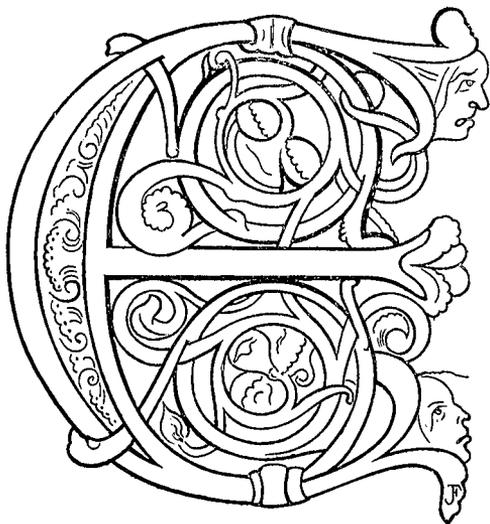


ON MANUSCRIPTS AND RARE BOOKS IN THE MAIDSTONE MUSEUM.

BY S. W. KERSHAW, M.A.



ASILY* accessible, among the many treasures which this Museum contains, are seven Manuscripts and twenty rare illustrated books. They are displayed in a room which was the ancient chapel of Chillington House. Any collection, however small, is sure to possess some distinctive features, which throw light upon the

history of illuminated art, or on the religious and legendary subjects so frequently embodied in the mediæval page.

The employment of colour as an aid, or interpretation, to literature, is of very remote origin. The famous Virgil, of the Vatican Library, dates from the third or fourth century. It is illustrated with paintings in body colour, and with architectural accessories of a classical character. The early Roman MSS. were illuminated in colours only; but the Greeks introduced a

* For sketches of this letter E, and of four other initials, copied from a twelfth century MS. in the Maidstone Museum, our thanks are due to Mr. F. James, of that Museum.

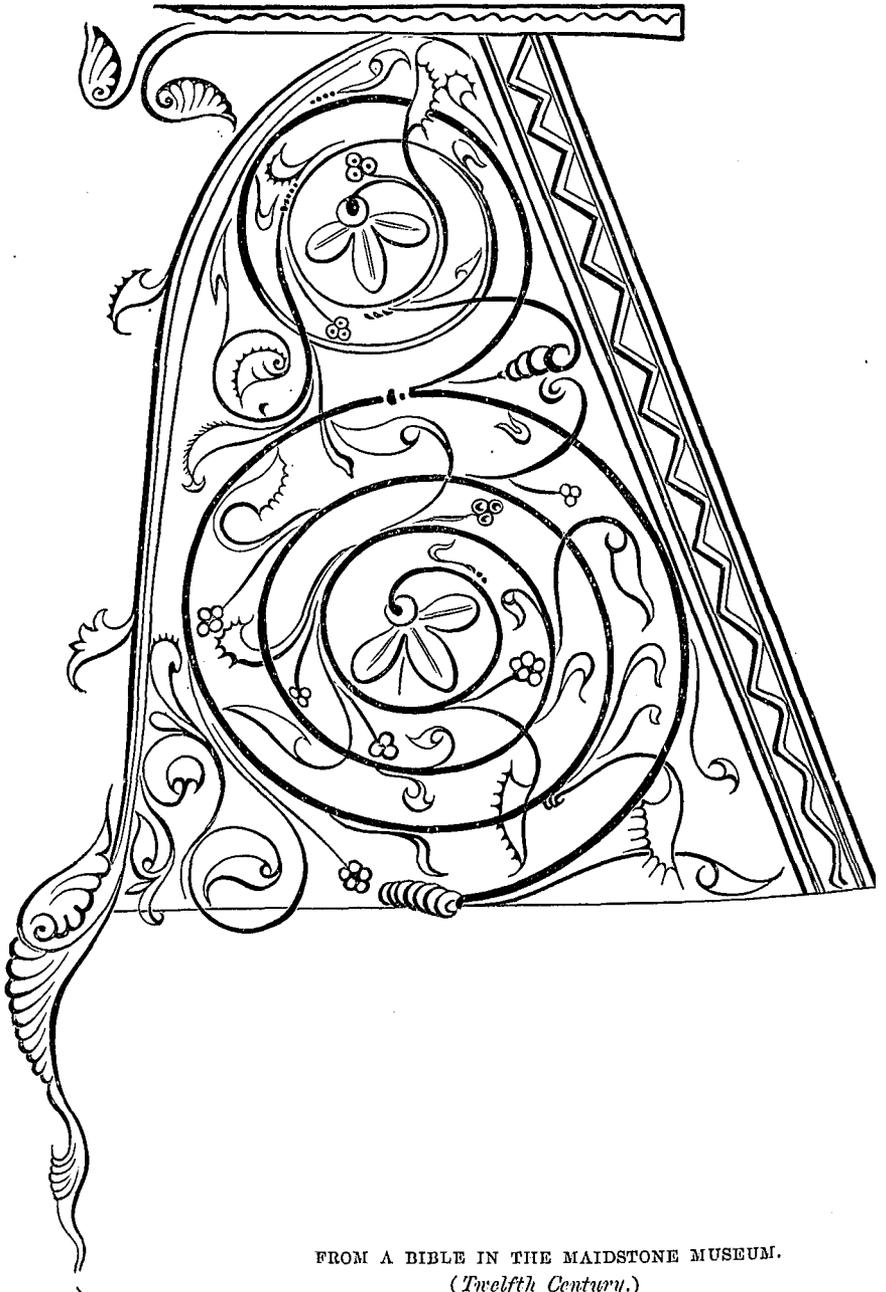
more ornate style, after the Oriental model. By them gold and silver, upon purple or rose-stained vellum, were much employed. For some centuries, the late Greek or Byzantine style, and the Roman or classical school of art, continued somewhat distinct; the Byzantine adhered more closely to the Oriental prototypes, though it long preserved, in its miniature pictures, the artistic feeling of the Greek period.

