chief Justice, who publicly denounced frauds in promoting and overcapitalizing companies so heavily that it was impossible for the investor to obtain a return on his investment, contributed to compel action on the bill. The rising tide of anger in the country and in the lower house—anger intensified by the revelation of Hooley's methods of promotion and the means by which he secured the names of titled personages to figure as directors—also exerted tremendous pressure upon the Lords to report the bill. But they have amended it with a vengeance. They have eliminated clauses which made the position promoters a fiduciary one toward their companies and therefore under obligation to account for undisclosed profits, and every portion of

the bill defining the duty of directors or prescribing any penalty for them has been stricken out or emasculated.

In view of the recent exposure of the fact that directors in many instances are the mere dummies of the promoters, it will be curious to note how the House of Commons will deal with the measure as thus amended. The outcome of the struggle to guard the public from the snares of the wily promoter and his subservient directors—who lure investors with their names and yet incur no responsibility—is awaited with acute interest on this side of the Atlantic.—New York Sun.

A beast of burden falls to the ground, we raise it immediately. A soul perishes and no one comes to its rescue.—St. Bernard.