CONRAD MARTENS

· THE MAN AND HIS ART ·

By LIONEL LINDSAY

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CONRAD MARTENS AND HIS ART

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Conrad Martens
From a portrait in oils painted by himself
In the possession of Miss Combes of Fonthill

29 x 24 in.

CONRAD MARTENS

THE MAN AND HIS ART

BY

Sir Arthur LIONEL LINDSAY

AUTHOR OF "THE AUSTRALIAN WORK OF ARTHUR STREETON"

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ANGUS & ROBERTSON LTD.

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1920

To WILLIAM DIXSON, ESQ.

WHOSE COLLECTION OF MARTENS' LETTERS AND NOTE-BOOKS HAS MADE THIS BOOK POSSIBLE, AND WHOSE NAME WILL IN THE FUTURE BE LINKED WITH THAT OF DAVID SCOTT MITCHELL

PREFACE

WHEN I undertook the writing of an essay on Conrad Martens and his times, I expected to make, not an addition to the already large volume of art-criticism, but a simple contribution to the history of Australian art. Gradually, as the hidden treasures of the Dixson and other collections came to light, and Martens' own diaries and letters brought me into closer touch with the man himself, my interest quickened; for I saw that here was an artist who had been hampered by the necessity of doing topographical work for a livelihood, yet had revealed in half a dozen masterpieces the natural bent of his talent and a rare instinct for his medium.

Had Martens remained in England, I believe that—urged by ambition and fortified by contemporary standards of work—he would have left a name high amongst the water-colourists of his day. It was his fate, happily for us, to be the Pilgrim Father of art at the Antipodes, and to lay the corner stone of our Landscape Art.

I wish to express my thanks for much valuable assistance in the preparation of this book: To Mr. William Dixson, for carefully collected data concerning Martens' life; Mr. G. V. F. Mann, Director of the National Gallery of New South Wales, whose knowledge of Martens' work is second to none, and with whom I shared the pleasure of selecting from the mass of it the pictures reproduced here; the Trustees of the National Gallery and the Mitchell Library; Miss Macarthur Onslow, Miss Combes, Miss Rose Scott, and Messrs. W. H. Ifould, Hugh Wright, J. J. Quinn, W. H. Hargraves, C. H. Bertie, Neville W. Cayley and Joseph Pearson.

Messrs. Hartland and Hyde have made the engravings, and Messrs. W. C. Penfold and Co. Ltd. have printed them, with their accustomed skill and care.

Lionel Lindsay.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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IN THE TEXT

THE LIFE OF CONRAD MARTENS

THE LIFE OF CONRAD MARTENS

OF the parentage and birth of Conrad Martens we know just this much, that his father was a Hamburg merchant settled and married in England, and that he was born in the parish of the Crutched Friars, near the Tower, in the year 1801.

He had two brothers, Henry and J. W. (the initials alone descend to us), and a sister, Mary Ann. The brothers Martens, like the Fieldings, all became artists. Henry was known as "Battle Martens," from his subjects pitched amidst "the noise of the captains and the shouting." The only work by him that I have seen is a French landscape, with some figures and a chateau, well drawn and delicately washed, but revealing no particular individuality; if it is representative of his work, then Conrad far outpaced him. The other brother, J. W., made a fine lithograph of a mill at Exmouth, from a water-colour by Conrad—they probably contemplated a series of Devonshire Views—and in a letter to Henry, in '49, Conrad writes: "I am glad J. W. M. is doing well. It would be hard indeed if none of us should succeed."

Though it is mere conjecture, I conclude from the tone of his letters and the quality of his mind that Conrad Martens received a good conventional education. Church and State are written large upon his thought. Precise, discreet, reticent, he preserves the ideal of the gentleman. Everything suggests that he enjoyed a good middle class home. That the father permitted his three sons to engage in the hazardous business of art speaks either for his indulgence or for his breadth of mind.

Conrad chose for his master Copley Fielding, the most fashionable teacher of the day, under whose tuition he laid the foundations of his style. Until 1837 Fielding's studio was at No. 26 Newman Street, and there Martens first learnt the mystery of washing-in a drawing. In his *Lecture upon Landscape Painting*,* delivered at the Australian Library in 1856, Martens not only gives us his concept of art, with many practical hints for its realization, but names the

* MS. in Mitchell Library, Sydney.

masters of his predilection and throws some side-lights on the enthusiasms of his student days. He praises Danby, Turner, Stanfield, Cox, Cattermole and Copley Fielding: "Cox, above all, for his wonderful faithfulness in colour, form and texture"; and Turner's *Liber Studiorum*—"a book to be studied with the greatest advantage. Here will be found breadth, grandeur, and a total absence of all petty details." In speaking of the angle of vision that may be included by the painter, the astronomer in Martens warms to the theme. "Fifty-five degrees of the circle," he states, "is the most that should be included from left to right of the subject"; and he gives the rule, saying it can always be found by holding up the paper before your eyes at a distance equal to its width. "Taking now . . . a smaller angle, say forty degrees, for the extent of the picture, grandeur and magnitude will be the result, without in the least departing from the truth . . . . And I may here take the opportunity to add that this was one of the first practical lessons which I myself learnt by carefully comparing the drawings of Turner with the scenes which he represented."

He was, then, familiar with the work of Turner and the men of the Old Water-colour Society, had followed up their exhibitions and was intimately acquainted with their finest tradition; and this went with him overseas when chance brought him to Australia.

Upon the father's death the family left London and settled in Devonshire; and the many sketches made by Conrad and dated at Exmouth point to that town as its place of stay. Martens sketched along the coast and in the neighbouring villages, affecting particularly Salcombe Castle, which he approached from more than one angle. These sketches are clear but conventional, and from a careful study of them I have come to conclude either that it was towards his twenties, or within them, that he went to Fielding, or that he was one of those who develop slowly and "arrive" late.

His last drawing made in England is a pencil sketch of Marly, the seat of Sir G. Broderick, dated the 1st of March, 1832, and in August of the same year he is at Monte Video, come thither from Rio. What breath of adventure blew Martens to South America

— Copy.

St. Leonards
Sydney
Jany 20th/62

To Chas Darwin Esq
&c &c.

Many thanks old shipmate for your kind message which I have just rec'd by the padre. I thought you had quite forgotten that I was in existence and certainly ~~who a~~ the man who voluntarily sets himself down in such a place as this has no right to grumble if he finds such to be the case.

As it appears however that you have stole two of my sketches

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nonsense does not
come in your way.

Well, that was a happy
change, and I hope you
have been well and
happy ever since—
and that you may
continue to be so for
long times to come
is the sincere wish
of your old shipmate

I wonder whether the Admiral
what is now, I should like
to send my kind regards, if
you should see him, but
don't if you don't like, coffee
without sugar, you know.

we shall probably never know. Official reports do not substantiate the rumour that "being offered by Captain Blackwood, of H.M.S. *Hyacinth,* the opportunity of a cruise, he sailed in that vessel to Rio," for Captain Blackwood was not appointed to the *Hyacinth* until a year later. However he came there, Martens was in Monte Video in August, 1832; the *Beagle* arrived the same month, and he joined it as topographer. He took the place of Augustus Earle, whose continual ill-health—probably a recurrence of fever caught in India—had prevented him from being of much practical use to the expedition.

The voyage of the *Beagle* would have been long ago forgotten by all except learned geographers but for the presence on board of that great naturalist Charles Darwin, attached, without pay, to Captain Fitz Roy's survey of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Darwin wrote in his Journal:* "The voyage of the *Beagle* has been by far the most important event in my life, and has determined my whole career." Martens might have said the same.

Martens remained on board the *Beagle* for two years, and many sketch-books, now in the possession of Miss Macarthur Onslow, and numerous sketches in the Mitchell and Dixson collections, attest the good use he made of his time. Apart from his work as topographer, he sketched everything that struck him as typical and peculiar, and was never tired of disentangling, with the point of his pencil, the luxurious undergrowth of the tropical forest. It is true that his sketches of Chileans and Patagonians, and other specimens of Adam's small fry, find out his weakness in figure drawing—though he preserves sufficient of native character for a scientific record; but this constant habit of sketching quickened his eye and hand, and we can see how much he has improved upon his English work.

On the 23rd of July, 1834, the *Beagle* arrived at Valparaiso, and Martens left her. The suggestion that a quarrel with Darwin was the cause of his leaving seems altogether unfounded, for the tone of a letter he wrote to the great man twenty-eight years later is cordial and pleasant, and suggests no previous discord. For Martens, the letter is a gay one. He jokes discreetly about *The*

* Darwin, *Journal during the Voyage of H.M.S. "Beagle."*

rigin of Species and the mountains of the moon: "But," he dds, "I must apologize, for I suppose you don't laugh at non- ense now as you used to do in the *Beagle;* or, rather, I suppose onsense does not come in your way. Well, that was a jolly ruise, and I hope you have been well and happy ever since." In l probability Captain Fitz Roy's abandonment of the *Beagle's* onsort, the *Adventure*, on account of her unseaworthiness, was ne cause of Martens' leaving. The *Adventure* was sold; the ersonnel of both ships had to be accommodated on the larger essel, and all supernumeraries would naturally be dispensed ith.

