

Mark Twain

Old Saint Paul's

Who can look upon this venerable edifice, with its clustering memories and old traditions, without emotion! Who can contemplate its scarred and blackened walls without drifting insensibly into dreams of the historic past! Who can hold to be trivial even the least detail or appurtenance of this stately national altar! It is with diffidence that I approach the work of description, it is with humility that I offer the thoughts that crowd upon me.

Upon arriving at Saint Paul's, the first thing that bursts upon the beholder is the back yard. This fine work of art is forty—three feet long by thirty-four and a half feet wide—and all enclosed with real iron railings. The pavement is of fine oolite, or skylight, or some other stone of that geologic period, and is laid almost flat on the ground, in places. The stones are exactly square, and it is thought that they were made so by design; though of course, as in all matters of antiquarian science there are wide differences of opinion about this. The architect of the pavement was Morgan Jones, of No. 4 Piccadilly, Cheapside, Islington. He died in the reign of Richard III, of the prevailing disorder. An ax fell on his neck. The coloring of the pavement is very beautiful, and will immediately attract the notice of the visitor. Part of it is white and the other part black. The part that is white has been washed. This was

done upon the occasion of the coronation of George II, and the person who did it was knighted, as the reader will already have opined. The iron railings cannot be too much admired. They were designed and constructed by Ralph Benson, of No. 9 Grace Church Street, Fen Church Street, Upper Terrace, Tottenham Court Road, Felter Lane, London, C. E., by special appointment blacksmith to His Royal Majesty, George III, of gracious memory, and were done at his own shop, by his own hands, and under his own personal supervision. Relics of this great artist's inspiration are exceedingly rare, and are valued at enormous sums; however, two shovels and a horseshoe made by him are on file at the British Museum, and no stranger should go away from London without seeing them. One of the shovels is undoubtedly genuine, but all authorities agree that the other one is spurious. It is not known which is the spurious one, and this is unfortunate, for nothing connected with this great man can be deemed of trifling importance. It is said that he was buried at Westminster Abbey, but was taken up and hanged in chains at Tyburn at the time of the Restoration, under the impression that he was Cromwell. But this is considered doubtful, by some, because he was not yet born at the time of the Restoration. The railings are nine feet three inches high, from the top of the stone pediment to the spearheads that form the apex, and twelve feet four inches high from the ground to the apex, the stone pediment being three feet one inch high, all of solid stone. The railings are not merely stood up on the pediment, but are mortised in, in the most ravishing manner. It was originally intended to make the railings two

inches higher than they are, but the idea was finally abandoned, for some reason or other. This is greatly to be regretted, because it makes the fence out of proportion to the rest of Saint Paul's, and seriously mars the general effect. The spearheads upon the tops of the railings were gilded upon the death of Henry VIII, out of respect for the memory of that truly great King. The artist who performed the work was knighted by the regency, and hanged by Queen Mary when she came into power.

The stone pediment upon which the iron railings stand was designed and erected by William Marlow, of 14 Threadneedle Street, Paternoster Row, St. Gile's, Belgravia, W. C., and is composed of alternate layers of rock, one above the other, and all cemented together in the most compact and impressive manner. The style of its architecture is a combination of the Pre-Raphaelite and the Renaissance—just enough of the Pre-Raphaelite to make it firm and substantial, and just enough of the Renaissance to impart to the whole a calm and gracious expression. There is nothing like this stone wall in England. We have no such artists nowadays. To find true art, we must go back to the past. Let the visitor note the tone of this wall, and the feeling. No work of art can be intelligently and enjoyably contemplated unless you know about tone and feeling, and can tell at a glance which is the tone and which is the feeling—and can talk about it with the guidebook shut up. I will venture to say that there is more tone in that stone wall than was ever hurled into a stone wall before; and as for feeling, it is just suffocated with it. As a whole, this fence is absolutely without its equal. If Michael Angelo

could have seen this fence, would he have wasted his years sitting on a stone worshipping the cathedral of Florence? No; he would have spent his life gazing at this fence, and he would have taken a wax impression of it with him when he died. Michael Angelo and I may be considered extravagant, but as for me, if you simply mention art, I cannot be calm. I can go down on my knees before one of those decayed and venerable old masters that you have to put a sign on to tell which side of it you are looking at, and I do not want any bread, I do not want any meat, I do not want any air to breathe—I can *live* in the tone and the feeling of it. Expression—expression is the thing—in art. I do not care what it expresses, and I cannot most always some times tell, generally, but expression is what I worship, it is what I glory in, with all my impetuous nature. All the traveling world are just like me.

Marlow, the architect and builder of the stone pediment I was speaking of, was the favorite pupil of the lamented Hugh Miller, and worked in the same quarry with him. Specimens of the stone, for the cabinet, can be easily chipped off by the tourist with his hammer, in the customary way. I will observe that the stone was brought from a quarry on the Surrey side, near London. You can go either by Blackfriars Bridge, or Westminster Bridge or the Thames tunnel—fare, two shillings in a cab. It is best seen at sunrise, though many prefer moonlight.

The front yard of Saint Paul's is just like the back yard, except that it is adorned with a very noble and imposing statue of a black woman, which is said to have resembled Queen Anne, in some respects. It is five feet four

inches high from the top of the figure to the pedestal, and nine feet seven inches from the top of the figure to the ground, the pedestal being four feet three inches high—all of solid stone. The figure measures eleven inches around the arm, and fifty-three inches around the body. The rigidity of the drapery has been much admired.

I will not make any description of the rest of Old Saint Paul's, for that has already been done in every book upon London that has thus far been written, and therefore the reader must be measurably familiar with it. My only object is to instruct the reader upon matters which have been strangely neglected by other tourists, and if I have supplied a vacuum which must often have been painfully felt, my reward is sufficient. I have endeavored to furnish the exact dimensions of everything in feet and inches, in the customary exciting way, and likewise to supply names and dates and gushings upon art which will instruct the future tourist how to feel and what to think, and how to tell it when he gets home.