

“American and British Marbles”

Stone, An Illustrated Magazine

Devoted to Stone, Marble, Granite, Slate, Cement, Contracting and Building

Published by Frank W. Hoyt, New York

Vol. XXVII, No. 2, December 1903, pp. 112-123

This article begins:

“The marble business started in America in the latter part of the eighteenth century in New England. Most of the deposits in that part of the country are white marble, and this was at first used mainly for cemetery work. Eventually it found slow adoption for structural purposes, until, about the middle of the last century, when it leaped into favor and was widely used for public buildings, business structures, and trim for residences. Gradually deposits of variegated, mottled and colored marbles were found in this country, and these began to be used for interior and decorative purposes. But even after our decorative marbles were in the market, we continued to import large quantities of foreign marbles, while no attempt was made to invade the marts of the Old World with our own admirable products. During the past few years a more determined effort has been made by our architects and builders to substitute the native material for the product of European quarries....”

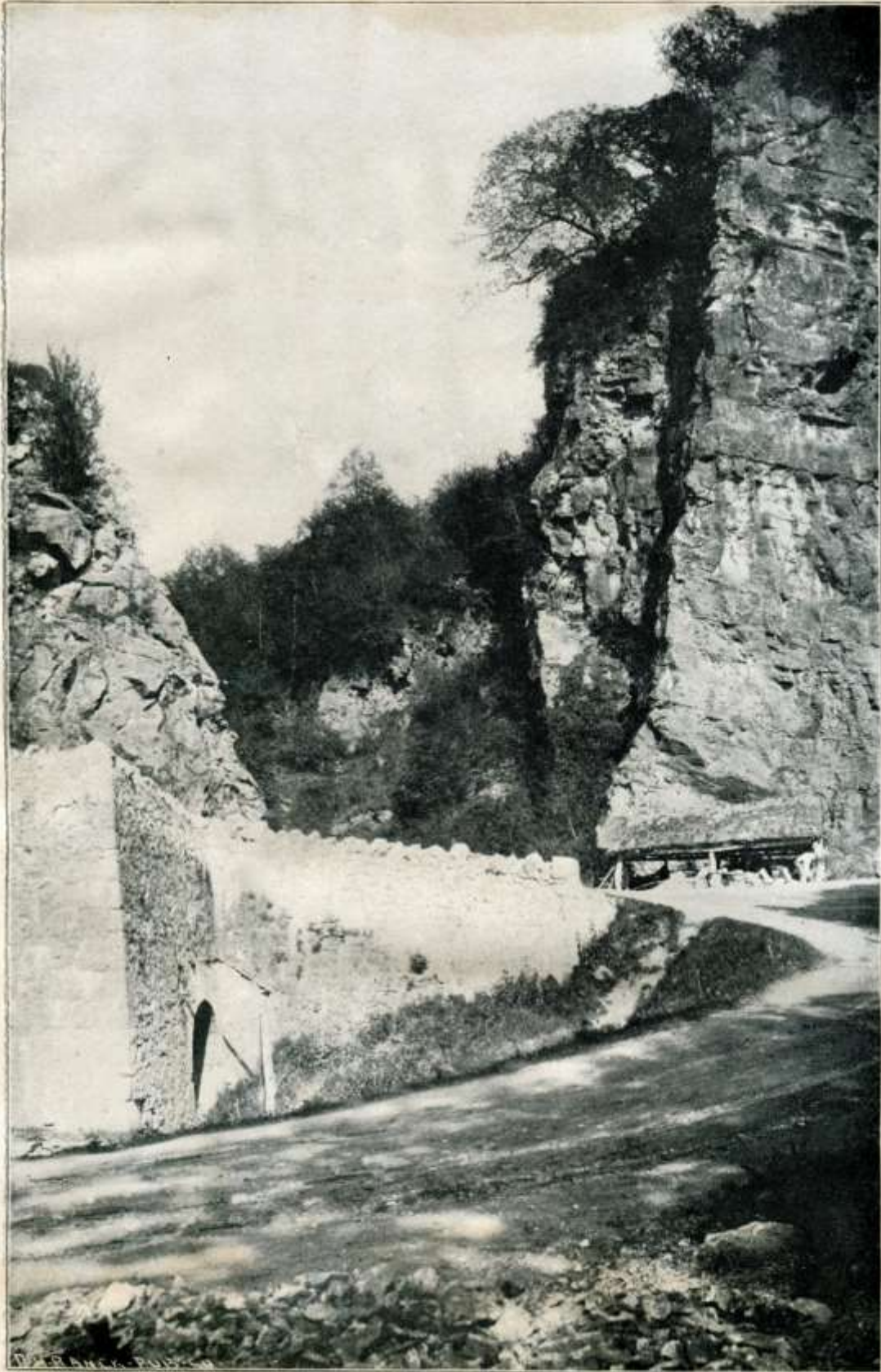
This article, which begins on the next page,
is presented on the Stone Quarries and Beyond web site.

