



Thomas Crawford, the Sculptor.

MASTERS OF ART AND
LITERATURE.

Sixth Article.

THOMAS CRAWFORD.



AMONG the greatest of modern sculptors must be classed the subject of this notice, Thomas Crawford, whose numerous works have commanded the admiration of nations as well as of individuals, and whose name is now a household word in America. He was born on the 22d of March, 1814, in New-York City. He early manifested a taste for art, and when a mere boy had his studio, where were gathered the promiscuous art-treasures and tools of which he became possessed. His father, a highly intelligent

gentleman, while he encouraged his boy to a career of scholastic study, laid no obstacles in his way to retard the development of his genius for Art; and thus he became not only a successful scholar, but a real devotee at the shrines of the sculptor and painter. Making choice of his profession, he entered the *atelier* of a carver in wood, pursuing the study of architecture at the same time. This wood-work, though highly ingenious, failed to satisfy his cravings for a free use of his genius; and after a while he entered the studios of Mr. Frazer and Mr. Launitz, who, detecting the native talent of the boy, directed it into proper channels. He labored with an earnestness and persistence almost incredible, for he resolved to leap over no difficulties, but to master them all. This indomitable energy and untiring industry he carried with him through life, as must be apparent when we consider the multitude of his works.

The desire to visit Italy, and there pursue his studies under the great masters, with the noble remains of the Antique for companionship, became the one fixed idea which he eventually saw realized through the kindness of indulgent parents. He sailed for Leghorn in 1834, and in seventy days entered Rome, to the realization of his dreams. Having a letter from Mr. Launitz to Thorwaldsen—the immortal Dane, whose works place him beside Canova—he was kindly received by the generous-hearted man, and immediately given quarters in his studio. Under his pupilage, Thomas advanced with wonderful rapidity, winning the confidence of his great master to an eminent degree, while his busts served greatly to advance his reputation with visitors. He finally opened a studio of his own; and now, thrown upon his own resources by the death of his excellent father, began the responsible struggles of life. How he discharged his duties, his works and his reputation attest.

In 1839 he designed his "Orpheus," showing, in the choice of his subject, the originality and power of his genius. He labored upon it so intensely as to induce a brain fever, which prostrated him very low. Recovering, he recommenced his labor of love, but only to induce a relapse which very nearly proved fatal! He at last regained his strength, and immediately entered upon the labor of reproducing the "Orpheus" in marble for the Boston Athenaeum, by which the work had been ordered. This work is pronounced by competent authority one of the greatest of modern marbles. It elicited encomiums of the most gratifying character. An English connoisseur wrote: "If Crawford is sustained in his art, and keeps his health, he will be the first of *modern* sculptors; nay, an American may rival Phidias. He has completed the mould of his 'Orpheus,' which some of the best judges, even in the mould, compare to the 'Apollo.' Gibson, chary and cold in praise, spoke of it to me as a most extraordinary promise of eminence in art. I know that Thorwaldsen has expressed the same opinion, and esteems Crawford as his successor in the severe classic style." This shows the estimation in which our young countryman was held by those best capable of judging.

The works succeeding his "Orpheus" are thus mentioned by the same authority above quoted: "He has produced several bas-reliefs of very great merit. Among these some from Anacreon are destined

for the Boston Atheneum. He has also been engaged on a large bas-relief for Mr. Tiffany, of Baltimore, in illustration of the words, 'Lead us into life everlasting.' It is understood that this is intended for a monument. Another work by him is a small figure, 'Genius of Autumn,' for Mr. Paine, of New-York; also a small statue for Mr. Jonathan Phillips, of Boston, a repetition of which has been ordered by Mr. Tiffany, of Baltimore." In 1845 he projected several large works, bas-reliefs, representing the great poets of ancient and modern times. Commissions from his countrymen were quite numerous. For Mr. Hicks, of New-York, he executed his "Genius of Mirth;" for Mr. Collins, "the Shepherdess;" an ideal bust of "Sappho," for Mr. Charles Parker, of Boston; and busts of "Tragedy," a "Vestal, &c., &c." Indeed the bare enumeration of his models and drawings would fill this page. They embrace every variety of subjects—from the magnificent "Adam and Eve"—"Family suffering under the rain of Fiery Serpents," five figures; "Mother and Child in the Deluge;" "David," a statue; "David before Saul," a bas-relief; "The Shepherds and Wise Men presenting Offerings," bas relief of twenty-four figures; "Christ disputing with the Doctors," bas-relief of twelve figures; "Christ restoring the Blind," bas-relief; "Christ and the Woman of Samaria," bas-relief; Christ restoring life to the daughter of Jairus," group of four figures; "Christ blessing Little Children," bas-relief of fourteen figures; "Christ ascending from the Tomb," bas-relief of five figures; "Prayer," a statue; "Angel teaching Children to Pray," a group of three figures; "Landing of Columbus," group of five figures; three statues of Washington, all differing; two designs for Washington monuments; equestrian statues of Washington; sketches for the statues of Franklin, Jefferson, Channing, Alston, Henry Clay, &c., &c., &c. All these serve to mark the varied genius of the artist, and his untiring industry as a worker. In 1845 he writes: "I regret that I have not a hundred hands to keep pace with the workings of my mind." Such was his ardor in his profession.