Martens stayed in Valparaiso until the 3rd of December, 1834, hen he sailed in the *Peruvian*, an American schooner of ninety ons burthen, for Tahiti. Here he remained for seven weeks ketching, and I think he long cherished a memory of that en- anted isle, for he often returned to these sketches for subject atter. But the enchantment of the South Seas is not matter for ne painter; it can only be a subject for literature, and has best been isualized by Herman Melville, by Robert Louis Stevenson, and y Rupert Brooke. In one of his letters from Tahiti,* the English oet who lies on Scyros, dead at the age of Keats, writes: "I've ound the most ideal place in the world to live and work in—a ide verandah over a blue lagoon, a wooden pier with deep clear ater for diving, and coloured fish that swim between your toes. here also swim between your toes, more or less, scores of ughing brown babies from two years to fourteen. Canoes and oats, rivers, fishing with spear, net and line, the most wonderful od in the world—strange fishes and vegetables perfectly cooked. urope slides from me terrifyingly." You cannot put that into a icture, because it is exotic colour and sensation. The word may voke a picture; the painted picture will be but a theatrical set cene—and this, I fear, must be the verdict on Martens' Tahiti ater-colours. Martens left Tahiti on the 4th of March in the *lack Warrior*, of Salem. She made the Bay of Islands, New ealand, in a month, stayed five days, and then continued her oyage to Sydney, Martens making his first sketch of the Heads

* Marsh, *Rupert Brooke: a Memoir*, p. 107.

(and a good sketch, too) on that seventeenth day of April, 1835, when he sailed into the Harbour whose pictorial quality he was to be the first to discover.

When he landed, Sydney had changed but little from the town described by Judge Therry* in 1829. "Sydney," wrote the Judge, "then contained about 15,000 inhabitants. The streets were wide, well laid out, and clean. Two regiments—the 39th and 57th—the headquarters stationed in Sydney, were then on duty in the Colony. This considerable regimental force, with a large commissariat establishment, imparted quite a military aspect to the place. The houses were, for the most part, built in the English style, the shops well stocked, and the people one met in the streets presented the comfortable appearance of a prosperous community. The cages with parrots and cockatoos, that hung from every shop-door, formed the first feature that reminded me I was no longer in England . . . . Ground was not then so valuable there as it soon afterwards became, and commodious verandahed cottages, around which English roses clustered, with large gardens, were scattered through the town. There was scarcely a house without a flower-plat in front. A band of one of the regiments, around which a well-dressed group had gathered, was playing in the barrack-yard, and every object that presented itself favoured the impression that one had come amongst a gay and prosperous community. . . . . When, however, day dawned in Sydney, the delusion of the evening was dispelled. Early in the morning the gates of the convict prison were thrown open, and several hundred convicts were marched out in regimental file and distributed amongst the several public works in and about the town. As they passed along—the chains clanking at their heels—the patchwork dress of coarse grey and yellow cloth, marked with the Government brand, in which they were paraded—the downcast countenances—and the whole appearance of the men, exhibited a truly painful picture. Nor was it much improved throughout the day, as one met bands of them in detachments of twenty yoked to waggons laden with gravel and stones, which they wheeled through the streets; in this and in

*Therry, *Reminiscences of Thirty Years in N.S.W. and Victoria*, p. 39.

other respects they performed all the functions of labour usually discharged by beasts of burden at home."

Martens has left us no reminiscences of Colonial life under the old régime. His bent was topography and landscape, and his figures, though they take their place as landscape accessories, are of the family of Claude, who used to say that he included them with the price of the picture and made no charge for them. It would have needed a Hogarth, caustic and bitterly observant, to portray that heterogeneous society; the self-sufficient officialdom, the prosperous parvenu emancipists, the Brahmin Pure Merinos, the Rowlandson doxies and all that dramatic underworld fated to escape the "Tree of the Triple Crook" in the old land only, perhaps, to find the "Rope of the Black Election" in the new.

The landscape painter, "cloud merchant" like the poet, is generally indifferent to the play of human life. For him the study of nature is all-sufficing, and when he has captured a new phrase from her illimitable dictionary to add to his art, "all's well with the world." We can be sure that our gentle-minded painter was interested in at least two sections of this society—the Pure Merinos and the official classes, from whom alone he could expect patronage and pupils. He took lodgings in Cumberland Street, near the Fort, in the "Rocks" area, which was still a fashionable quarter, and not yet outrivalled by Hyde Park. He probably pitched upon Cumberland Street as a likely lay for pupils; suburban quiet, too, reigned there. It was out of the way of traffic, and, to Sydney folk of that date, residence in the Rocks presented some of the advantages of the North Shore of to-day.

Martens made numerous sketches from his heights above the Cove, and was never tired of drawing, with something of a thought of England in the resemblance, that graceful manor-house which is Government House. Ships, those "beautiful and bold adventurers," came in from sea, freighted with crime and merchandise and brave emigrants, and were moored not far beneath him. He could see the sails of the windmills turning on the sky-line of the Domain, and to the right the long barrack of the Rum Hospital, and the delicate spire of St. James's, Sydney's landmark from every point of the compass.

He was early alive to the landscape interest about him, "minuting," as Horace Walpole has it, all points of interest that he happened upon. The habit of the topographer and the necessity of preparing work for a very hypothetical market soon drove him afield. As early as 1835 he was in the Illawarra, drawing with a meticulous touch all that sub-tropical forest growth of tangled lianas, great fronded ferns and graceful cabbage-palms which attracted the romantic Englishman in him, and which, on paper, wears so much the appearance of a transformation scene. The exotic was ever the poorest material for art: it is only the things we understand, woven in the texture of our lives, that can make a true appeal to our emotions.

In those good conservative times no young lady's education was considered finished unless she had taken lessons in drawing, acquired the Fielding touch for trees, and learnt to decorate the albums of her friends with insipid reminiscences of the "Keepsake." So Martens set up shop to instruct those "over whom time spent was time lost." His advertisement in the *Sydney Herald* says that he "will be happy to give instructions in the different branches of Landscape Painting, Sketching, etc. Terms may be known and specimens seen at the artist's residence, Cumberland Street, near the Fort."

Ah, those poor drawing masters! teaching stupid fingers to make copies of their own works, and retouching the poor effort to a likely conclusion, that papa and mamma might dwell with pride on the cleverness of their progeny. Which—for the Graces must be served—did they consider most essential to the finishing of Miss—Drawing Master, Dancing Master, Pianoforte Mistress? I am afraid, not the Drawing Master.

French influence has changed our methods of teaching, and to-day our attack is directed straight at nature. In Martens' day the pupil approached it in an indirect way, by copying his master's studies, and when he had acquired sufficient handling—that recondite handling so aptly described by Samuel Butler as "the hieroglyph of a lost soul"—he was allowed to let fly into the "brown" of nature, before he had learnt the mere A B C of observation.

Martens must have been a good teacher, for he was thoroughly grounded in the practice of the day. He was master of a fine understanding—the clarity with which he develops his ideas on art, in the Lecture, is enough to attest it. He was curious of the methods and tricks of his trade—witness his inveterate habit of note-taking, and his pleasure in a good workshop receipt; and as he was honest, straightforward, and circumspect, we may rest assured that whatever knowledge he possessed was at the service of his pupils.

Teachers were better paid then than now. Turner and Der Wint had begun with five shillings an hour for private pupils, and ended by charging a guinea. We do not know what those colonial worshippers of Apollo paid Martens; but, with his credentials and qualifications, he must have earned creditable fees, for he was in a position to marry as early as 1837. The lady of his choice was Jane Brackenbury Carter, daughter of William Carter, sometime Sheriff and later Registrar-General of the Colony: she survived her husband by sixteen years. Two children were born to them while in Cumberland Street, Rebecca in 1838 and Elizabeth in the following year.

This young family must have considerably strained the artist's resources, so to add to them he hit upon an excellent expedient. There had never been a good general view of Sydney accessible to the public. This, as Martens saw, was his golden opportunity, and he designed the well-known view from North Shore, of which so many examples are still in existence. Lithography in Sydney was so poorly executed, and suitable paper so hard to procure, that Martens was compelled to send his design to London, where it was transferred to the stone by a journeyman named Boyd. The partially-tinted prints Martens wrought upon with water-colour and body-white until they wore the appearance of original water-colours; and, at times, when colouring one for a special patron, he varied his foreground. "My coloured print continues to sell," he writes in '49. "I have, in the long run, made a very good thing out of it. I sell none uncoloured. They sell at a guinea, but I allow Ford and others twenty-five per cent. if they choose to pay me cash. I do not, however, think it would

be possible to raise anything like fifty pounds at this time for a similar publication. I intend to see what can be done in lithography here; something that would do to colour might perhaps be got up."

