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MEDIEVAL SCULPTURE
IN FRANCE



Frontispiece. ROMANS. *S. Barnard. West porch—Two Apostles* (p. 183)

MEDIEVAL SCULPTURE IN FRANCE

BY
ARTHUR GARDNER
M.A., F.S.A.



Auxerre

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CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	page xiii
Chapter I. <i>Beginnings</i>	I
II. <i>Southern Schools of Romanesque</i>	31
I. LANGUEDOC	37
II. BURGUNDY	84
III. AQUITAINE OR THE SOUTH-WEST	129
IV. AUVERGNE	149
V. PROVENCE	162
III. <i>The Northern Schools and the Beginnings of Gothic</i>	184
IV. <i>The Thirteenth Century</i>	237
V. <i>The Fourteenth Century</i>	356
VI. <i>The Last Gothic Sculpture or the Franco-Flemish School</i>	388
<i>Note on Saint-Denis Statues</i>	478
<i>Index</i>	481

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ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES

<i>Frontispiece.</i>	Romans. <i>S. Barnard. West porch—Two Apostles</i>	
I.	Toulouse. <i>S. Sernin. Angel</i>	To face page 46
II.	Toulouse. <i>Museum. "Signs"</i>	47
III.	Moissac. <i>Tympanum of porch</i>	58
IV.	A. Moissac. <i>Trumeau—Prophet</i>	59
	B. Beaulieu. <i>Trumeau—Prophet</i>	
V.	Beaulieu (Corrèze). <i>Tympanum—Last Judgment</i>	68
VI.	Beaulieu. <i>Tympanum—Monsters of Hell</i>	69
VII.	Carennac. <i>Tympanum—Christ and Apostles</i>	70
VIII.	Cahors. <i>Tympanum—Ascension</i>	71
IX.	Cluny. <i>Capitals</i>	96
	A. <i>Arts (?)</i>	
	B. <i>Autumn (?)</i>	
X.	Vézelay. <i>Capital in nave</i>	97
XI.	Vézelay. <i>West doorway (from narthex into nave)</i>	106
XII.	Vézelay. <i>Tympanum—Pentecost</i>	107
XIII.	Autun. <i>Tympanum of west door—Last Judgment</i>	110
XIV.	Perrecey-les-Forges. <i>Tympanum of west door</i>	111
XV.	Avallon. <i>Detail of west doorway</i>	124
XVI.	A. Souvigny. <i>Fragment set in west wall</i>	125
	B. S. Menoux. <i>Fragment of screen</i>	
	C. Autun. <i>S. Andrew from shrine of S. Lazare</i>	
XVII.	Parthenay-le-Vieux. <i>Constantine</i>	132
XVIII.	Saintes. <i>S. Marie des Dames. West doorway</i>	133
XIX.	Angoulême. <i>Façade</i>	134
XX.	Angoulême. <i>Façade: Lateral tympanum—Mission of the Apostles</i>	135

XXI. Aulnay. <i>South transept</i>	To face page 140
XXII. Aulnay. <i>West doorway</i>	141
A. <i>General</i>	
B. <i>Virtues and Vices, Zodiac, etc.</i>	
XXIII. Poitiers. <i>Notre Dame la Grande. Façade</i>	144
XXIV. Poitiers. <i>Notre Dame la Grande. Detail of façade— Visitation, Nativity, Baptism, etc.</i>	145
XXV. Clermont-Ferrand. <i>Notre Dame du Port. South doorway— Majesty, Magi, Baptism</i>	162
XXVI. S. Gilles. <i>Porch</i>	163
XXVII. Arles. <i>S. Trophime. Cloister: East walk</i>	170
XXVIII. Arles. <i>S. Trophime. Cloister—S. Trophimus, etc.</i>	171
XXIX. Arles. <i>S. Trophime. Porch</i>	176
XXX. Arles. <i>S. Trophime. Porch—S. Stephen, Apostles, the Lost</i>	177
XXXI. Arles. <i>S. Trophime. Porch</i>	178
A. <i>S. Trophimus and Apostles</i>	
B. <i>SS. Paul and Andrew</i>	
XXXII. Arles. <i>S. Trophime. Porch: Tympanum—Majesty, Apostles, Abraham's bosom, etc.</i>	179
XXXIII. La Charité-sur-Loire. <i>Tympanum—Ascension, Magi, Pre- sentation</i>	190
XXXIV. A. Beauvais. <i>S. Étienne. Tympanum of south door</i>	191
B. Bourges. <i>S. Ursin. Tympanum signed by Girauldus</i>	
XXXV. Bourges. <i>South doorway</i>	196
XXXVI. Bourges. <i>North doorway</i>	197
A. <i>Tympanum—Magi, Annunciation, Visitation</i>	
B. <i>Foliage scroll on lintel</i>	
XXXVII. Bourges. <i>South door: Statues</i>	198
XXXVIII. Le Mans. <i>South porch: Statues—S. Peter and Old Testa- ment personages</i>	199
XXXIX. Le Mans. <i>South porch: Tympanum</i>	200
XL. Chartres. <i>West doorways: "Portail Royal"</i>	201
XLI. Chartres. <i>West doors</i>	202
XLII. Chartres. <i>West porch: Right door: Tympanum—Madonna and Nativity scenes</i>	203

