Notices of New publications

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Notices of New Publications.

ICONOGRAPHIE CHRETIENNE. HISTOIRE DE DIEU, PAR M. DIDRON, DE LA BIBLIOTHEQUE ROYALE, SECRETAIRE DU COMITE HISTORIQUE DES ARTS ET MONUMENTS, 4to. pp. 600. Paris, imprimerie royale, 1843.

FRANCE owes to the enlightened administration of M. Guizot (then Minister of Public Instruction) the formation in 183- of a *comité* (or commission) for the publication of historical monuments, on a much more liberal and extensive plan than our Record Commission. Under the term *historical monuments*, not only documents of history, but monuments of art and literature, were included, and it was proposed to publish gradually a complete antiquarian survey of France, with descriptions and delineations of all its monuments of antiquity. At first the whole business was transacted by one commission, but subsequently this commission was separated into four or five, according to the different classes of monuments it was intended to publish, purely historical, philosophical, scientific, artistical, &c. This new plan appears not to have worked well, and more recently the number of *comités* has been reduced to two, that of historical documents, and the *Comité des Arts et Monuments*. Both these comités have already issued many valuable publications, some of which we shall have other occasions to notice.

The subjects embraced by the *Comité des Arts et Monuments* had hitherto been less systematically studied than those of the other departments of historical research, and the *comité* found it necessary to publish short popular treatises on different branches of archæology in the form of instructions for the use of its numerous correspondents. These instructions, at first brief and incomplete, have by degrees grown into learned treatises, such as the profound volume on Christian iconography, which has just been completed by M. Didron, the Secretary of the Comité. This volume is itself only a portion of the subject; a second, on which M. Didron is now employed, will include the iconography of angels and devils; and there will still remain for future labours other scriptural subjects of pictorial representation, with saints, martyrs, &c.

The work now before us contains the history of the artistical representations of the Persons and attributes of the Deity during the middle ages. It is only necessary to know that it appears under the name of M. Didron, to

be assured that the subject is ably treated. After an introduction of some length on the object and practice of pictorial representations of religious history and doctrine, M. Didron enters upon his subject by treating first one of the most striking characteristics of divinity and sanctity, which, when it appears about the head is called the *nimbus*, and when it encircles the whole body he distinguishes by the term *aureole* or *glory*. The *nimbus* is used very extensively; but the *aureole* surrounding the whole body is almost entirely restricted to the Divine Persons and to the Virgin, and does not dispense with the use of the other at the same time. The following figure, (fig. 1,) taken from an illuminated Italian MS. of the fourteenth century, in the Bibliothèque Royale at Paris, represents Christ carried up to heaven by angels: the Saviour has the nimbus about His head, and an elliptical glory about His whole body; the angels are also nimbed, but with a nimbus of an inferior rank.

(Fig. 1.) Christ in an Elliptic Aureole.

By far the most general form of the *nimbus*^a is a circle, but it sometimes occurs under other forms, particularly in early monuments. In Italy, and

^a M. Didron's observations on the Nimbus were first published in an article in M. César Daly's *Revue Generale de l'Architecture et des Travaux publics*, of which an

abridged translation appeared in the *Literary Gazette*. They have been revised, newly arranged, and much amplified, in the *Iconographie Chretienne*.

more especially in Greece, the nimbus is found in a triangular form: in other instances it becomes square or lozenge-shaped. The circular nimbus, when it belongs to the Divine Persons, is always distinguished by four rays at right angles to each other, one of which is concealed by the head. The three Persons of the Trinity are thus nimbed in fig. 2, taken from a MS. of the thirteenth century in the *Bibl. Royale* at Paris. M. Didron proceeds to describe other varieties of the nimbus, which (as well as the aureole or glory) he believes to have been intended merely as the outline of the rays of glory supposed to issue from the head or body of the divine or sainted personage. These rays are sometimes found without the line of circumference, and in some of the figures given in the book before us, we see how the line came to take these different forms. As we have already observed, the nimbus of God is always (unless by a rare instance of negligence or ignorance in the artist) distinguished by two cross perpendicular bars, arranged in the form of a Greek cross, one being partly concealed by the head, above which it rises vertically. In fig. 3, taken from a MS. of the thirteenth century, in the same collection as the former, we have another representation of the Trinity, each Person of which bears the cruciferous nimbus. M. Didron gives reasons which appear satisfactory for believing that this form was not allusive to the cross on which our Saviour suffered. The nimbus appears to be derived from the pagan symbolism of the eastern nations: it is not found in Christian monuments of the earlier ages. We have just observed that the cross of the divine nimbus appears to have no connection with the Christian symbol of the cross: one of the cuts given by M. Didron furnishes a curious proof of this. In the

more ancient monuments, where the nimbus is absent, the Person of Christ is frequently accompanied by, or typified by, a lamb, which lamb always has

(Fig. 2.) The Trinity creating Man.

