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A Biographical Dictionary

Containing An Historical Account Of All The Engravers, From The Earliest Period Of The Art Of Engraving To The Present Time; And A Short List Of Their Most Esteemed Works. ... To Which Is Prefixed, an Essay On The Rise And Progress Of The Art Of Engraving, Both On Copper And On Wood. ...

Strutt, Joseph

London, 1785

Chapter VII. A Description of the Eight first Plates referred to in the foregoing Essay.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-3182

CHAPTER VII.

A Description of the Eight first Plates referred to in the foregoing Essay.

AS the engravings which accompany this Essay are occasionally referred to in more places than one, it was judged most eligible to put them all together, (the frontispiece excepted) with such a description as was necessary for their explanation, and a reference to the collections from whence they are taken.

THE FRONTISPIECE.

On this plate is represented an ancient Etrurian *patera* or *sacrificing instrument*, and part of a *sheath* for a sword or dagger; these are particularly described page 10 of the Essay; the originals are preserved in the British Museum, and were brought from Italy by Sir William Hamilton.

PLATE I.

The Virgin and Child, a very ancient German engraving; the date which appears under the tree is 1461; the four is very commonly written in this manner in the old manuscripts, and it seems to have continued longer in use among the Germans than the other European nations. The original print from whence this engraving is taken, is in the collection of Dr. Monro, who kindly permitted me to copy it.

PLATES II. AND III.

The original prints from which these two plates are engraved, belong to a set which consists of eight; seven of them represent the seven planets, and the influence those heavenly bodies are supposed to have upon the human constitution. The plate marked with the No. II. served as the frontispiece; it is a sort of almanack, exhibiting a calendar of the saints days, and a calculation of the day on which Easter would fall, from 1465 to 1517 inclusive. Upon twelve small circles in the middle of the plate, are represented the employments for the twelve months of the year, with the zodiacal sign belonging to each month; and the gradual increase and decrease of the days, is expressed by the extent of the shadow upon the border, within which these delineations are inclosed. They are as follows:

January. An elderly gentleman seated at a table, spread with provisions, near the fire, holding a glass with liquor in his hand.

February. The gardener digging his ground.

March. The employment of the two figures represented in this compartment is rather obscure; probably the man is planting shrubs or herbs in the garden, according to the direction of the lady who is standing by him.

April. Hawking and hunting the hare.

May. Running at the ring.

June. Mowing.

July. Gathering in corn and thrashing.

August. Sickness; the doctor is examining the urinal.

September. Gathering grapes.

October. Making wine.

November. Ploughing.

December. Killing of Swine, and providing the good fare for Christmas.

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The following directions are written in Italian at the bottom of the plate: *If you will know when Easter shall be, find the date of the year in this engraving, the letter A. standing for April, and the letter M. for March.*

PLATE III. represents the planet Venus, she appears in the clouds riding in her chariot drawn by doves, accompanied by Cupid, who has just discharged an arrow at one of the ladies standing in the balcony; at a distance we see an unfortunate lover upon his knees, invoking the assistance of the deity; the rest of the figures appear to be immediately under the direction of her powerful influence. On the wheels of her chariot are represented the Bull and the Balance, with these inscriptions: TORO and BILANCE, the signs of the zodiac over which this planet was supposed to preside.

At the bottom of this and six other plates, are inscriptions importing the properties of the planets represented upon them. I shall give the following entirely as a specimen for the whole; one line of it only being copied upon the plate No. III.