In 1854 he saw the necessity of bringing the View up to date, as the city had altered very much in a decade; and in June of that year he wrote the following interesting letter to his brother Henry, to whom he entrusted the work of overseeing its reproduction:—"I have just been making arrangements for the publication of a new lithograph View of Sydney, in partnership with a Mr. Mader, who will undertake to meet all expenses. My drawing is done, and will shortly be sent to the care of Mr. S. A. Donaldson, now in London. He is the principal of a Sydney Mercantile house. Mr. Mader proposes that you shall superintend the engraving, etc., if you are so inclined, and that whatever commission you may think right to charge will be paid to you. The choice or selection of a draughtsman will be left to you, as well as the printer. Mr. Donaldson alone will be requested to find the necessary funds. As I suppose you will have no objection to undertake the job, I will proceed to give a few necessary directions about it. I hope, in the first place, that as you are not restricted in the expense, someone may be found who is more skilful than the Mr. Boyd who made my other lithographic view. The double printing also, I hope, may be better executed. The paper I wish to be exactly similar to that of mine—namely, thick imperial, a sample of which will be sent with the drawing. . . . The number of copies is to be 500, but the stone is to be kept till further notice. No impressions are to be left for sale in London. If it turns out well we may get up one or two more in the same way. Once more about the print, as the composition is not good on account of its being too much all in one line. I hope the depth of the bays will be particularly attended to, more especially on one over which I have placed a mark ⌒. It is called Farm Cove, and partly encircles the Botanic Gardens."

Martens had made one attempt upon copper—doubtless with the idea of multiplying saleable views—but fear of his mordant and his timidity of line betrayed him. He had chosen a tree fern—

perhaps for its detail—but the touch, for such a practised draughtsman, is like a beginner's, and there is no feeling for the copperplate line. Wisely, he returned to lithography as a means of increasing his output. Albums and books of views were in demand with both the public and the booksellers, but, happily, the commercial genius who thought of the picture postcard had yet to burden the world with his invention. Long practice with the pencil had made lithography an easy process for Martens; it was, besides, the current method of the sketcher for passing his authentic touch on to his public. Cox, Prout, and Harding had employed it successfully, and Martens, in turn, published his set of twenty views, *Sketches in the Environs of Sydney*, in 1850-1. This he produced locally—to his sorrow, for the lithographs were a poor lot and the paper likewise bad; he must have been disheartened with the result, for to hide his printers' clumsiness ("bunglers" he called them) he was put to retouching the prints by hand.

Colonel Mundy, at first sight of Sydney—the Sydney of the View—in 1846, had said: "It might be Waterford or Wapping, with a dash of Nova Scotian Halifax."* For the truth is, the Englishman changes readily his skies, but never his habit of mind, and wherever he colonizes he sets up a microcosm of the Old Land—the eating and drinking customs whereof endure here even unto this day.

There was no Australianism before Kendall, and his influence, at the earliest, dates from 1862. In the forties New South Wales was still a Crown Colony, and the educated classes, naturally enough, regarded themselves as transplanted Englishmen. It was a good thing for Martens that so many squatters, proud of their wealth and possessions, had built fine homesteads in imitation of the country seats of England. Georgian architecture, with adaptations fitting it for a warmer climate—in most cases introduced by retired Indian army officers—has left this country the richer for a tradition of good taste. The city magnates, too, insisted upon investing their dignity with those Palladian mansions which evoked the Gothic rage of Ruskin. Everywhere the sense

* Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, vol. 1, p. 38.

of founding dynasties had taken possession of the first or the wealthier families. More legitimate was the simple pride of possession; and as Martens was the one artist capable of doing more than justice to the "house and the grounds," commissions came his way. He was an honoured guest at Camden, and fulfilled many commissions for General Macarthur. Sir Daniel Cooper, Alexander McLeay, and Thomas Sutcliffe Mort were amongst his city patrons; and one well worthy of mention is the good merchant John Brown, jun., who balanced the artist's wine bill for twenty-six pounds twelve shillings against four pictures. Martens had a Turnerian appreciation of old sherry, which should, I think, be accounted to his credit.

He must have enjoyed, too, those excursions to the country, which not only increased his material for pictures, but enabled him also to experience new landscape sensations—a thing which to some painters imparts a fresh forward impetus. His fecundity on these occasions was amazing, and, as he visited many places of interest in New South Wales, his sketches form a record that cannot be too highly valued.

Martens never seems to have uttered a wish to return to England, and I think his genuine love of Australian landscape held him to his new home. To Marshall Claxton, a pretentious painter who, for some ungodly reason, brought to Australia a commission from Miss Burdett-Coutts to cover a canvas eighteen feet by twelve with "Christ Blessing Little Children," he upheld the "necessity" of preserving the character and true delineation of Australian trees and plants, short of absolute servility.

The meticulous Mr. Fowles—who, judging from his delineation of *Sydney in 1848*, might have been empowered to collect a tax upon window-panes, so justly has he allotted each window its share of glass—is, in his text, garrulous and vainglorious; the place might have been a very Paris, so nobly does he extol, under the divine inspiration of payment for services, the Advancement of Learning and the Fine Arts. But the Fine Arts flourished mainly in Mr. Joseph Fowles's luxuriant imagination, though their condition was not so desperate as is hinted by the pessimist who told Sir Robert Peel that "there are very few

pictures and no artists in the Colony." Martens sets forth their condition in the following letter to his brother Henry towards the end of 1849, which contains an animated picture of the times:—

"I have never known so great a depression in business of all kinds as there is at present. The people are leaving the country in hundreds for California by every ship that goes, and to charter a vessel for that place is now, I believe, one of the best specs going. When this mania will end, or how it will end, I cannot even guess. It is true the ups and downs have always succeeded each other in pretty quick succession, but, as the artist is perhaps the last to feel the depression, so is he also the last to benefit by an improvement in the times. The money will indeed be most acceptable when it comes. I am altogether at a loss to account for such great stagnation of business. I am certainly not inclined to look upon emigration to California as the cause, but rather as the effect, in part, of the want of employment in and about Sydney, as the general intention is, I believe, not to go to the mines, but rather to obtain the high wages reported to be given in San Francisco. I am truly sorry to hear that you still lack employment. I wish, indeed, that I could give you more encouragement to come out here, but I feel that I have said all I dare say to you on that subject; some of which account, if in strictness already too favourable, must be attributed to the very natural desire of having you near us.

"I cannot help looking out somewhat anxiously for the arrival of the cash you mention; indeed, I should have been fairly aground some time since had it not been for a haul of about sixty pounds which I made by the Art-Union Exhibition, which was, I think, about to take place when I last wrote. It was as good an exhibition of colonial talent as I could have expected, but in all other respects a decided failure. That is to say, firstly, the proprietors of good pictures would not lend them, visitors were not so numerous as might have been expected, and subscribers to the Art Union did not number more than, I think, sixty-two. There was not a single picture sold during the Exhibition; but, fortunately for me, the prize-holders were almost unanimous in selections from my works, so that where I could not meet them

with a picture of exactly a corresponding figure to the amount of their ticket the balance was paid. This occurred in two instances, and gave me an extra ten pounds, my share of the actual Art Union subscriptions being fifty pounds. Since that time, however, I have sold but one drawing, nor have I at present any pupils; in short, something else must be thought of to keep the pot boiling till better times come round. I think I can say for certain that I shall not leave this place for any neighbouring colony, desirable though it might appear to be for the time."

Without doubt, a deep affection existed between Conrad Martens and his brother Henry. In a kindly letter to his sister Mary Ann, who, from the context seems to have been well-to-do, he dismisses her rosy descriptions of society at Bath—the Bath of Mr. Bantam—with the reflexion that he would rather have word from her that she had assisted their unfortunate brother. "Your duty is plain," he writes, "you cannot but see it; think not of early indiscretions, but assist him in any way that you can; and if in money matters, I entreat you to do it voluntarily and in a kind manner, for that will at once double the value of it." Henry, characterized as "long out of employment," seems to have got into more scrimmages than ever he put into his pictures. Probably his genre in painting had fallen out of the vaward of the fashion, and the Peninsular War was now forgotten by all but its veterans. Emigration seemed the only way out for him, and Martens expected him in 1850. But his letter alone arrived, for Henry never emigrated; and all we know of him further is the date of his death, 1860. The letter seems to have asked for further particulars—as if his intention was still to "make the plunge"—and Martens, in reply, suggested the bringing of "what articles of crockery and hardware you might want, viz., knives and forks, teapot and coffee ditto, or any useful things in Britannia metal, with teacups, plates and dishes, would be a good investment. I don't know what price clothing may be in England now, but I have to pay here, for a good well-cut pair of trousers of what is called doeskin, made for me by the best tailor, thirty-two shillings. Coats are of all kinds and materials now, but I should quote them from fifty shillings upwards.

"Of all drawing and painting materials it would be well to bring a good supply; all these things are both bad and scarce. For instance, there is not a lithographic drawing book for beginners that is worth twopence to be had, nor has been for years. Neither can I get any paper upon which to print any lithographic sketches in all the colonies; but I must wait till that arrives from England which I have sent for.

