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"Hope" by Edward Burne-Jones

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well as the ground, and then darned back in the pattern. In the case of this relic bag, however, it is difficult to determine whether any threads have been withdrawn or whether, to form the mesh, the threads have merely been counted and bound together in threes. This seems the more probable explanation after examining the linen ground of the band of embroidery in plait stitch, where in places the silk threads have rotted and disappeared, leaving conspicuous holes. These give the appearance of a regular mesh although, along the edge where there has been no embroidery, the threads of the linen retain their original loose cloth weave.

The rosettes and stars in the bands of openwork are the creamy color of undyed linen but the mesh which forms the background is worked in blocks of color, green, red, blue, and ivory silk. Warm neutral red silk<sup>1</sup> lies under both strips of openwork. The same silk, underlaid with linen, is used as the ground of a strip of embroidery in interlacing stitch which separates the band of eight-pointed rosettes from the band of eight-pointed stars.

Because the interlacing stitch is worked in silk on a silk ground it is vaguely reminiscent of a piece of Indian, Kathiawar, embroidery of the nineteenth century. Closer parallels, however, can be found among German mediaeval embroideries, although most of these are worked in white linen on a white linen ground. Examples of this type are illustrated by Dr. Marie Schuette, in *Gestickte Bildteppiche und Decken des Mittelalters*.<sup>2</sup> One, an altar cloth with, in the center, Christ enthroned, framed in a mandorla, belonging to the Benedictine Convent of Lüne,<sup>3</sup> has been attributed to the middle of the thirteenth century. Another altar cloth,<sup>4</sup> attributed to the second half of the thirteenth century, in the Convent of Isenhagen, also worked in part in interlacing stitch, is covered with geometric and conventional figures including angular birds and animals as well as stars and rosettes. If this were not unquestionably a piece of mediaeval work we should be tempted to look for the source of these designs in the German pattern books for lace and embroidery, printed during the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> While a search such as this could only have been undertaken by Alice on the other side of the Looking Glass, at least we find here a clear indication that, when printing made possible the wide distribution of patterns for needlework, designers had at their disposal a long established tradition to which to turn for material.

If we compare the small figures on the relic bag from Mainz with those on the Isenhagen altar cloth, we will find many points of similarity. On both in addition to rosettes, stars, etc., there is a crested peacock with a branching tail. Though these peacocks are not identical, they are rendered in a very similar manner, and the counterpart of the eagle on

one of the armorial shields appears on the altar cloth.

For evidence of the use of plait stitch in mediaeval Germany we may refer to the fine chasuble, dating from the twelfth century, which, in 1805, was taken from the Monastery of St. Blaise in the Black Forest to the Monastery of St. Paul in Carinthia.<sup>1</sup> There is also evidence of the use, in thirteenth century needlework, of a fine rectangular mesh ground composed of threads, bound together in groups, to be found in another altar cloth from the Convent of Lüne.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Schuette points out the similarity between this ground and that seen in Italian drawn work of the Renaissance.

A narrow band of red silk, like that on which the interlacing stitch is worked and which underlies the strips of openwork, crosses the plain linen lining of the bag. On it, worked in chainstitch, are the words *HADEWIGIS ME FECIT*. With this as a clue, and with the additional evidence of the armorial shields, we may at least hope that further research will establish the identity of the maker of this curious and charming piece of mediaeval needlework.

GERTRUDE TOWNSEND.

#### "Hope" by Edward Burne-Jones

THE work of Burne-Jones is out of fashion. More than any of the major figures among the Pre-Raphaelites and their successors, he found in his art a means of escape, a way to withdraw into a *hortus inclusus* where the artist alone could dwell, remote from the horrors bred by the industrial revolution. Thus, with Burne-Jones, we enter into a world created by an artist's imagination which drew hardly at all upon the clash of contemporary life, but was nourished on the sagas and romances of an imaginary golden age in a distant past. It is not surprising, therefore, that in these days when artists go to the factory, the farm, and the sidewalk for inspiration, the art of Burne-Jones should seem remote and artificial. Yet if honest craftsmanship, grace of design, sincere and tender sentiment mean anything in the arts, Burne-Jones has earned some remembrance; all the more since through him speaks the Victorian idealism which strove, however unsuccessfully, against the growing obsession with the pursuit of wealth which marked the nineteenth century.

The painting of *Hope*,<sup>3</sup> which has recently been given to the Museum expresses fully Burne-Jones's ideas and capacities. Mrs. George Marston Whitin, mother of the four donors of the picture, had in 1896 commissioned a painting of a dancing figure from the artist. Before he had begun work, however, William Morris died. Morris was Burne-Jones's lifelong and most intimate friend; and in his grief,

<sup>1</sup>Dreger, Moriz, *Kuenstlerische Entwicklung der Weberei und Stickerei*, Vienna, 1904, vol. II, pl. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Schuette, Marie, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pls. 29-32.

<sup>3</sup>Oil on canvas, 70½ x 25 in. (179 x 63.5 cm.). Signed, lower right: E. BURNE-JONES / Finished 1896. Given in memory of Mrs. George Marston Whitin by her four daughters, Mrs. Laurence Murray Keeler, Mrs. Sydney Russell Mason, Mrs. Elijah Kent Swift, and Mrs. William Carey Crane.

<sup>1</sup>Plain cloth weave, untwisted silk.

<sup>2</sup>Leipzig, 1927 and 1930.

<sup>3</sup>Vol. I, pls. 37 and 38.

<sup>4</sup>Schuette, Marie, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pl. 27.

<sup>5</sup>Lotz, Arthur, *Bibliographie der Modelbuecher*, Leipzig, 1933.