(Fig. 3.) The Trinity nimbed.

a cross, which is often placed on the forehead. In fig. 4, taken from an Italian sculpture of the tenth century, we have the lamb with the divine nimbus, and the figure of the cross in each limb of the cross of the nimbus.

In its original application, the nimbus appears to have been understood as representing power and intelligence, and was given to all supernatural beings. Even in Christian monuments it is not unfrequently used thus: and we find it not only applied to saints,

but to the various personages of the Old Testament, to kings and emperors after their death, and even to the spirit of evil, and to allegorical personages. Living persons, who had reached a certain point of reputation of sanctity or greatness, were represented with a nimbus, but in this case it was always *square*. We are assured by Johannes Diaconus that this was the case; and his statement is supported by various monuments, which appear, however, only in Italy. M. Didron gives a cut of a bishop, from a Latin MS. of the ninth century, written before his death, with the square nimbus in the form of a roll of paper; another from a mosaic in the Vatican of the same century, representing St. Peter, with the plain circular nimbus, and Charlemagne and Pope Leo III. (who were alive at the time the monument was executed) both bearing a square nimbus; and a third, from a mosaic likewise of the ninth century, in the church of Santa Cecilia at Rome, representing Pope Paschal with the square nimbus. We reproduce this latter cut in our fig. 5. Various other examples of the square nimbus are cited, many of them very curious. According to the doctrines of the Neoplatonists, the square was of less dignity than the circle, a notion which appears to have given rise to this square form of the emblem. It has been already observed that the nimbus is not found in the earlier Christian monuments.

The Divine Person is there also frequently represented without a beard,

(Fig. 4.) The Divine Lamb.

(Fig. 5.) Pope Paschal with Square Nimbus.

which was quite contrary to the notions of a later period. The following cut (fig. 6), taken from a very early sarcophagus in the Vatican, represents God, without nimbus or beard, condemning Adam to till the earth and Eve to spin wool. At the period of the Renaissance, and subsequently, the real character and distinction of the nimbus was almost entirely neglected.

From the nimbus, M. Didron proceeds to the *aureole*, or the nimbus of the body. "The aureole," he observes, "is a nimbus enlarged, as the nimbus is an aureole diminished. The nimbus encircles the head; the aureole surrounds the whole body. The aureole is as it were a drapery, a mantle of

(Fig. 6.) God condemning Adam and Eve to labour.

(Fig. 7.) Our Saviour in an Aureole of Clouds

light which envelopes all the body from the feet to the top of the head. The word *aureole* is much used in Christian iconography; but it is vague, and people apply it sometimes to the ornament of the head, and at others to that of the body. We here restrict and adopt it entirely to the great nimbus, which incloses, almost always, Jesus Christ, and sometimes the Virgin. It is true that antiquaries call this nimbus the fish's bladder (*VESICA PISCIS*); but a dignified terminology ought to reject such an expression for its coarseness; it was invented by the English antiquaries, who repeat it perpetually. Moreover this denomination is false, for very often the aureole has not the form of a bladder, as we shall see. It has also been called the *divine oval*, and the *mystic almond*; the word mystic prejudices, before any examination, a symbolical intention, which we have very good reasons for doubting. Moreover, it is frequently neither an oval nor an almond; it is simply what the nimbus is to the head. The head being round, the nimbus is round; the body when upright forms a lengthened oval, and the aureole also lengthens itself generally into a form nearly oval. But when the body is seated, the oval contracts itself into a circle, sometimes into a quatrefoil; because then the four protruding parts of the body, the head, legs, and two arms, have each their particular lobe, their section of the nimbus, and the torso is collected into the centre of the four leaves." M. Didron gives many examples of the aureole in its different forms. The most common is that represented in our fig. 1, where Christ is seated on a section of a rainbow: this figure is the *vesica piscis* of the English antiquaries. In the preceding figure (fig. 7), taken from a MS. of the tenth century in the Royal Library at Paris, Christ appears in an aureole formed of clouds, which mould themselves to the shape of the body.