St. Augustine's mission to England opened up a new era in MS. literature, during which the Anglo-Saxon school of illumination was gradually developed. Another style, destined to become very famous, and unique of its kind, was the Anglo-Irish, or as it is sometimes called the Celtic, which flourished from the seventh to the tenth centuries, and of which the most ancient and renowned example is the Book of Kells, in Trinity College, Dublin. Other specimens of Celtic illumination are extant, not only in England and Ireland but on the Continent. The excessive fineness of the writing, the initial letters formed of lines intricately but gracefully interwoven, and the omission of gold, constitute the leading features of this style. Anglo-Saxon and Irish art, modified by classical and Byzantine influence, continued in force until the Norman conquest, which by its inroads and disruptions extinguished for a time any artistic development of a new character.

From about 1250 to 1400, the English and French schools of illumination grew together in harmonious rivalry, each displaying special characteristics, and towards their close exhibiting an excellence hard to distinguish. Meanwhile, a contemporary style arose, which had for its features great boldness of outline and imposing initial letters. It was usually denominated German or Romanesque. While formed by the mixture of the late Anglo-Irish style with the Byzantine, it for the first time introduced many grotesques in its treatment and details.

A large folio MS. of the Scriptures, in this Museum, affords an excellent example of the style. The initial letters which illustrate this paper are copied in outline from that manuscript.

History and art so act and re-act on each other, that it is not surprising to find religious or political movements carrying with them traditions and art tendencies, from distant countries to our own island. Thus, the wars of the Crusades led to the



FROM A BIBLE IN THE MAIDSTONE MUSEUM.
(*Twelfth Century.*)

re-introduction of Byzantine features, in thirteenth century MSS.; and Flemish illumination practised here, may in a great measure be attributed to the settlement and employment of Flemings in England during the fourteenth century. The panel paintings in the rood-screens of the Norfolk and Suffolk churches, sufficiently attest a Flemish influence, which appears in the expression and selection of the Saints, and in their surroundings.

The Netherlandish illuminations during the fifteenth century rivalled the existing styles in artistic beauty, and an imitative school, after the great Van Eycks, produced miniatures of exceeding beauty, softness of execution, and quaint expression of countenance.