"I have done no oil painting for some time; my painting room is so cold in the winter that I have been obliged to retreat to another room to draw in, but which has no light for painting. I am, indeed, much disheartened about painting. There is no sale for anything in that way. Small drawings and lithographs and teaching have been of late the only way of raising a little cash. Our exhibition has not been repeated. There is a puffing, un-

principled fellow here who has been getting up what he calls Art Unions, but I know him too well to have anything to do with him. He gulled the public by saying that he gave prizes to the artists for the best pictures; but he kept the pictures, and his prizes were in fact much below my prices. I have raffled a picture or two, but that is disagreeable work, and now I am glad to find a 'Games and Wagers Bill' has put a stop to anything of the kind, Art Unions and all; only a charter will be given when applied for by a Society of Artists, the same as in England. In my opinion there is not talent enough in the Colony at present to support a thing of the kind, and therefore I do not move in the matter. There are some chaps, however, who call themselves artists, trying to bring about something of the kind."

In this connection another letter of the same period is interesting. A Melbourne amateur, who had bought one of Martens' pictures, sent with his cheque two pencil-drawings of his own and a watercolour by Prout. Martens tempers the wind to the shorn amateur by making some kindly comment on the drawings, but accompanies it with severe criticism of the Prout, adding: "We artists, you see, do not spare each other, whatever we say about the performances of amateurs."

Martens' slightly caustic references to brother brushes were quite justified. Their work was, for the most part, heavy and amateurish: to labour with such confrères is depressing to a man of talent, and likely to lower his standards; and this is one of the drawbacks from which the native-born artist still suffers, in that he has not the incentive of great work to freshen his inspiration, or to keep him to the mark. Happily, in the last decade Australia has produced some men of genius who are setting a standard for posterity, as well as for to-day. But Martens is a lonely figure. Though he was recognized as the leading artist of his day, his work in his best years brought him less than three hundred pounds per annum, and in his worst anything up to fifty; so it is little wonder that he sought the refuge of a Government billet at the age of sixty-two, when his market was declining with his powers.

Like most men of active intelligence, he fallowed himself in

hobbies, and buried the melancholy that haunts us all by finding play for his hands. He was a capable carpenter, woodcarver and turner; but his master hobby was astronomy. In all his note-books that I have examined there are, interlarded with workshop receipts and hints on water-colour practice, long and carefully written extracts on the science that seems rarely to have been far from his thoughts. From these excerpts (mostly drawn from popular cyclopedias and from books demoded in the hour he used them), from his boyish fondness for "the instrument" and its paraphernalia, but chiefly from the absence of calculations, I scent the true amateur astronomer, to whom the building of the telescope is the Great Adventure; and who hopes, not to make fresh discoveries, but to vivify his reading by gazing enraptured on Jupiter's moons, the Ring of Saturn, the great Nebula in Orion—above all, to enjoy the showman's privilege of astonishing his visitors with the real and authentic Mountains in the Moon.

Martens had yielded to the seductions of his siren shortly after his arrival in Sydney, for in 1835 he ordered from England "A two foot achromatic Telescope by Dolland, pancratic eye tube, tripod stand with leather case and sling,"—how rarely runs the catalogue! but he had to possess himself in patience until the 7th of March, 1838,—a cruel stretch for any amateur to wait upon the coming of his chimera.

But he sighed for an instrument worthy of his enthusiasm, and in 1860 set about constructing a six-inch reflector. The casting of the speculum for this telescope must have afforded our amateur Herschel unspeakable bliss. He was then at the height of his production, and selling his work for good prices: but he must have enjoyed the break; for what in the world is more pleasant than to steal from the continuity of well-paid work, to play truant with the doxy of your heart? Martens failed in his first essay—the speculum cracking as it cooled—but succeeded in his third attempt by adding arsenic to the zinc and copper. Follows thereon the grand business of grinding and polishing, and in a kind of ecstasy he noted down (and underlined) "Babbage, Dictionary of Manufactures. Good Hints upon Speculum Polishing."

A careful drawing of Miss Herschel's "Sweeper" seems to indicate his working model; that the telescope was successfully finished is clearly set out in his letter to Darwin, where he says "I got him (Ross, the optician) to make two eye-pieces for a reflector telescope just before he died, two metals for which I had succeeded in making, of six and seven feet focal length, and so now I can show the good people here the Mountains in the Moon turned upside down, as of course they ought to be when seen from the Antipodes."

The passion for astronomy has, I think, waned lang syne, and the diadochi of the earnest, elderly gentlemen who sat up with the stars in frozen solitude have all retired into golf clubs. But in Martens' lifetime the Victorian era found much to marvel at in the discoveries of her true high priests, the men of science; and astronomical literature, from the rhapsodies of the Rev. Thomas Dick to the discreet lyrism of Proctor and Flammarion, wore some of the trappings of Romance—the Romance of Time and Space. The continuity of optical discoveries was also an incentive. Nations contended for the proprietorship of the largest telescope—even Melbourne made a bid for supremacy—and comets and the canals in Mars were good newspaper copy.

A sort of finality seems—as in the case of the safety bicycle—to have been reached in the Lick telescope; that mammoth height once touched, there could be but decline; and popular astronomy is no more to us nowadays than so much archery. Yet, I sometimes wonder what became of Conrad Martens' telescope. To what dusty and forgotten limbo has it descended, with its speculum tarnished and pitted, and its gear awry? How fitly would it grace some museum of Australian antiques, to show the curious how a hard-working artist beguiled his scant hours of leisure in the sixties of last century!

He had still another hobby, if I may be allowed the word—his Church; and a staunch old-fashioned churchman was he—one to whom the idea of Church and State was inviolable as the Thirty-nine Articles, and who would not endanger his belief by putting any strain upon its cohesions. His admission that he had no intention of reading the *Origin of Species* has a certain naive charm.

Sooner would he peruse *The World's Birthday* of Gaussen than traffic with radical and revolutionary ideas, so likely to upset—such is the diabolical power of reason!—the simple conscience of an old conservative.

He was one of the churchwardens of St. Thomas's, North Sydney. Had he not helped to collect money for its renovation, and carved the font with his own hands? Such service must have added to his sense of proprietorship—for it is the act of giving which binds us to the receiver—and when he graced the foreground of a North Shore landscape with the old church, it was with an intimate pleasure that he traced its familiar form.

Martens had removed to St. Leonards, as the North Shore was then called, in 1844. In the previous year he had built a cottage there on five acres belonging to his wife—now the site of the home of the Apostolic Delegate. The land was of the poorest description, fit, Mrs. Martens used to say, only for the growing of cactus. Here a son, William Conrad, was born on the 11th

of March, 1844, but lived only six weeks. He was buried in the garden, but afterwards properly bestowed in the cemetery.

Martens dwelt at St. Leonards for the remainder of his life, retaining his studio in Mort's Buildings for purposes of business as late as '56. He taught his daughter Rebecca to paint; but her work is a weak imitation of his own, lacking touch and insight. Both his girls had grown up, but neither married. Elizabeth died in 1870; Rebecca survived both parents, and died in 1909. I fancy that, as in most mid-Victorian homes where respectability leaned upon a straitened income, life at St. Leonards must have been quiet, sad and a little depressed.

In 1863, on the recommendation of his friend Alexander Berry, he was appointed Assistant Parliamentary Librarian. Doubtless he felt that, though his working days were nearly over, he was well fitted for the position by reason of his love and knowledge of books. Writing in '67 to an English friend, he says of it: "My present occupation, I am happy to say, suits me well, as it enforces a certain amount of exercise. I have now but little time for painting. The few hours which I spend at home in the day are frequently employed in little domestic matters, and I must own that now, after the journey to Sydney and back, I feel a positive pleasure in sitting still—I mean quite still, doing nothing, especially during the present hot weather, which is sometimes very relaxing. Mrs. Martens takes a regular siesta, and I can do that too, sometimes, with the help of a book." It is a pleasure to think that the old man enjoyed his quiet work in the Library. He asked for a retiring pension in June, 1878, having suffered long from angina pectoris. There is something pathetic in this appeal less than three months before his death, but it was not granted, and he died on the 21st August, 1878.

His long and honourable life had been uneventful as the lives of most artists—preoccupied, as they must needs be, with but two problems, their bread and their art. It was his destiny to be the first artist to make here a tradition in landscape, and Sydney must ever esteem his memory, for he was her first painter-lover. Never did lover pay to the beauty of his mistress a more untiring homage.

THE ART OF CONRAD MARTENS

WHEN Tom Girtin destroyed the mean tradition of the tinted monotone by bringing in the direct method of laying a wash of colour truly in its place, he had discovered a new art—the English art of water-colour. English it was in origin, English it has remained in practice; for in vain do we look abroad for any master, outside the brilliant Spaniard, Fortuny, who comes within coo-ee of our own. Girtin, Turner, Cotman, De Wint, Cox, Barrett, and Copley Fielding exploited all the possibilities of the medium, and in Turner's *Battle of Fort Rock*, exhibited at the Academy in 1815, may be seen practically every method of handling used to-day. All these great English masters were born between 1775 and 1790, and Conrad Martens came into a world of art still astir with their discoveries.

It must have been predilection that took Martens for tuition to Copley Fielding, for his attachment to nature, and a certain turn of elegance in his style, indicate some affinity of taste; this, rather than the persistence of a master's influence, which a genuine artist must have in the course of his evolution modified and absorbed into a personal style.

Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding, for many years President of the Old Water-colour Society, was a pleasant and courtly gentleman—a kind of minor Sir Thomas Lawrence. He was successful early, and remained so to the end of his life; but—alas for instant popularity!—his work is not esteemed so highly now as in his own day. Ruskin rates him for not studying sufficiently with his pencil, and for trusting to the virtuosity of his brush—a fault of which his pupil was never guilty. "Fielding's professional life," says old Roget,* "was spent in sketching, painting in the studio, and giving lessons to pupils. But the last two of these occupations engrossed more of his time than of theirs; for, sooth to say, a large class, though not nearly all, of Fielding's works, beautiful as they were, had the air more of models of art than guides to

* Roget, *History of the Old Water-colour Society*, vol. 2, p. 74.

nature. As compared with those of the brother painters with whom his name is always associated, the President's works were, in his own day, the most popular of all. His were eagerly purchased, while those even of David Cox were often returned from the gallery unsold."

Though Time, in the most equitable spirit of revenge, has reversed much contemporary opinion, and done justice to De Wint and the great, neglected Cotman, the ready elegance of Copley Fielding's draughtsmanship remains, and he has to his credit "the invention of the Downs in art." This Sussex work Ruskin praises with his accustomed beauty of style; but it must be remembered that Ruskin loved all draughtsmen of line, and ever preferred the artist who elevated his theme to him who simply rendered simple nature. Of Fielding he says, in one of his Oxford lectures: "The depth of far distant brightness, freshness and mystery of morning air, with which Copley Fielding used to invest the ridges of the South Downs as they rose out of the Sussex champaign, remains, and I believe must ever remain insuperable, while his sense of beauty in the cloud forms associated with the higher mountains enabled him to invest the comparatively modest scenery of our own island—out of which he never travelled—with a charm seldom attained by the most ambitious painters of Alp or Apennine."

Fielding painted also the mountain and lake scenery of the North of England, and typical seascapes with shipping; and in all these his pupil displayed a like interest, though he had later to deal with them under very different conditions of colour and light. Martens must have been a consistent worker, for his Devonshire sketches reveal a will to master his craft and a delight in outdoor sketching for its own sake. A sound training in the practice of the day had made him a good craftsman; he had early learnt to lay a wash with precision, and to handle pigments with some sense of their specific differences. In general, his English work is small in size, and characterized by care and neatness, as if he still must feel his way, dependent on a knowledge of form and colour not yet ample enough for a larger essay. He is still dominated by the drawing-master's angle of vision. The ruined castle, the old water-mill with attendant reflections, and the tree groups that

speak the language of Harding, master of plumbago—these, and all the well-used subjects which the practitioners of the day found acceptable to the genius of water-colour, have demanded and received their measure of commentary from his brush. There is no sense of originality yet; but before he leaves England he has learnt to play freely with his pencil, and some drawings in the Dixson collection show that he has a more than casual knowledge of perspective and architectural form.

His South American work had little artistic result beyond his drawings for the engravers, inadequately handled by Landseer, who upset their unity of tone; and his Tahiti drawings, developed long after his stay on the island, have not that convincing air that invariably goes with work the subject matter of which has been thoroughly digested. Not until he has made Sydney his own does his personality stand revealed. For though he landed here well enough equipped, a proficient sketcher, and a keen observer, yet upon his work no seal of originality had been set. That originality Sydney and her harbour were to discover, for in his revelation of their beauty Martens was to find both himself and his art.

In painting the harbour, Martens had an advantage lost to us by the development of the suburban system: there were no mathematical lines of red roof to disturb the harmony of his skies. The city itself, always beautiful from a distance in its changing greys upon the sky-line, has added only to its mass the loud garishness of advertisement—crude witness to our provincialism and apathy! The quiet seclusion of the foreshores, charming bays and happy beaches, with an occasional well-placed villa for sign of man's presence, have since passed into the clutch of Progress—that arrant alderman and parvenu. For the purpose of a painter, nothing could have been better than this gracious landscape of sky and water and undulating hills, with its distant town and clear horizon, that knew not yet the smoke of factories. He could consider a unity of mass unbroken by petty details; and the essential nobility of some of Martens' compositions, granted that its first cause lay in the artist's mind, must admit, as contributory factor, the almost unsullied beauty of the foreshores. It

is a singular pleasure to look over the numberless drawings Martens made of distant Sydney: the sureness with which he places each building and tree-mass, and the swiftness of the touch, have an inimitable grace; and we come to see that in abandoning the pencil (which, it is to be remembered, was Turner's preference) the modern artist has lost much of his power over form and natural perspective.

I cannot sufficiently praise Conrad Martens' dexterity with the pencil. As a sketcher, he is supreme in swift execution and direction of touch. Mrs. Macarthur Onslow, whom he taught, has left it on record that he never lifted pencil from paper, so quickly did he grip the essentials of any scene. His drawing of distances and middle-distances could not be bettered, so accurately did his eye gauge the lie of the country and the character of hill and valley. There is never the slightest confusion, because he was master of his method, which was to employ four deliberate strengths of line—" no hatching, as it is a slow process "—and to depend on these for perspective and representation. The advantages of such a method are obvious: a fine style results from limitation of means, and the clear study, comprehensive and truthful, will leave the artist free to select and amplify when he comes to the final consideration of colour—for Martens followed the Turnerian tradition of painting from his pencil drawings, aided by an occasional colour-note and by written memoranda of landscape " effects."

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Conrad Martens was a product of the thought and taste of the days of his youth. He had by heart Reynolds' *Discourses*, the *Composition* and *Light and Shade in Painting* of John Burnet, and the *Landscape Maxims* of John Varley; the Turnerian Elevation of Theme was part of his mental texture, just as we to-day are unconsciously subject to the influences of French landscape. Only when his work is seen in its due relation to those ideas which were his currency can we form a just estimate of his art. In the first place we must dismiss from our minds all exactitudes of value and colouring, and all local colour reactions, and consider his work

from the standpoint of design and draughtsmanship, of chiaroscuro and harmony. Then, if we have any love for that monument of the art of landscape engraving, the *England and Wales* of Turner, we shall surely find a niche in our hearts for the work of Conrad Martens.

The nineteenth century is strewn with the wreckage of artistic wars. With the French Revolution passed not merely the old traditional monarchy but the old traditional painting: and, as upon the one, so upon the other followed wars and riots. The struggles between Science and Religion were accompanied by as many battles for artistic beliefs; even to-day the Realist would burn William Blake and Turner at the stake, and the Pre-Raphaelite regards the Impressionist as the Beast from the Pit, while the Impressionist looks upon his adversary much as would great Falstaff upon all who would banish good honest sack. As for the Futurist, who is the Bolshevist in Art, he flings his stupid dynamite with the impartial tolerance of a madman, and would immolate them all.

In this nook of the Antipodes Conrad Martens hardly took note of these wars and rumours of wars: he had to settle down to the earning of a livelihood, and the difficulties of handling an alien landscape in which he had neither guide nor exemplar. That he did not succeed in mastering the gum-tree is not to his discredit, for the problem could not be solved by his method. He learned to draw the trunk and generalized shape of the tree, but he did not perceive—what it took the combined genius of a Heysen and a Streeton to resolve—that the gum is visually a *flat* tree and, unlike the oak or fir, has little volume; that its character lies in silhouette, in the true generalization of its mass, and not in shifting light and shadow. Realism alone could analyse those greys and bronzes, that metallic sheen and play of light on pendant leaves: and Martens was not a realist.

The characteristics of a new land are not to be learned in a generation, for the eye of the immigrant will be caught by the unfamiliar, the unexpected, not by that which is general to the country. The bottle-tree, the "blackboy," the fern-tree gully, the cabbage-palm were seized upon by our colonizing fathers in art as

precious and typical. I cannot think that they much admired the gum, for it interfered with all their accepted notions of tree formation. Looking at the work done by our pioneer artists, we find little that is convincingly Australian until we come to Bouvelot, whose *Pool at Coleraine* is the most admirable piece of Australian landscape achieved by the elder men. Such a landscape is a discovery in the art of seeing, and it cost Bouvelot much and profound study before he realized it. Here we have something which reminds us of Australia and no other land. The light is mellow and sunny, the drawing expressive and faithful; for Bouvelot was dominated by the true Gallic instinct for the verities. He has not twisted his material to a pictorial conformity, but has divined and realized its true character.

Nicholas Chevalier was not so successful. In his *View of Melbourne from the Yarra* the group of trees to the right might easily be elms, so casually has he marked their construction and leafage. Martens drew the gum with more insight, but he was over thirty when he landed and his touch was already formed. In all his renderings of the gum foliage that I have seen, he gives no more than a suggestion—in his drawings, by a flowing round line, in his aquarelles, by an accumulation of small touches, little blots of colour, which break up the masses and destroy that essential shape of the gum, which Heysen alone has conquered and handles so beautifully. And here it is interesting to note how very few of our native-born artists have been successful with the gum. It is only by setting free its form against the sky that one can reveal the infinite variety of its shape within the fixed character. In its primeval condition it is, seen close at hand, almost unpaintable; only where settlement has thinned and scattered the legions, and the individual giant dominates his fellows, does decorative space of tree and earth and sky become material for the painter's art. No European formulae for painting trees are of any utility here, where the sky spaces are so different in shape and light effect, the pattern and weight of foliage so unusual. The problem demands unflinching courage and a student's submissiveness, without a backward glance at methods generalized to the expression of other flora.

