

## INTRODUCTION.

ON THE INFLUX OF ANTIQUE SCULPTURES INTO  
GREAT BRITAIN.

## PRELIMINARY.

NO other country in Europe can at this day boast of such a wealth of Private Collections of antique works of art as England, which in this particular recalls the Rome of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Great is the number of town-houses and palaces, still greater the number of country-seats, in which the noble and the rich treasure up, by the side of incomparable masterpieces of modern painting, considerable collections of antique works of art, especially of sculpture. So numerous are they, that few have any notion of this abundance of treasures, and perhaps no one individual enjoys a really comprehensive knowledge of them. Whatever has once reached the region of this Enchanted Island has remained there as it were spell-bound. These collections have in frequent instances experienced great vicissitudes. Many have more than once changed owners, many have come to the hammer in public auction; they have been moved from one place to another, and in consequence have often found their way into remote and inaccessible hiding-places; indeed a certain number of specimens have been utterly lost sight of, so that only a happy chance can bring them back to light. Very few however, and those under quite peculiar circumstances, have made their way back across the Channel. "England," says a gifted writer on art, "is to works of art what the grave is to the dead; her gates do not open again to let them out<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Bürger, W., *Les Trésors d'Art en Angleterre*, Brussels and Ostend, 1862, p. 1.  
M. C. I

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The works of ancient Greek and Roman art in England alone constitute the subject of the present volume. The student who attempts to trace the introduction of such works into the country, will soon notice that there are three clearly defined periods in the development of this branch of dilettantism. In the first, which embraces the time of the Stuarts and their immediate successors, it is individual collectors who strike into the path indicated. Only a few undertook to collect the larger works in marble. There is consequently a preponderance over these of the smaller objects of art, bronzes, coins, gems, which, being more easily attainable and more easy to transport, have at all times formed a favourite object of the antiquarian collector's enthusiasm. The destinies of these old collections are for the most part, like the whole circumstances of the time, variable and frequently violent. At the end of the period only a few had entirely or even partially preserved their old condition. At this day the collection at Wilton House is the solitary unimpaired representative of that epoch; besides which, of the treasures of the illustrious Earl of Arundel the greater part is still to be found at Oxford, in the secure possession, not of a private person, but of the University.

Then comes the heyday of dilettantism in England, the last century, especially in its latter half. In an unintermitting stream the ancient marbles of Rome poured into the palaces of the aristocracy of Britain, whose wealth in some cases afforded the means of gratifying a real artistic taste by these rare possessions, and in others enabled them at any rate to fall into the new fashion of dilettantism, the *furore* for antique art. The older Roman collections were bought up; fresh excavations were instituted. Englishmen settled in Rome and dealt in the acquisitions without which *milord* on his travels could not well return home from the 'grand tour.' Of course other countries tried to secure their share, but England stood foremost. During

this period of fifty or sixty years there came into being most of the private collections of antiques in which the island abounds, and those the largest and most valuable. Their general character depends upon the fact that their origin has been almost exclusively in the soil of Rome and its immediate vicinity.

At the beginning of this century the possession of a gallery of sculpture ceased to be indispensable to *bon ton*. The importation of antiques came to a stop, owing to the interruption of commercial intercourse entailed by the protracted war against Napoleon. Other fashionable tastes sprang into existence or were revived. Once again the interest, or at any rate the active enthusiasm, for collections of antique works of art, became the privilege of a few real lovers of such things. While however this abatement of zeal took place in private circles, the State stepped into the place of individual amateurs with abundant energy. Since the opening of this century the British Museum has advanced with rapid strides to the supreme position of having the finest collection of antiques in the world. It was no longer Rome, or Italy generally, which filled the rooms of this institution with late copies or imitations of Greek originals; but Greek art itself, represented by a stately series of its most beautiful creations, entered the museum in triumph, and asserted a might of simple grandeur before unknown. The British Museum must in this respect remain altogether beyond the reach of rivalry. The sum of its priceless treasures has been completed by means of excavations specially undertaken, and successful acquisitions made with unremitting zeal at the sites of discoveries. They have often been increased by donations or purchases of private collections. In fact, the British Museum has gradually thrown all private collections far into the background. It seems therefore only natural and desirable that in the future also the several brooklets should discharge themselves into this mighty stream.