VENERE. E SEGNO. FEMININO. POSTA. NEL. TERZO. CIELO.
FREDDA. E VMIDA. TENPERATA LA QVALE. AQVESTE. PROPRIETA.
EAMA BELL. VESTIMENTI. ORNATI. DORO. E DARGENTO. E
CHANZONE. E GAVDII. E GVOCHI. ET. E LACIVA. ET HA DOLCE
PARLARE. EBELLA NELLIOCHI. E NELLA. FRONTE. E DI. CORPO.
LEGGIERI. PIENA. DI CARNE. E DI. MEZZANA. STATVRA. DATA.
A. TVTTI. OPERE. CIRCA. ALLA. BELIZZA. ET. E SOTTO POSTO.
ALLEI. LOTTONE E. IL. SVO. GIORNO. EVENERDI. E LA. PRIMA.
HORA. 8. 15. ET 22. E. LA. NOTTE. SVA. E MARTE. DI. E IL. SVO.
AMICO. E GIOVE. EL NIMICO. MERCVRIO. ET. HA. DVE HABI-
TATIONNI. EL. TORO. DI. GIORNO. E LIBRA. DI. NOTTE. E PER-
CONSIGLIERE. EL. SOLE. E LAVITE. SVA. EX ALTATIONE. EIL
PESCE. ELA MORTE EDVMILIAZIONE. E VIRGO. E. VA. IN IOMESI,
IZSENGI. INCOMIN CANDO. DA. LIBERA. E IN 25. GIORNO. VA
VNO. SENGNO. E IN. VN GIORNO. VA VNO GRADO. E IZ. MINVTI.
E. IN VNA ORA. 30 MINVTI.

I thought two specimens sufficient to be engraved, in order to show the style in which these curious plates were executed. However, I doubt not but that a short description of the rest, will be also very acceptable to many of my readers.

GIOVA, *Jupiter*. He is seated in his chariot in the clouds, with a crown upon his head, and a dart in his left hand; before him is represented Ganymede kneeling, with a small vase in one hand, and a cup in the other. The chariot is drawn by two eagles, and on the wheels are the two signs Sagittarius and the Fishes, with the words SAGITARIO and PISCE. The distance is a mountainous country, with figures on horseback and on foot, hunting and hawking; in the foreground towards the right we see an emperor upon his throne with figures doing him homage; and to the left, three figures representing (as it is supposed) Boccace, Dante, and Petrarch seated in an alcove, &c. with the inscription underneath, beginning thus:

GIOVE. EPIANETA. MASCVLINO. POSTO. NEL SESTO. CIELO!
CALDO. E HVMIDO. TEMPERATO. DI NATURA. DARIA. DOLCE.
SANGVIGNO. SPERANTE. &c.

SOLE, *the Sun*. He is represented splendidly armed, with a crown upon his head, and seated in his chariot, drawn by four horses; upon the chariot wheel is the zodiacal sign of the Lion, inscribed beneath LEO. In the back-ground we see a castle upon an hill, and some figures shooting at a mark with cross-bows; near them are two men praying to a crucifix; others are diverting themselves with mock fights, and a laughable figure of a dwarf is standing by them with a sword under his arm; others again are throwing stones and wrestling, whilst in the front an emperor is seated, and three tumblers are depicted before him, exhibiting their feats of activity. The inscription begins in this manner:

SOLE. E. PIANETA. MASCVLINO. POSTO. NEL QVARTO. CIELO.
CALDO. E. SECHO. INFOCATO. CHOLERICO. DI. COLORE. DORO. &c.
MARTE

MARTE, *Mars*. He is seated in his chariot, drawn by two horses, and represented compleatly armed, with wings upon his head, and a sword in his right hand; upon the wheels of the chariot are expressed the Ram and the Scorpion, two signs of the zodiac, and under them is written ARIETE and SCARPIONE. At a small distance is a castle, with figures fighting before it, and a man is represented ringing the alarm bell; in the fore-ground, a foraging party of soldiers are seen falling upon a company of herdsmen, and seizing their cattle, the inscription begins in the following manner:

MARTE. ESENGNO. MASCULINI. POSTO. NEL QUARTO. CEILO,
MOLTO. CALDO. FOCOSO. ET HA QUESTE. PROPRIETE. DAMARE.
MILIZIA. BATTAGLE. ET UCCISIONI. MALIGNO. DISCORDINATO, &c.