<http://quarriesandbeyond.org/>

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February 2016



CHUDLEIGH MARBLE QUARRY, IN DEVONSHIRE.

(photo caption) "Chudleigh Marble Quarry, in Devonshire" (England)

STONE

VOL. XXVII.

DECEMBER.

NUMBER 2.

AMERICAN AND BRITISH MARBLES.

THE marble business started in America in the latter part of the eighteenth century in New England. Most of the deposits in that part of the country are white marble, and this was at first used mainly for cemetery work. Eventually it found slow adoption for structural purposes, until, about the middle of the last century, when it leaped into favor and was widely used for public buildings, business structures, and trim for residences. Gradually deposits of variegated, mottled and colored marbles were found in this country, and these began to be used for interior and decorative purposes. But even after our decorative marbles were in the market, we continued to import large quantities of foreign marbles, while no attempt was made to invade the marts of the Old World with our own admirable products. During the past few years a more determined effort has been made by our architects and builders to substitute the native material for the product of European quarries. The beautiful colored marbles of Tennessee and Georgia are in high favor, and the demand can scarcely be met for the fine clouded and variegated marbles of Vermont. With our superb verd antiques and rich greens from Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Georgia, we have almost completely crowded out the Alps Green and foreign verd antiques that were once so very popular here. In a recently opened Maryland quarry we have a cream white and a veined that are largely replacing Carrara and Cipollino in elaborate structures. This marble, it will be remembered, is being used in what is perhaps the most costly and magnificent private residence in America, the home of a Western multi-millionaire. The wide variety of Vermont clouded marbles are used constantly in fine buildings where, a few years ago, the veined Carrara would surely have found a place. When our greatest bourse, the New York Stock Exchange, was erected, the architects were universally applauded for using a product of the State, and the South Dover marble, for the interior panelling. Every season witnesses the adoption of some new native decorative material, until we now, even here in the East, draw from the quarries on the Pacific Coast. All of this means that we are no longer dependent upon the Old

World deposits of marble, although importations may still show an increase, owing to the unprecedented development of our building activities.

In view of what we are doing in this country with our native marble it is strange that a determined effort is not made to export them. This is particularly true when we consider that a welcome surely awaits them in many influential quarters. The editor of this magazine has received a number of inquiries as to American marbles from foreign dealers, and has sent



THE LIZARD, CORNWALL; CLIFFS OF OLIVE GREEN SERPENTINE.

some samples abroad. But good missionary work should be started and a regular campaign be carried on by the quarrymen themselves. Our colored marbles are generally sounder than the European ones, and although wages are very much higher here, we have made so large a use of machinery and have adopted such improved methods of quarrying, that we ought to be able to meet the prices of foreign competitors.

One Englishman of authority never fails to speak enthusiastically in favor of American marbles, and to predict a welcome for them abroad. This is Mr. Harry Hems, of Exeter, the leading ecclesiastical sculptor of England. It will be remembered that a couple of years ago Mr. Hems carried on a controversy with an anonymous critic as to American marble, and that the discussion was reprinted in these columns. Mr. Hems has just written a communication to "The Illustrated Carpenter and Builder" concerning the

(photo caption) "The Lizard, Cornwall: Cliffs of olive green serpentine." (England)



MARBLE CLIFFS AT BARRACOMBE BAY.

