

Medallions in the Chapel of St. Martin of Tours

THE chapel of St. Martin of Tours of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine is known to all lovers of ecclesiastical art as one of the most beautiful examples of early Gothic architecture in this country.

The windows have been designed and made in a type of grisaille which includes bands and spots of pure color, with a background of silvery glass, on which runs a flowing pattern of foliated ornament.

It was the intention when these windows were placed to add at some future time medallions illustrating the life of St. Martin of Tours, to replace important circular units in the grisaille. This work has recently been undertaken, and the medallions will be completed and placed some time late this summer.

The St. Martin of Tours medallions are to occupy the three centre lancets of the group of windows. St. Louis of France is to be represented in four medallions in the centre lancet of the left group of three, while St. Joan of Arc is to be represented in the centre lancet of the right group.

The life of St. Martin of Tours is rich in colorful incidents. It has been the purpose of Mr. Connick and his associates in designing the cartouches to use the more significant of these incidents as symbols rather than as actual pictorial delineations. This distinction is really an appreciation of the greatest possibilities of the craft, as well as an acknowledgment of its limitations. Stained glass is the greatest medium in the world for the expression of ideas in simple form, in terms of pure color. Those familiar with the great masterpieces in the cathedrals of France and England, especially Chartres and Canterbury, will at once appreciate, as they recall those beautiful windows, the predominance of color in their memories of them. Form is, of course, extremely important, but the old masters never attempted to copy slavishly the details implied in an incident and its surroundings. They used even the human figure more like a symbol of a deed or an action, with accessories chosen to enhance the character of the design, rather than to give a realistic conception of the matter.

These medallions of the life of St. Martin have been wrought out in the same spirit, not only because they are to enrich a structure which belongs to a period when the stained glass medallion was at its highest development, but also because the beautiful medium, stained glass, best expresses its message of color and light when it is treated in this sincere, straightforward manner.

The incidents chosen for the Life of St. Martin are as follows: (They begin at the lower left, and end at the upper right of the centre group of three lancets.)

First—St. Martin as a boy enters the army.

Second—He shares his cloak with the beggar.

Third—While sleeping he has a vision of Christ enthroned wearing the severed cloak.

Fourth—His baptism.

Fifth—He converts a robber from his evil ways.

Sixth—He restores a man from death in the monastery.

Seventh—He is welcomed with affectionate rejoicing upon his return to Tours.

Eighth—He destroys the temples of the heathen.

Ninth—He intercedes with the cruel Count Avitians for the release of captives.

Tenth—He pleads for the life of Priscillian.

Eleventh—His death.

Twelfth—The ship bearing his body is propelled mysteriously without the use of a sail.

The first eight of these medallions are reproduced herewith, and it is to be hoped that they may reveal in black and white some of the qualities of lustrous color which will give them a vitality and charm impossible to describe.

The St. Louis medallions include the following subjects from the life of that great-hearted, much-loved King of France:

First—His coronation.

Second—His release of prisoners from the Paris prisons.

Third—Serving sick soldiers during the first Crusade.

Fourth—Departure on the second Crusade.

The four medallions represent St. Joan of Arc in her vivid short life are:

First—Her vision.

Second—The Capture of Orleans.

Third—The coronation of Charles VII.

Fourth—Her martyrdom.

It is interesting to know in relation to the designing and making of these medallions that Mr. Connick's workshop has the same atmosphere of friendly cooperation, and the same spirit of eager delight in beautiful work well done, that must have characterized the groups striving so happily together in the golden age of the craft.

Mr. Earl Edward Sanborn, who drew the cartoons for these medallions, is a graduate of the Museum School of Fine Arts of Boston, and at present holds the Paige Traveling Scholarship. He will visit France and England this summer for the purpose of studying the great examples of the craft in the principal cathedrals and small churches of those countries.

Mr. Lawrence Peterson, who will assist in this work, is also a graduate of the Museum School of Boston. Others whose services will be enlisted are Arturo Marena, a graduate of the Institute of Fine Arts of Naples; Mr. and Mrs. Oron Skinner, graduates of the School of Fine Arts, Rochester, N. Y.; Mr. Trovatore Mainini, William A. Rowe and Ernest Connick.

It must be encouraging to all those who are interested in the enrichment of church interiors to know that the noble old craft, stained glass, is still a vivid means of sincere expression. Its advancement is made possible by a growing appreciation on the part of all thoughtful people who glory in the spiritual ideals, and their expression in all possible mediums.—(Advertisement.)



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in the St. Martin of Tours Chapel
Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York

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