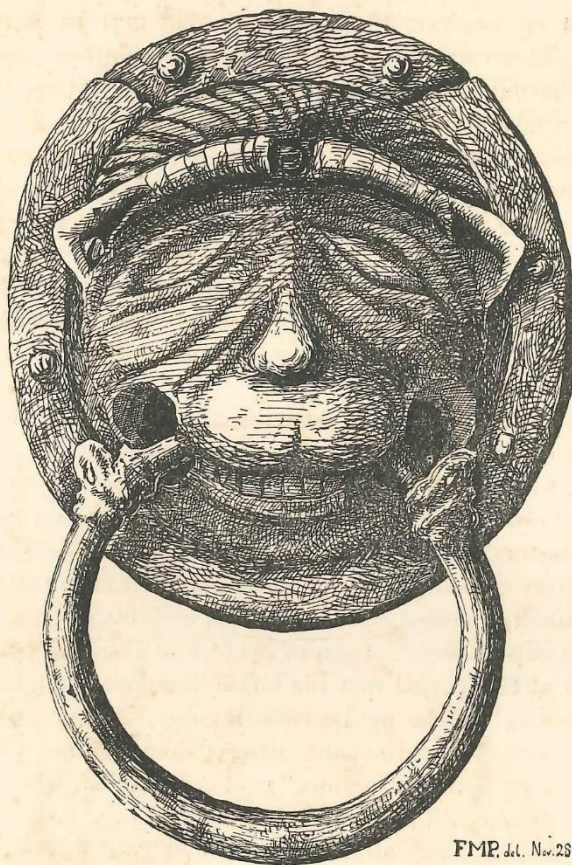


THE BRAZEN NOSE.



F.M.P. del. Nov. 23 1890

ON the evening of Tuesday, Nov. 18, 1890, the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society met in the Ashmolean Museum, and after some antiquarian notes by Professor Westwood, adjourned to the Hall of Brasenose College, where Mr. F. MADAN, Fellow of the College, made some remarks on the recent recovery by the College of its eponymous Nose after an absence of five and a half centuries from Oxford. The Nose itself is fixed in a conspicuous position in the Hall.

Mr. MADAN began by explaining why the *College* (founded in 1509) could take so much interest in an event connected chiefly with the *Hall* from which it received its name. It should be remembered that the College (1) is on the site of Brasenose Hall; (2) has its chief gateway precisely on that

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site; (3) found the Hall, through annexations, in practical possession of the property round it; (4) derived its name from it; (5) received as its first Principal, Matthew Smyth, the last Principal of the Hall, thus securing a real succession from the earlier to the later foundation.

We find no organisation of the scholars among themselves in the first two stages of the University which are comprised in the twelfth century (see Prof. Holland in the *Oxf. Hist. Soc. Collectanea II.*): but in the first half of the next century, when the University reaches full development, we find concurrently the rise of Halls, in which a Principal provided common life and common meals for a voluntary body of students, as well as superintended their studies.

In 1239^a we first hear of what became Brasenose Hall, as the house of Jeffrey Jussell, from whom it passed to Simon de Balindon, who in 1261 sold it to the University to form part of the endowment settled by William of Durham on certain resident Masters of Arts—the foundation which subsequently became University College. Soon after this we read of the house being summarily seized by Adam Bilet and his scholars, who turned out one Andrew, the son of Andrew of Durham. Clearly it was just at this period that the house became a Hall, though still possessing Scholæ or Lecture Rooms. At last in 1278 we meet with its permanent title, “domus quae vocatur Brasenose cum quatuor scholis.” The house of which the name had altered with each successive owner had at last secured that desirable consummation, a permanent title. If we look at the principles which determined these titles (such as, for instance, Broadgates, Deep Hall, into which one had to step down, Corner Hall, Glass Hall, Black Hall, Eagle Hall), it is evident that any prominent feature of whatever character was readily made use of to distinguish the place from others. What more natural, then, than that a knocker of brass, probably of the early part of the twelfth century^b, and so a curiosity for its age even in A.D. 1270, should have been regarded as sufficient to suggest the title of Brazen Nose?

