

INTRODUCTION.

It is just possible that the reader may not have forgotten some beautifully executed fac-similes,¹ from a once CELEBRATED WORK, which, in its entire and original form, now claims his particular attention. When exercised in the task of selecting those fac-similes, I could have little anticipated the gratification afforded me, in being engaged, by the Publisher of this Volume, to become the humble instrument of making such a Work more generally familiar to the Public.

Little indeed is requisite by way of prefatory observation; and yet it would be offering something like violence to one's feelings, to suffer such a volume to go abroad without some attempt to disarm scepticism respecting doubts which may be entertained of the authenticity of these "IMAGES"—as the performance of HANS HOLBEIN. Not only is the testimony of Vandoperanus (in the Latin verses prefixed to these cuts) express and positive, in assigning them to Hans Holbein—but the intrinsic evidence arising from the Compositions themselves is not less express and positive. No man, conversant with the works of Holbein, can deprive that great man of the honour here due to his name. That it was, however, a Work executed in his earlier years, and before he had quitted Basle for England, in 1526, is most certain: and, if so, the Original Drawings

¹ *Bibliographical Decameron*, vol. i. pp. 174—180.

were in all probability in distemper : as no well authenticated water-coloured drawing is known to have been executed by him abroad. My authority is Walpole, to whom the Reader is referred below.²

The first Edition of this popular Work appeared in 1538, and the second in 1539. Of the intervening Editions, between the latter and that of 1547, the following, it is presumed, is a tolerably accurate list.³ In 1549 there appeared, for the first time, an *English* version of the different passages of Scripture subjoined to elucidate the cuts : all the previous editions having only *Latin, Spanish, or Latin and French, Extracts*. It is clear that the Author of this English version was a *Foreigner*. I have presumed to think that Lutzelberger⁴ might have engraved these

² *Anecdotes of Painting, Dallaway's Edition: 1826—8, vol. i. pp. 118. 120.* It is somewhat singular, that Walpole, in enumerating Holbein's earlier works abroad, does not notice the original Drawings of this identical Work. See p. 128, &c. It might, *primâ facie*, appear that these Drawings were among "the hundred and three genuine Sketches," in the possession of Amerbach, relating chiefly to the life of Christ.

³ *List of the Editions.*

- 1538 *Historia Veteris Instrumenti, Icones ad vivum expressæ, 4to. Lugduni, sub scuto coloniensi. Excudebant Lugduni Melchior et Gaspar Trechsel, 1538.*
- 1539 *Historia Veteris Testamenti, 4to. Lugduni, sub scuto coloniensi, 1539.*
- 1543 *Historia Veteris Testamenti, 4to. Lugduni, sub scuto coloniensi, apud Joannem et Franciscum Frellonios, fratres. MD.XL.III.*
- 1547 *Icones Historiarum Veteris Testamenti. Lugduni, apud Johannem Frellonium, 4to. 1547.*
- 1549 *Retratos o Tablas de las Historias del Testamento viejo, hechas a dia buxadas por un muy primo y sotil artifice. Lion de Francia, 1549.*
- 1549 *The Images of the Old Testament lately expressed, set forthe in Ynglishe and Frenche, vwith a playn and brief exposition, Printid at Lyons by Johan Frellon, the yere of our Lord God 1549.*

⁴ All the editions appear to be printed from the same blocks, except a pirated one with the following title : "Historiarū Veteris Testamenti Icones ad vivum expressæ. Paris apud Petrum Regnault, sub tribus coronis Coloniae, via ad diuum Jacobum, 1544,"—in which the subjects are somewhat altered, and reversed.

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designs; and I am willing to believe that the original Blocks themselves, like those for the triumphs of the Emperor Maximilian, are YET in existence.⁵ Why the Work was first published at *Lyons* instead of *Basle*, seems to be a sort of puzzle for which no very satisfactory solution can be offered: unless it be from the presumed superiority of art in the former city. And why the publication of the Work itself was delayed so long, does not appear to be sufficiently evident. The original Publishers of it were *Melchior* and *Gaspar Trechsel*; and *Frellon* seems to have been, latterly, both Editor and Publisher. *Giles Corrozet* was, in all probability, the author of the French metrical version.