(photo caption) "Marble cliffs at Barracombe Bay."

British marbles, in which he goes out of his way to bestow high praise upon those of America. Mr. Hems says:

“‘A West Countryman’ asks whether the assertion commonly made by creditable authorities that Devonshire marble can worthily hold its own with the best of foreign varieties is correct. It may certainly be answered in the affirmative, although the time may and will probably come when the splendid and almost endless variety of colored marbles now raised in the United States of America, being better known than at present, will stand a good



A CORNISH GRANITE QUARRY.

chance of comparing favorably with anything Europe has, or is ever likely to produce. Of course, rich connoisseurs to whom money is no object, ‘go in’ for such luxuries as Egyptian red, old Rhondona Africano, Giallo Antico, green porphyry, Cipollino, and other rare and costly marbles. Still, I am doubtful whether Devonshire marbles, equally as rich in color and texture, although vastly more economical, are not raised almost daily in the neighborhoods of Torquay and Plymouth. The interiors of the churches of All Saints, Babbicombe (the late William Butterfield, architect), and St. John’s, Torquay (the late George Edmund Street, R. A., architect), are striking examples of what may be done with our local marbles, and I know few, if any, churches in Italy or elsewhere on the Continent in which marble plays more successful parts than it does in these edifices. Plymouth is the great centre for Devonshire marble, but Torquay possesses an advantage in respect to diversity of color. Plymouth, like Kilkenny, is said to be ‘paved with marble.’ The streets of the former are particularly beautiful after a smart

(photo caption) “A cornish granite quarry.” (Cornwall, England)



A MOOR IN CORNWALL STREWN WITH GRANITE BOULDERS.

(photo caption) "A moor in cornwall strewn with granite boulders." (Cornwall, England)

shower, when the rich red figure in the stone shows out at its best. Unfortunately, of late years, the use of marble for flagging has been much on the decrease in Plymouth. The black marble paving at Kilkenny is not, of course, seen to such advantage after rain as are the varied varieties used to so large an extent in the 'Queen City of the West.'

"Devonshire possesses at least four-and-twenty distinct varieties of marble, and these are to be found variously in the neighborhood of Plymouth—viz., at Oreston, Cattledoun, Pomphlett, Radford, Kitley, etc. At Ashburton, Ippelfen, Ogwell, Chudleigh, excellent marbles abound, whilst Yealmpton possesses a very fine green one. The choicest of all, perhaps, as already remarked, are in the neighborhood of Torquay, its quarries mostly situated amidst the wild romantic scenery of St. Mary Church and Babbicombe. Cornwall is famous for its gray granite, which is probably as good, in every respect, as is the granite of similar color raised upon Dartmoor, on the north-western fringe of Devonshire. The serpentine of Cornwall is a beautiful material. It abounds near the Lizard, but is very little quarried. In Somersetshire marble, but not in any great quantities, is raised in the Quantock Hills, and at Draycott. Dorset produces the well-known Purbeck, of which we find such numerous mediæval examples in the cathedrals of Winchester, Exeter, Westminster, St. Albans, Salisbury, Lincoln, Worcester, etc., and in hundreds of old parish churches all over England. I remember when, about thirty years ago, the late Sir G. Gilbert Scott, R. A., restored the interior of Salisbury Cathedral, all the old Purbeck shafts in the triforium were varnished instead of repolished!

"So much, then, for marble in the southwestern counties. Going a step further, Derbyshire is a great centre for English colored marbles—the Derbyshire black and Derbyshire gray fossil are both favorites, and so is Dove marble. The black comes from the neighborhood of Ashford, Bakewell, and Wirksworth; the gray from Flagg and Sheldon; bird's-eye and mussel marbles are also quarried in that county, and an excellent purple-veined marble is raised in Ricklow Dale. In Wales we get the green Anglesea marble, but this is very hard, so difficult to get the saw through, indeed, that I have had a couple of big blocks of it lying untouched in my yard for these twenty years and more past. I have already mentioned Kilkenny black. Ireland abounds with splendid marbles, and it is only the happy-go-lucky characteristics of the mass of its ever-charming and large-hearted inhabitants that prevent these being better known and as largely used as they deserve to be. The red marble raised in West Cork, and the Galway marbles (especially its green varieties) are all very handsome. Near Waterford, in Donegal, and many other places in the sister isle, splendid marbles abound, but to enlarge upon them would require a column by itself."

