

## CERTAIN GREAT MONUMENTS.

BY JAMES F. HUNNEWELL.

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IN the history of the most civilized portions of the world during the past twenty centuries, three growths and diffusions are especially noticeable—those of the Latin language with the institutions accompanying it, in times now ancient; those of the English language and institutions in recent times; and, midway between the two, the rise and spread of the Pointed style of architecture.

Mediæval, and a creation or a development in western Europe, with its greatest results there, it might, at first thought, seem that this style has nothing expressive of our country and people, and yet, if we look for something that is a monumental and enduring expression of the origin and growth of the present and coming American people—a blending of many races—we could hardly find another as distinctive and pre-eminent expression of thought and character shared by all, or nearly all, of these races, as is the Pointed style.<sup>1</sup>

Our country long ago ceased to be a group of British colonies, and then, numerically to a large extent, of their descendants, or of people having the same origin. There is scarcely a race of western Europe which is not now represented among us, and is not now, and in cases to a large extent, mingling with us. Of all these races the Pointed style was an expression in common. For that reason consideration

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<sup>1</sup> The style often called Gothic, as stated by Mr. Ferguson ("Handbook of Architecture," p. 660.) "the pointed architecture . . . became the style . . . of all Europe during the Middle Ages; and is, *par excellence* the Gothic style of Europe."

of it really belongs among early American subjects, and it includes, also, consideration of some of the greatest demonstrations of human genius and exaltation.

As is apt to be in regard to origins, there are differences of opinion about the origin of the style: these we need not attempt to consider here. We simply observe that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a great conception in art grew rapidly, so that within the next two hundred years it was shown by works such as the world had never before known, such as it never has surpassed, inspired by thought and feeling that spread through Christendom, works with features in common, but with expression varied by the varied races producing them.

At the period when this style was developed, all these European races, now represented among us, held one religious faith controlled by one central power. In this style produced by that faith and the wonderful genius at its service were some of the grandest, the most beautiful of human works—civil and ecclesiastical, but pre-eminent, the churches. In art, their conception, size, majesty, beauty, are amazing, and so also is their geographical diffusion. The creations of Greek art, and their remains, are widely spread, and often in places now remote and lonely, but yet they are within a comparatively limited area; the Roman, in classic styles, were far more widely spread, yet still within a hardly wider area than are the works in the Pointed style.

In the mother country of most of us, indeed, to a large extent, of our nation, the style, at home there, spread to every part. The churches had the general European features of orientation, cross-form with nave, transepts and choir—found in almost every place to which the style spread, but they had also treatment native in Britain—great length, moderate internal height, long choirs, small western portals, and, unlike most churches on the Continent, they were, with scant exceptions, placed in beautiful

open grassy or wooded grounds. There is a charm about them that scarcely exists in any other buildings.

The French had an active and important part in our early history, at one time attempting domination in North America; their race is still notable at the South, and is now coming to us in appreciable number from the North. In the old realm of that race the style had wonderful development, and its own characteristics of the general features. The churches had, internally, great height, moderate length, and a complicated and often superb apse; clerestory and apse became great walls of rich tracery and gorgeous glass; west portals were often immense triumphal arches. Generally, they stood directly in the streets, or on the market-place, of the town or city. They had stateliness of form and regal wealth of decoration.

The mighty German race is in our land multiplying in number and influence. Throughout their father-land were works in the style, and, in places, on a colossal scale. Lofty windows, soaring spires, marvels of geometric design, or carved altars, marked them. Unrivalled stand the five great Germanic masterpieces, at Cologne, Vienna, Strasbourg, Ulm and Freiburg.

The Spaniards have given and left names for many a place in our country, and in it, also, are not a few people descended from them. Far and wide over their great home peninsula are grand examples of the Pointed style worthy of a race that ruled much of Christendom.

Italians, from the first voyage of Columbus to the last steamer from Naples, have come to America; they have transformed an old historic part of Boston. The mediæval Italians did not to a great extent adopt the Pointed style, but they did in the North fashion the immense Duomo in Milan with its marvellous lacework of parapet and pinnacle, and in the South, by their own inventive genius, shape the arches and walls, as of gold and jewels, resplendent in the Capella Palatina at Palermo.

Far north, at an opposite extreme of Europe, the Scandinavians, whose descendants are now almost as numerous here as there, reared churches in the Pointed style still wonders and treasures. And thus it is with each minor people or country of western Europe: in all, the Pointed style; from all, representatives mingling with our people.

No paper, only a volume, can adequately describe their monuments; here can only be mentioned the grandeur and beauty, the unique and priceless value, and the wide extent of their works, and note, also, the wisdom and pious care that is preserving, reviving and completing them. Of the great number that may be called central, I can say nothing in a paper no longer than this. Let me simply remark on what there is today at points along the outer circumference of the lands of the Pointed style—a circuit that gives an impressive realization of its diffusion through countries and peoples, of the widely reaching creative genius of a great age, and of the faith by which that genius was inspired.

It has been one of the delights of my life to visit, and make notes on all the great mediæval works I mention, and many more, as they stand where their builders reared them, and to observe the careful and costly labors to preserve every one of them, and realize that as the Middle Age was mighty in conception and accomplishment, so the latter days are noble in appreciation. To give evidence, let me briefly sketch the monuments of the style and of the races found along the circuit that shows how widely spread both of them were.