XLIII. Chartres. <i>West porch</i>	To face page 204
A. <i>Central door—Elders, etc.</i>	
B. <i>Right door—Dialectic, Aristotle, Gemini, etc.;</i> (below on capital) <i>Betrayal, Entry into Jeru-</i> <i>salem, Entombment</i>	
XLIV. Chartres. <i>West porch: Left tympanum—Ascension.</i>	205
XLV. Chartres. <i>West porch: Central tympanum—The Christ</i>	208
XLVI. Étampes. <i>South doorway</i>	209
XLVII. S. Loup-de-Naud. <i>Porch</i>	218
XLVIII. A. Angers. <i>Statues of Cathedral porch</i>	219
B. S. Loup-de-Naud. <i>Porch—S. Peter, etc.</i>	
XLIX. Paris. <i>Notre Dame. Portail S. Anne: Tympanum</i>	222
L. Senlis. <i>Tympanum—Death, Resurrection and Coronation of</i> <i>the Virgin</i>	223
LI. S. Benoît-sur-Loire. <i>Tympanum of north door—Majesty,</i> <i>Evangelists; Translation of relics of S. Benedict</i>	228
LII. Sens. <i>West porch</i>	229
A. <i>Tympanum of left door—Baptist scenes, etc.</i>	
B. <i>Plinth of central door—Bestiary subjects</i>	
LIII. Chartres. <i>North porch</i>	244
LIV. Chartres. <i>North porch: Central tympanum—Death, Resur-</i> <i>rection and Coronation of the Virgin</i>	245
LV. Chartres. <i>North porch: Central door—Old Testament types</i>	246
LVI. Chartres. <i>North porch: Right door</i>	247
A. <i>Balaam, Queen of Sheba, Solomon</i>	
B. <i>Jesus son of Sirach, Judith, Joseph</i>	
LVII. Chartres. <i>North porch: Left tympanum—Nativity, Magi</i>	248
LVIII. Chartres. <i>North porch: Left door—Visitation, Daniel</i>	249
LIX. Chartres. <i>South porch: Central tympanum—Last Judgment</i>	254
LX. Chartres. <i>South porch: Right tympanum—Stories of SS.</i> <i>Martin and Nicholas</i>	255
LXI. Chartres. <i>South porch: Right door—Confessors: SS. Martin,</i> <i>Jerome, Gregory</i>	258
LXII. Chartres. <i>South porch: Left door—Martyrs: SS. Theodore,</i> <i>Stephen</i>	259

