

THE WAX-WORKS AT



BY T. SIDNEY ALLNUTT.

WAX-WORKS and Westminster Abbey would seem to have as little in common, with the exception of the initial W, as, say, Punch and Judy and St. Paul's; and it will surprise many to learn that a collection of waxen effigies is among the most interesting features of the "Collegiate Church of Saint Peter's, at Westminster."

Yet such is the fact. The wax-works are easily accessible; they can be seen whenever the Abbey is open, on payment of 3*d.* or 6*d.*, according to the day of the week. So very few people, however, seem to be aware of their existence that they are practically ignored, and the excellent and, with one exception, hitherto unpublished photographs which we are able to give of them will therefore, doubtless, be the more interesting.

It is true that the collection cannot pretend to rival "Tussaud's" in point of magnitude, being, in fact, limited to eleven figures—*viz.*: Queen Elizabeth, King Charles II., King William III. and Queen Mary II., Queen Anne, the Duchess of Buckingham and her two sons, the Duchess of Richmond, the great Pitt, Earl of Chatham, and, last but not least, Horatio, Viscount Nelson; but what it lacks in size is made up in interest of quite an unique description.

It will be seen that the figures all represent well-known people, and they may be trusted to represent them faithfully, for in most cases the features have been modelled from death-masks, while the figures are dressed in costumes which were worn by their originals during the time that they were making history which is rapidly growing ancient. So that these men and women of wax possess an "actuality"—to use the favourite term just now—which is not shared by many of their kind.

They are to be found in a little loft above Abbot Islip's Chapel—itsself one of the gems of the Abbey—in the north aisle of the apse. A small door and narrow, winding staircase give access to the abode of the wax-works; and as, lighted lantern in hand, a verger in his dark, flowing robes leads the way upward, the surroundings have a natural effect upon the imagination and are apt to make one feel very mediæval indeed. And there is nothing of that frivolous air of conscious fraud which usually characterises wax-works, in these solemn figures, to dispel the glamour of the past which seems to hang about the place. The waxen folk look out of their dim cases with a startling appearance of life-likeness and reality, looking, in the half-light, rather like a coterie of spirits from the



QUEEN ELIZABETH.

underworld revisiting "the glimpses of the moon" than the wax models they are.

It is a superstition common to most primitive peoples that the spirit of a dead person will haunt an image of its earthly body, and, looking at these figures, it requires but a small effort of imagination to make one think that each all but speaking mask hides a prisoned soul.

It is difficult to help comparing them with the marble memorials of monarchs, statesmen, and other dignitaries or notorieties which throng the Abbey floor below. Who has not been amused to note the vacuous loftiness of expression which the sculptors have been so fond of giving to those gentlemen in Roman togas and other strange garments who, at the same time, all look so painfully conscious that they are perched on pedestals for ever and must live up to the trying position? What human interest do

they possess? Surely not the smallest. The waxen portraits, on the other hand, are not merely memorials of eminent people, but real records of once living men and women, with all their greatnesses and meannesses, potentialities and failings indelibly imprinted on their faces. Each figure is a bit of history, and more; it is an autobiography. Hardly anything else could make one so



CHARLES II.

readily and thoroughly realise that "Good Queen Bess," the "Merry Monarch," and the rest are not merely historical abstractions, but were real individuals who ate and drank, laughed and wept through their little span as the greatest and least of us do to-day.

