

“American Cemeteries are Pagan – Impressions of a Foreign Visitor”

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Mr. A. R. Ross and Mr. John Ruhl for the obverse which they submitted together. This exhibit was supplemented by a rare collection of coins and medals loaned by the American Numismatic and Acological Society.

The judgment of the placing committee was commended by every one who felt the harmony of the rooms, and too much can not be said in praise and gratitude to the sculptors who, with infinitely hard labor, brought together for the first time a collection of representative American work. We have too long been content with knowing almost nothing of what our sculptors could do and how their works compared. That Mr. Ward, Mr. Warner, Mr. Bissell, who sent his bronze sitting statue of Abraham de Peyster, and Mr. Adams could do great things we knew, but to have these things brought together in a forestry of green, to hear the music of the fountain, to rest on the low marble settees and realize that all this splendid work is ours to claim and to encourage,—this was what filled every lover of art with a gratitude which the exhibitions of painting have not inspired for years. Large works of sculpture are produced so slowly that the public is in no danger of growing too accustomed to this pleasure. Such an exhibition cannot be repeated again for four or five years, and in the meanwhile we will be forced to content ourselves with small exhibitions of sculpture in connection with some other society.

Perhaps the best comparisons that can be made to this exhibit in the United States are the beautiful old New Orleans cemeteries where the massive old vaults above ground are like walls in Italian gardens, covered with vines, shadowed with crowding foliage and surrounded with statues. And this leads us anew to wondering why we have combined landscape gardening and monumental art so long without realizing the fitness and even the necessity of keeping nature and sculpture together within doors and without. *Marguerite Tracy.*

American Cemeteries are Pagan.

IMPRESSIONS OF A FOREIGN VISITOR.

The impression was deeply marked upon my mind when two years ago I first had the opportunity of looking through several American cemeteries and was intensified the other day when I spent an afternoon in Greenwood. I have seen American cemeteries in New England, around Chicago, in many inland places, as well as those which are dotted around Brooklyn on Long Island, and I speak of Greenwood as being, not so much a fair specimen of them all, as rather a model, typical of that which the other cemeteries aspire to be.

Let me say first, that in all respects except the one of which I shall speak in hostile criticism, Ameri-

can cemeteries compare most favorably with those of the old world. It appears that in their inception much more ground was available for them than we have to spare for such purposes on the Eastern side of the Atlantic, and great advantage has been taken of this extensive area and of all natural inequalities of surface which break the monotony of a landscape; whilst more has been done probably in the way of artificially produced hills and valleys with lakelets along them to improve the general appearance of the place. Of foliage there is abundance; which we all understand to be a most important consideration in a cemetery, both for the shade which it affords to those who visit the place and for the hygienic chemical action which all trees exert so largely, particularly in a burial ground. I have much admiration for the slopes and banks, green as in the Emerald Isle, for the substantial granite which forms the facades of the vaults, and for the great variety of cenotaph and sarcophagus, pyramid and mausoleum, some of which are ornate even to worthiness of their title, and for many blocks which were wrought into their shape with reason and now boldly bearing honored names.

The arrangement and the nomenclature of the roads and paths in these cemeteries are admirable. How can I quote from them? "Landscape Avenue," "Forest" and "Woodlawn," in endless variety and across these avenues are the paths named

after every blossom that blooms upon English hedgerows and flowerets that sparkle on prairie breadth or mountain side in spring, whose very names suggest odors of sweetness and thoughts of peace which are very well inspired in these surroundings. The cypress and mistletoe, willow and palm, and other indications more sombre are found here also, but amid all these, which constitute the admirable natu-



CROSS IN MEMORY OF STEPHEN CLARE.

ral environment, there stand those stones which to my mind are evidences of the lack of Christian thought and Christian sentiment which surely should be found around the abodes of the dead.



THE MAUDE CROSS.

I have no difficulty in proving this. I stood upon a hilltop which is adorned by the Morse tomb, in itself a thing of beauty, though of composite architectural character. Around and within view from that hill-top were probably more than a thousand various memorial stones, and among them all I counted but four crosses which surmounted other erections, one cross sawn out in a headstone, and only one Latin cross pure and simple.

There is no lack of work or wealth spent upon these tombs. The material is excellent. They are enriched with moldings and panels, bordered with banners and worked in mosaic with shells, but of all the best of them I do not hesitate to say that their character is pagan. I think there are more obelisks than any other order of tomb, and who that knows the origin of the obelisk as a memorial can look at it without a blush of shame. My conviction is that those who use the obelisk never have thought of what they were doing, or they would certainly not have done, as can be seen to be repeatedly done, embellished the apex of the obelisk. There are obelisks here whose point finishes in a heavy molding, or is surmounted with a cap, or has an angel standing on it. One such unfortunate creature spreading his wings as if attempting flight, but with wings so small they would not have lifted his arms if they could fly. Where the obelisk has not suffered attempt at adornment at its apex, it is stood on a base out of all character with itself. On any base one can justify space enough to place an inscription, but most of these consist of more bases than one, all over done with conventional molding. Returning to the point of the obelisk, some are finished in tasseled drapery, others are carved, surmounted by emblematic figures, have urns with flame showing, and one, perhaps most offensive thing of all, was paneled and carved all over.