LXIII.	Paris. <i>Notre Dame. West front: Left tympanum—Resurrection and Coronation of the Virgin</i>	To face page 270
LXIV.	Paris. <i>Notre Dame. West doors</i>	271
	A. <i>Central tympanum—Last Judgment</i>	
	B. <i>Reliefs from plinth below statues</i>	
LXV.	Amiens. <i>West porches</i>	272
LXVI.	Amiens. <i>West porches</i>	273
	A. <i>Left trumeau—S. Firmin</i>	
	B. <i>Central trumeau—“Le Beau Dieu”</i>	
LXVII.	Amiens. <i>West porches: Left buttress—Prophets and local saints</i>	276
LXVIII.	Amiens. <i>West porches: Right bay—Annunciation, Visitation</i>	277
LXIX.	Reims. <i>West porches: Right bay—Precursors</i>	290
LXX.	Reims. <i>North transept: Portail S. Sixte</i>	291
LXXI.	Reims. <i>North transept: Tympanum—Job, Life of S. Rémi</i>	294
LXXII.	Reims. <i>North transept: Judgment porch: Tympanum</i>	295
LXXIII.	Reims. <i>West porches: Central bay—Visitation</i>	298
LXXIV.	Reims. <i>West porches: Left bay—S. Nicaise between angels</i>	299
LXXV.	Reims. <i>West porches: Central bay—Presentation</i>	306
LXXVI.	A. Paris. <i>Notre Dame. North transept—Madonna</i>	307
	B. Reims. <i>West porches: Central trumeau—Madonna</i>	
LXXVII.	Amiens. <i>South transept door: Tympanum—Apostles; Legend of S. Honoré</i>	316
LXXVIII.	Rouen. <i>Portail aux Libraires: Part of tympanum—General resurrection</i>	317
LXXIX.	Bourges. <i>West porches: Central tympanum—Last Judgment</i>	320
LXXX.	Bourges. <i>West porches: Central tympanum—Heaven</i>	321
LXXXI.	Auxerre. <i>West porch: Right bay</i>	324
LXXXII.	Villeneuve l’Archevêque	325
	A. <i>South door</i>	
	B. <i>South door—David, Solomon and Prophet</i>	
LXXXIII.	Villeneuve l’Archevêque. <i>Annunciation and Sibyl (?)</i>	326
LXXXIV.	Semur-en-Auxois. <i>North door: Tympanum—Months; Legend of S. Thomas</i>	327

LXXXV.	S. Thibault. <i>West door—Bishop and Abbess</i>	To face page 328
LXXXVI.	Bordeaux. <i>Cathedral. North door</i>	329
LXXXVII.	A. Bordeaux. <i>Cathedral. North door: Tympanum—Last Judgment</i>	336
	B. Rampillon. <i>West door—Months</i>	
LXXXVIII.	Bordeaux. <i>S. Seurin. Porch statues</i>	337
	A. <i>Church and Apostles</i>	
	B. <i>Apostles and Synagogue</i>	
LXXXIX.	S. Père-sous-Vézelay. <i>Gable of façade</i>	356
XC.	Auxerre. <i>West porch: Left bay—Creation; Cain and Abel</i>	357
XCI.	Auxerre. <i>West porch</i>	364
	A. <i>Left bay—Creation</i>	
	B. <i>Right bay—Judgment of Solomon</i>	
XCII.	Paris. <i>Notre Dame. Reliefs on apse chapels</i>	365
	A. <i>Assumption</i>	
	B. <i>Legend of Theophilus</i>	
XCIII.	A. Paris. <i>Louvre. Madonna</i>	378
	B. South Kensington. <i>V. and A. Museum. Madonna said to have come from Écouen</i>	
XCIV.	Carcassonne. <i>S. Nazaire. Statues in choir</i>	379
XCV.	Rouen. <i>S. Maclou. Tympanum of west door—Last Judgment</i>	396
XCVI.	Rouen. <i>Cathedral. Central door of west front: Tympanum—Tree of Jesse</i>	397
XCVII.	A. Paris. <i>S. Denis. Marie de Bourbon (d. 1401)</i>	408
	B. Dijon. <i>Chartreuse de Champmol. Madonna by Jean de Marville (from a cast)</i>	
XCVIII.	Dijon. <i>Chartreuse de Champmol. Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, by Claus Sluter (from a cast)</i>	409
XCIX.	Dijon. <i>Chartreuse de Champmol. Calvary, Isaiah and Moses by Sluter</i>	412
	C. Dijon. <i>Chartreuse de Champmol. Calvary, Jeremiah and Zechariah by Sluter</i>	413
CI.	Tonnerre. <i>Hospital. Entombment</i>	422
CII.	Chaource. <i>Entombment</i>	423