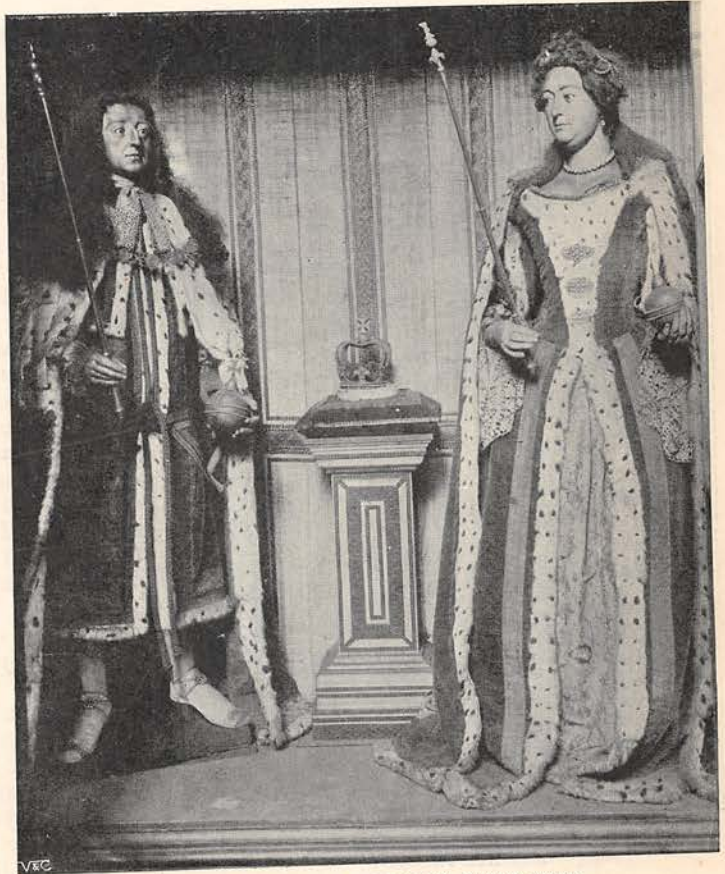
One of the most interesting figures is that of Queen Elizabeth. It is as the figurehead of a certain period that she is generally thought of and, as such, is awarded a great deal of undeserved credit for the brilliance of her statesmen and naval and military commanders, as well as for the literary and dramatic achievements which made her reign so notable.

Here we see the woman. Her face is interesting, but not at all lovable. Firm will is, perhaps, its most salient characteristic; it would seem obstinacy but for the corrective calculation shown by the upper part of the face. The tightly compressed lips look not a little cruel, too, and the general impression one receives is that of an extremely able but entirely unscrupulous woman; and there is a touch of the virago in the face which helps to explain a good deal that seems puzzling in the records of her life.

She wears a gown of royal purple and what looks like an extremely heavy brocade with bright metal threads running through it—a variety of cloth-of-gold, maybe—and the exaggerated Medici lace collar which we always associate with Queen Bess is not wanting. A crown and sceptre decked with transparently artificial jewels can do nothing to rob the figure of its dignity.

This figure, by the way, is not the original one, made at the time of Elizabeth's death, but a copy, made in 1760, from the old one, which was worn out by exhibition. It was then exhibited close by Queen Elizabeth's tomb, without the protection of a case, and no doubt received a good deal of rough handling.

Charles II., whose figure occupies the next case, is another particularly interesting personality. The dark eyes and swarthy complexion make him look but little of an Englishman; but the face is by no means an altogether unpleasing one. It is entirely lacking in the imperious dignity which so strongly marks that of Elizabeth, but, in compensation, is infinitely more sympathetic. The "Merry Monarch" really does not look a bad fellow at all. If we may believe the



WILLIAM III. AND HIS CONSORT, QUEEN MARY.

information given by his face, he lacked chiefly firmness of character. He looks like one who always followed the line of least resistance, and as that invariably leads in an undesirable direction, it may be that to this weakness rather than to innate vice his many shortcomings may have been due. At any rate, certain it is that a look at his waxen presentment makes one very willing to make all possible excuses for him.

His dress is of crimson velvet, made yet more beautiful by some fine old lace, silk



FRANCES THERESA, DUCHESS OF RICHMOND AND LENNOX,
AND HER PARROT.

rather bitter to the taste. If ever a whole life were summed up in a face, it is here; and no doubt the story written in its firm outlines is pleasanter to read than it was to write.