The intention of *Frellon*, in this beautiful publication, was to gratify the taste for art which was then generally prevailing; but to gratify it with objects more worthy of chaste eyes to gaze upon. That Editor tells us, in his address "to the Christian Reader," (subjoined below,⁶) that "instead of figures of *Venus* and *Diana*, and libidinous forms of other Goddesses, which only injure the mind by error, or poison it by depravity," he has exhibited "subjects connected with holy writ, which point, finger-like, to the penetralia of Hagiography." The attempt

⁵ *Bibliographical Decameron*; vol. i. p. 178: and *Bibliographica-Tour*, vol. iii. p. 529, &c. Edit. 1821.

⁶ *Franciscus Frellonius Christiano lectori S.*

En tibi, Christiane lector, sacrorum canonum tabulas, cum earundem et Latina et Gallica interpretatione officiose exhibemus: Illud in primis admonentes, ut reiectis *Veneris* et *Dianæ* cæterarumque dearum libidinosi imaginibus, quæ animum vel errore impediunt, vel turpitudine labefactant, ad has sacrosanctas Iconas, quæ Hagiographorum penetralia digito commonstrant, omnes tui conatus referantur. Quid enim pulchrius, aut Christiano homine dignius, quam ad has res animum adlicere, quæ solæ fidei mysteria sapiunt, et Deum creatorem nostrum vnicè amare, ac veram religionem profiteri præcipunt? Tuum igitur erit hunc nostrum laborem æquo animo suscipere, ac cæteros commonefacere, ut eiusmodi omnia ad Dei largitoris beneficentissimi gloriam, et honorem dirigere meminerint. Vale, Lector, et fuere.

was as commendable as the success of it was complete : and I can conceive fewer works in the sixteenth century likely to do more good—either by awakening the virtuous curiosity of youth, or by gratifying the religious principles of the aged. My recollection does not furnish me with any volume since the days of PFISTER, to the present, so well calculated to accomplish these laudable objects.⁷

Before I say a few words upon the comparative merits of some of the compositions, it may be as well to reprint, in the order in which they appear in the earlier impressions, the commendatory prefixes of Vandoperanus and Corrozet : the latter being among the most fluent popular French writers of his day.⁸

NICOLAI BORBONII VANDOPERANI

POETÆ LINGONENSIS AD LECTOREM CARMEN.

Nvper in Elysio cùm fortè erraret Apelles,
 Vnà aderat Zeusis, Parrhasiusque comes.
 Hi duo multa satis fundebant verba : sed ille
 Interea mœrens, et taciturnus erat.
 Mirantur comites, farique hortantur, et vrgent :
 Suspirans imo pectore Cous, ait :
 O famæ ignari, superis quæ nuper ab oris
 (Vana vtinam) Stygias venit ad vsq; domos :
 Scilicet, esse hodie quendam ex mortalibus vnum,
 Ostendat qui me vósque fuisse nihil ;
 Qui nos declaret pictores nomine tantùm,
 Picturæque omneis antè fuisse rudes.
 Holbius est homini nomen, qui nomina nostra
 Obscura ex claris ac propè nulla facit.

⁷ In regard to Pfister, I allude to what may be called THE FIRST PICTURE book of any portion of the BIBLE, with a date (1462), in his highly curious and extraordinarily rare "*Histories of Joseph, Daniel, Judith, and Esther,*" printed by him in 1462 : of which work a pretty fair notion may be formed by consulting the *Bibl. Spenceriana*, vol. i. pp. 94—100. Lord Spencer's is the only known copy of it in the kingdom.

⁸ Some copious and amusing extracts of the poetry of this bard, relating to the early history of Paris, may be seen in the *Bibliographical Tour*, vol. ii. p. 123, &c. Edit. 1821.

INTRODUCTION.

v

Talis apud Manes querimonia fertur : et illos
 Sic equidem meritò censeo posse queri.
 Nam tabulam siquis videat, quam pinxerit **Hansus**
 Holbius, ille artis gloria prima suæ :
 Protinus exclamet, Potuit Deus edere monstrum
 Quod video : humanæ non potuère manus.
 Icones hæ sacræ tanti sunt (optime lector)
 Artificis, dignum quod venerèris opus.
 Proderit hac pictura animum pauisse salubri,
 Quæ tibi diuinas exprimit historias.
 Tradidit arcano quæcunque volumine Moses
 Tótque alii vates, gens agitata Deo,
 His **HANSI** tabulis representantur : et vnà
 Interpres rerum sermo Latinus adest.
 Hæc legito. Valeat rapti Ganymedis amator :
 Sintque procul Cypriæ turpia furta deæ.