SATVRNO, *Saturn*. He is seated in his chariot, drawn by two dragons, in his right-hand he holds a scythe, and upon the wheels of the chariot are two signs, the Goat and the Water-Bearer, inscribed CAPRICORNO and AQUARIO; the distant country is bounded with mountains, and with castles, and a figure is represented hanging upon a gallows holding a cross in his hands; near to the spectator is seen a man ploughing with two oxen, in a large space, overflowed with water, and other men are thrashing corn in the open field. Towards the left appears an hermitage surmounted with a cross, and the hermit is seated at the door, near which is a man cutting wood, and two other labourers with their tools; in the fore-ground, to the right, is a prison, and before it a man seated with his legs and arms in the stocks, and two grotesque figures are standing in the front; towards the left are men killing hogs, one of which is hanged upon a tree. The inscription at bottom begins as follow:

SATVRNO. E PIANETA. MASCVLINO. POSTO, NEL SETIMO.
CIELO. FRIDDO. E SECHO. MA. ACCIDEITAL MENTE. HVMIDO.
DI NATVRA. DI TERRA, &c.

MERCVRIO, *Mercury*. He is represented in his chariot, holding his caduceus and drawn by two birds like hawks; on the wheels of his chariot are two zodiacal signs, the Virgin and the Twins, inscribed VIRGO and GEMINI; we are here presented with the inside of a city; in the back-ground is a view of a street, and in the front, towards the right, a large building, which the workmen are decorating with ornaments; below appears the potter with a variety of small vessels, and in the front the sculptor carving a head in stone; above him are two philosophers holding a celestial sphere, and near them a table covered with viands; in the buildings towards the left, we see a musician playing upon an organ; it is singular enough that the bellows, by means of which the instrument is supplied with wind, resembles the common bellows which we have in our houses at this day; in a compartment below, are two figures at a table writing, and a third is regulating a clock. The perspective, in which science the artist had here an opportunity of shewing his abilities, is most dreadfully defective. The inscription at the bottom begins in this manner:

MERCURIO. E PIANETA. MASEVLINO. POSTO NEL SECONDO-
CIELO. ET SECHO. MA PERCHE. LA SUA. SICCITA. E MOLTO
PASSIVA LVI. E FREDO. &c.

LVNA, the *Moon*. She is seated in her chariot, drawn by two females, holding a bow in her left-hand, and a dart in her right; upon the wheel of the chariot is the zodiacal sign of the Crab, with the Latin name CANCER, written underneath it. The distance represents a mountainous country, with a castle and a town, very rudely executed. Nearer to the eye is a fowler setting his nets, figures fishing in a boat, and a man shooting at a flock of birds with a bow and arrow; near him, some people are seated at a table playing at dice; in the fore-ground, towards the left, is a water-mill, part of the wheel of which appears, and a bridge over the river upon which we see a man on horse-
back

back, and an ass fallen down under his load; beneath the bridge are naked figures in the water fishing with a net. The inscription at the bottom of the plate begins as follows:

LA LVNA. E PIANETA. FEMININO. POSTO. NEL PRIMO. CIELO.
FREDA. E. VMIDA. FLEMATICHA. MEZANA TRA EL MONDO.
SVPERIORE ET LO. INFERIORE. AMA. LA GEOMETRIA, &c.

These curious and valuable specimens of ancient engravings are in the collection of Dr. Monro, with whose permission I copied the two above described.

P L A T E I V.

This singular curiosity is already spoken of in the fourth chapter of this Essay; there is the greatest reason to believe that it was engraved in England, and the plate itself bears every mark of great antiquity. It had a hole at the top quite through it, by which it appears to have been fastened with a nail to the wall, perhaps of some religious place, and to this circumstance, it is not improbable, we owe its preservation. The scratches and other defacements which it has sustained from the hand of time, could not be removed without danger of destroying the originality of the engraved work, and for that reason, it was conceived to be much better to let them remain as they are, than run any hazard that was not absolutely necessary. This plate is in my own possession.