I have already noted that Conrad Martens drew the bole of the gum with care and love, and, in his middle-distances, he did generalize its form with sufficient character; but I feel that he is happier when he does not bring the tree, thus treated, into his near foreground. This does not in any way affect his status as a landscape artist. Claude employed a generalized tree shape, let Ruskin rate him for it as he will; and Turner invented a tree formula, employing dark mass and delicate receding greys to epitomize that tree depth so difficult to render, and in actuality conquered by the divine Corot alone. As for our own Hilder, much as he loved the beauty of all trees, he failed to render their individual character.

Roughly speaking, there have been three great schools of landscape, the Classic, the Romantic, and the Realistic—the purely Impressionist school we can neglect for the moment as beside the issue in considering Martens' work. The Classic style composes by noble mass and line, the Romantic depends for its magic upon colour and chiaroscuro, and the Realistic, whether it be the fine truth of Ruysdael or the slavish imitation of Holman Hunt, depends upon a close rendering of "things seen." If one puts aside much of Martens' work which, from the exigency of commissions, is of purely topographical interest, it will be seen that his best is plainly influenced by the classical ideal. True it is that the Turnerian tradition plays here an unmistakable part; but how was he to escape that dominating influence of his time? Turner not only overtopped and crushed his contemporaries, but established a genre in landscape, half art, half topography, which charmed a vast public through the medium of engraving. Turn to any of the landscape engraving done between the twenties and fifties of the nineteenth century, and you will see not only that Turner swayed the topographers of his day, but that his long rule over the style of engraving reduced his contemporaries' work for the burin to one great common Turnerian denominator. He trained his engravers to see the "lights," who hitherto had comprehended only the dark end of the scale; to render delicate distances, the sparkle and brilliancy, which are so aptly rendered by the graven line. That great school of landscape engraving founded and

reared by the genius of one man—to-day the ignorant scorn of both public and artist besotted with photographic reproduction—is dead and almost forgotten; but it confirmed that love of landscape which is a peculiar appanage of the English race.

The typical picture engendered by topographical necessity was that panorama of nature known as the View, and the idea of its value persists, though not in the mind of the artist. Choosing his height upon the hill, the painter commanded an outlook over an unbroken lie of country. The windings of the river, or the broad waters of lake or haven, were ever-welcome breaks in the uniformity of the land; valleys and hills, intervening, materially aided the perspective of the scene, and a distant chain of mountains upon the sky-line was never found amiss. A rocky foreground with trees to left and right helped to force the distance into the inane of the sky, with a near figure or two, or cattle, or some evidence of man's presence. Tourist Bureaux, and the photographer, have long usurped the place and use of the old topographer; yet, strangely enough, owing to the inability of the lens to render the perspective of distances, the camera often fails where the good draughtsman succeeds.

Much of Martens' work must be classed as topography, and the bulk of his commissioned work was views either of or from the patron's residence. Sometimes—for they had good eyes for a site, those grandfathers of ours—Martens had no trouble with the subject; but more often he had to be content with making the best use possible of his material, to the fettering of his imagination. To do justice to the artist, we must be prepared to disassociate such bread-and-butter stuff from the work of his choice, and regret that the necessity, which kept him working in the "gentlemanly interest," did not more often leave him free to follow Ariel into the region of pure beauty. Yet for the necessity that called him to topography we have reason to be grateful. His indefatigable pencil has left such a treasury of drawings that no history of our first century in New South Wales and Queensland would be complete without them. His sketch-book could never have been far from his hand, and the flying pencil that ministered to the calm eye left little to record once it had harvested its view.

Martens never learned to handle oil-colour comfortably; with one or two exceptions, an even opacity pervades all his work in that medium. As soon as he took up a hog-hair brush he was haunted by his water-colour experience; and, as he did not possess the secret of keeping his canvas translucent in the shadows and loading his lights, the general result attained is a notable lack of atmosphere. This almost invariably goes with the practice of a hand used to the fluency of water-colour when it essays the heavy medium; and rarely have artists handled both vehicles with equal success. Turner stands unrivalled in water-colour, but his oil paintings have deteriorated through faulty construction. Constable, whose technique in oils was sound enough, handled water-colour so clumsily that his use of it can only be regarded as a time-saving device for the making of colour notes. Martens was no exception to this rule. Though he tried bravely to master the older medium, he drew not by values but by his feeling for form, and was, therefore, confronted from the outset by insuperable obstacles. His work in oils resembles water-colour with a glaze. It lacks both depth and limpidity. His distances do not recede into infinity, but are stayed by dead paint, so that he produces none of the rare characteristics of oil painting—fine impasto, variety of tones, charm of gradation and that mystery of shadow, interpenetrated by indefinite shapes which the eye divines but does not seek to determine. We arrive inevitably at a surface of paint. Generally, his colour is tame and lacks variety, the trees are heavy and petrified, their edges hard and palpable, artificial; you feel that his spirit has not entered the medium, and that he has been beaten by it. His greatest success in oils is the panel of Sydney Cove, charming in colour and filled with atmosphere. The slightness of scale has helped him here. As the panel is mainly concerned with the middle distance, he has no near difficulties to contend with, and his technical knowledge suffices for his purpose. Here are no spaces empty of interest; the small quantity of colour opposed in the pictorial forms embodied is the reason of its success; expanded to a larger canvas it would have been empty and thin.

Very different is his accomplishment in water-colour. Here

are no hesitations, no misgivings; this is his natural element. He had noted the styles of the masters before he left England, and through a long life was ever adding to his equipment. Throughout his scrupulously-kept notebooks there are continuous memoranda on practice. Here, a series of restricted palettes, how to work with four colours—black, ochre, indian red, and cobalt—or, again, with five or six pigments; there, particulars of phenomena observed, the colour mixtures for clouds, the manner in which the illusion of light at evening may be attained; or, again, tints for trees, the greys of distances, the composition of shadows. He is often occupied with methods of attack, outlining carefully a lay-in of greys and browns, and finishing with the primitives—but this method, if he essayed it, he certainly abandoned, for it would have killed all richness of colour and brilliancy of tone. Once he analyses carefully the colour of a tea chest, giving the relative quantities, and how he may apply the colour scheme to landscape.

His technique in water-colour varies with the size of the work and the paper employed, and is, I think, with the notable exception of *Sydney from Vaucluse* and *The Five Islands*, at its best in medium-sized works like the *Hartley Stockade, Moonlight*—a gem that Hilder would have loved—and the *Landscape* (Plate V.) with a lake in middle distance, which, in the opinion of Mr. Hardy Wilson, Cotman might have signed with easy assurance. In many of these it is limpid and singularly direct, and the result is a delight to dwell upon. His method was to float three or four already determined tints softly and purely together. The execution is invariably swift, and the hues blend without break or muddiness, beginning with the tint of the sky and passing through delicate distances to the warm ochres of the foreground. Upon this finely graded base, when dry, he superimposed his drawing. In the larger works he washed down the tones, as recommended by Fielding's practice, to blend and soften the tints. This "washing down" gets rid of some of the size in the paper, and conduces to a matt effect in the skies and distance; colour is absorbed by the paper and atmosphere is achieved at the expense of brilliance of tone. With a clear outline to guide him, and his inimitable pencil

study before him, Martens next proceeded to the building of his picture, laying his flat washes of general tone and skilfully treating their edges. Finally he individualized the forms, pulled his composition together with infinite little touches, and finished with Chinese white in his lights and occasional body-colour in the foreground. This is the only weakness in his technique, for the glaze of yellow has disappeared and left his lights naked and a little cold—as in the smoke and sunset reflections of his *Sydney Harbour, 1866,* in the Mitchell Library. The practice of that day permitted the use of opaque pigment; even De Wint, purist of the medium, was at times guilty of falling back upon its easy security. It is scarcely necessary to say that, except in gouache, where it enters into every component tint, a water-colour is better without this heavy addition; for whenever its use becomes apparent it disturbs the technical unity of the work.

The legitimate use of white is with grey paper, as masterfully employed by Turner in his *Rivers of France.* Martens was singularly skilful in working upon such a toned base, and some of his most delightful minor works, such as the slight sketch *Sydney from Potts Point,* are executed upon bluish and grey papers. These are never over-elaborated; the sketch element is preserved and the colours artfully disposed without undue preciosity; they have a genuinely captivating and careless charm, and that element of grace which was one of the most constant attendants of Conrad Martens' mind.