The remaining royalty is Queen Anne, whose rather squat figure is also dressed in royal purple—the ermine being represented by a kind of broad ribbon trimming, as may be seen by the photograph, over a robe of silk brocade. She wears an imposing crown. Sceptre and orb of not less majestic dimensions are also among her “properties.” Her hair is done in a series of tight ringlets and is allowed to fall over her shoulders. Anne does not look at all the mere cipher that so many historians have made of her. Her face is both pleasant and intelligent, and gives evidence of no little force of character.

A figure slightly earlier than that of Queen Anne, chronologically speaking, is that of Frances Theresa, Duchess of Richmond and Lennox, better known, perhaps, as “La Belle Stewart.” The Duchess, who, by the way, is said to have sat as the model for the

stockings, and rather high-heeled shoes, and his head is crowned by a quaint piece of headgear sufficient alone to conjure up a picture of seventeenth century England before our mental vision. Altogether Charles looks like a very good picture of a gallant of his period, but a more unmajestic Majesty it would be impossible to imagine.

In a case on the other side of that containing Queen Elizabeth's presentment are the figures of King William III. and Queen Mary II. The short stature of William III. is faithfully represented in his waxen portrait, which is standing on a cushion in order that the head may be on a level with that of Queen Mary. Both of the figures are dressed in royal robes of purple and ermine, and each wears a crown and carries orb and sceptre as further outward and visible signs of the exalted rank of its original.

Queen Mary died in 1694, in the thirty-third year of her age, of smallpox, and as her face was modelled from a plaster cast taken after death, it can, perhaps, hardly be considered a fair representation of her appearance during life, being naturally rather haggard as the result of her illness. Her face is not in any case particularly notable, being plainly that of an amiable nonentity.

The face of William III. is much more worthy of notice. The forehead is broad and high, the brows have a thoughtful frown, and the mouth is firm and a trifle cynical. It is the face of a capable man of affairs and a born ruler of men, who had lived through all his illusions and found the core of life

figure of Britannia on our coinage, was the daughter of William Stewart, a member of the Blantyre family, and was a famous beauty in her day. The Duchess died on the 15th October, 1702, the year of Queen Anne's coronation. She left instructions that after death she was to be "as well done in wax as may be," and her figure wears the robes worn by the Duchess at the coronation ceremonies. The dress is a handsome one, the bodice being of velvet trimmed with ermine, and the skirt of a very rich and handsome silk brocade. The sleeves and skirt are trimmed with some very lovely old lace, which must be worth a small fortune.

In the same case as the Duchess of Richmond is a stuffed grey parrot, also a celebrity in its way. The bird, having lived with the Duchess for forty years, died only a day or two after her. Her Grace was very fond of the bird, and its presence with her waxen memorial is a pretty touch of sentiment quite in accordance with the fitness of things.

The Duchess of Buckingham, whose figure, with that of her second son, occupies the next case, was the wife of John Sheffield, Duke of Normanby and Buckinghamshire, usually styled, by himself, indeed, as well as by others, Duke of Buckingham. John Sheffield was a very high mightiness indeed—great enough to have aspired, in his earlier days, to the hand of the Princess Anne. The Princess did not accept him, but she evidently was not offended by his presumption, for she bestowed the two dukedoms upon him very soon after she came to the throne. The Duchess of Buckingham was the half-sister of Anne, being the daughter of James II., by Catherine Sidley, afterwards the Countess of Dorchester. The Duchess had been previously married to Lord Anglesey, but obtained a divorce from him on the ground of ill-treatment. Lord Anglesey was, however, not living at the time of her marriage with Buckingham. The Duchess is robed in a handsome dress of velvet, fur, and a magnificent brocade, and some glorious old lace is again used as trimming.

The child who is with the Duchess died in 1715, being then a few weeks over three years of age. It is curious that the figure looks like that of a much older child.

In the centre of the little loft is the figure of the Duchess of Buckingham's third son, who lived to become Duke of Buckingham, though he died at the early age of eighteen. It is said that his mother had the effigy made under her own supervision, and wished to borrow the funeral car which had been used in the obsequies of the great Marlborough. The Duchess of Marlborough refused to lend it, whereat her Grace of Buckingham contemptuously declared that her undertaker had offered to supply a finer one for £20.