Examples of Italian illumination are not so numerous as others, being chiefly confined to the great choir books, and to secular volumes called *Ducali*, which were often gorgeously illuminated. These *Ducali* contain the diplomas of appointment of ambassadors sent out by the Venetian Republic. Some of the great Italian painters, of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were themselves illuminators, and this fact claims great deference for such MSS. After the invention of printing the beautiful work of the illuminist was practically at an end; but the art did not at once die out. The first pages, and initials, of printed books were often hand-painted, and were made to resemble MS. as much as possible.

It is well known that the MSS. most frequently embellished were Missals; Psalters; Horæ, or Service Books for the Canonical Hours; the Sacred Scriptures; Chronicles; and other historical and didactic works. In devotional books, the paintings are generally found at some particular "office" or recurring portion of the volume, to the text of which they form illustrations. The Maidstone collection comprises a MS. Bible, Breviary, and Books of Hours, all with illuminations, while the printed rarities are Bibles, Prayer Books, and other volumes with early wood-cut illustrations.

BIBLE.

Large folio, 12th century.

This copy of a portion of the Scriptures commences with part of the book of Psalms, and ends with the Apocalypse. It

is well written, in Latin, with a brownish coloured ink, and is of the German or Romanesque style of art. The MS. is imperfect, and several of its initial letters have been cut out, but many glorious examples remain, as our illustrations demonstrate. Some of these initial capitals are very large, like the "A" of which we give an engraving, shewing its exact size. The "B," represented on the same plate with the letters "O" and "P," is of the same size as that "A" in the original. Some, like the "E" and the "O" which we have engraved, are formed of a graceful interlacing ornament; others, like the letters "E" and "P," (which last is reduced one-half in size on our plate), contain grotesques, a common characteristic of this period. The backgrounds are generally of a greyish blue, chocolate, or crimson red. A gold border, outlined with brown and white, surrounds a few of the initial letters, others extend in length to one-fourth of the page, while some, of a circular form, are enclosed in a square kind of framework, as shewn, on our plate, around the letter "O." The following list enumerates the principal illuminations in this magnificent manuscript:—

Book of Psalms. *Dixit insipiens*; Figures of the Godhead, disposed, so as to illustrate the text "Sit thou on my right hand," etc.

Initial letters with figures, foliage, or grotesques adapted to the following verses; Letter D: in *Dominus illuminatio mea*, and in *Dixi custodiam*. Letter E: in *Exultate Deo*. Letter S: in *Salvum me fac*.

Ecclesiastes, i. 1. Letter O. *Omnis*, etc.

St. Jerome's Prologue to the New Testament.

Letter B:—of fanciful scroll work, represented in our plate.

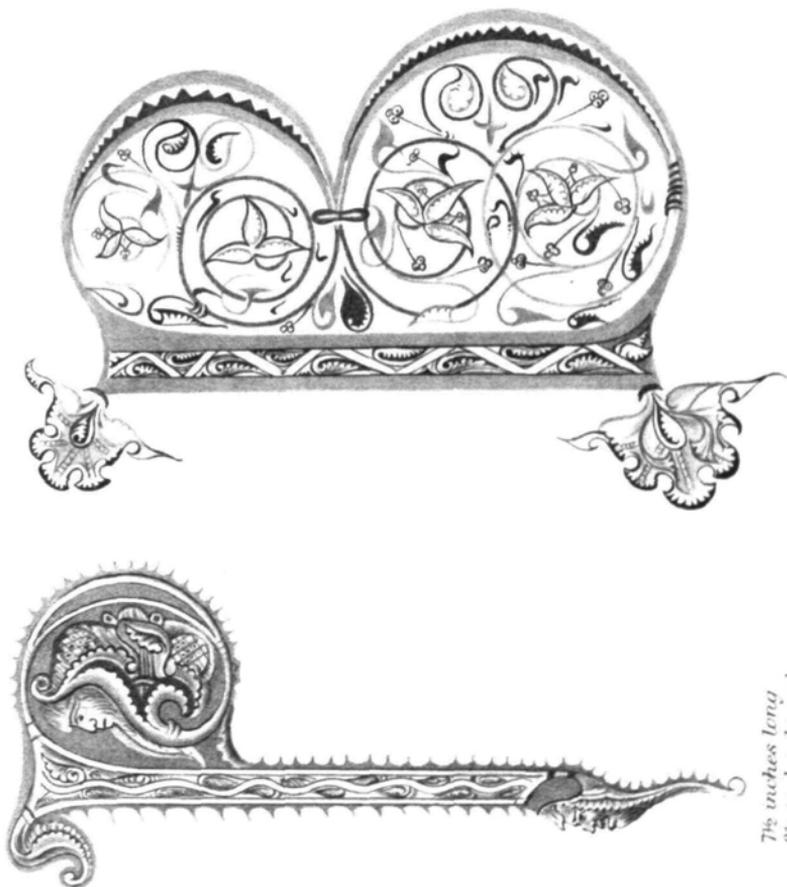
St. Matthew, i. 1. M:—Partly in outline, of a scroll pattern.