In Italy especially, and indeed most generally in other countries, the outline of the aureole is more regular and geometrical. It is in some instances a perfect circle. The accompanying cut (fig. 8.) is taken from a fresco in the great church of the convent of Salamina in

DESSINE A SALAMINE PAR PAUL DVRAND

(Fig. 8.) God in a Circular Aureole.

Greece, executed in the eighteenth century; but, as M. Didron observes, Christian Greece of our times is a country of the middle ages, and a monument of art there executed in the eighteenth century answers to one of the thirteenth century in western Europe. Here the aureole is circular, and supported at the four cardinal points by four cherubim. The field of this aureole is divided by symbolical squares, with concave sides, which intersect.

The Divinity has here His feet on one rainbow while He is seated on another. In fig. 9. we have the Virgin, with a plain nimbus, seated in an

(Fig. 9.) The Virgin in an Aureole.

oval aureole, intersected by another lesser aureole of the same form, which encloses her feet. It is taken from an illuminated manuscript of the tenth century, in the Bibl. Royale at Paris.

We have said so much on the nimbus and the aureole, that we must pass much more rapidly over the remaining, and much larger portion, of the important volume before us. In the first section, M. Didron treats of the different manners of representing the first Person of the Trinity, God the Father. The Father is properly represented as the Creator; yet in some monuments, and especially among the Greeks, the Son usurps the place of

the Father, and is frequently represented in the act of creating, as well as in other acts and attributes belonging to the Father. In the following figure (fig. 10), from a fresco of the eighteenth century, at Salamina, Christ is represented as the Almighty — ὁ παντοκράτωρ. In some instances we find the second Person of the Trinity placed in a superior position, or with higher attributes, than the first. In other instances we find the Father clothed in the attributes of pagan deities, as the god of combats, &c. Some of the singularities of this kind may perhaps be attributed to sectarian doctrines which ruled at the time and place where they were made. Platonism, Judaism, and Gnosticism, are sometimes traced distinctly in early monuments. The Father is frequently represented by a mere hand, inclosed in a nimbus, and issuing from the clouds: he generally appears aged and with a beard, and is frequently clad in the mantle and crown of a Pope.

Ε. Π. ΔΟΥΡΑΝΔΕΞ-ΠΙΚΤΟΥΡ-ΓΡΑΦΕΙΣ

(Fig. 10.) Christ the Almighty

The different events of the history of our Saviour, and His immediate intercourse with mankind, give to the Son a much more varied character than the Father in the hands of the medieval artists. "In iconography," as M. Didron observes, "the God *par excellence* is Jesus." We prefer sending our readers to the book itself than to attempt giving any notion of the mode in which this extensive part of the subject is treated. It embraces many collateral emblems, such as the cross, the fish (*ixθys*), &c. With regard to the fish, we think that M. Didron has shewn satisfactorily that this figure, when sculptured on the early Christian sarcophagi in the catacombs, signified nothing more than that the person buried there was a fisherman. There has been a tendency in archæology to extend too widely the system of symbolism. The Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Divine Trinity, also occupies a considerable space in Christian iconography. Its most common form is that of a dove, always accompanied with the nimbus. The following miniature (fig. 11), taken from a French manuscript of the fifteenth century, represents the Holy Ghost carried upon the face of the waters in the work of creation. The nimbus of the Creator is here not bounded by an outline.

At other times (and not unfrequently) the Holy Ghost is represented in a human form, sometimes with the dove seated upon the head or arm of

(Fig. 11.) The Creation.

the figure: this occurs chiefly when the three Persons of the Trinity are represented together, and the Holy Ghost appears as joining the Father and the Son. In these cases a regular gradation of age is most commonly observed: the Father appearing in the character of a man far advanced in years, the Son as a man in the vigour of age, and the Holy Ghost the youngest of the three. The last cut we borrow from the book before us (fig. 12), was taken

(Fig. 12.) The Trinity.

from a French miniature of the fifteenth century, and represents the three Persons of the Trinity, each with a cruciferous nimbus, and enveloped together in a flamboyant aureole, not limited by an outline. M. Didron's book ends with the chapter on the Trinity. The importance of this work, and the complete and satisfactory manner in which the subject is treated, seemed to call for a longer notice than we shall be able, except in few cases, to give to new publications.