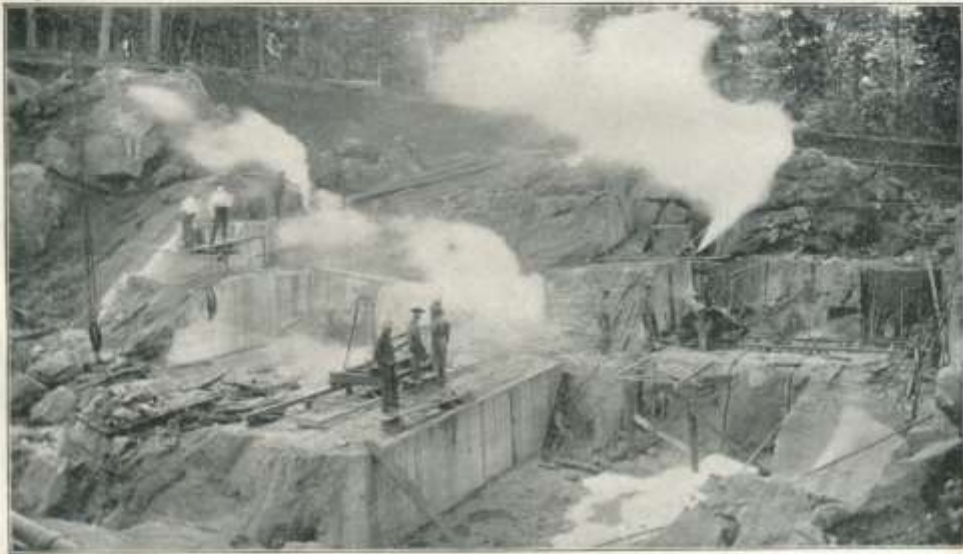
In view of Mr. Hems's generous praise of the American marbles, it is only courteous to endorse his words as to the British quarry products. How does it happen that we have gone so freely to the quarries of Norway, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Greece and Africa for our foreign marbles, but have passed by those of Great Britain, with one single exception, to be noted later? Samples of the various British marbles in this



A WEATHERED CRAG OF CORNISH GRANITE.

(photo caption) "A weathereed crag of Cornish granite." (Cornwall, England)

office justify all of the praise that has been bestowed upon them. The Devon marbles are of good texture and of attractive and harmonizing colors. Among the darker stones suitable for church memorial work, and for mouldings and trim, there is nothing more beautiful than the Ashburton. This is of black mottled with various tints of mouse color (for lack of a more exact term) with bold veins of white and vivid pink. Clouded yellow has a background of light mouse or gray (an indefinable but most beautiful color) with mottlings of pinkish white and brilliant orange yellow. Clouded Pink and Mountain



A TENNESSEE MARBLE QUARRY, SHOWING EQUIPMENT.

Rose are what their names would indicate, excellent in their markings and attractive in effect. Purbeck is scarcely what we should call a marble in this country, but rather a fossil limestone. One can imagine it would be effective for certain classes of interior church work, but there would be little place for it here. Others of the English marbles have not quite enough "life" to suit the American taste. The exceptions that we noted in speaking of our use of British marbles were in the case of those from the Irish quarries. With these we are more familiar. The Kilkenny black is as rich and lustrous as that from Belgium, which is better known. We should remark in passing, however, that no black or black and white that we have ever seen will at all compare with specimens taken from the vicinity of Dalton, Ga. There are also in the office of *STONE* some unusually fine samples of black and white mottled and veined, and black and gold, from Mexico. But this is aside from the subject.