St. Luke, i. 1. Q:—Scroll, heightened with white.

The Books of the *Acts*, *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Timothy*, have each at their commencement the letter "P," formed of a combination of grotesques, figures, and scrolls.

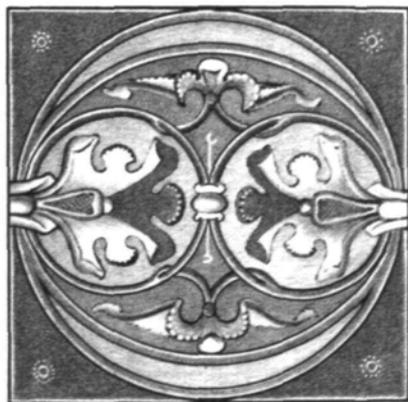
Book of Revelation. Letter A: of elegant design and colour treatment, shewn in outline in our engraving.

The last leaf of this MS. appears to have been used as a register of births and marriages.



7 3/4 inches long, 5 inches broad.

*7 1/2 inches long
3 3/4 inches broad*



4 inches square.

A FRAMED LETTER (O) from a Chorale Book.

School of Giotto, circa 1300.

The subject, forming the body of the letter, is the well-known incident of St. Martin's charity to the beggar; the faces are well painted, exhibiting force and expression.

BREVILIARY.

English art, 14th century.

This MS. formed part of the Maidstone Parochial Library. Though containing no large paintings, it has several beautiful initials, and borders entirely surrounding the page.

It is in a wooden cover, fastened by one clasp, and contains the Calendar, Psalter, Litany of Saints, Hymns for Advent, and other offices. It is unfortunately not perfect in all the contents, but for what is wanting in this respect the ornamentation seems to make up, particularly that upon pages 75, 133, and 134, where gold is used in the decoration of the finials, and of the marginal patterns.

BOOK OF HOURS.

Flemish art, 14th century.

This MS., in good preservation, and in stamped leather binding, has several paintings of merit and interest. The backgrounds are chiefly of the tessellated pattern. A framelike border of scroll work, in which birds and flowers are gracefully interwoven, surrounds the subjects. The principal paintings are:—1. The Crucifixion. 2. The Annunciation. 3. The Saviour as Judge. 4. The Madonna and Child. 5. The Service for the Dead. The Calendar and Prayers are in Flemish, but the rest of the volume is in Latin.

BOOK OF HOURS.

Dutch art, 15th century.

This little MS. has no illuminations, but the art is seen in the initials, the border patterns, and the medallions. An inscription at the end affords some clue to the scribe, and the locality of the volume.

“Escrypt et finit p' moy seur ysabel de Halewyn, religieuse en n're cloestre de Sainte Margrite en bethlee' en la ville de doinse en lan mille cecciiij et douze le premier iour de Septembre.”

The remaining MSS. are—a work on Trials at Law, and a MS. on various subjects in divers languages. They contain no illuminations.

PRINTED BOOKS.

LUTHER'S BIBLE.

Folio, Wittenberg, 1551.