T. WRIGHT.

PICTURESQUE ANTIQUITIES OF IPSWICH, DRAWN AND ETCHED BY FREDERICK RUSSELL AND WALTER HAGREEN, Parts I. and II. folio, *Ipswich*, Pawsey. London, Longman and Co.

TIME, casualties, and the indiscriminate removal of ancient buildings for modern improvements, are contributing to deprive our old towns of their most attractive features, the remains of the monastic and domestic architecture of the middle ages. In many towns which, a few years ago, abounded in memorials of the taste and skill of our forefathers, scarcely a solitary example is now to be found in each street. The skill of the artist is therefore demanded to perpetuate the character of the remains and their localities before impending decay and removal render the project fruitless.

No town has suffered more than Ipswich from the bad taste of the persons entrusted with the care of public buildings, and of owners of ancient edifices, who, because they felt they could *do as they liked with their own*, seem to have studied to illustrate the bad maxim, by pulling down their property and substituting fantastic and incongruous piles.

The Parts of this Work already published exhibit views of buildings recently destroyed, and of others which are fast disappearing; such as *Christ's Hospital*; *Gateway of Wolsey's College*; *interior of the Grammar School*; *Archdeacon Pykenham's Gateway*; the *Neptune Inn*; &c. The execution of the drawings and the etchings reflects great credit on the artists, both of whom are natives of Ipswich.

SEANCES GENERALES TENUES EN 1841 PAR LA SOCIETE FRANCAISE POUR LA CONSERVATION DES MONUMENTS HISTORIQUES, 8vo. pp. 272. (With many wood-cuts.) *Caen*, 1841.

THE above-named work shewing the good that has been already done in France by a Society whose objects are similar to those of the "British Archæological Association," is therefore selected for review in order to demonstrate what may also be eventually achieved in this country.

The "Société pour la Conservation des Monuments Historiques de France" was founded about nine years ago by the zeal and talent of M. de Caumont, a gentleman of Caen in Normandy. He was immediately joined

by M. Lair of Caen, by the Comte de Beaurepaire de Louvagny, and by the Abbe Daniel, Rector of the 'Academie' at Caen; and shortly afterwards by many members of the 'Institut de France' and other learned societies, besides several of the noblesse and enlightened persons of its agricultural and industrial classes. At first the Society held its meetings only in Normandy; but it was soon invited to visit other provinces of France, in order to confer with their various literary bodies, and the clergy and gentlemen who were laudably endeavouring to restore their desecrated churches, and to prevent that destruction of feudal castles, and Roman and Gaulish remains then daily perpetrated: and this feeling has since so much increased, that the Society is now called on to visit several provinces in one year, diffusing thus its civilizing influence over nearly the whole kingdom.

The meetings of the Society in 1841 took place at Clermont, at Le Mans, at Angers, at Cherbourg, and at Lyons, during the session there of the *Congres Scientifique de France*. The meeting at Clermont was held on the 11th of June, under the presidency of M. Bouillet, its divisional inspector; but as its object was only to visit those churches and other monuments in that province, which, with the aid of government, it had recently restored, I shall proceed to relate the transactions of the sitting at Le Mans, on the 17th of June, under the presidency of the venerable M. Cauvin, and at which his wife, with a few other ladies of acknowledged literary acquirements, were permitted to be present. Business commenced by a report on the restoration of a window of the twelfth century in the cathedral there, and a description of its subject, (the history of St. Julien;) followed by a notice of a Dolmen lately discovered in the vicinity, and the presentation of sundry archæological prints and drawings. M. de Caumont, as Director of the Society, then distributed a list of the questions for discussion at its subsequent great meeting at Angers, in which those questions not otherwise intelligible were illustrated by marginal woodcuts, and he afterwards read an essay on the Lantern-towers of ancient cemeteries, which was succeeded by a description of a beautifully carved organ-case put up A.D. 1531. A grant of money was then voted for two casts from some ancient sculpture at Le Mans; one for the museum there, and one for the Society's museum at Caen. A statistical report was next made on the civil and religious edifices in the diocese of Le Mans, whence it appeared that of seven hundred churches therein no fewer than five hundred were as old as the eleventh and twelfth centuries—many of them having crypts and stained glass, of which a tabular view was in course of publication for the Society. An enquiry was thereupon addressed to the Clergy present as to what particular restorations were most urgently requisite in the diocese, and their replies having been noted by the Secretary, the sitting at Le Mans then terminated.