The prayers contained upon the plate are, as my readers will readily see, in Latin; but as this work may fall into the hands of some persons unacquainted with the old manuscript form of letters, which are here closely imitated, I have transcribed them (some few words excepted, which are by no means intelligible to me.)

O R A T I O D E O M N I B U S S A N C T I S.

Gaude mater salvatoris
Felix fide flos decoris
Mundique solatium
Nunc letare celi choris
Ju hoc festo et langoris
Nostri sis remedium.

Gaude Michael in hac die
Gabriel Raphaelque Messie
Augelorum ordines
Nos precamur nobis pie
Sitis causa melodie
Supra celi cardines

Gaude ventre conservatus
O Baptista mire natus
Sacer degens seculo
Patriarchis sociatus
Et prophetis viae flatus
Fac finire jubilo

Gaude Petre cum sodali
Paulo Christo speciali
Luceus orbis climata
Et caterva generali
Vestri sita loco tali
Nos cum iis adjuva.

Gaude Thoma spes auglorum
Et Georgi tutor horum
Cum Edwardo nobili
Tu Laurenti rege lorum
Ut tuamur poli chorum
Cum favore Stephani.

Gaude presul O martine
Nicholae hugo lini
Posse nobis gratiam
Erkenwalde que Birine
Jam cum tuis augustine
Da supremo gloriam.

Gaude virgo Katerina
Margaretta Magdalena
Cum Brigida
Auna fides & Christina
Nos servando divina
Geus celorum jubila
Amen letamini in Domino &c.
Et Gloria omnes.

Concede

Concede quibus omnipotens Deus ut intercessio sanctæ Dei genetricis Mariæ sanctarum
que omnium celestium virtutum & beatorum patriarcharum prophetarum apostolorum
evangelistarum martyrorum confessorum atque virginum & omnium electorum tuorum
nos ubique letificet ut dum eorum merita recolemus præmia sentiamus
per eundem Christum dominum nostrum amen.

The words printed in *Italics*, are such as are very difficult to decypher; and I am by no means certain, that the true meaning is given to them. In the seventh prayer, there are two words which I cannot explain.

P L A T E V.

An emblematical subject in which an engraver is represented at work. This print is faithfully copied from a very ancient engraving of the same size, in the collection of Dr. Monro. The letter F. which appears upon the stone near the hand of the artist, gives some plausibility for supposing the plate to have been the work of Finiguerra. See a more particular account of it in the fourth chapter of this Essay.

P L A T E VI.

The Virgin and Child, from a print of the same size, engraved by Andrea Mantegna. The original is in my own possession.

P L A T E VII.

This curious Engraving is taken from the edition of Dante, printed at Florence, 1481, and served as a Frontispiece to the seventeenth Canto; the original was consequently engraved by Boticelli, or by Baldini, from the designs of Boticelli. A full account of this Book and of the Plates belonging to it, will be given in the Second Volume of this work; there are xix in the beautiful Specimen possessed by — Wilbraham, Esq; of Hill Street, Berkeley Square, from which, with his permission, the present plate is taken

ON THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF INVENTIONS.

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The words printed in Italics are very difficult to decipher, and I am by no means certain that the true meaning is given to them. In the former part, there are two words which I cannot explain.

PLATE V.

An engraving of a design in which an engraver is represented at work. The plate is a faithful copy from a very ancient engraving of the same kind in the collection of Dr. Meuschen. The letter K, which appears upon the right hand side of the work, is some plainness for the sake of the plate to have been engraved in England. See a more particular account of it in the fourth chapter of this Essay.

PLATE VI.

The Virgin and Child, from a print of the same size engraved by Andrea Mantegna. The original is in my own possession.