The figure of the young Duke is arrayed in his peer's robes and ducal coronet, and it is noteworthy that this is the only case in which the deceased is represented in a recumbent position. This funeral, it may be of interest to mention, was the last one in which an effigy



THE DUCHESS OF BUCKINGHAM AND HER INFANT SON.



GOOD QUEEN ANNE.

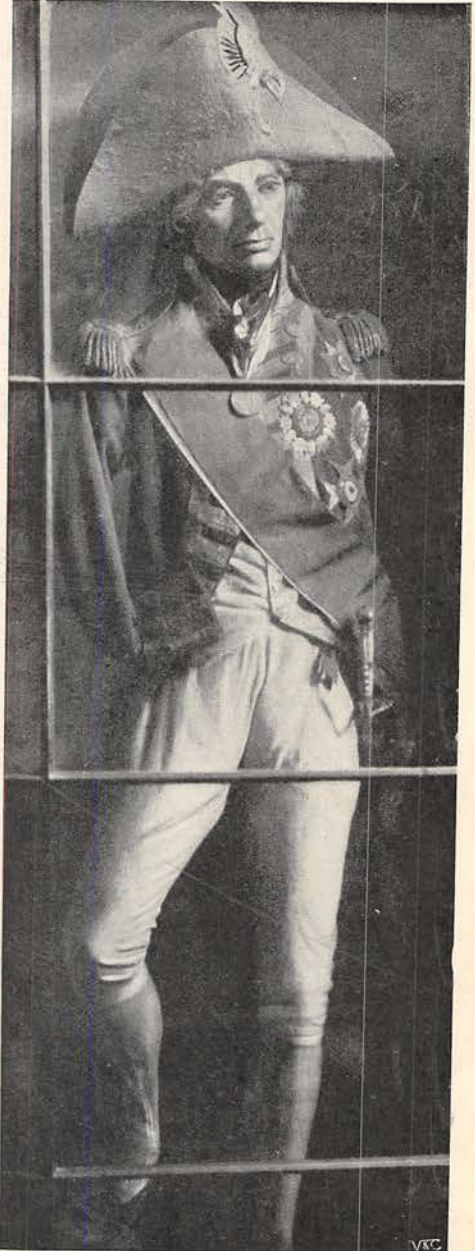
was laid on the coffin. The custom afterwards fell into disuse.

The remaining figures are those of Pitt and Nelson. The former is not very good, and unquestionably gives anything but a fair idea of George III.'s greatest minister. That of Nelson, on the contrary, is excellent, although it was not modelled from a cast, but from portrait sketches. The spare figure and keen, sympathetic face are those of a man who would always win respect and affection from those who knew him; and the blind eye and empty sleeve are eloquent though silent reminders of his services to his country. The clothes worn by Nelson's effigy were all once worn by the hero himself, with the exception of the coat.

It was merely for exhibition purposes that the figures of Pitt and Nelson were made; indeed, it is said that the latter owes its being to the fact that when, after the burial

of Nelson in St. Paul's, all the world was paying a pilgrimage to his tomb, the authorities at the Abbey considered that they were being unduly neglected, and accordingly had a figure of the popular idol modelled and exhibited in order to rival the attraction at the metropolitan Cathedral.

The cases in which the figures are shown



NELSON.

were probably made in the seventeenth century.

In a corner of the loft is a suit of armour once worn by General Monk, and afterwards by his effigy, which has been since destroyed; and a cupboard contains fragments of many earlier figures.

With the exception of the last two figures mentioned, the presence of these waxen portraits in Westminster Abbey is owing to the old custom of placing an effigy of a deceased person on the coffin during the funeral ceremonies, the figure being afterwards placed on or near the tomb.

