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Notices of Archaeological Publications

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Notices of Archaeological Publications.

REMAINS OF PAGAN SAXONDOM, principally from Tumuli in England. Drawn from the originals. Described and illustrated by JOHN YONGE AKERMAN, Fellow and Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London. London : J. Russell Smith. 1852—5. 4to.

It is not many years since archaeological pursuits were looked upon as a sort of innocent trifling, very fit to be indulged in by gentlemen with more money than wit, or clergymen not overburthened with rural duty. If they did no good, they did at least no harm, and they amused him that followed them, and those that laughed at him. Collections of curiosities, as they were called, were considered as a sort of inferior collection of articles of *virtu*, which only proved their owners not to possess the refined taste of cognoscenti in Greek or Etruscan remains. Slowly however, and by degrees, the truth became acknowledged, that these curiosities were historical records, dating from periods too, of which no other record was to be found ; and with the recognition of this truth, archaeology began to assume the proportions of a science. It was clear enough that we knew a good deal more about the Greeks when we read what Otfried Müller wrung from their urns and bas-reliefs, than when we continued on the beaten track of word-grinding with grim old Godfrey Hermann. And so it was thought we might turn our own archaeological treasures to account, and see if they too had not a tale to tell, which was not written elsewhere. But from that moment it was also necessary to collect, in a very different manner from what had prevailed, and to look for answers to questions which heretofore no one had thought of putting. Dryasdust was, in fact, discovered to be a dull dog, who had fairly earned all the quizzing his aimless pains had brought upon him. If he was thanked at all, it was for having, by a useful but unconscious instinct, preserved here and there trifles from destruction, which more thinking men could now compare and combine, and use for definite objects.

Comparison and combination—these were the two levers by which the inert mass of facts was to be moved. Induction was here also to claim its rights, and observations to take place of crude *à priori* conclusions. And so we have at last a sound footing, and can look back upon and count our gains. What is perhaps more valuable still, we know by what process we can continue to advance. If we know that much remains to be done, we have at least learnt *how* to do it. We must compare and combine facts, real, definite, and not imaginary, facts : we must note resemblances and differences, and apply to archaeology something of the principle which guides us in comparative anatomy.

It is this which gives their value to such books as Mr. Akerman's, and on this account we look upon his work as a boon to the English archaeologist. He brings together, from a great number of different quarters, objects whose full interest can only be duly appreciated when they are

compared and studied together, as they may be in his pages. They are executed mostly in the natural size, and with the natural colours; are, as far as we have had the means of judging, scrupulously accurate in point of resemblance, to the originals; and the selection is such, as not only to be of service in a scientific view, but also to present a very interesting and ornamental representation of the household implements and jewellery of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. The book is not less a graceful adornment of a boudoir-table, than a work which the student will consult with advantage and satisfaction. It is natural that the objects drawn should be of a kind attractive from their form and the purpose they were intended to serve. A large proportion of them are articles of dress, mostly, in all probability, female dress—necklaces, fibulæ, and the like; and these are properly selected because in them we can best observe the state and progress of the arts, which are a key to the social condition of a people. Thus, in these plates we have figures of sixty-three circular or cruciform fibulæ from different parts of England, many of which display an astonishing familiarity with the secrets of the lapidary's and goldsmith's art, and which might advantageously be adopted as models for brooches at the present day. There are no less than eight representations of glass drinking vessels, one of which is of such peculiar quality and form, that a most competent authority (not knowing that it was derived from a Saxon interment) pronounced it to be Venetian, and *cinqe cento*. We have necklaces of gold and precious stones, clasps and buckles of beautiful execution, and a variety of articles of the toilet, including several richly ornamented hair-combs. One or two plates are devoted to the representation of weapons, which are on a reduced scale.

The reader will easily judge, from this sketch, how much the work contains both to instruct and interest. Every plate is accompanied with as much letterpress as suffices to give an accurate account of the locality wherein, and (as far as possible) the circumstances under which, the articles represented were found; and this is obviously the most important part of the work; for, without these details, the most exquisite of curiosities that Dryasdust or Jonathan Oldbuck ever locked up from his neighbours, is a *curiosity*, and nothing more: with them, it may help us to read a very interesting chapter in the unwritten history of men.