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The object of the ensuing sketch is to follow this development more closely into detail, and at the same time to draw attention to such general considerations as must necessarily escape notice during the study of the collections taken severally. If in these preliminary remarks the older collections are found to be treated more fully than the newer, and those which have been dispersed than those still existing, no apology is needed.

I cannot help lamenting the general inadequacy of the aids at my disposal. Only occasionally have I been enabled to give more than a mere outline of my subject. However, I have at any rate aimed at accuracy and certainty in its delineation. Much will undoubtedly have escaped me, notwithstanding the assistance of friends quite qualified to offer criticism and advice, as I was able to devote but a short time to the use of a mass of literary aids only available in England. But in the case of the great majority of these collections, there is an absolute dearth of accounts of their origination and of the sources of their component elements. There is undoubtedly much information on such matters, either in the form of short memoranda or complete correspondence, still preserved among the archives of those families whose ancestors in bygone times acquired the collections. I have had access to only a small proportion of such unprinted papers. It is to be hoped that my book will call forth communications of such records. Of previous labourers in a more general style in the same field, it is only necessary to mention the occasional paragraphs in Horace Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*, and Dallaway's useful though too superficial and uncritical books. Should these drawbacks not seem sufficient to secure indulgence for the shortcomings of the following sketch, the reader may earn the gratitude of the public and of the author by pointing out or laying open new sources of inquiry.

## I.

THE ARUNDEL MARBLES AND OTHER  
EARLY COLLECTIONS.

I. IT was late before England joined the competition of the nations which desired to possess a share of the abundance of antique sculptures which since the fifteenth century have come to light in unheard-of numbers from the soil of Italy. In the course of the sixteenth century we see Francis I. of France, Philip II. of Spain, Rudolf II. of Germany, taking pains to raise their residences in Paris, Madrid, and Prague to equal rank with the palaces of the Roman nobles by decorating them with works of antique art. Princes of lesser rank, such as the Electors of Bavaria, follow their example; and even private persons of wealth are loth to be left behind. I may instance the Welser family of Augsburg, between which city and Italy there were intimate connections. In England during the Tudor period no trace yet showed itself of a similar interest; although the influence of Italy in other fields of culture was scarcely so deeply impressed on England at any other time as in the sixteenth century. The long distance from Italy, the insular position of the country, the keenness of political and religious oppositions and dissensions, a puritanical aversion from images of heathen deities, might constitute the main reasons why in this particular England lagged behind the continental states throughout the whole of the sixteenth century.

*No antiques in England in the 16th century.*

*Henry,  
 Prince of  
 Wales.*

2. It was under the Kings of the house of Stuart that a change first began. It appears that the first to aim at the possession of antique works of art was the eldest son of James I., PRINCE HENRY, "that hopeful cherisher of great and noble things," who died young A.D. 1612. He laid the foundation of a collection of coins which his brother Charles subsequently enlarged, and acquired the collection of gems made by Abraham Gorlaeus of the Netherlands (*d.* A.D. 1609)<sup>2</sup>. He further left his brother eighteen small statues, but as they are designated in the catalogue of works of art in the possession of King Charles the First, as "Florentine brazen statues," and as their description contains several strange particulars<sup>3</sup>, it is doubtful whether genuine antique statues are meant or whether they were not rather modern imitations, like many specimens in the possession of Charles I. Prince Henry had not yet reached his eighteenth year when he died. Had he lived longer, to his lot there would probably have fallen a share of the glory, which now belongs to another, of being proverbially styled the "father of *vertù*" in this country. We pass now to the individual thus designated, from whom a distinguished Society of friends and promoters of genuine art has been able with propriety to take its name.

*Lord  
 Arundel's  
 tours in  
 Italy.*

3. THOMAS HOWARD, EARL OF ARUNDEL AND SURREY (*b.* A.D. 1585), reinstated by A.D. 1621 in the dignity hereditary in his family of Earl Marshal of England, stands indisputably at the head of English art collectors<sup>4</sup>. His delicate health had early taken him to Italy for a comparatively long visit, from which he

<sup>2</sup> Evelyn, *Letter to Pepys*, 1689, Aug. 12. Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, ch. VIII. (Sal. de Caus). IX. (Charles I.). Chamberlain to Carleton in Birch's *Court and Times of James I.* I. p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> *A Catalogue of King Charles the First's Capital Collection*, transcribed by Vertue, London, 1757, p. 21, "the

eighteen little Statues which came to his Majesty by the decease of Prince Henry." Cf. Carleton to Chamberlain (Birch, *James I.* I. p. 212).