CIII. A. Troyes. <i>S. Urbain. Madonna</i>	To face page 434
B. Paris. <i>Louvre. Madonna from Rouvroy</i>	
CIV. Troyes. <i>S. Jean. Visitation</i>	435
CV. Brou. <i>Retable of Seven Joys of our Lady</i>	45 ⁰
CVI. Brou. <i>Choir from east: Jubé, stalls, tombs of Philibert and Margaret of Austria</i>	45 ^I
CVII. Brou.	454
A. <i>Canopy of tomb of Margaret of Austria—S. Catherine</i>	
B. <i>Support of tomb of Philibert—Virtue (?)</i>	
CVIII. Brou. <i>Detail of canopy of Margaret of Austria—S. Barbara, etc.</i>	455
CIX. Rouen. <i>Cathedral. Tomb of the Cardinals d'Amboise</i>	468
CX. Brou. <i>Stalls</i>	469
A. <i>Moses</i>	
B. <i>S. Jerome</i>	
CXI. Amiens. <i>Stalls</i>	47 ⁰
CXII. Amiens. <i>Stalls</i>	47 ^I
A. <i>S. Anne and education of Mary; Presentation of Mary in Temple</i>	
B. <i>The wedding at Cana</i>	

PREFACE

SO far no comprehensive textbook on the history of the development of French medieval sculpture has appeared in the English language¹. It might have been thought that such books as Ruskin's *Bible of Amiens*, or more recently M. and E. Marriage's well-illustrated *Sculptures of Chartres Cathedral* would have stirred up more interest in this fascinating subject, but the failures of the Gothic Revival of the nineteenth century seem to have cast some discredit on the students of medieval art, and we have only recently learnt to take a wider view and study the real qualities of this great art movement without allowing its vital achievements to be obscured by artificial taste or false sentiment. Our universities are at last beginning to give some attention to art history and to realise that other movements besides that of ancient Greece are worth attention, and there may, therefore, be room for such an attempt as is made in the present volume to draw up an outline scheme of classification and to describe the gradual evolution of style.

Even in French the only comprehensive account of the sculpture of the whole medieval period is that contained in Michel's *Histoire de l'Art*, and as this takes the form of a number of articles spread over eight or ten substantial volumes dealing with the whole of Christian art, it is not in the most convenient form for the average student. M. Aubert has recently published a brief sketch entitled *La Sculpture*

¹ Since this was written, while the present work has been in the press, three sumptuous and expensive volumes have been published by the Pegasus Press of Florence in several languages, each dealing with a part of our subject. French Romanesque Sculpture is dealt with by P. Deschamps, the beginnings of Gothic Sculpture 1140–1225 by M. Aubert, and the Sculpture of the great Gothic Cathedrals 1225–1270 by P. Vitry.

française du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance, which is an admirable summary of the orthodox views illustrated with some fifty beautiful plates, but as the text dealing with our period only runs to forty pages the author has not been able to go into much detail or to discuss any disputed points. Viollet-le-Duc's article on Sculpture in his famous *Dictionary* is a remarkable piece of pioneer research, and extraordinarily good for the period at which it was written, but line drawings are insufficient for a study of sculpture, and naturally much progress has been made in our knowledge since his day. The real background upon which the active modern school of French antiquaries have based their studies is the magnificent collection of casts in the Trocadéro Museum in Paris. A guide to it was published by the late curator C. Enlart entitled *Le Musée de Sculpture comparée du Trocadéro*, and there is also an illustrated catalogue by him and J. Roussel. Good picture postcards of the most important objects are obtainable, and are very useful to the student. The great album by MM. Vitry and Brière, *Documents de Sculpture française*, contains 140 plates illustrating 940 separate objects, serves as a museum reference for those unable to work in the Trocadéro and includes many things not in that collection, but the photographs are accompanied by the briefest of notes with no attempt to do more than assign each exhibit to its own century.

A few years ago a book by Dr Julius Baum appeared in English, entitled *Romanesque Architecture in France*, and contained a magnificent series of photographs including a fair proportion of sculpture detail. More recently the American, Prof. A. Kingsley Porter, has published his great work on the *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads*, which has raised great controversies, and which will be frequently referred to when dealing with the earlier period. We shall be forced to discuss various questions raised by Prof. Porter in due course, but whatever view we take of his conclusions, the vast series of photographs he has published almost form a corpus of twelfth-century sculpture in south-

western Europe, and are an invaluable help to the student. It is a pity that the very magnitude of the work has necessitated its being sold at a price which puts it beyond the reach of the ordinary student.