This Bible has engravings by Godfrey Liegel and Hans Brosamer. It is preserved in the original wooden boards, and appears to be perfect. The text is in old German, and the wood-cuts closely resemble those of the famous "Nuremberg Chronicle," printed in 1498, the illustrations to which are drawn in the same vigorous manner. This Bible has an engraved frontispiece, various initial letters, and delineations of many scriptural scenes. The illustrations more especially interesting to the historical student are those which represent—

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The Creation. | 5. The History of Isaac. |
| 2. The Temptation. | 6. Jacob's Dream. |
| 3. The Murder of Abel. | 7. The History of Joseph. |
| 4. The Deluge. | 8. The Plagues of Egypt. |

In the later illustrations, of the Temple, etc., architectural details are introduced, and the New Testament contains figures of the Evangelists with their emblems, and minute representations of Eastern furniture, and interior decoration.

The Apocalyptic scenes are somewhat unequal, yet, as a whole, they possess much originality in subject and design. Arabesque borders surround most of the wood-cuts, and there are marginal notes attached to the book.—Mr. Godding Reader presented it to the Museum.

BIBLE ; in English (Parker).

Folio, 1566.

Presented by Miss Pine.

BISHOPS' BIBLE ; (imperfect).

Folio, 1572.

Presented by E. Pretty, F.S.A., late Curator.

GENEVA BIBLE; commonly known as the "Breeches Bible."

Quarto, 1581.

Presented by Rev. J. Yates.

GENEVA BIBLE; ed. alt.

Folio, 1588.

Presented by Edward Hoar, Esq.

BIBLE ; authorized version.

Quarto, 1620.

Presented by Mr. John Buttery.

BIBLE; authorized version, with Prayer Book.

Quarto, 1632.

Presented by Mr. J. B. Jude.

BIBLE.

8vo Edinb. 1633.

Presented by J. L. Brenchley, Esq.

PRAYER BOOK (imperfect).

1608.

PRAYER BOOK.

circa 1630.

Presented by F. Fairbrass, Esq.

NORWEGIAN PRAYER BOOK.

circa 1604.

(Illustrated, with prints of flowers, coloured by hand, and with marginal ornamentation.)

Presented by Mr. Bartlett, Curator.

SWEDISH PSALM BOOK. *Duodecimo*, Stockholm, 1848.

This book, also called a marriage Prayer Book of a peasant of Dalecarlia, presented by the Trustees of the Christy Collection, is bound in white vellum, gilt and coloured, and fastened by clasps. Both sides of the cover are ornamented with quaint and symbolic devices, of which the following deserve notice:—

1. A crown, supported by angels, in the centre two heart-shaped devices.
2. Christ on the cross, round which the serpent is twined.
3. An inscribed scroll—underneath is represented the Temptation—the Tree of Knowledge and the Serpent.

BOOK OF CHRISTIAN PRAYERS.

Octavo, Printed for the assignees of R. Day,
London, 1590.

The editions of this book are numerous; the first, in 1569, was followed by others in 1578, 1581, 1590, and 1608.

A full account of the various editions is given in a volume of the Parker Society, entitled, "Private Prayers of the reign of Queen Elizabeth." 8vo, 1851.

The present copy contains the Prayers in English, each page having border illustrations from scriptural scenes, probably a reprint of earlier editions, which were after designs of Holbein and Dürer. The marginal ornaments exhibit Elizabethan emblems, with other enrichments, and scroll patterns of the Tudor period.

The printer's device is at the end of the book.

BOOK OF HOURS.

Octavo, Paris (Kerver) 1508.

This volume, printed on vellum, and coloured by hand, contains several pleasing pictures; much gold is used in the costume and architectural details. The colouring, however, is inferior in character, thus detracting from the merit of the original designs. The introductory pages have the following subjects:—

1. The Madonna and Child appearing to a kneeling figure. Above the margin of the page are the words "John Montresor," who may have been the first possessor of the volume.

2. The printer's initials, etc., on a shield, underneath the words Thielman + Kerver.

3. The Calendar (uncoloured) has the usual occupations of the month and zodiacal signs, and is surrounded with intricate and pleasing border ornaments.

The following are the large subjects:—

The Annunciation.

Samuel anointing David.

The Salutation.

Raising of the Ruler's daughter.

The Appearance to Shepherds.

The Crucifixion.

The Adoration of Magi.

The Virgin and Saints.

The Circumcision.

The Trinity, surrounded by the

The Flight into Egypt.

four Evangelistic symbols.