In the early part of 1334 there was a great migration from

^a The University deed of 1219, which mentions Brasenose, has long been recognised as a forgery.

^b See a paper on the same subject as the present one in the *Guardian* of July 23, 1890, by A. J. B.

Oxford to Stamford, under pressure of internal disputes, not between the University and the Town, but between North and South, within the University, and between the scholars and their servants. But of all the bodies of students who made their uncertain and toilsome way to Stamford, one only kept firmly together and preserved its cohesion and name. For in Stamford to this day we find a fourteenth-century gateway attached to a house called, without any variation for the last three centuries at least, and probably since its building, "Brasenose Hall (or College) in Stamford;" and on the gateway from remote times till this century hangs a Brazen Knocker with an iron ring, which may be seen described in Wood's "History and Antiquities of the University" (ed. Gutch, vol. i. p. 432), and engraved in Peck's "History of Stamford" (1727). We can hardly doubt that they who stuck so firmly together as to transfer their organisation and name to a distant town and to build a house called by their old name and on the model of the Oxford Halls (see Peck's description of the Refectory pulled down in 1688, and of the rooms about it), they who showed such prevision and tenacity of purpose, did bring with them as the symbol of union, as a Palladium of the traditions of Brasenose, their ancient Nose. At Stamford the immigrants pursued a regular course of studies as at Oxford, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Merlin:—

"Doctrinæ studium, quod nunc viget ad Vada Boum,
Tempore venturo celebrabitur ad Vada Saxi."

More than once a stringent proclamation from the King attempted to force the scholars back to Oxford, but even when a last and effectual effort was made by a special commission to suppress the *Tertia Academia* (July, 1335), there were still found 37 recalcitrants, among whom occurs the name of "Philippus obsonator [manciple or cook] Eneanasensis." The intensity of Oxford's dismay at the Stamford incident may be judged by the extraordinary survival till 1827 of the oath taken by every Bachelor of Arts since 1335; "Tu jurabis quod non leges nec audies [deliver or attend lectures] Stamfordiæ!" The poor schoolboys were in fact sent summarily away from Stamford, and those few who found their way back to Oxford were re-established there: and in 1509 their traditions, fame, and name passed to the King's Hall and College of Brasenose.

In the summer of 1890 the College received notice from a firm of auctioneers that "Brasenose in Stamford" was to be sold, and with it the ancient knocker, and in July the welcome news came that the property had been secured for its ancestral owners. When the Nose arrived, its antiquity was so much greater than anything previously surmised that the belief of its close connexion with the old foundation in this city received unexpected and ample confirmation.

The knocker is a face of a lion or leopard of the type well known in heraldry, with a prominent nose, the other features being less strongly marked, especially when compared with the Brazen Head of Lindsell in Essex. It is in brass or bronze, whereas the ring dependent from the jaws is of iron.

The work is believed to be English, of the early part of the twelfth century, and the ring bears two dragon heads of a type characteristic of English ornament. The accompanying engraving (from a drawing most kindly made by Miss F. M. Parker) will show its general appearance.

It is a striking coincidence that the College should have recovered this monument of its ancient pluck and solidarity in the same year in which it has attained a position in which these same qualities alone could have landed it, the headship on the river both in the Torpids and in the Eights^c.

The present metal Nose, which is on the gateway of the College, and which is of a grotesque type, is probably due to a feeling that *some* visible nose was required, and may well have been copied in the sixteenth century from a nose still to be seen in the glass of the North window of the East end of the Hall, near the likenesses of the two founders. The derivation of Brasenose from Brewing-house (Bracinum house) may from henceforth be discarded, and seems to have been unknown before the Restoration.

A discussion then took place in which Mr. DRINKWATER, who exhibited the Essex Brazen Head, Mr. BRUTON, who suggested that the Nose was originally a Sanctuary Knocker, and Mr. James PARKER, who, like Mr. Bruton, passed round a most interesting series of drawings of old knockers, took part.

^c Brasenose has started Head of the River in the Eights on 104, the next College being University with 63 days: in the Torpids on 77 days, Exeter being next with 59.