For the iconography, or study of the subjects treated by the medieval sculptor and the change in his religious outlook as time went on, we have Emile Mâle's delightful series of volumes, *L'Art religieux du XII^e Siècle en France*, *L'Art religieux du XIII^e Siècle*, and *L'Art religieux de la fin du Moyen Age en France*. These books have become classics, and have formed the basis of all subsequent works on the subject, and the "XIII^e Siècle" volume, which appeared first, has been translated into English. M. Mâle has treated this side of our subject so thoroughly and clearly that it will be unnecessary to repeat his thesis in the following pages, and all we shall have to do is to give the minimum required to understand the sculptures illustrated and described, and to follow the general course of development. L. Bréhier's *L'Art chrétien* should also be consulted on this subject.

For the records from medieval sources of the building of eleventh- and twelfth-century churches, on which the dating of the monuments of this all-important period must to a large extent be based, Victor Mortet's *Recueil de Textes relatifs à l'Histoire de l'Architecture en France au Moyen Age, XI^e et XII^e Siècles*, is an exceedingly valuable work of reference, which has been much drawn upon by subsequent scholars and writers on the subject. Paul Deschamps has also edited a second volume dealing with the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, left unfinished by M. Mortet at his death. Comte R. de Lasteyrie's valuable works, *L'Architecture religieuse en France à l'époque romane*, and *L'Architecture religieuse en France à l'époque gothique* contain chapters dealing with the sculpture, but necessarily rather briefly in such a position.

Although there is a dearth of general works on our complete subject, there are a number of important treatises dealing with portions of it. Most modern criticism of the twelfth-century sculpture is based on

the masterly treatise by Comte R. de Lasteyrie, *Études sur la Sculpture française au Moyen Age*. Mlle L. Pillion has written on *Les Sculpteurs français du XIII^e Siècle*, Abbé Terret on *La Sculpture bourguignonne aux XII^e et XIII^e Siècles*, besides an interesting article on “La Sculpture bourguignonne au XII^e Siècle” in the *Millénaire de Cluny* of 1910. A. Humbert has described *La Sculpture sous les Ducs de Bourgogne*, and R. Koechlin and J. J. Marquet de Vasselot *La Sculpture à Troyes et dans la Champagne méridionale au XVI^e Siècle*.

A. Marignan tried to establish an impossibly late date for the monuments described in his *Histoire de la Sculpture en Languedoc*, and Prof. A. Kingsley Porter’s book with its attack on some of the orthodox theories has called forth some interesting articles in reply in the various archaeological journals. His foremost opponent, M. Paul Deschamps, has produced some valuable articles in this way, notably “Notes sur la Sculpture romane en Bourgogne” in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1922, and “Notes sur la Sculpture romane en Languedoc et dans le Nord de l’Espagne” in the *Bulletin Monumental*, 1923. His article on “La Renaissance de la Sculpture en France à l’époque romane” in the *Bulletin Monumental* for 1925 is a very valuable description of the origins of medieval sculpture and the sources of inspiration to which the earliest carvers turned for their models. M. Charles Oursel in his *L’Art roman de Bourgogne* defends Prof. Porter’s plea for the early dating of the Cluny sculptures, and supports his arguments by a minute analysis of all the evidence. The book has been reviewed by M. L. Bréhier in an article entitled “Questions d’art roman bourguignon” in the *Revue Archéologique*, 1929, and this distinguished scholar accepts the main arguments put forward by M. Oursel.

The sumptuous publication *Les Richesses d’Art de la France* contains a number of large plates, but so far has not got beyond Burgundy.

Besides these general works there are, of course, a large number of monographs on individual buildings. Georges Durand’s *Mono-*

graphie de l'Église Notre-Dame, Cathédrale d'Amiens is a monumental work, describing and illustrating every detail of that great storehouse of medieval art. E. Houvet's *La Cathédrale de Chartres* is a superb collection of photographs of every detail of that wonderful church; S. Muté's *Cathédrale de Bourges* is a work on somewhat similar lines, with six albums of fine photographs including big details of most of the sculptures, and on a smaller scale L. Pillion's *Les Sculptures de Reims* with its sixty beautiful plates is a remarkable production for the price at which it is published. The series of "Petites monographies des grands édifices de la France", published by H. Laurens, are usually written by experts and are a most valuable help, but there are many other local guides which are too numerous to be mentioned here. Reference to some of these, to the books mentioned above, and to other important articles will be made in the notes as we go on.

