

PUGIN AND HIS CIRCLE

THE renaissance of Christian art brought about by the Gothic Revival of the last century did not come easily. There were still those who quibbled and spoke of *pasticheurs*, as though architects who raised Doric town halls and Corinthian façades in the nineteenth century were not *pasticheurs*.

Earlier, Constable, the painter, had said acidly: 'A new Gothic building, or a new missal, is in reality little less absurd than a *new ruin*. The Gothic architecture, sculpture, and painting, belong to peculiar ages. The feelings that guided their inventors are unknown to us.' Coleridge, however, with a nobler vision, had said: 'The principle of the Gothic architecture is infinity made imaginable. It is, no doubt, a sublimer effort of genius than the Greek style; but then it depends much more on execution for its effect.' The Classicists continued to murmur. Some suggested that Gothic was a mummy exhumed for exhibition in market-places already slowly greying with the first smoke of industrialism; others said that Gothic was an entirely new, a Victorian, product.

That period of Victorian art which was coloured by a Ruskinian hue was preceded by what has since been called the Pugin Period. Whatever his limitation and excesses, Augustus Welby Pugin was the man who, in England, brought Christian art out of the catacombs, and much of the credit for this must be fairly divided among the select coterie of craftsmen and patrons who assisted and befriended him. Of some of these 'real Gothic men, like you and me,' as Pugin wrote to his friend Osmund, much is known; their figures are clearly etched. Such were the noble John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury; Ambrose Phillips de Lisle, that 'perfect Medieval man'; Osmund, the Salisbury friend who was so anxious to learn about medieval architecture; Myers, the builder from Beverley; Cromwell Carpenter, apostle of Anglican ritualists and designer of the Woodard colleges, whom Pugin introduced into the Ecclesiological Society; and John Rogers Herbert, R.A., the painter. Others however are remembered as but shadowy beings, wraith-like.

Benjamin Ferrey (1810-1880) was Pugin's earliest friend. He was apprenticed to the elder Pugin, in whose atelier-cum-office he was too late to meet John Nash, the Regency architect, but in time to meet Anthony Salvin, the builder of Plantagenet castles. Ferrey has left an account of the arduous life of apprentices in the Pugin *menage*, but this did not strain the bonds between the two young

craftsmen. At fourteen years of age, Pugin set out to explore Rochester Castle, and Ferrey, two years older, was his companion. Three years later, Pugin's diary had an entry stating that he examined Hatfield House and Hurstmonceux Castle with 'my friend Ferrey.' Their affinity was not merely professional, for both were of Huguenot descent.

Ferrey was one of the most enlightened of the revivalists; Sir Gilbert Scott claimed him as his best friend and toured the continent with him. He was one of the first to reintroduce sculptured figures into niches in churches after the Reformation—at Buckland S. Mary in Somerset—and his church of S. Mary at Chetwynde, Shropshire, closely adheres to the spirit of Pugin's work. As an antiquary, he delved into the history of old S. Paul's, of which he published a collection of drawings; he also restored Wells Cathedral and Episcopal Palace and designed the market cross at Glastonbury.

He was an ardent Goth—he hated the Venetian and would mutter 'Batty-Langley' whenever it was spoken of—but while earlier influenced by Pugin, he struck out on individual lines, and his later work, though compromising, is vigorous and full of character. Such are his Jacobean Dorset County Hospital and his Dorchester Town Hall with spired *tourelle*, while he prepared the detail drawings of the National Gallery. His biography of Pugin, published in 1861, although badly written and clumsily disposed, was a monument to their friendship.

Herbert Minton (1793-1858) was one of Pugin's staunchest friends. Minton took over the pottery works at Stoke-on-Trent, founded by his father, and extended the range to include Palissy and Majolica wares. It was however as the man who revived the lost medieval art of encaustic tiles that he made his name. Such tiles were first introduced into churches towards the close of the twelfth century, and they had already disappeared by the end of the fifteenth century.

Minton began production early in the last century, and his work was everywhere in demand. At the medieval Hospital of S. Cross near Winchester he made many reproductions of the original fourteenth-century tiles, though these are perhaps not the best bed-fellows for Butterfield's 'streaky bacon' style of restoration. Elsewhere, good work is to be found in the cathedrals of Wells, Lichfield and Bristol, while it was exhibited at Paris, New York and the Crystal Palace Exhibition.

Pugin designed most of his own tiles but always relied upon Minton for their execution. He once wrote assuring Minton that his work was 'the finest done in the tile way; vastly superior to any ancient work

... the best tiles in the world, and I think my patterns and your craftsmanship go ahead of anything.' Sir Gilbert Scott, however, whilst conceding that Pugin's patterns were unequalled ('though I think that Lord Alwyne Compton greatly excels him in arrangements') held that Godwin of Hereford came nearer to the texture of medieval tiles than did Minton.

Shortly before Pugin's death there was a misunderstanding which threatened to create a serious rift, but the breach was made good, and Pugin promised his friend 'a better reception at S. Augustine's than the emperor,' a promise which could not be fulfilled. Pugin had frequently intimated that a public statue should be erected to Minton's memory, with one hand holding a specimen of his tiles; a memorial was later erected to him at Stoke-on-Trent.

