Illustrations of Domestic Architecture, &c. From Illuminated Manuscripts

T. Wright

To cite this article: T. Wright (1844) Illustrations of Domestic Architecture, &c. From Illuminated Manuscripts, Archaeological Journal, 1:1, 301-307, DOI: [10.1080/00665983.1844.10850532](https://doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1844.10850532)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1844.10850532>

Published online: 10 Jul 2014.

Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)

Article views: 1

View related articles [↗](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS OF DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE, &c. FROM ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS.

1. Workmen making incised Monumental Slabs, from MS. Addit. No. 10,292, fol. 55, v^o.

WE have already given some instances of the valuable assistance to be derived from the literature and from the illuminated manuscripts of the middle ages, especially in treating of the domestic and military architecture of the middle ages. The present article will be confined to one book (an illuminated MS. in three volumes), preserved now in the British Museum (MSS. Addit. Nos. 10,292, 10,293, and 10,294), containing the series of romances relating to the San Graal and the Round Table, written in French prose by Robert de Borron and Walter Mapes. Our first figure, one of the earlier illuminations in the first volume of the book alluded to, is a curious representative of a master and his two workmen employed in cutting incised monumental slabs. The chapter to which it belongs is entitled in the MS., *Ensi que une duchoise fet taillier les tombes et les lettres escrire*; and it goes on to inform us how the duchess sent for workmen far and near (*elle manda ouvriers près et loins*), and "caused them to write on each of the tombs letters which told how each had come by his death." It is important that to one of these tombs the scribe has given a date, 1316, which there can be no doubt is that of the year in which these illuminations were executed, and this gives a still greater value to the architectural information they may convey.

Our second figure is a good illustration of what was said in our last number on the juxtaposition of the hall and chamber in houses of the thirteenth century, as described in the fabliaux of that age. The chapter to which it belongs is entitled, *Ensi que Gal. parole à Lancelot en une chambre, et li che-*

2. Position of the Hall and Chamber, MS. Add. No. 10,293, fol. 139. v^o.

valier les atendoient en la sale; and the hall is represented open on one side in order to exhibit the knights within, while the door of the chamber shews us the king in conversation with Lancelot. The next cut (fig. 3.) furnishes an exceedingly good picture of a house of the beginning of the fourteenth century (the age of the MS.^a): it is entitled, *Ensi que Lancelot ront les fers d'une fenestre et si entre dedens pour gesir avec la royne*. The queen has informed Lancelot that the head of her bed lies near the window of her chamber, and that he may come by night to the window, which is defended by an iron grating, to talk with her, and she

3. A House, from MS. Addit. No. 10,293, fol. 199 v^o

^a The cut also shews the simple form of the houses even of the great. In a tract in a MS. of the thirteenth century (MS. Reg. 3. A. x. fol. 180), an alphabetical list of names of things, and their definitions, gives the following account of a house:—
Domus sic ædificatur.

Primo terra foditur.
Deinde fundamentum jacitur
Post parietes eriguntur.
Diversa laquearia interponuntur.
Tectum superponitur.
Quadrata est.

tells him that the wall of the adjacent hall is in one part weak and dilapidated enough to allow of his obtaining an entrance through it; but Lancelot prefers breaking open the grating in order to approach directly into the chamber, to passing through the hall, in which it appears in the sequel that the seneschal Sir Kay was sleeping for the purpose of acting as a spy on the queen's conduct. It is an interesting drawing, even in its details, for the door of the hall exhibits the lock, knocker, and hinges of that time, and the roof is a perfect example of early tiling. The chimney also is distinguished by a peculiar style, which runs through all the drawings in this MS., and may be compared with that of the house in the seal engraved in our last number. Over Lancelot's head is the soler, with its window. In addition to the passages already cited from the fabliaux relating to the soler, or upper floor, it may be observed that it appears to have been in the thirteenth century a proverbial characteristic of an avaricious and inhospitable person, to shut his hall door and live in the soler.

Encor escommeni-je plus
Riche homme qui *ferme son huis*,
Et va mengier *en solier* sus ^b.

We have a very elegant example of the chimney in fig. 4, representing part of the house of a knight, whose wife has an intrigue with one of the heroes of these romances, King Claudas. The knight laid watch to take the king as he was in the lady's chamber at night, but the king being made aware of his danger, escaped by the chamber window, while the knight approached by the hall door—the illumination of which this is a fragment represents—*Ensi que li roys Claudas s'enfuit par mi un fenestre, por le signour de l'ostel qu'il veoit venir.*

4. From MS. Addit 10 293 fol. 6 v°

The manuscript from which we are quoting contains many interesting illustrations of the minor castellated buildings, of which some description was given in our former article, representing the manner in which the towers, &c. were roofed, with the wood-works on the top. In one of the romances a duke of

^b Wright's *Anecdota Literaria*, p. 61.

Clarence wanders in a wood, till at length he finds a beaten path, which leads him to a *chatelet* or little castle (*et voit qu'il y a un castelet.*) "This castle was in appearance very strong, for there were good ditches round it full of water, and near the ditches were great 'roeillis' and wonderfully strong, and after there were walls wonderfully strong and thick and lofty, and they were as *white as chalk*^c." The duke rides up to the outer

5. A Castle, from M.S. Addit. 13,293, f. 137, v^o.

gate, which he finds open and without guard—*et c'estoit la bertesce desouz les fosses*—he passes through it into the *court*, and rides up to the gate of the *baille* or body of the building, which was closed^d. He knocks hard, and a 'valet' comes, of whom he asks a lodging. Our cut (fig. 5.) shews—*Ensi que li duc de Clarence parole au valet à le porte du castel.* We have here the ditch and fence, apparently of strong wooden palisades, surrounding the court, with the fortified tower (or *bretesce*) defending the bridge, and (within it) the castle or body of the building. We might be led by the words of the text to suppose that the walls of the castles were whitewashed, or painted; and in a translation of Grosteste's *Chateau d'Amour*, in a MS. of the end of the fourteenth century (MS. Bibl. Egerton. in Mus. Brit. No. 928), the walls of a castle are spoken of as being painted of three colours:—

Therfor a castel has the king made at his devys,
That thar^e never drede assaut of any enemys.