Eiusdem Borbonij Poeta.

Διστιχον.

Ἦξεν ἰδεῖν εἶδωλα θέλεις ἐμπνοῖσιν ὁμοῖα;
 Ὀλβιακοῦς ἔργον δέρκεο τοῦτο χερσίν.

Latinè idem penè ad verbum.

Cernere vis, hospes, simulacra simillima **viuis** !
 Hoc opus Holbinæ nobile cerne manus.

GILLES CORROZET

AUX LECTEURS.

EN regardant ceste tapisserie
 L'œil corporel, qui se torne, et uarie,
 Y peut auoir un singulier plaisir,
 Lequel engendre au cœur certain desir
 D'aimer son Dieu, qui a fait tant de choses
 Dedans la letre, et sainte Bible encloses.
 Ces beaux portraictz seruiron d'exemplaire,
 Monstrant qu'il fault au Seigneur Dieu complaire,
 Exciteront de luy faire seruice,
 Retireront de tout peché, et vice :
 Quand ilz seront insculpez en l'esprit,
 Comme ilz sont painctz, et couchez par escrit.
 Donques ostenz de voz maisons, et salles
 Tant de tapis, et de painctures salles,

Ostez Venus, et son filz Cupido,
 Ostez Heleine, et Phyllis, et Dido,
 Ostez du tout fables et poesies ;
 Et receuez meilleures fantasies.

Mettez au lieu, et soyent uoz chambres ceinctes
 Des dictz sacrez, et des histoires saintes,
 Telles que sont celles que uoyez cy
 En ce liuret. Et si faites ainsi,
 Grandz et petis, les ieunes et les uieulx,
 Auront plaisir, et au cœur et au yeulx.

Plus que moins.

On casting even a cursory view over the graphic attractions of this volume, we are quickly impressed with a sense of the general tone of character, or of merit, of the whole : wishing however that those subjects, almost purely architectural, or relating to the ceremonies or interior of the Temple, had been omitted. Still they might have their portion of instruction for youth. Of the subjects, purely and professedly historical, I would take leave to recommend the mode of treatment of those of *Abraham entertaining the two Angels* (No. 3), *Moses explaining and enforcing the precepts of the Almighty* (No. 26), *Nathan and David* (No. 39), *Abishag and David* (No. 42), *Hiram and Solomon* (No. 43), *the Genealogy of Adam* (No. 50), almost the whole of the *History of Job* (No. 61), *Daniel* (No. 77), *Hosea* (No. 79), *Amos and Jonas* (Nos. 81, 82), *Tobit* (No. 85), as particularly deserving of admiration. Perhaps, generally speaking, the figures are too short and robust, and the heads in several instances too large : but there is a firmness, a strength, and breadth of effect about the whole, which pronounce, in an instant, that they are the productions of no ordinary pencil. Many of the heads, considered apart, are full of grandeur of expression. At Nos. 65, 66, two subjects, of a very opposite character, follow each other :—the one, the Fool with a set of children denying their Maker (Ps. liiii.) ; the other, the very bold embodying of the Psalmist's

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expression of "Christ sitting at the right hand of his Father." The dress and management of the Fool is in Holbein's best and apparently favourite style. The representation of the Almighty is grand, from its quiet dignity and composure; but that of the Messiah is a failure: the figure being at once meagre and commonplace. In such subjects most artists fail: and it may be no very unpardonable heresy to pronounce, that, sometimes, we are not perfectly satisfied with them in the designs of Michael Angelo and Raffaele.

It only remains to observe, that the ensuing Cuts are as faithful representations of the originals as can well nigh be conceived: that they are the united efforts of a Brother and a Sister^d engaged in the laborious profession of Wood-Cutters—with whose talents the Public have been a long time gratified. It will be evident that the Publisher could not have been influenced by the hope of much gain; as even a very extensive sale, at a moderate price, could hardly remunerate him for the expenses incurred. Such, however, as the volume is, in a country, and at a period (of the keenest competition in graphic publications of every description) like the present, it is offered alike to the notice and patronage of the Public.

T. F. D.

^d John and Mary Byfield.