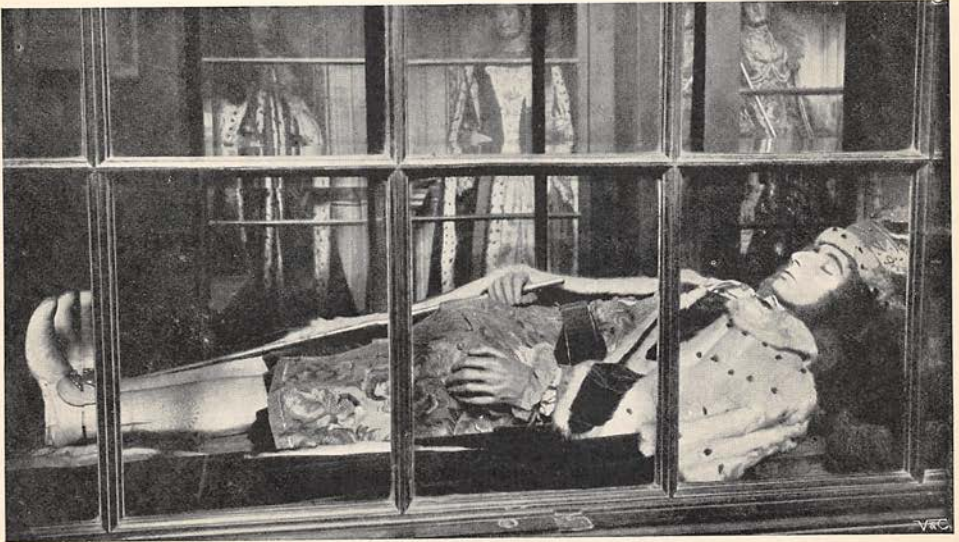
In very primitive times the figure was made with the idea of affording a habitation for the spirit of the dead man or woman; and as it was thought that the spirit would prefer a habitation as nearly as possible similar to that which it occupied during life, care was taken that the effigy should truthfully represent the deceased in "his form and habit as he walk'd"; and the custom of making these post-mortem portraits faithful likenesses of their subjects prevailed long after the old-time reason for so doing was forgotten.

The custom was undoubtedly a survival from very early days indeed, but was very tenacious, as burial customs invariably are. Even to-day, in military funerals the dead man's charger is led behind his bier—a last survival of the time when horses and servants were sacrificed at the graveside, in

PITT,
EARL OF CHATHAM.



order that they might serve their master in the underworld; while volleys are fired across his grave—a custom which in its



THE YOUNG DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

Buried in 1736. The last instance of the custom of placing an effigy of the deceased on the coffin.

origin grew out of the desire to scare away malevolent spirits from the tomb.

At one time boiled leather was the material in which the funeral effigies were modelled ; but the art was lost, and wax was afterwards used, a fact in no wise to be regretted, for wax, pliant as it is, suffers very little from the ravages of time.

Whether considered as evidences of the

survival of a curious burial custom, as portraits, or as illustrations of history, this little company of waxen celebrities certainly deserves far more attention than it receives ; and a visit to the wax-works at Westminster Abbey may be relied upon to provide that excellent combination of "amusement and instruction" so often recommended.

A BALLADE OF PROTEST.

By THEODOSIA HARRISON.

I LIKE full well our modern ways,
 Of late inventions fond am I ;
 These are the wondrous, glorious days ;
 I'm glad last year I did not die !
 To-day great steamships quickly ply
 'Twixt this and lands beyond compare ;
 But for one ancient thing I sigh—
 Give me an old-time love-affair.

They sing to-day the modern lays
 That none of old had sense to try ;
 And there are, too, the modern plays,
 And buildings tall that reach the sky ;
 More wondrous is the modern lie,
 Unknown to ancient folk ; I swear
 I love improvement ; but, my, my !
 Give me an old-time love-affair.

The telegraph, that lifts the haze
 From things remote and brings them nigh,
 Is something that would make one gaze
 Who lived in days departed ; why
 Should one object that wondrously
 His words go hurtling through the air ?
 Though useful things I'll not decry,
 Give me an old-time love-affair.

L'ENVOI.

Sweetheart, forget the modern tie
 That binds you in convention's snare.
 Forget these modern methods ; fie !
 Give me an old-time love-affair !