Mr. Akerman has prefixed to his work a short introduction, written in a very just and sound spirit, and which will be read with pleasure and interest even by the *layman*, with profit even by the professed antiquary. He enters in it upon some account of the forms and modes of mortuary deposit among the Anglo-Saxons, noticing the coincidences and distinctions observed in graves in different parts of England. Thus he is led to speak of inhumation and cremation; of the deposit of arms and ornaments with the dead; of the use of coffins, or of funeral urns. And, bearing in view the universal connection between funeral ceremonies and religion, he adds a few judicious pages on the Saxon mythology.

We fear that there is not a large public demand for works of this nature, and in too many cases the pleasure of the labour must be its own reward. We cannot, however, conclude without expressing a hope that a work so admirably executed as this may find a wider class of readers, and that its beauty may recommend it even to those for whom its scientific character has perhaps fewer attractions.

J. M. KEMBLE.

I. CHURCH OF S. FERMO MAGGIORE, AT VERONA.

(View of the West End.)

BRICK AND MARBLE IN THE MIDDLE AGES; Notes of a Tour in the North of Italy. By GEORGE EDMUND STREET, Architect, F.S.A., Copiously Illustrated. London: John Murray. 1855. 8vo.

WE feel sure that those of our readers who may not as yet have met with this elegant and agreeable volume, will feel that a service has been done to them by its having been brought under their notice, for although Mr. Street's examination of the architecture of Lombardy and the Venetian States, was undertaken with artistic and practical views, and not in order to carry out antiquarian or historical investigations, much information highly interesting to all architectural antiquaries will be found in it.

We have the high authority of Professor Willis for the assertion that, the neglect of Italian Gothic architecture is an "undeserved neglect," and it will, we think, be readily seen, that in addition to the fact that the study of this variety of Gothic architecture is calculated, as he has so ably shown,¹ to throw much light on the principles of Gothic architecture in general; there are many reasons why it is deserving of more attention, both from architects and from archaeologists, than it has hitherto received: to the architect it very frequently presents novel, ingenious, and beautiful combinations and details usually of most perfect execution, and sometimes of the greatest beauty, while to the archaeologist an accurate knowledge of the architecture (that, as Sismondi has said, "of all the fine arts which bears the most immediately the impress of the character of its age") of Italy in the 13th and 14th centuries can never seem unimportant, especially when he remembers that at that time Italy was the most advanced of European nations in letters, in the fine arts, in the arts of manufacture and in commerce; that this was the period of Dante, of Giotto, and of the Pisani.

Although Mr. Gally Knight's splendid folios, Professor Willis's acute and systematic treatise, and Mr. Ruskin's publications, unequalled as they are in scrupulous fidelity of representation, have done much to place the means of acquiring such knowledge within the reach of the English reader, there is still ample room for more detailed information, and Mr. Street's work is welcome as supplying this so far as Lombardy and the Venetian States are concerned. In pursuing his object, which, as he informs us in his preface, is "mainly to show the peculiarities of the development of Pointed architecture in Italy, and specially to show in what way the materials so commonly used there, brick and marble, were introduced both in decoration and in construction," he has, in the well-chosen and admirably executed illustrations, more than 70 in number, which the volume contains, and in the intelligent and instructive comments and criticisms which accompany them, given us the means of making ourselves acquainted with many little-known, but very interesting buildings, and a great variety of beautiful detail. We have availed ourselves of the liberality of the publisher to place before our readers a few of the illustrations, and we have endeavoured so to select them as to give some idea of the variety and novelty of matter which the reader will find in the volume itself.

The west front of the Church of St. Fermo Maggiore at Verona (see cut, No. I), which, according to Professor Willis, probably dates from about 1313, is a very characteristic specimen of its period and country, particularly as regards the alternate bands of "red brick and warm-coloured stone," and the hoods over the tombs affixed to it; such, also, is the north

¹ In the Introduction to the "Remarks on the Architecture of the Middle Ages, especially of Italy," 1855.

II. NORTH TRANSEPT OF THE CATHEDRAL AT CREMONA.

porch, on which Mr. Street bestows the qualified praise that it "is very fine of its kind." The disproportion between the slenderness of the shafts and the mass they support, and the faulty construction which requires the aid of connecting bars of iron, are no doubt the defects which prevent so great an admirer of the Italian fashion of constantly using bearing-shafts from bestowing warmer commendation upon this, the ever-recurring form of porch in Italian churches.