The Pointed style, as already said, did not prevail to the south as it did to the north of the Alps; nevertheless, we find it in Lombardy, as has also been mentioned, amazingly developed in the marble glory at Milan; in Sicily, in the vast and gorgeous, mosaic-robed aisles at Monreale, and in the noble simplicity of the historic interiors of the Frari, and Santi Giovanni e Paolo at Venice—three extremes of Italy.

South of the Pyrenees the style spread throughout the land—to its grand monument, the Cathedral at Seville, with its vast interior made dim and solemn by windows that do not concentrate the light as they do in the colder or duller North, but that veil the fierce rays of the Andalusian sun.

To the west, by the shores of the Atlantic, are Bayonne, Bordeaux, Quimper and more, each with its Pointed cathedral; and above the broad sands where Brittany and Normandy now mingle, on the towering rock of Mont St. Michel, still strong and noble, rise the mighty walls and the richly carved pinnacles of the abbey, with the stately halls in the great edifice well called the Marvel—now an almost unique Historical Monument of France, and of the Pointed style.

To the far southwest of Europe it also reached. In the Imperial city, long, and not very long ago, bulwark of Christendom against Mohammedanism, stand the spacious “dim, religious aisles,” and the lofty, almost peerless, spire of St. Stephen’s, Vienna. Again, far north and eastward from it, in the old capital of the Poles, on a hill, above the life beneath, we find the cathedral of Cracow, last resting-place of departed rulers, partly Renaissance, but at core Pointed, freshened and completed by work of today, showing how the style spread there. A long way north of this, also in a distant Polish city, we find still another example, smaller, in a cross street, but no slight proof of the diffusion of the style—the cathedral of Warsaw.

Passing Roskilde, also with its Pointed cathedral amid the beautiful prairie-like fields of Denmark, carefully restored, and now, as since it was built, one of the noblest of human works in that country, passing also the great brick Pointed churches of the Hanse-towns, we go some hundreds of miles east of north to the rocky and forested hills of Scandinavia, and find at Upsala a large example

of the style, spacious, simple, noble in design, shrine of the old regalia of Sweden.

Now go on to three more examples, that in place and form are nothing less than astonishing. On the green shores of a fiord within three degrees of the Arctic Circle, is Norway's masterpiece of art and of the Pointed style, the surprising, the marvellous cathedral of Trondjheim. Built in the Middle Ages, standing through the wear and tear of time and man, partly wrecked, it has been, within the last few years, made fair as ever—fairer, may be. Built by the Viking race, it stands in fresh beauty given by their descendants—those bright, tough, hard-handed, hard-headed Yankees of the North, whose kin abound in our land also. Rich as we are, matchless among mankind, we have nothing to surpass it. Even to those who know the richness of Continental Mediæval Art it is a marvel.

Go in a different direction to the distant North, reach the northern shores of the mainland of Scotland, cross the rough waters of Pentland Frith to Orkney, and at Kirkwall see the cathedral. The older parts are round arched, but its later are pointed, and it can fairly be in this list of Mediæval works. Read the words in Mr. Billings's magnificent and accurate "Antiquities of Scotland": "Among all the architectural glories of the Middle Ages, there is scarcely any other that presents so startling a type of the capacity of the Church of Rome to carry the symbols of its power, its wealth and its high culture into distant regions, as this Cathedral edifice, built in the twelfth century, in one of the most remote dependencies of a small and secluded European power. After having stood for nearly seven hundred years, it still remains pre-eminent, both in dignity and beauty, over all the architectural productions, which the progress of civilization and science has reared around it . . . matched but by a very few of the ecclesiastical edifices of our great cities, and those few are also ancient. Even as when it first reared its head among

the fishermen's huts, it still frowns broad and dark over the surrounding houses of the old Burgh of Kirkwall," and, "though dedicated to another worship, still to the honor of those who dwell around it, and of their forefathers, stands entire." And, let me add—honor indeed to the fishermen of Orkney, and to their fellow-men around them through centuries, for their intelligence and their genuine piety and patriotism, they did not desecrate and destroy a masterpiece of inspired art dedicated to God's glory by their fathers. Long and high, with a central tower, built mostly of dark red sandstone, simple and noble, stands St. Magnus, a triumph, in youth and in age.

Words similar to those used by Mr. Billings at Kirkwall might well be used at the last place that will be mentioned in this wide circuit; indeed, the words might be made stronger, for they would describe a larger, a richer, and not less surprising, and even secluded work. Traversing for many a mile the large, bleak hills of extreme southwestern Wales, across a lonely country, you at length reach a village, in it not a sign of human work greater than its small, plain houses. But pass through it to the brow of a steep declivity, and, nestled beneath, you see a cathedral such as only the Middle Ages could conceive and build—St. David's. Here again there is a great deal of round arched work, but enough also of pointed to allow it to be named in the present list. Ruin impended, but repair and renewal, absolutely required, have made it once more strong and noble. In almost utter loneliness, far from the busy world, it stands a monumental outpost of the faith and art once prevalent through the races that have peopled our land.

Through Britain, between these wide extremes—Orkney to St. Bride's Bay—and especially in England, are hundreds of buildings in the Pointed style; indeed we might as well think of England without her language as without them. We might also say as much of France or Germany,

and even other lands. Attractive, important and many as they are, we can here only again note their existence and wide diffusion.

Existing Americans tracing descent from almost any European people or place west of Russia, will trace back to where the Pointed style was a monument of the faith, the art and the history of their ancestors. There are few members of this Society who do not trace their lineage back to Old England, and every one of them who does so trace, will probably find the clue leading in some way to a church, and that church will be found to be partly, or wholly, in the Pointed style.



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