^c Par samblant yeils castiaus estoit mult fors, quar il y avoit bons fosses entour et plains d'aigue, et pres avoit grans roeillis et fort à grant merveille, et après sont li mur

fort et espes et haut à grant merveille, et estoient aussi blanc comme croie.

^d Et puis envient a la porte del baille, qui fremes estoit. ^e need.

He sette hit on a whit roche thik and hegh,
 With gode dykes al aboute depe and dreght.
 Men may never with no craft this castil doun myne,
 Ne may never do harme to hit no maner engyne.
 This castil is ever ful of love and of grace,
 To al that any nede has socour and solace.
 Four toures ay hit has, and kernels fair,
 Thre bailliees al aboute, that may noȝt apair;
 Nouthur hert^κ may wele thinke ne tung may wel telle,
 Al the bounté and the bewté of this ilk castelle.
 Seven barbicans are sette so sekirly aboute,
 That no maner of shoting may greve fro withoute.
 This castel is *paynted without* with thre maner colours,
 Rede brennand^h colour is above toward the fair tours,
 Meyne colour is y-myddes of ynde and of blewe,
 Grene colour be the ground that never changes hewe.

The poem goes on to state that internally the walls are painted white.

In another part of our romances we learn how Sir Iwain loses his way similarly in a wood, and how he finds a path which leads him to the castle of a poor gentleman on the border of the forest. He hastens thither because he hears a horn sounding for assistance. He finds the *breteske* open, and a young man (*vallet*) in the upper part who is sounding the horn. It appears that this castle is occupied by the young man, his mother and sister, and a small number of serjeants or household servants, and that a party of robbers from the forest have succeeded in surprising it, and are occupied in killing his mother and the servants, and in outraging his sister, he alone having taken refuge in

6. A Castle, from MS. Addit. 10,293, fol. 160, v^o.

^κ dry.

^κ heart.

^h burning.

S S

the breteske. Sir Iwain rushes into the court and attacks the robbers, while the young man having obtained a bow shoots down upon them from his place of refuge. The cut, fig. 6, (see previous page) represents—*Ensi que Ywains se combat en .i. castel as larons*. We have here again the court surrounded by the ditch and fence of wooden palisades, (*qui estoit close de haute lande et de bons fossés grans et parfons*), and the castellated residence within. The latter appears to consist simply of the hall, (indicated by its two large windows,) the entrance of which is in the tower, on the right end of it, while the chambers occupy the tower at the other end, and a watch-tower rising above the other buildings.

The last illumination we select from this MS. is a bridge with a *breteke*, or tower of defence; it is described in the rubric as being *ben breteskiet*ⁱ. The sequel of the story, however, seems to indicate that it was a ford, with a *breteke* or fort on the shore^k.

The wood-work above is very clearly delineated. In the middle ages, bridges were generally, and fords sometimes, defended by fortresses of this description, the object of which was not only to hinder the advance of an enemy,

7. A fortified Bridge, from MS. Addit. 10,283, fol. 58, v^o.

but also to enforce the toll levied upon travellers (especially merchants) passing over the bridge or ford, or sailing along the river. The following curious account of an enchanted city, taken from a Cambridge MS. of the English romance of Bevis of Hampton, describes the bridge with its tower of defence.

ⁱ Ensi que .j. chevaliers ben armes vint devant .j. pont li quel estoit ben breteskiet.

^k Tant que .j. jor avint qu'il aprochie-
rent d'une iauue lee et basse, et quant il

vient a l'iaue si n'i voent point de pont, mais .j. gue i avoit, et desus chel gue d'autre part estoit une bertesque haute, si estoit l'iaue close de haut palis ben une archie entor le bertesque.

Soche a cyté was noone undur sonne,
 Hyt was never nor schalle be wonne.
 Ther be abowte syxty gatys y-wys,
 And .ij. brygges and .ij. portcolys ;
 Ovyr the watur ys a brygge of brasse,
 Man and beste ther-ovyr to passe ;
 Whan ony bestys there-over gone,
 Os bellys ryngyng faryth hyt thane.
 At the brygge ende stondyth *a towre*,
Peyntyd wyth golde and asewre ;
 The toret was of precyus stonys,
 Ryche and gode for the nonys.

T. WRIGHT.

ON ANCIENT MIXED MASONRY OF BRICK AND STONE.

THE specimens of ancient masonry we meet with in this country, of a date anterior to the thirteenth century, exhibit such a diversity of construction as to lead to the inquiry, whether there are any decided marks of discrimination which we may apply so as to affix to each its proper epoch and character, whether as belonging to the ancient British, the Roman, the Anglo-Saxon, or Anglo-Norman era.

It is doubtful whether we have any remains of early masonry to evince that, prior to the Roman invasion, the use of lime in a calcined state mixed with water and sand, or any other substance, so as to form an adhesive cement by which stone could be joined to stone, was known to the ancient inhabitants of this island. On the contrary, in most of the existing remains of ancient British masonry, or those which may be presumed to be such ; in the stone walls with which some of the fortified posts of the Britons are surrounded, or nearly so ; in the vestiges of their huts or dwellings, which are still in some places apparent ; in their structures of a sepulchral class formed of large and irregular-shaped stones, such as the cromlechs, where one huge flat but irregular-shaped stone is raised in an inclining or horizontal position on the points or edges of other large and