In this instance it will be seen, that although brick is pretty largely used, all the ornamental detail is executed in stone or marble. In the north transept of the Cathedral of Cremona (see cut, No. II), we have an example in which nothing but brick is used, either for walling or for decoration, excepting in the doorway and its porch. Mr. Street comments upon this and the south transept as follows: "The rest of the interior of the duomo is all of brick, and it boasts of two transept-fronts, which are certainly most remarkable and magnificent in their detail, though most unreal and preposterous as wholes; they are, both of them, vast sham fronts, like the west front, in that they entirely conceal the structure of the church behind them, and pierced with numbers of windows which from the very first must have been built but to be blocked up. These fronts have absolutely nothing to do with the buildings against which they are placed, and in themselves, irrespective of this very grave fault, are, I think, positively ugly in their outline and mass. And yet there is a breadth and a grandeur of scale about them which goes far to redeem their faults, and a beauty about much of their detail which I cannot but admire extremely. Both transepts are almost entirely built of brick, and very similar in their general idea, but whilst only the round arch is used in the south transept, nothing but the pointed arch is used in the northern." . . . "The date of the work is, in all probability, somewhere about the middle of the 14th century." . . . "The tracery of the rose windows is all finished in brick."

The windows are instructive examples of the treatment of the material for such purposes (see cuts, Nos. III. and V.), and other very beautiful examples are afforded by the windows in the campanile of St. Andrea, Mantua (see cuts, Nos. IV. and VI.).

In the cities of Upper Italy, the town-halls (Broletto or Palazzo Publico)

III. Brick window, Cremona Cathedral.

IV. Brick window, Church of S. Andrea, Mantua.

V. Window in the North transept, Cremona Cathedral.

Detail of window-jamb, Cremona.

VI. Brick window, Church of S. Andrea, Mantua.

VII. THE BROLETTO AT MONZA.

(View of the Southern end.

form a class of edifices of the greatest interest, both in an historical and an architectural point of view. The Italian school of Gothic architecture appears perhaps to greater advantage in these buildings (peculiarly picturesque and grand, as Professor Willis has termed them) than in the churches; the uses for which they were constructed allowed, or even suggested, a simplicity of composition admitting of that breadth of effect which Mr. Street has well observed, seems to have been the great aim of the Italian architects. Lofty, open arches on the ground, and over them windows of size proportionate to the large hall which occupies the upper story, with a projecting balcony, or *Ringhiera*, in the centre, are the features, which with a tower, to contain the bell which summoned the citizens to debate or to arms, are common to nearly all these structures. Every traveller in Italy must recollect the fine effect of the mass of shade in the open lower story, contrasting with the sun-lit wall above. The Broletto at Monza (see cut, No. VII.) is a very picturesque and interesting example of these buildings, and has a peculiarly fine *ringhiera*.

The Palace of the Jurisconsults at Cremona affords an instance of nearly the same composition, somewhat differently treated. Mr. Street remarks upon it: "There is a simplicity and truthfulness of construction about this little building which make it especially pleasing after the unreal treatment of the great transept fronts of the Duomo."

The Ducal Palace at Mantua presents another variety of the same composition, most beautifully executed in brick. The fine windows of the upper story are, however, injured by the common Italian defect, an excessive slenderness of the shaft which divides the lights.

Our limits compel us to confine ourselves to thus merely indicating what the volume contains, but we think that we have fully proved the assertion with which we commenced. As archaeologists, we could have wished that Mr. Street's architectural taste were somewhat more catholic, and that he had been disposed to give more information upon buildings anterior or posterior to the 13th and 14th centuries. To his limitation of his field we must probably attribute the absence of any notice of two methods of employing burnt clay for architectural decoration, which occur in Lombardy, viz., the use of discs or basins of painted and glazed earth, as in the campanile of the cathedral, and several of the churches at Pavia, and that of terra cotta, not merely turned out of a mould, but carefully modelled up by hand, as in parts of the Ospedale Maggiore at Milan. Somewhat more of historical investigation as to the dates of the buildings noticed would add greatly to the value of the work, for although such researches do not form a part of the author's plan, his object being, as we have before said, artistic rather than antiquarian, we cannot but regret that they did not do so; so well-practised an observer could doubtless do much to rectify or reconcile erroneous or doubtful dates. We hope these suggestions will have his attention when he prepares to give us, as we trust he will one day do, an account of the architecture of Central Italy, the district which, in the opinion of many competent observers, contains the best examples of that Italian style which corresponds with our Decorated.

We cannot conclude without expressing that commendation of Mr. Jewitt's admirable woodcuts which they so richly deserve; their combination of distinct and intelligent rendering of detail, and of good general effect, has rarely if ever been equalled, and certainly never surpassed.