

**THE STORY OF
ARCHITECTURE
IN OXFORD STONE**

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The story of architecture in Oxford stone by E. A. Greening Lamborn

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OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1912

PREFACE

This book is not meant to be an addition to the already numerous guides to the individual buildings of Oxford. As such it could find little justification, since every important building has at some time or other been the subject of a book, in which its history and its architectural features have been exhaustively treated, and there are besides several guides to the city as a whole, in which accounts are given of its chief architectural details with the dates and styles of all the colleges and churches.

Not Oxford's buildings, but the science of architecture illustrated by them, is the subject of this essay.

As a rule, writers on English architecture draw their examples from buildings scattered broadcast over England; the majority of students must, therefore, be content to make acquaintance with their details through the medium of photographic illustrations, drawings, and descriptions, which are at best a poor substitute for the real thing. Now Oxford, a unique city in so many respects, is unique in this, that all the great architectural types are represented in her buildings. It is true that our examples of Classic architecture are but poor imitations of the stately porticoes of Greece and Rome, but they will still serve to illustrate the mechanical principles and the ornamental details of the ancient building systems; of every stage of mediæval architecture Oxford possesses examples as representative of the best work as are to be found anywhere in England; the buildings of the great Renaissance

architects are not better represented in London itself than in the streets of our own city; and finally, it was Oxford that saw both the last efforts of expiring Gothic and the first attempts at the revival of the mediæval style.

Here, then, is an opportunity to approach the study of architecture with buildings of every period at hand for illustrations; I have tried to show how they may be used to illustrate the development of the science from primitive to modern times.

My main purpose has been less to describe the characteristics of the work of different dates than to attempt to trace through the successive styles a continuous line of evolution. Therefore, minute descriptions of details that the reader may observe for himself are unnecessary; the aim was rather to inquire into their origins and functions, and to follow the history of their development.

Ability to recognize the work of different periods in an old building, and to trace in chronological sequence the history of the structure is not very difficult to acquire, and adds greatly to one's capacity for feeling the mysterious charm of ancient things. But it involves no more real knowledge of architecture than the recognition of the signs of age in a human being involves a knowledge of physiology. The deeper intellectual interest of the science is to be found, not in the naming and classification of details, but in the study of their functions, and of the adaptations of their forms to the ends they are intended to serve; it is a physiological interest.

This book is, in its small way, an attempt to apply to the study of architecture the methods of modern biology; to trace the origin and development of architectural forms; to explain their functions and their inter-

relations ; and to seek out the causes that modified them and controlled their development. It proceeds on the premisses that architecture is analogous to an organic growth, that its study should therefore be approached from a genetic and evolutionary standpoint, the student seeking to explain its development by reference to the changes in human circumstances, just as the biologist seeks to explain the development of species from simple to complex, not by the theory of special creations, but by the effects of environment upon the organism. The old botanist was content when, from observation of outward resemblances, he had referred a plant to its natural order ; to the post-Darwinian, classification is not the association of like forms, but the relating of species to a common ancestor ; he is not satisfied until he has explained the differences between related species by reference to the varying circumstances of their environments. The belief that each species sprang into existence by a separate act of the Creative Mind has given place to the nobler theory of evolution from a single primitive form of life.

I have tried to apply the evolutionary method to the study of architecture, and to show that in the history of building, as in that of organic life, there is a single primitive type from which all later forms were evolved ; that all the varied styles belong to one or other of a few great branches ; that the line of progress is from simple to complex, from the lowly organism to the high ; from the undifferentiated form to the specialized, from the rudimentary to the highly developed ; and that the changes that mark that progress were the results, not of changing fashions or of the caprice of individual architects, but of the pressure of new circumstances.

Of the many writers to whom I am more or less indebted, I owe the largest amount of gratitude to three : Mr. Garbett, whose *Principles of Design in Architecture*, probably the most philosophically written treatise on the subject, first suggested to me the idea of evolution in architecture ; Mr. Bond, who, in his great work, *Gothic Architecture in England*, has analysed that system with a completeness that must make all later writers his debtors ; and Mr. Jackson, whose book, *Reason in Architecture*, has been full of suggestion for me, and whose accounts of S. Mary's and Wadham have provided me with much information. I have to thank the Dean of Christ Church and the Wardens of Merton and New Colleges for permission to take photographs. Finally, I owe to Mr. R. W. Chapman, and to my friend Mr. C. R. L. Fletcher, most grateful acknowledgement of wise and helpful criticism in the manuscript stage of the book.

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