We have, perhaps, paid dearly for our devotion to Charles Darwin and his *Descent of Man.* The materialism of the nineteenth century, which found its issue in the Great War, was due not so much to the decay of the religious spirit as to man's depreciation of his own—to the relegation of all things to a scientific standard. Art has suffered immeasurably by this degrading worship of facts; and the Impressionist movement in painting, once past its first decent impulse of revolt, ended by denying to art all individuality and all emotional significance. It made the painter a mere recorder of light and colour, an automaton without sensibility or intelligence. A landscape was no longer, as in the words of Amiel, "a state of soul," but a spectrum

analysis of light stated in terms of apothecaries' paint. Modern scientific Impressionism abolished the good demon Chiaroscuro, and the idea of beauty in line and mass. Values were forgotten, and the masters of old, from the great Dutchmen to Corot, might as well have died with Babylon.

In this total abandonment of tradition for colour reaction, Impressionism signed its own death warrant. In its oils, the "pure sunlight" imprisoned in the pigment will have blackened in the passing of a century, and the flat picture will become flatter and duller; nothing will awake those colour reactions when once the morphia of Time has done its opiate work. Ghosts, and poor dull ghosts at that, will then haunt the heavy golden frames, for colour without form is pure sensuality and must die the death. Beside the atmosphere of Nature—which modern painters have been at such pains to render—there is also what the French call an "Atmosphere of the picture," of which the Impressionists have been frequently ignorant or unmindful. Compare a fine Dutch landscape or a Constable with an impressionist piece by Monet, and you will immediately be conscious that, although there is more light in the Monet, it is all as flat as a pancake; that everything is treated with a fine democratic indifference; sky, trees, or buildings, all are mere light and colour sensation; there is neither such depth nor such weight in the picture as in the work of the older men. Composition is at an end—as for the painter's emotion, since he has failed to convey any, we must believe it to have been non-existent. Mere transcription, what the older men called a "study," has long been the currency of landscape art, and the result has been sundry documents in colour and "effects" of light. Handling and style are finished with, for the mind loses control in the act of copying nature. Naturalistic painters had been mad enough to set the tints of their palettes against the living colour of nature.

Martens was saved from any such folly by a true knowledge of the limitations of medium. "The art of landscape painting," he says in his *Lecture*, "lies not in imitating individual objects but in imitating an effect which nature has produced with means far beyond anything we have at command." Illusion, that was the

goal to be won; and that atmosphere of the picture of which I have spoken, that skilful disposition of the content within the frame, were the means by which alone illusion could be attained.

That he sometimes failed by forcing his medium was due to his attempt to make weight of tone do the work of colour; moreover, he sometimes, in presence of the actual problems—as so often happens to any of us—forgot the rules of his own aesthetic. And that aesthetic is embodied in the *Sydney from Vaucluse* which I have come to consider his masterpiece, the key to his intention in landscape. Often as he essayed the theme and charm of light, he never so completely succeeded as in this splendid vision of Sydney Harbour. He has rested here upon a far-off memory of Turner, as Turner had stayed himself upon Claude. Its colour quantities he never equalled in any of his other works, for here the colour sings. The atmosphere of distance is rendered perfectly, the touch is generalized to the requirement of each space and indication of form, the foreground is the most masterly he ever executed. And the subject is one wherein man shall take joy until light and life fail from our planet—the setting of the sun across a noble flood of water. The splendour that lies about departing day embodies an unearthly beauty—an irradiation that transfigures all nature like the visible presence of a god, an effulgence as from the wide-flung gates of paradise. For surely here, in such calm glory of intense gold, man, as he brooded enraptured over the miracle of day's decease, may well have come to ponder his own going-hence and dream that, when his own day's light should fade, he too might inherit such palaces of amber light and dwell for ever secure in tranquil halls of vision.

. . . . . .

Grace, balance, the feeling for line, a just eye for the pictorial planes, a delicacy of touch in skies and distances—these are the characteristics of Martens' art. His love of Nature was untiring. He was too well-bred to "show off" in her presence, for his mind was grave and self-respecting, and—shall I add—perhaps a little

cold. In his finer moments he attained a singleness of effect, and sometimes a rhythm which eludes him when his theme is too complicated. He had a sense of the hieratic relations of the parts of a picture; had not the pleasure of patrons demanded a bread-and-butter consideration, I believe he would have avoided that "finish" and accumulation of details which was of the spirit of his age and sanctified by the great Turner. Simplicity and the sacrifice of the inessential are revealed in his *Sydney from Vaucluse*, *Dawn*, *Moonlight*, and *The Hartley Stockade*. These contain that three-fourths of tradition whose remainder, according to Charles Whibley, is the quantum of permissible originality in all great art. Traditionalist, conformist in art as in religion, Conrad Martens was content with Nature's help to make his personal offering to Beauty—content also to do his best in despite of hard times and scanty patronage. To this integrity of mind his pencil drawings bear witness: precise, straightforward, honest, recalling inevitably the dictum of the great Ingres—"Drawing is the probity of art."

PLATE I.
26 x 18½ in.

Sydney from Vaucluse (1864)
In the Dixson Collection Sydney

PLATE II.
8½ x 5½ in.

High Tor, Dartmoor
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE III.
25⅛ x 17⅛ in.

Sydney Harbour
from Point Piper (1866)
In the Mitchell Library
Sydney

Sydney Cové
[Circular Quay in 1842]
Oil painting in the Dixson Collection

PLATE IV.
31 x 12 in.

PLATE V.
10⅜ x 6⅛ in.

Landscape
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE VI.
5¼ x 5 in.

Moonlight
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE VII.
26 x 18 in.

The Five Islands
South Coast, N.S.W.
This picture is at Camden Park
New South Wales

PLATE VIII.
26 x 18 in.

Sydney from St. Leonards
(1841)
Oil Painting in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

View from Mt. Wingen
New South Wales
In the possession of
Mr. George Robertson
Sydney

PLATE IX.
18 x 11 in.

The Bay of Islands
New Zealand (1835)

Oil painting in the possession of
Mr. Arthur Wigram Allen
Sydney

PLATE X.
19 x 13 in.

PLATE XI.
19½ x 10½ in.

Sydney from Lavender Bay
Hand-coloured lithograph
in the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XII.
25 x 15 in.

Sydney Heads
from above Balmoral
In the National Art Gallery
of New South Wales

Dawes Point, Sydney
In the possession of
Miss Edith Hill, O.B.E.
Sydney

PLATE XIII.
17½ x 11½ in.

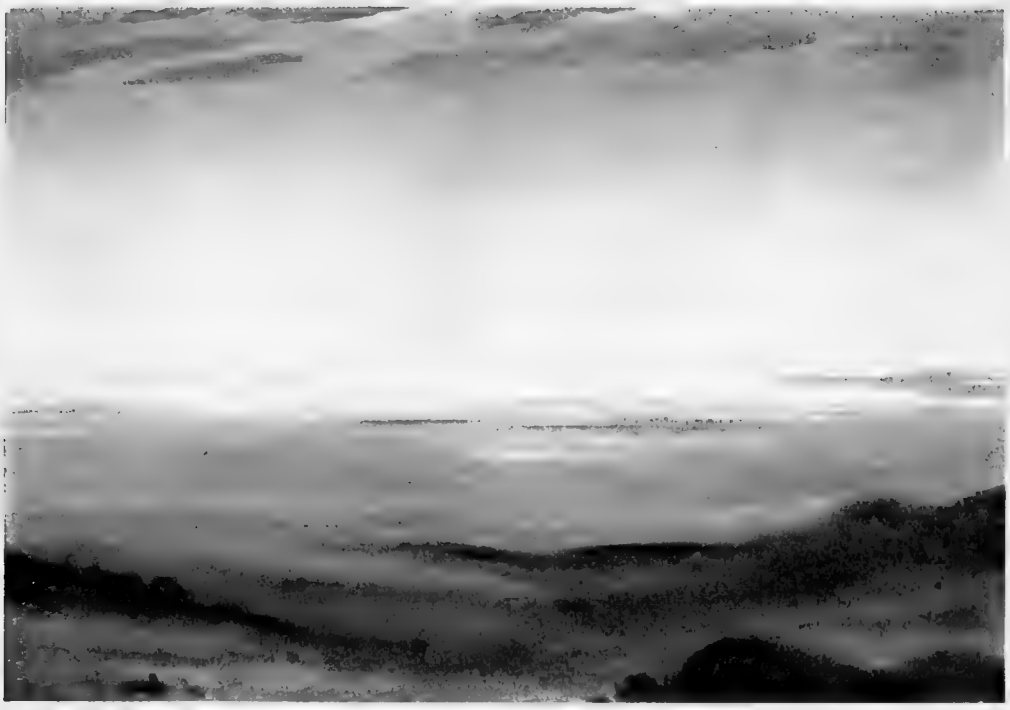

PLATE XIV.
5¼ x 3¼ in.

Dawn
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XV.
26 x 18 in.

Bridge Street, Sydney
(1835)
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XVI.
22 x 11 in.

Sydney Harbour
Oil Painting in the possession of
Mr. John Young
Sydney

PLATE XVII.
14 x 9½ in.

