

**THE BRONZE FOUNDERS
OF NUREMBERG: PETER
VISCHER AND HIS FAMILY**

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The Bronze Founders of Nuremberg: Peter Vischer and His Family by Cecil Headlam

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CECIL HEADLAM

**THE BRONZE FOUNDERS
OF NUREMBERG: PETER
VISCHER AND HIS FAMILY**

**HANDBOOKS OF THE GREAT
CRAFTSMEN. EDITED BY
G. C. WILLIAMSON, Litt.D.**

PETER VISCHER



STEIN PHOTO.]

[FROM A DRAWING IN POSSESSION OF T. A. STEIN, NÜRNBERG

1. PORTRAIT OF PETER VISCHER

THE BRONZE FOUNDERS
OF NUREMBERG

PETER VISCHER
AND HIS
FAMILY

BY
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1906

PREFACE

THE Germans have by nature the gift of working in metal, and, among them, in the realms of bronze, Peter Vischer stands easily first. His position as a craftsman may, in fact, be compared with that held by his contemporary and fellow citizen, Albert Dürer, as an artist. The history of his works and of those of his house, have a peculiar interest to the student of art, inasmuch as they illustrate the gradual but easily traceable passage of the German craftsmen from the style of late Gothic to that of complete neopaganism, and from the school of the Northern painters and sculptors to that of the great Italian masters successively.

I speak of the works of Peter Vischer "and his house," because, in tracing this development, we have to take into consideration not only his works but also those of his father Hermann and of his sons, Hermann and Peter and Hans. The pendulum of criticism has indeed swung more than once since the Emperor Maximilian used to visit Peter Vischer's foundry in Nuremberg, and the questions as to what are actually the works of the Master and what position is to be assigned to him in the world of art, have been answered in more ways than one. For many years, owing partly to the ignorance of most people, and partly

PREFACE

no doubt to the greed of the few, the tendency was to attribute to this one famous craftsman the works of many. At one time almost any work of art in bronze to be found throughout the length and breadth of Germany was attributed to Peter Vischer, just as a Talleyrand or a Sydney Smith has had witticisms of every date and every quality fathered upon him.

From unreasoning praise, again, men passed to equally indiscriminating disparagement. Heideloff arose and wished the world to see in Peter Vischer nothing but the mere craftsman who put into bronze the designs and models of Adam Krafft or another. The admirable labours of Retberg, however, and of Dr. Lübke have shown how little foundation there is for this view, and, more recently, by the application of the principles of more exact art-criticism, Dr. Seeger, in his minute and loving study of Peter Vischer the younger, has vindicated the claim of the great craftsman's son to rank with, or even above, his father as the first and greatest exponent of Renaissance plastic-work in Germany.

To the two latter authors I have been continually and especially indebted whilst writing the present monograph. For the use of very many of the illustrations forming the volume to which Dr. Lübke contributed the text, my best thanks and acknowledgements are due to the publisher, Herr Stein, of Nuremberg.

C. H.

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