

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-06444-6 - Memorials of Sir Francis Chantrey: Sculptor in
Hallamshire and Elsewhere
John Holland
Frontmatter
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Memorials of Sir Francis Chantrey

Originally published in 1851, partly with the aim of correcting certain mistakes in painter George Jones's 1849 tribute (also reissued in this series), this work commemorates Norton-born sculptor Sir Francis Chantrey (1781–1841), whose illustrious career began in nearby Sheffield. His most celebrated works include *The Sleeping Children* in Lichfield Cathedral, his statue of James Watt, and his busts of Sir Walter Scott and John Horne Tooke. An enthusiast for his country's art, Chantrey left a generous bequest to the Royal Academy which allowed for the purchase of numerous works of British art, now held by the Tate. The author John Holland (1794–1872), himself a Sheffield man, wrote with a passion for local history and topography. Here, his delight in the 'absolutely or comparatively trivial' lends a curious local slant to his delineation of the sculptor's background, entry into the profession, later working life and burial back in Norton.

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Memorials of Sir Francis Chantrey

Sculptor in Hallamshire and Elsewhere

JOHN HOLLAND



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108064446

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2013

This edition first published 1851

This digitally printed version 2013

ISBN 978-1-108-06444-6 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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MEMORIALS
OF
SIR FRANCIS CHANTREY, R.A.
SCULPTOR,
IN HALLAMSHIRE AND ELSEWHERE.



Cottage in which Chantrey was Born.

BY JOHN HOLLAND.

LONDON :
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMAN.
SHEFFIELD :
J. PEARCE, JUN., TIMES OFFICE, HIGH-STREET.

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PREFACE.

The following Reminiscences of an individual whose well-earned celebrity is, in various ways, identified with the town and neighbourhood of Sheffield, including especially the adjacent village of Norton, are published with unaffected diffidence, as to their particular interest and value, though without any misgiving on the ground of their general truthfulness. Their appearance at this particular moment is mainly due to a perusal of "Recollections of Sir Francis Chantrey," by George Jones, R.A., a work which, however acceptable in some respects, shows how many original mistakes, in relation to its subject, are passing from periodical to permanent publications, and thus suggesting to the present writer the propriety of at once giving to his own notes some form less restricted and fugitive than that of MS. memoranda.

He was the more inclined to this course, inasmuch as the matter which he had collected was wholly distinct from that which forms the staple of Mr. Jones's book—three of the following sections, relating chiefly to periods in the life of Chantrey preceding, and the greater portion of the others to that subsequent to the term formally comprised in the "Recollections." Of course, neither separately, nor together, have these Collections any claim to be considered as—nor will they, it is hoped, be allowed long to stand in the place of—a regular "Life" of the great English Sculptor; while, for such a work, whenever or by whomsoever worthily undertaken, even these pages may yield some hint, or afford some clue of value to a competent biographer.

Less doubtful about the propriety of preserving, in some way, memorials of the early life of so distinguished an individual as the late Sir Francis Chantrey, than confident as to the best mode of doing so, some apology is felt to be necessary for the style— if not for the substance—of this volume. In the first place, it may be alleged, that many matters absolutely or comparatively

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ii.

trivial are noted ; and, secondly, that the writer, instead of contenting himself with the simple record of a fact as such, has not seldom associated it with some remark or allusion of remote, if not doubtful relevancy. For the first point, the interest of local association at least may fairly be pleaded—a paragraph of domestic intelligence is often read with deep interest in a Sheffield newspaper that would be quite out of place in a London journal—much more in a History of England. For the second matter—that of diffusiveness, or sentimentality—let the privilege of the Poet be conceded to the Memorialist, who felt, even when his task appeared little else than making a catalogue of pictures, busts, or statues, that perhaps a time might come when identification, if not value, would depend upon a few characteristic words written while evidence was fresh. If this may be said to be anticipating an after-interest in objects, the present estimate of which Time will probably rather lessen than enhance—be it so: one fact is certain—whatever place the works of Chantrey, the British Sculptor, may ultimately occupy in the History of Art, the memory of Chantrey—the munificent patron of the Royal Academy, the grateful and graceful Norton benefactor—will be perennial through living generations.

The foregoing sentences were written some months ago, when this work was first placed in the hands of the printer ; but while the writer is conscious that he must lose something of whatever forbearance the public might have readily accorded to a fresh and seasonable contribution to the interest excited at that time by the book above-mentioned, he is grateful that such unanticipated delay has enabled him to render the following pages less imperfect than otherwise they might have been. Instances in which obligation has been created by the kind co-operation of friendly individuals will, each in its proper place, be specially, as they are here in general terms, very gratefully acknowledged.

Sheffield, May 1, 1851.

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CHANTREY IN HALLAMSHIRE, &c.

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HALLAMSHIRE is a district, of which the ancient limits have been variously defined, but of which Sheffield is the modern capital. In its widest early meaning, it comprehended what are now the separate parishes of Sheffield, Ecclesfield, and Handsworth; and as a territory over which the jurisdiction of the "Company of Cutlers" extended by Act of James I., a still wider additional outline of "six miles compass" was assigned to it. The history of the infeudation and early government, as well as of the ecclesiastical, social, and commercial vicissitudes of this interesting and important locality, by the Rev. Joseph Hunter, is one of the most elegant and instructive topographical works in the language.

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Say, what is Genius?—that mysterious power,
 The secret birth-right of few marvellous minds!
 One man, in Nature's every aspect, finds—
Or calm, or storm, mist, sunshine, cloud, or shower,
Communion with the elements : the dower
 Of some—that rarer faculty, which gives
 Birth to ideal beauty, such as lives
In picture, song, or marble : in an hour,—
Perchance a moment,—springs to active life,
 That deep, creative energy of soul,
 Beyond all vulgar commerce or control,
Which finds no sympathy in sordid strife :
Art, taste, and skill,—each in its highest state,
Obedient menials, all on heaven-born genius wait.