There is also the rich red Irish fossil marble, finely brecciated, but unusually sound, owing to the firmness of the cementing material. But the queen of all the Irish marbles is the Royal Irish Green, from Galway, in Con-

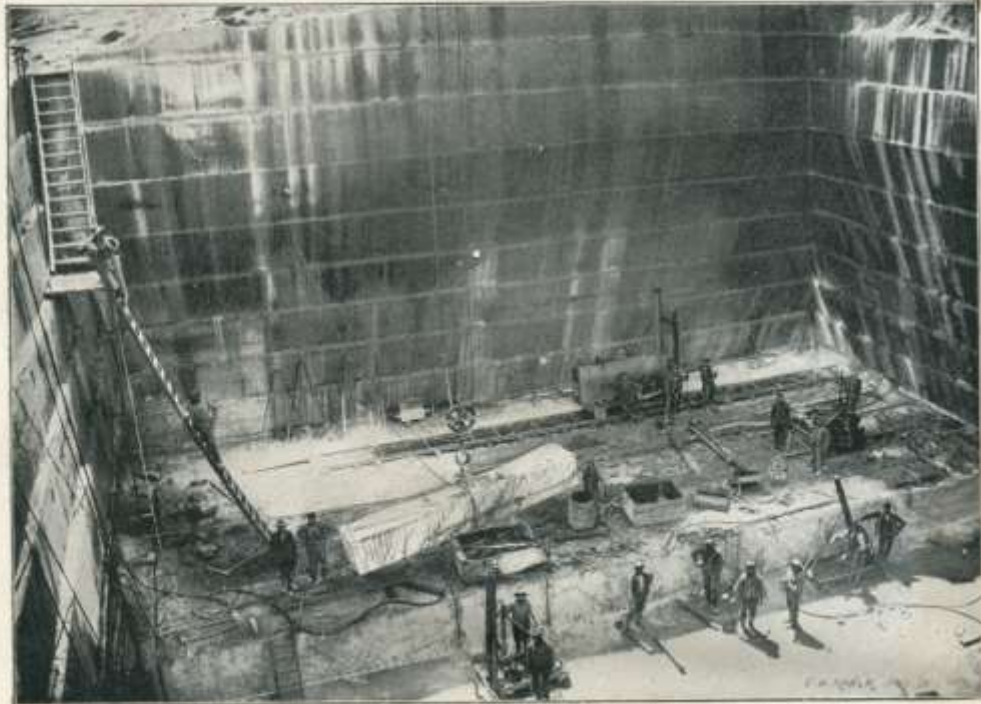
(photo caption) "A Tennessee marble quarry, showing equipment." (Tennessee, USA)



MARBLE QUARRY IN GALWAY, IRELAND, SHOWING EQUIPMENT.

(photo caption) “Marble quarry in Galway, Ireland, showing equipment.”

nemara. While we have no exact facts at hand bearing on the subject, we are inclined to believe that a more generous use has been made of this in America than in England. It has been employed in some of the most notable marble decorative work to be found on this continent. The superb columns and pilasters in the University Club and the large columns in the Library of Columbia University are famous among New York's many great art works in stone. There has recently been finished entirely in Irish Green what is undoubtedly one of the most magnificent banking offices in the country. This



A GEORGIA MARBLE QUARRY WITH ITS CLEAN-CUT WALLS.

is the office of the United States Mortgage and Trust Company, on Cedar street, New York. Clinton & Russell were the architects, and R. C. Fisher & Co. did the marble work. There are six large columns in the center that are, unfortunately, of scagliola, but the smaller columns, the pilasters, doorways, wainscoting and counters are of this truly royal material. It ranges in color from the light greens, almost verging on yellow, to the deep, dark, lustrous greens that suggest in turn the emerald, the depths of the sea and the moss of the forest covert. This stone is one of the few that, because of their unique beauty, are scarcely dependent upon ordinary transportation facilities. The marble has to be hauled in ox wagons for miles over the rough Galway hills. The other Irish marbles cannot stand such an expense. When the Emerald Isle is fairly equipped with railroads, the products of her quarries will be more frequently seen in the markets of the world.

(photo caption) "A Georgia marble quarry with its clean-cut walls." (Georgia, USA)



WIRE SAW AT WORK IN THE GALWAY MARBLE QUARRY.

(photo caption) "Wire saw at work in the Galway marble quarry." (Galway, Ireland)