I observe also that the ledger shaped tomb appears to have no admirers among your monumental masons, for I suppose that they are the sinners

above all who deal in America in the matter of monumental taste. There are also but few broken columns, which I venture to commend, as to my mind to erect a broken column despoils irreverence. What should be done then? Surely the answer is simple. The cross is the emblem of Christian faith. The more simple it is in its character, the less it detracts from its original significance. In the course of ages the cross has been used by various nations of people and in various forms, all of which forms lend themselves now with propriety to memorial uses.

The cross to John Augustus Smith is an Iona cross, that early settlement on Scotland's western coast where the monks of the sixth century founded a settlement and erected their cross, which still stands, though this pattern is very much more worn than might be imagined from this modern representation of it.

The cross to Alfred Crawshay is of another order, known to us as a rustic cross, but all the details of this were suggested by his widow for his memorial and it is certainly a unique design; more than that, it is a unique erection. No two were ever made of them. The rock hewn base is represented with some cut flowers which are supposed to have been distributed upon it, whilst from the interstices grow ferns. The cross is the imitation of rustic timber supposed to have been stood in its base until it had been grown around and entwined with luxurious passion flowers. The head and one arm of it carry a crown of thorns carved in exact imitation of the original. The passion flowers have entwined themselves through and among the thorns and spread upon the arms and head of the cross.

This is illustrated in the International Edition of this issue.

Surely these are superior in many ways, and are worthy the attention of those who have much to say in deciding what tomb shall be raised over the disciples of Jesus Christ in America.

Another evidence of lack of Christian sentiment in the cemeteries is the exceeding scarceness of even



CROSS IN MEMORY OF JOHN A. SMITH.

an attempt at Gothic shaping. There stands in Greenwood a row of five in one large plot, so bald in their outline that they might have been meant for barrier posts. On one of the larger headstones the adornment consists of a soup bowl vase. Headstones which with us are generally finished with a lance head, sharper or blunter, in America are but roughly rounded. Where carved adornment is attempted it is generally limited to stiff leaf foliage, the earliest kind of carving which Gothic builders did, and from which they wholly delivered themselves in the thirteenth century.

Concerning inscriptions, you largely adopt raised letters, which are very plain speaking, and which if protected in a panel may be durable, but on many of your tombs there is no surrounding protection and the letters are knocked off. I would suggest the consideration of lead letters, finished flush with the marble surface, said to be more imperishable than the marble and which are shown on all tombs of which I give you illustrations. They are in general use in England on all marble tombs.

London.

Halford L. Mills.

Mosaics.

Mosaic work has hitherto been comparatively little known in this western hemisphere although an art of great antiquity; and much used in the interior decoration of ancient buildings. At the present time, however, considerable work of the kind is being introduced into our large office and other public buildings, which should make the following abstract of a lecture on Mosaics by Director A. H. Griffith, of the Detroit Museum of Art, of particular interest. The illustration herewith shows a piece of ancient mosaic work:

"Aside from the ties of affection which bind the human family together, there is that love for the beautiful, more or less developed, which delights in personal adornment or the beautifying of the home and temple which every family and people create to their heroes, their gods or their religions. To this love of adornment we owe the splendid homes of Detroit and every other city. To this love of the beautiful and magnificent we are indebted for the palaces of the old world. To the infinite desire of every nation to adore their heroes and gods, the people of today are enabled to look with wonder and surprise upon the temples, cathedrals and churches which are the pride and glory of every country.

"The desire to excel, which is uppermost in almost every human breast, brought the fine arts and the industrial arts to the highest degree of perfection in very early times, so that while this is an age of

invention, of steam and electricity, yet for our highest ideals in art and artistic works we study the antique.

"Inlay work is frequently mistaken for mosaic, and in a sense

it is of a similar character. The inlaying of furniture with pearl and ivory is often spoken of as mosaic, in fact the earliest specimens which we find preserved in the Louvre and British Museums are of this character, and show pieces of ivory perforated in which are in-



serted bits of colored glass and gems. This, however, is more like cloisonne. There is a vast amount of this work both inside and out on the famous Taj Mahal.

"A mosaic is the fitting together many small pieces of marble, opaque glass or other materials so as to form a pattern which may be more or less elaborate, according to the use for which it is intended.

"The Egyptians seem to have understood the work. The finest specimen in the British Museum which is entirely of glass is a small tablet only about three-eighths of an inch square, possibly used as a setting in a ring, on which is represented the sacred hawk, every feather on the bird's wing being reproduced with a marvelous attention to detail, colors and even tints, each quite distinct but so small that it requires a strong magnifying glass to distinguish the different parts.

"A famous artist in mosaic experimented until he discovered how it was possible to accomplish such a work. He did it in this way. Numbers of long sticks of various colored glass were arranged in such a way that their ends produced the figure of a hawk. Other sticks of blue glass were fastened about so as to form the back ground. The bundle when looked at endwise presented the picture of a hawk with a blue background, but of course on a large scale. This bundle was then carefully heated until it became one mass, and while in this softened state was drawn out as they draw wire until it

Photo captions of the photographs included in the article above entitled, “American Cemeteries are Pagan”:

“Cross in Memory of Stephen Clare.”

“The Maude Cross.”

“Cross in Memory of John A. Smith.”