The Coronation of the Virgin.

The Virgin, surrounded by her attributes;—form of the Almighty issuing from the clouds.

The Risen Saviour, accompanied by the "Instruments of the Passion."

The miniature paintings (also coloured) which preface the various "lessons" or readings, represent the following Saints:

St. Michael.

St. Laurence.

St. John Baptist.

St. Christopher.

St. John Evangelist.

St. Sebastian.

St. Peter.

St. Nicolaus.

St. James.

St. Claudius.

St. Stephen.

St. Anthony.

St. Francis of Assissi.

St. Anna.

St. Barbara.

St. Mary Magdalen.

St. Apollonia.

St. Katherine.

St. Geneveva,

St. Margaret.

ERASMUS' ENCHIRIDION MILITIS CHRISTIANI *Svo, Basil,*
1519.

This work has gone through many editions, viz., of the years 1519, 1524, 1544, 1548, 1641, and others. The title has an engraved frontispiece, and the book is always interesting as one of the many productions from the pen of Erasmus.

THE SHIP OF FOOLS 1498.

In the middle ages satire and reproof were conveyed by the medium of metaphor, allegory, enigma, and other similar allusions. These were introduced either in illustrated books, engravings, or small paintings:—The “Wheel of Fortune,” “Procession of Fools,” “The Shepherd’s Calendar,” and other metaphorical similes were often employed.

“The Ship of Fools” is no exception to the list of such works; the author was Sebastian Brandt, and the copy in the Maidstone Museum is a translation by Locker from the German original.

Another well known translator of the “Ship of Fools” was Barklay, who, in 1508, enlarged the original work and added many other “follies” which he found among his own countrymen, thus giving the book a more special value as a record of the English manners of the time. The Maidstone copy has 116 illustrations, engraved in a clear manner, and accompanied by verses in Latin, explanatory of the subject. The several characters are depicted as embarking on a voyage, during which every kind of folly is produced. Marginal references from the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and from Latin writers, elucidate both the text and wood-cuts. The following are some of those illustrations which “point a moral and adorn a tale.”

Avarice:—Two imbecile figures attempting to touch heaped up gold, cannot reach it for their infirmities. *Ingratitude*; *Pride*; *Contempt of Poverty*; *Neglect of Good Works*; *The Foolish Virgins*; *The Mutability of Fortune* is illustrated by the revolutions of a wheel, a common representation both in English and German works in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Altogether this book is very interesting and in excellent preservation.

THE GOLDEN LEGEND. *W. de Worde. Lond. 1527.*

This volume, belonging to the Maidstone Parochial Library, is unfortunately imperfect. As all literati and connoisseurs know that the work commonly contains Scriptural and legendary biography, illustrated with woodcuts, it is unnecessary to describe it at length.

FOXÉ'S BOOK OF MARTYRS. (*Illustrated, imperfect.*)

The MSS. and books which have been described cannot fail to attract the notice of the curious, and it is gratifying to find that they are so carefully preserved in the County Museum, which has universal interest in the many branches of art and science of which it is an able exponent. When we are seeking for the various phases of symbolism and religious thought; for a better interpretation of legend, either Christian or Pagan; or for a clearer insight into the character, costume, manners, or life of our ancestors; illuminated books will be found to supply such wants, from original sources. Whoever has studied the beautiful designs of the china, enamels, ivories, embroidered and other works of art in this Museum, cannot fail to follow up his researches into the field of illuminated books.

He will there perceive that one of the most valuable and truthful aids to the reproduction of design, or colour, may be learnt from the pages of illuminated MSS., and that their examples are verily a precious link between the past and the present, whereby art has been transmitted with a continuity and fulness hardly to be found elsewhere.

[*Note.*—There is in the Maidstone Museum a valuable English manuscript, of the age of Chaucer, which was not seen by Mr. Kershaw. It comprises two religious treatises:—

I. On the Love of God.

II. The Abbey of the Holy Ghost.

It is written in the English of that period. All the initial letters are well drawn in ink, blue or red alternately. Many grotesque devices are formed from the elongated strokes of letters in the top line of each page.—W. A. S. R.]