The Society subsequently met on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, and 25th of June, at Angers, into which city it was honourably welcomed by the Bishop, the Clergy, and the literary societies there. The business was

opened with a panegyric by M. Cauvin on the general utility of Archæology; the services which it had already rendered towards the settling of several historical opinions previously doubtful, and an enumeration of those towns wherein branches of the Society had been planted. The architect of the department having then reported on the church reparations recently effected in it, funds were voted for casts from a capital, which he had spoken of as very remarkable, and for the purchase of a certain tumulus which seemed to him likely to afford, on excavation, some interesting objects. A map of the Celtic monuments of Le Maine having been presented, the director suggested that its value might be much augmented by the addition to it of the Roman roads.

At the afternoon sitting of this industrious Society, under the presidency of the Bishop, notice was given of a Credence-table of the twelfth century lately found in a church, remarkable also for containing an equestrian statue. A request was then made that a grant of money voted in 1839 for the restoration of certain carved stalls should not be revoked because of such restoration not having been commenced within the period assigned by the Society for so doing. M. Barraud announced that he had instituted a research into the several materials and ornaments of chalices and other ritual vessels of known date. A notice of a mass of bronze fish-hooks, and bronze celts, arms, and ornaments, all found under one large stone, then led to an enquiry how such heterogeneous articles became so placed together. Next followed a report on the monuments of the Upper Loire, chronologically and geographically arranged, and again subdivided according to their supposed purport or style of art: its author eloquently deprecating the frequent indifference to such things on the part of the authorities to whose guardianship the laws of France now commit them, and, in some degree, also of the clergy, even towards sacred objects. A new edition of the map called Peutinger's table was afterwards exhibited; and the Bishop having announced that a Chair of Archæology was about to be established in his diocesan seminary, M. de Caumont, in the name of the Society, thereupon offered its best thanks to his lordship, and suggested the introduction of some archæological instruction into the Government school of mechanical arts at Angers.

At the morning sitting on the 22nd, the chief judge of the Cour Royale condescendingly acted as Secretary, and business began by a report from the Society's inspector of the Aisne (no less a person than the Prefet himself) upon the several works recently executed in that department. Among these were some restorations in the cathedral at Laon, and other churches there, and the upholding of certain feudal castles and Roman camps—naming the members under whose special superintendence these works had been conducted. The inspector of the Moselle then enumerated the labours of the Society in his department, one of which was the preservation of a Roman aqueduct, and the purchase of which structure was recommended as an instructive example of ancient subterraneous masonry. He

stated, moreover, that the Prefet had forbidden any appropriation of the stones of a certain Roman causeway in the vicinity of some modern road-making, and that he had ordered all designs for any 'beautifications' of the cathedral at Metz to be previously subjected to the approval of a committee of taste; and concluded by informing the Society that a sum had been granted by the department for the maintenance of an interesting edifice formerly serving both for sacred and military purposes.

The director then commenced the following series of questions addressed especially to members inhabiting the neighbouring departments. Are there any Dolmens? Of what stone are they formed? What are their dimensions? Are they single or divided? Is their chief opening to the east or south? Have any bones or cinerary urns, or instruments of stone or bronze, been found beneath them? Are there any Celtic tumuli in their vicinity, and are there any collections of upright stones artificially placed in circles or otherwise? These questions elicited much information, (but which it would take too much space here to detail,) and led to a vote requesting the Prefets of the several departments in which Celtic remains had been thus shewn to exist, authoritatively, to forbid their destruction.

At the second sitting on the 22nd, which was again presided over by the Bishop, the director put the following questions. Are there any villas in the departments bordering on Angers referable to the Gallo-Roman epoch? Or any remains of ancient masonry near mineral springs? Do the fragments of Gallo-Roman sculpture, hitherto found, throw any light on its general system of ornamentation? and of what form was the architectural capital usually adopted? The subject of the middle age geography of Anjou having been introduced, M. Marchegay, the departmental archivist, furnished some documentary information thereon. The Secretary then read a memoir on the tombs of certain Dukes of Anjou, formerly existing in the cathedral of Angers, one of which, that of King René, he concluded with a motion for entreating government to restore. At seven in the evening the Society visited some of the principal buildings in Angers, inspecting first, under the guidance of the Bishop, his cathedral, and the ancient portions of his palace; then the interesting castle, and, finally, the pretty little chapel of Lesvieres, one of the many Angevine edifices erected by 'the good' King René.

(To be continued.)

W. BROMET.

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