<sup>4</sup> Walpole, *Anecd.* ch. IX. Dal-  
 laway, *Anecdotes*, p. 229. Ellis, H.,  
*The Townley Gallery*, I. p. 57. Ed-  
 wards, *Lives of the Founders of the  
 British Museum*, I. p. 183. Cf.

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first returned home at the end of the year 1612. The direction of his taste was finally determined by a renewed sojourn of twelve months, A.D. 1613, 1614. By the King's order the young lord, accompanied by his wife Alatheia Talbot, daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury, had conducted the Princess Elizabeth as bride to her betrothed husband, Frederick, the Elector Palatine. "Thence he went into Italy, where he very much pleased himself, and either took up or improved his natural disposition of being the great master and favourer of arts, especially of sculpture, design, painting and architecture, which rendered him famous and acceptable to all ingenious spirits both at home and abroad<sup>5</sup>." Thus we are told by Sir Edward Walker, who had stood in close relations to him and his house. Peacham's often-quoted words refer to the same juncture as the beginning of the Earl's activity as a collector. They will be found in their proper place further on. It deserves notice that Arundel had in his suite no less a person than Inigo Jones, whose artistic taste developed itself for the first time during this journey in the direction of that classical style which characterized his later designs<sup>6</sup>. We may fairly conjecture that the Earl's natural taste for art must have been much stimulated by the influence of the practical knowledge and mature judgment of his elder companion. Relations were in various forms kept up between the two men afterwards.

4. We cannot now prove in detail how much Lord Arundel got together at that time in person, how much gradually by his agents, several of whom he employed in Italy and "generally in any part of Europe where rarities were to be had<sup>7</sup>." He is said to have himself

*His Italian  
Marbles.*

Michaelis in *Im neuen Reich*, 1878, I. pp. 921, 964. I have taken pains to refer on all occasions as far as possible to the original authorities, and I hope that the account has consequently been made both more complete and more accurate.

<sup>5</sup> *Historical Discourses*, London, 1705, p. 212.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1613, July 9 (Birch, *James I.* p. 255).

<sup>7</sup> Walker, *Hist. Disc.* p. 222.

obtained leave to institute excavations on the sites of ruins about Rome, and it is also related that he discovered in subterraneous chambers a whole number at a time of splendid Roman portrait-statues. These were soon restored in the usual manner, and furnished with the high-sounding names of Cicero, Marius, and so forth. They still at this day adorn the collection at Oxford<sup>8</sup>. Others were obtained by purchase. "He made a wonderful and costly purchase of excellent statues, whilst he was in Italy and Rome, some whereof he could never obtain permission to remove from Rome, though he had paid for them<sup>9</sup>." That Arundel's aims were pitched high we learn from two instances accidentally recorded<sup>10</sup>. In the Circus of Maxentius (usually called of Caracalla) not far from the Via Appia, there lay an obelisk of about sixteen metres in length broken into four pieces. It was only the difficulty of transport to the sea which deterred the Earl from purchasing the fragments and putting them together in London; which city might otherwise have been able to boast an obelisk long before the bringing over of Cleopatra's needle. What happened instead was that Bernini (A.D. 1651) crowned his fantastic fountain in the Piazza Navona with the obelisk in question. The purchase of the Meleager (then called Adonis) of the Pighini palace, which now constitutes one of the chief ornaments of the Belvedere, was likewise one of Arundel's schemes, but it miscarried upon the refusal of the owner to part with his treasure even for a high price. For the element of cost never came into consideration with respect to the Earl's passion for collecting. "His expenses," says his embittered opponent Lord Clarendon<sup>11</sup>, "were without any measure, and always exceeded very much his revenue." If we measure those aspirations by the results, certainly most of the sculptures of Italian origin, which

<sup>8</sup> Dallaway, *Anecd.* p. 256.