Hope

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898)

Given in memory of Mrs. George Marston Whitin by her daughters,  
Mrs. Laurence Murray Keeler, Mrs. Sydney Russell Mason, Mrs.  
Elijah Kent Swift, and Mrs. William Carey Crane

the artist asked whether he might paint, instead of the dancing figure, an oil version of a water color entitled *Spes*, which he had painted in 1872 as one of a series of three, the others representing *Fides* and *Temperantia*. To this proposal Mrs. Whitin agreed, and the painting was finished before the end of the year. In 1897 it had arrived in America, and was the subject of an interesting letter from Burne-Jones.<sup>1</sup> "Did I tell you that 'Hope' had got safely to America? For a long time I didn't know a word about it, and thought that as it had been bought without having been seen by the purchasers they were disappointed with it, and was going to write to them to ask them to send it back. But they are very pleased with it. They say, however, they have hung it up without a glass, to see it better, because of reflections in it. They could manage that by sloping it or in some way. I like a picture so much better under glass, it is like a kind of aethereal varnish. It is wonderful to me how people don't see that a picture under glass is so much more beautiful than without it—they are so insensitive. But they must do as they like with it. They can hang it upside down if they will."

The oil painting is almost the same size as the water color,<sup>2</sup> but differs from it in the architectural detail being more elaborate, in having a plain instead of a tiled floor seen at a different angle, and in including the upraised hand of the figure which in the water color is cut by the upper edge of the painting. The variations are on the whole an improvement. The greater enrichment of the architecture in the lower half is better in accord with the convolutions of the drapery and with the rich patterning of the background scenery, so giving greater unity of texture; while the change in the angle of the floor relates the figure and its setting more closely. Painted as they were at an interval of twenty-four years, some marked differences in style might have been expected. But by 1872, the date of the water color, Burne-Jones's methods and outlook were well matured, and thenceforward did not change greatly. In a letter written in 1871 after a visit to Italy,<sup>3</sup> Burne-Jones writes "now I care most for Michael Angelo, Luca Signorelli, Mantegna, Giotto, Botticelli, Andrea del Sarto, Paolo Uccello, and Piero della Francesca"; and adds later "Giotto at Santa Croce, and Botticelli everywhere, and Orcagna in the Inferno at Santa Maria Novella, and Luca Signorelli at Orvieto, and Michael Angelo always . . . seemed full of the inspiration that I went to look for." In neither the oil nor the water color are these enthusiasms all equally reflected. As in everything Burne-Jones painted, the affection for artists such as Giotto, Andrea del Sarto, and Michelangelo is revealed as strictly Platonic; and in both paintings the main inspiration of the pose of the figure, and of the elaborate linear rhythms of the design, is from Botticelli, while

influence from Mantegna appears in the metallic convolutions of the drapery. The difference between the two paintings is mainly that, in the oil, the decorative elements as compared with the expressive are somewhat more stressed, witness to a general tendency in all Burne-Jones's later work.

As usual with Burne-Jones, symbolism plays a considerable part in the picture. A branch of apple-blossom held by the figure is one form of a traditional attribute of Hope, who in mediaeval Italian art was sometimes represented holding flowers, a flowering branch, or a cornucopia.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, the conception seems to be the artist's own. The significance of the barred window and of the ankle fettered to the wall is reinforced by the periwinkle which grows on the floor; since, in early times, a garland of that plant was placed on the heads of persons on their way to execution, whence, perhaps, comes the Italian name for periwinkle of *fiore di morte*. In contrast is the upturned face and uplifted hand of the figure, and the sunlit landscape outside the window, with the distant mountains, suggestive of the psalmist's words "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." The blue cloud or veil in the upper part of the picture has been explained as symbolizing a promise from heaven of future deliverance,<sup>2</sup> though it may equally well represent the lifting of doubt or despair. Hope was a favorite subject with Burne-Jones. It was treated in ways quite different from that employed in the Museum's picture, in a water color in 1862; in a cartoon for stained glass in 1871; in a design on vellum in gold in 1897; and in a design in pencil for metal work which was apparently never carried out. Characteristic also of the artist is the workmanship of the painting and consequently its excellent state of preservation. Like the first generation of the Pre-Raphaelites, Burne-Jones set considerable store on using good materials and sound methods. In his early work, ignorance sometimes defeated good intentions; but his later work attains a high level of craftsmanship. His method was to build up a painting in many stages, leaving the paint to harden thoroughly after each one, while the final varnish was sometimes not applied until after several years.<sup>3</sup> In his own words, "you don't succeed with any process until you find out how you may knock it about and in what you must be careful. Slowly built up texture in oil painting gives you the best chance of changing without damage when it is necessary"; adding later, "a picture that looks as if it had been painfully struggled with looks rather dreadful, but a picture with no workmanship in it is a very tiresome thing too."<sup>4</sup> Modern opinion may ignore Burne-Jones as an artist, but many modern painters might profit from his example as a craftsman.

W. G. CONSTABLE.

<sup>1</sup>G. B.-J., *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 1906, II, 306.

<sup>2</sup>This measures 69 x 24¼ in. It was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, London, 1877, and at the New Gallery, London, 1893; and is reproduced in Malcolm Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, 1898, opp. p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>G. B.-J., *op. cit.*, II, 26.

<sup>1</sup>See Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, under *Speranza*; and Mâle, *L'Art Religieux au fin du Moyen Age*, 321.

<sup>2</sup>Julia Cartwright, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, n.d. 17; Malcolm Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, 1898, 112.

<sup>3</sup>Malcolm Bell, *op. cit.*, 120.

<sup>4</sup>G. B.-J., *op. cit.*, II, 275.