It is hoped that this book will cater for the intelligent tourist as well as the student. An increasing number of Englishmen take a motor trip in France as a holiday, and most of them will, no doubt, realise how much more interesting such an expedition may become if they stop to look at the local antiquities. A little easily acquired knowledge of architecture and its accompanying arts will add enormously to the pleasure to be obtained from such visits, and the pursuit of a particular line of inquiry will give an additional zest. There are many books dealing with architecture generally, but the sculpture which adorns the medieval church is an even more fascinating study. It has a human interest which is lacking in purely constructional form, and it is less technical and more easily understood by the half-trained amateur. It cannot, of course, be entirely divorced from the buildings it adorns, but a comparatively slight knowledge of the history of architecture is all that is absolutely necessary for its appreciation.

With this object in view, I have endeavoured to make the book readable. I have avoided technical language and all but a few of the

commonest technical terms. I have also felt that one good photograph is of more use than pages of description in dealing with such a subject as sculpture. I have therefore sought, at the risk of extravagance in illustration, to insert a photograph of almost every important monument described in the text. This method saves elaborate description, and the reader is enabled to make his comparisons for himself, while all the author has to do in the text is to point out the particular features he wishes to emphasise and assign its proper place in his classification to the piece in question. The appeal to the eye is much the most vivid method of presentation, and if a book is to be readable it is important to avoid the tedium of reference to other volumes for illustrations, some of which may not be readily available. Where it has been necessary to refer to other examples beside those it has been found possible to illustrate I have, as far as convenient, put such references in footnotes, so as to avoid confusing the text with things not readily grasped without looking them up elsewhere. For the sake of the student, lists of monuments not illustrated, with occasional brief notes, have been added at the end of each section or chapter. These do not claim to be exhaustive, but they enable certain important objects to be mentioned which would otherwise have had to be included in the body of the text. The tourist or motorist can skip these notes without interrupting the main thread of the argument, but they may be useful even to him for occasional reference.

I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to avoid the temptation into which most French antiquaries fall of illustrating their works with photographs of the casts in the Trocadéro Museum. They make nice bright pictures, but do not give the real texture of the surface which can be given in a direct photograph from the original, even if less brilliant in quality. The vast majority, therefore, of the photographs here reproduced are from the originals, and it is only in about twenty cases that I have had recourse to the casts, and these only because

difficulty of position or lack of accessibility, local regulations, or the inevitable restrictions of time and space, have made it difficult for me to live up to my ideal.

It is sometimes held that textbooks should avoid controversial points, but in the earlier period at any rate much of the interest lies in solving the difficult questions of date and origin. In the case, therefore, of disputed points I have usually tried to state the case for both sides, and if I have supported one side more than another I have at least warned the reader that my view is not universally accepted.

The visitor travelling over a wide field cannot cumber himself with heavy or elaborate photographic apparatus: if the perspective is not always correct or the architectural lines are not straight in some of the illustrations, this must be my excuse. I have thought it better to show the object as large and clear as possible, even at the risk of slight distortion unavoidable in pictures taken from the ground.

I hope I have been successful, on the whole, in drawing my examples from the more genuine and less-restored pieces of sculpture, but some French restorers have been so much cleverer than the clumsy workmen usually employed in England in the past, that it is very difficult to avoid an occasional mistake. Where restoration is obvious I have usually pointed it out in the text.

I am indebted to my brother, Mr Hugh Gardner, for the photographs from which Figs. 368, 369 and Pl. XCII A from Paris, Figs. 351, 409, 415 from S. Denis, and Figs. 484, 486 from S. Benoît and Vendôme were made. Figs. 64, 65, 66 from Elne and Arles-sur-Tech are from photographs taken by the late Mr Charles Gardner; the rest are from my own negatives. They represent a not inconsiderable amount of travel and research spread over a good many years, but if they give any reader a tenth part of the pleasure which their collection has given me this work will not have been written in vain.

A. G.