<sup>9</sup> Clarendon, *Hist. of the Rebellion*,  
 Oxf. 1849, I. p. 78.

<sup>10</sup> Evelyn, *Diary*, 1645, Feb. 16.  
 1644, Nov. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Hist. of the Reb.* I. cit.



are still to be found among the remains of the Arundel collection at Oxford, seem rather insignificant. For there are only a few specimens which rise above the level of mediocrity; the best portion of that collection being undoubtedly or probably derived not from Italy but from Greece.

5. In the first period of the reawakening of classical culture, Poggio Bracciolini, the great pioneer of the Renaissance, had already made use of his connection with some friends in Chios to get a few antiques from Greece to grace his villa near Florence, the Valdarniana<sup>12</sup>. Again, about the middle of the fifteenth century, the enthusiastic traveller Ciriaco de' Pizziccoli of Ancona, during his repeated wanderings through the islands of the Archipelago, had turned his attention to the relics of Greek art<sup>13</sup>. These districts were then under the rule of Italian princes. But since the Turks had established themselves in absolute dominion over them, it had become more and more difficult to pursue such interests. At best the nobles and merchants of Venice could place themselves in possession of one or two specimens, and there was a general impression that "all above ground was gone to Venice"<sup>14</sup>. Or else the ambassador of a Western power to the Sublime Porte would use his residence as an opportunity for collecting what presented itself to him. So it was with the French ambassador, Des Hayes<sup>15</sup>. We hear too of similar efforts of the Provençal scholar Claude Peiresc, who most zealously turned to account his wide-spread connections for his scientific works<sup>16</sup>. But the merit of having caused these classic shores to be ransacked for the express purpose of collecting antiques belongs to the Earl of Arundel, and

<sup>12</sup> Shepherd, *Life of Poggio Bracciolini*, Liverp. 1802, p. 291. G. Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des class. Alterthums*, Berlin, 1859, p. 173.

<sup>13</sup> Jahn, O., *Aus der Alterthums-wissenschaft*, Bonn, 1868, p. 333.

<sup>14</sup> Roe, T., *Negotiations*, London, 1740, p. 647.

<sup>15</sup> Roe, p. 154. Laborde, *Athènes*, t. p. 62.

<sup>16</sup> Gassendi, *Fabr. de Peiresc vita*, Par. 1641, p. 227.

the energy with which he followed up this task in the midst of so many others, quite answers to one of the characteristic qualities of his nation.

*Sir  
 Thomas  
 Roe in  
 Constanti-  
 nople.*

6. The first opportunity was presented by the mission of Sir Thomas Roe to Constantinople, as ambassador from James I., in the year 1621<sup>17</sup>. The Earl Marshal, by birth and position one of the foremost among the dignitaries of the English nobility, might well count on meeting with no refusal if he earnestly requested the ambassador at his departure to pay regard in his interest to the treasures of antiquity, works of art, and manuscripts, and to collect them for him. In fact, Sir Thomas was quite willing to be of service, and declared himself ready "to look back upon antiquity" besides pursuing his own vocation, which was "to attend new things," all the more so as he was himself "a lover of such vertues," though no great connoisseur. Had he had an idea to what troubles and unpleasantnesses he was about to expose himself by undertaking this commission, he would probably have been less ready and willing to enter upon this "quarry and stone business." For some time indeed the affair went on tolerably smoothly. Immediately upon his arrival at Constantinople Roe collected information about the localities which gave the best promise of a return. In particular the Bishop of Andros pointed out the places of sepulture in Rheneia (great Delos) as a rich mine of treasures. This spot has been ransacked again and again up to the present day, and is not yet exhausted. He set the British consul to work to institute inquiries within his district. Here was the commencement of a system which has since been employed with such important results. Sir Thomas was indefatigable in asking the necessary permis-

<sup>17</sup> *The Negotiations of Sir Th. Roe in his Embassy to the Ottoman Porte*, London, 1740. These letters have been often used since the time of Horace Walpole, but never thoroughly used up. So far as they refer to our present subject, they will be found

arranged in order in the Appendix to this Introduction. I have looked through some other correspondence of Sir Thomas', which is preserved in the British Museum, for notices of this kind, but to no purpose.