

**THE LEGEND OF CHRISTIAN
ART: ILLUSTRATED IN THE
STATUES OF SALISBURY
CATHEDRAL**

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The Legend of Christian Art: Illustrated in the Statues of Salisbury Cathedral by H. T. Armfield

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H. T. ARMFIELD

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THE
LEGEND OF CHRISTIAN ART

ILLUSTRATED IN THE

Statues of Salisbury Cathedral.

BY THE
REV. H. T. ARMFIELD, M.A.,
MINOR CANON OF SALISBURY.



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1869.

PREFACE.

THE aim of this book is to gather into a small compass such information as shall enable the reader to decipher for himself the characters which occur the most frequently in the representations of sacred art. To interpret with precision every single picture or window that you may see, requires indeed a legendary knowledge of very wide range ; but inasmuch as a few leading figures are repeated over and over again in works of religious art, a very little of such knowledge covers a very wide field, and is sufficient to explain to the uninitiated a large proportion of their mysteries. That little knowledge is what I have collected here.

The immediate occasion, indeed, of my writing the book was the restoration of the Statues in the external niches of Salisbury Cathedral. I observed that amongst the multitude of spectators who throng to see this masterpiece of English art in its new glory, many, even of the more intelligent, were utterly unable to identify any but the most familiar of the figures. With the exception, however, of an occasional remark, by way of illustration, there is nothing local in my book beyond the chapter giving an outline of the design upon which the Salisbury figures are grouped. I have taken those figures, indeed, as the basis of my selection ; but representing, as they do, the most famous saints of Western Christendom, they are the very same figures which meet us

with such frequency in the galleries of Florence, Munich, Paris, Antwerp, or elsewhere. The sort of information, which I have gathered into these few pages, has therefore a very wide use. In fact, wherever a stained-glass window, a wall painting, a canvas or a statue in a church is to be seen, there some slight knowledge of the matters treated upon here is absolutely indispensable to any one who would understand the meaning of what he sees. It is not too much to say that, from the want of the elements of such knowledge, those who visit the art collections in our own country, and, still more, those who year by year wander into the churches and galleries of the Continent lose one half of the interest latent in the many pictures which they see of glorified Christs, Madonnas or other eminent Saints, surrounded by a group of attendant figures. It is generally not difficult, even for the least instructed, to identify the principal figure of the composition; but the subsidiary characters in the scene are, so far as the average spectator is concerned, a mere group of figures with no apparent aim but the covering of the disposable space. If such a person had, before his visit to the homes of great works of art, spent a few leisure hours over the pages of such a book as this, he would see on a glance at his picture or his window that each of such attendant figures has an individuality of its own, that its presence in the work has its significance; and the whole gallery, instead of being for him a meaningless assemblage of figures, would begin to teem with character, with legend, and consequently with life.

I desire especially to call attention to the legendary life of St. Osmund, the originator of the celebrated *Use of Sarum*, and so, indirectly, of a large portion of the modern service

of the English Church. The Life is taken from a Latin manuscript in the British Museum, which, so far as I can learn, has never before been printed. For the general purposes of my book, I have turned it, of course, into English; but for the benefit of the many scholars who are interested in such subjects, I have printed the original text of the manuscript also. The Latin manuscript has been collated for me by my learned friend, the Rev. H. T. Kingdon, M.A., late Vice-Principal of the Theological College, Salisbury. As I record this obligation to him, I venture to say that those who know his habits of accuracy and his experience in such matters, as well as I do, would feel quite safe in relying upon this collation for all critical purposes in which it may be required.

Since the early sheets of this work were printed, circumstances have compelled me to enlarge my original plan by the addition of some notice of St. Patrick. I take this opportunity of saying that in drawing up this sketch of his career I have been largely indebted to the late Dr. Todd's elaborate compilation upon the subject.

I ought to say that I am indebted to Mr. Redfern, the sculptor of the Salisbury Statues, for his obliging replies to questions that I have had to address to him during the progress of my work.

H. T. ARMFIELD.

ERRATUM.

P. 12, line 16, for 'Plotina' read 'Platina.'

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