Daniel Rock (1799-1871) was a member of that small but discerning circle which aimed at liturgical perfection. Educated at S. Edmund's College, Ware, he studied for the priesthood at the English College in Rome, and he became one of the foremost ecclesiologists of a period which saw such authorities as Bloxam, Parker, Raphael Brandon and F. A. Paley. In 1827 he became chaplain to the Earl of Shrewsbury at Alton Towers, where he wrote *Hierurgia*, and in 1840 he became chaplain to Sir Robert Throckmorton. Later, he became a Canon of Southwark Cathedral (Pugin's creation), and he wrote an important monograph on the textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Dr Rock contacted Pugin by letter, congratulating him on his book *Ornaments*, from Alton Towers in 1836, and it may have been partly due to his persuasion that John Talbot sent for Pugin, who arrived in the summer of the same year. The friendship between the two must have been of an unsettled nature, for the affinity between them was no doubt strained by the liberties which Pugin took in the liturgical realm, which rightly belonged to the priest. And one feels that the good Doctor's patience must have been well tried by his enthusiastic but exacting friend.

On the other hand, how much of Rock's later success was indirectly due to Pugin? The former's monumental work *The Church of our Fathers* was largely written in Berkshire after 1840 and was published between 1849 and 1853 (a year after Pugin's death), and the brief grudging acknowledgement of 'my friend, the talented Pugin' in the preface seems to cover up not a little anxiety. This work was inspired by the old Sarum Rite of S. Osmund, a manuscript of which was in the possession of a Mr Hatch of Salisbury, whose son had presented Rock with a copy.

In 1833, and frequently afterwards, Pugin stayed with the younger Hatch in Wells. Was he responsible for ascertaining the existence and nature of the transcript; was he instrumental in providing Rock with the copy? Ferrey quotes a cryptic entry in Pugin's diary for the year 1837: 'Sept. 16—Began Dr Rock's work.' There is, moreover, much evidence of their collaboration at Alton. Such an hypothesis, however, does not detract from the admirable scholarship of Daniel Rock, and there is little doubt that the respect which he felt for Pugin was mutual.

John Hardman (1811-1867) was prominent among Pugin's earliest and most loyal friends. He was a pioneer among ecclesiastical craftsmen, founding his Birmingham metal-works in 1838 and later adding the stained-glass works. The Hardmans were a staunch old Catholic family who had suffered in penal times, and John's sister, Mary Juliana, became Superioress of the Handsworth Convent of Mercy, which was founded by their father and had a chapel by Pugin.

Hardman, with his nephew, John Hardman Powell, was responsible for executing all Pugin's windows. Powell, the firm's artist, was Pugin's only pupil, under whom, according to Gilbert Scott, he had received 'a good drilling'; he later married Pugin's daughter, Anne.

Their work was in great demand by Anglicans no less than in their own circle, and their production was prolific. Most of the English cathedrals contain their craftsmanship. There is, for example, the decoration of the vaulting of Worcester Cathedral, and the great east window, depicting the Crucifixion and Ascension, of which the glass was originally made for the Paris Exhibition of 1862. There is the lectern of Lichfield Cathedral, the reredos designed by Powell and executed by Salviati at S. David's Cathedral, and the admirable windows, Powell again, in the Houses of Parliament.

One of the greatest compliments to the Hardmans was paid by Edmund Street, notable among Gothic architects, who on the eve of his death begged that Hardman be allowed to execute the nave windows of Bristol Cathedral which he (Street) had designed.

John Hardman was one of the cantors at the Office of the Dead chanted at S. Augustine's, Ramsgate, on Pugin's death. There is yet at the Benedictine Abbey of S. Augustine's a watercolour by Pugin of the church, which was sent to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1849 and afterwards inscribed and presented to Hardman.

The name of Alfred Alexander Clarke (1826-1913) has been associated, particularly in the West Country, with the name of Pugin. The Clarkes were an old Somerset family, and it was at

Chipley Court as the friend and guest of Edward Clarke that Locke wrote a large part of his *Essay on Human Understanding*.

Alfred Clarke was a native of Taunton, but he later resided in Close Hall, Wells, where he became distinguished as an antiquary and artist. He was an authority on ecclesiology and wrote a *Monograph on Wells Cathedral*. His delightful watercolours and drawings are valuable inasmuch as they portray ancient buildings before the full impact of the Gothic Revival—and urban development—changed them.⁽¹⁾ His intimate circle included Edmund Sharpe, author of *Architectural Parallels* and *Houses of the Cistercians*; John Britton, the historian and illustrator of the *English Cathedrals*; Charles Buckler, who designed the Dominican Priory at Woodchester, the Carmelite Convent at Chichester and chapels at Stonyhurst College; Professor Cockerell, erudite author of *The Iconography of Wells*; John Henry Parker, eminent authority on Gothic; and Edward Welby Pugin, the son of Augustus Welby.

One oral tradition contends that Clarke, as a very young man, met Augustus Welby and through him became friendly with Edward. If this were so, the friendship with the elder Pugin, who died in 1852, must have been very brief. It was certainly Edward who became Clarke's friend; together they explored the churches and manors of the Mendip Hills and made many drawings of medieval bench-ends.

One wonders, however, whether Clarke ever met Augustus Welby at all, and whether the first meeting with Edward was, perhaps, in Wells about 1860. There is in Wells Museum a Gothic sideboard, attributed to the elder Pugin, which belonged to Clarke and which was almost certainly bequeathed to him by Edward.

Let it be sufficient to feel that, in spirit, all these men dwelt together, bound by a common ideal, all seekers after Augustine's City of God. 'Rich men in virtue, studying beautifulness: living at peace in their houses.' (Ecclesiasticus). TUDOR EDWARDS.

(1) A collection of his work has recently been presented to Wells Museum, and another collection is in the possession of the writer.