Among Mr. Crawford's later works may be mentioned the statue of Beethoven, owned by Charles Perkins, of Boston; the many designs for the pediment, and doors and interior statues for the Capitol at Washington, and the equestrian Washington and surrounding statues of Revolutionary

heroes, for the Capitol Square at Richmond. All of these last named works are on a gigantic scale, and show great boldness in conception, fine harmony with surroundings, grace in execution, and American spirit in their language. They have served to place the artist at the head of American, and, as we have said, among the greatest of modern, sculptors and designers.

Of the works on the Washington Capitol it is unnecessary to speak in detail—the country is already familiar with them from comments of the press and representations in our pictorial papers and magazines. The pediment of the northern wing of the building is given up wholly to Mr. Crawford's designs, to which we may briefly refer. In the centre is the statue "Genius of America," which we reproduce. The left hand of the figure is pointing to the Pioneer, whose axe is swung in air to lay the tree before him. Then we have the Hunter, a fine figure of a man returned from the chase, with his game slung over his shoulder, while his dog rests at his side. Next is an Indian chief sitting upon a stone, his tomahawk dropped at its side. The attitude is one of profound thought, the head resting upon the hand, and the elbow upon the knee. This is a finely conceived statue. The Indian's wife, with babe clasped to her breast, sits upon the ground at his left, leaning upon the stone seat of the chief. All this group, typical of the changes wrought by Saxon settlement in America, is admirably conceived, and pleasing to the beholder. To the right of the centre figure we first have the continental soldier, standing erect, in the act of drawing his sword for the defence of his rights. Then the figure of Commerce—a merchant sitting upon a bale, his hand resting upon a globe before him, which is surmounted on a chest of tea. His right foot reposes upon a box of specie, near which lie bags of it—all eminently suggestive of the commercial prosperity which followed upon our liberty. Next are two youths in the act of offering themselves to the service of their country. Then comes Education—an instructor with a youth at his side, poring over the open book before them. Last comes the figure of Mechanism, recumbent, with left arm thrown over a cog-wheel, the hand clasping the handle of the hammer. This is a noble and suggestive figure. The effect of the whole will be very impressive; and may it stand for untold centuries, not only as a monument to the great sculptor's genius, but

also as one of the crowning glories of the Capitol of an *inseparable* Union!

The Virginia Equestrian Washington is a most magnificent work. An account of its casting at the celebrated Munich foundery, together with a *fete* given the sculptor by Müller, the founder, to the sculptor, was given in the November number, 1856, of this Journal. In Munich it was regarded as a perfect triumph of Art, and a crowning glory to the artist's fame, and it is now pronounced one of the noblest bronzes in the world. When surmounted upon its pedestal at Richmond, and surrounded by its associate statues of Patrick Henry, Jefferson, &c., it will form a fitting *centre piece* of the Old Dominion State.

Mr. Crawford paid several visits to his native land during the interval from 1839 to 1856, generally to adjust commissions and designs. At each visit he was received with every mark of respect, as a man and artist, by his countrymen. Upon the occasion of one of his visits to his native country Mr. C. was wedded to Miss Louise C. Ward, daughter of the late Samuel C. Ward, banker, of New-York City, and niece of Mrs. John W. Francis.

The readers of the Journal have already been informed of Mr. Crawford's terrible suffering through a cancerous tumor behind the left eye. He came to this country in the summer of 1856, when it was first discovered that his left eye protruded, showing disease behind it. Becoming very painful, he went to Paris for advice and relief. Rest was prescribed; but rest to Mr. C. seemed impossible. Passing on to Rome he entered upon his labors with his accustomed energy. A great aggravation of the disease followed. The eye was then subject to examination, when it was found that there was a cancerous tumor on the socket of the orb, which not only threatened the loss of his eye but also of his life. He repaired again to Paris, but with only a temporary relief. The disease gained upon the most eminent skill of French and English surgeons; and now, as we write (October 5th), it is thought that Thomas Crawford is no more. By every late steamer news has come of his terrible suffering, borne with the most heroic fortitude, and submission to the will of Him who rules the destinies of all; and the last message from the afflicted wife was that her suffering husband could hold out but a little while longer. Alas that this should be written of one so gifted, so young, so good!