Hartley Stockade
New South Wales
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

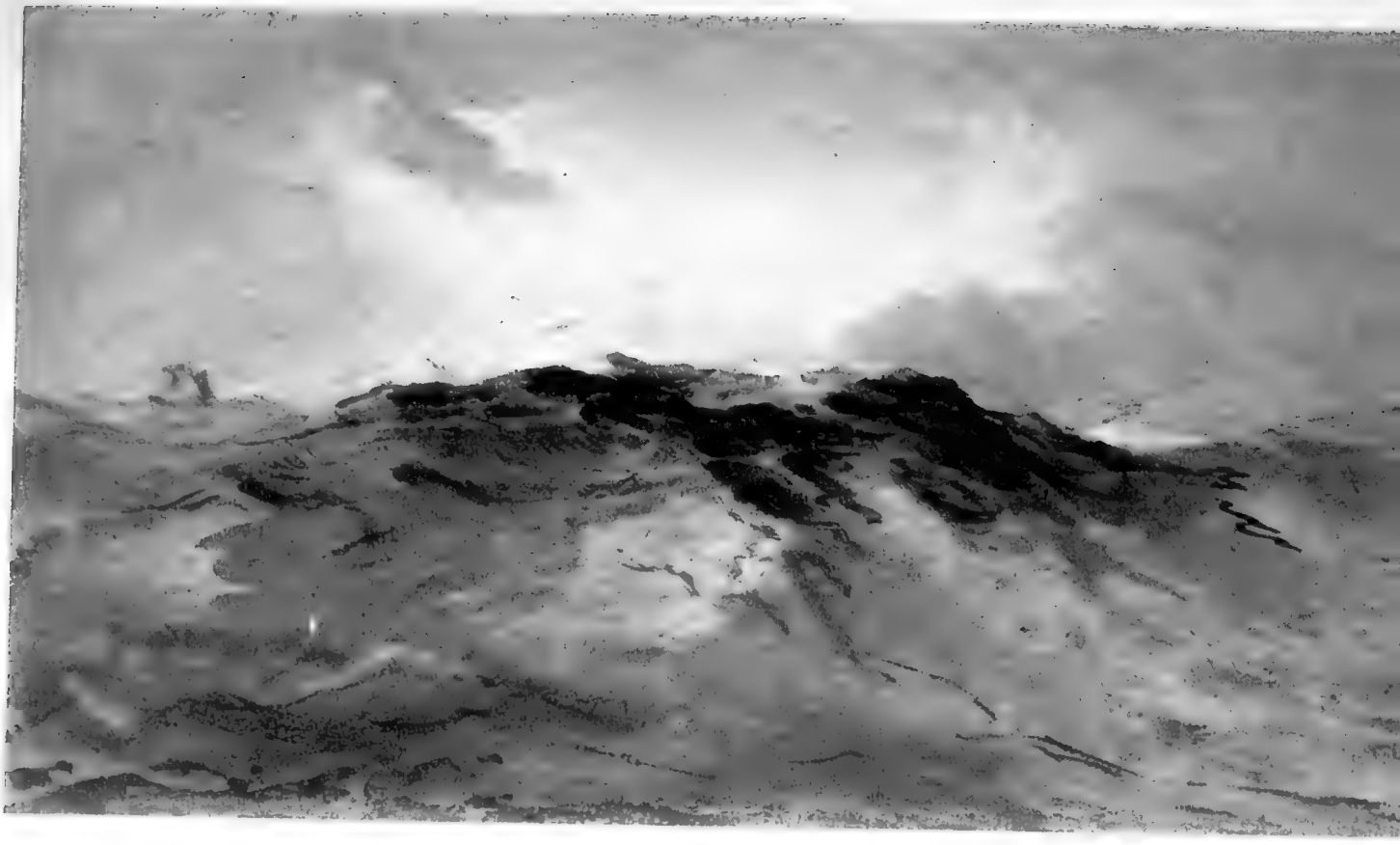

PLATE XVIII.
8 x 4½ in.

The Wave
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

Sydney Harbour
from Macquarie Street
In the possession of
Miss Eadith Walker, C.B.E.
Sydney

PLATE XIX.
24 x 16 in.

The Heads
from Point Piper
In the Mitchell Library
Sydney

PLATE XX.
16½ x 10½ in.

PLATE XXI.
26 x 18 in.

Elizabeth Farm
Parramatta
This picture is at Camden Park
New South Wales

PLATE XXII.
15 x 10¼ in.

Barco Creek
New South Wales (1835)
In the possession of the
Right Hon. Adrian Knox, C.J.

PLATE XXIII
25½ x 18 in.

The Darling Downs
near Killarney, Q.
In the possession of
Angus and Robertson, Ltd.

PLATE XXIV.
25½ x 18 in.

Brisbane in 1852
In the Mitchell Library
Sydney

Rushcutter's Bay, Sydney from Darlinghurst (1841)
In the possession of Mr. Justin Brenan Bowral

PLATE XXV.
26 x 18½ in.

PLATE XXVI.
15 x 9¼ in.

Mounts Keira and Kembla
New South Wales,
from the South Coast Road
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXVII.
17⅞ x 11¼ in.

Mount Dumaresq
Darling Downs, Q.
In the possession of
Miss Edith Hill, O.B.E.
Sydney

Papeete Harbour
Tahiti (1835)
In the possession of
Mrs. Odillo Maher
Sydney

PLATE XXVIII.
18¼ x 12½ in.

PLATE XXIX.
25 x 16½ in.

Crown Ridge
Blue Mountains, N.S.W.
In the Mitchell Library
Sydney

PLATE XXX.
10⅛ x 6¼ in.

Sydney,
from Potts Point

In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXXI.
26 x 18 in.

Jamison Valley, N.S.W.
looking towards
King's Tableland

This picture is at Camden Park
New South Wales

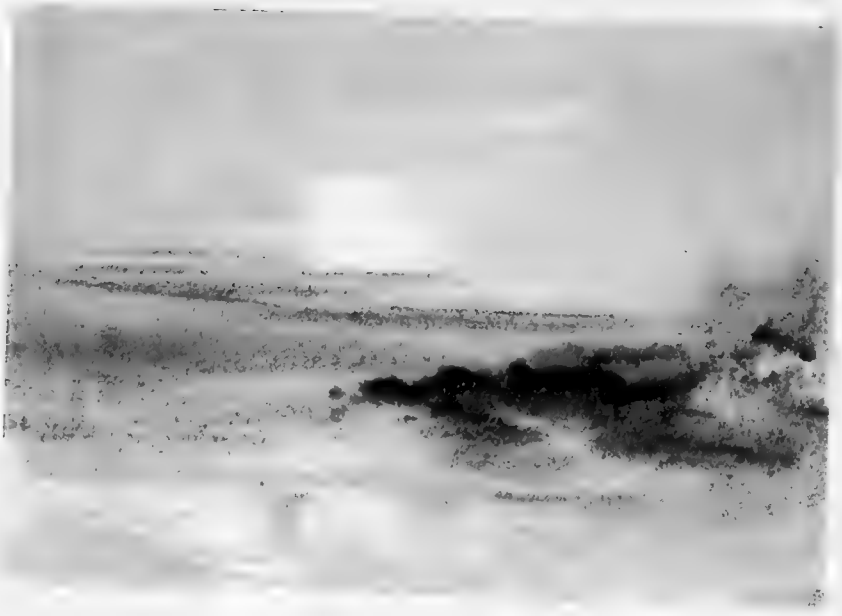

PLATE XXXII.
4¼ x 3 in.

Sunset
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXXIII.
11 x 6 in.

An Old-time Cottage
North Sydney, 1844
In the Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXXIV.
9¼ x 6 in.

Romantic Landscape
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXXV.
11 x 6½ in.

Landscape Composition
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXXVI.
10¼ x 7¼ in.

Harbour Piece
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXXVII.
10¾ x 6 in.

Romantic Landscape
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXXVIII.
10¾ x 7¼ in.

On the Foreshores, Sydney
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XXXIX.
9½ x 6 in.

View from the Domain
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XL.
10¼ x 6½ in.

View near Gosford
New South Wales
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

View in Tahiti
Sepia Drawing in the Dixson Collection Sydney

PLATE XLI.
11 x 7¼ in.

PLATE XLII.
9½ x 5¼ in.

Near Coogee
New South Wales
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

PLATE XLIII.
13½ x 9½ in.

Mount Greville
New South Wales
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

PLATE XLIV.
11 x 7 in

Fort Macquarie, Sydney
Sepia Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE XLV.
11½ x 7¾ in.

The Bourke Statue
Sydney (1847)
Pencil Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

PLATE XLVI.
11¾ x 7 in.

View of Parramatta
New South Wales, 1837
Pencil Drawing
in the possession of the
Right Hon. Adrian Knox, C.J.

PLATE XLVII.
14¾ x 9 in.

The Great Zig-Zag
Blue Mountains Railway
Pencil Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

PLATE XLVIII.
14⅛ x 9⅛ in.

Railway Viaducts
Lithgow, N.S.W.
Pencil Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

PLATE XLIX.
12 x 7½ in.

Sydney from Mosman
(1841)
Pencil Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

PLATE L.
12 x 8 in.

Rose Bay, Sydney
Pencil Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

PLATE LI.
17 x 11½ in.

The North Head, Sydney, from Middle Harbour

In the Dixson Collection Sydney

PLATE LII.
12 x 7 in.

Macquarie Place, Sydney
Pencil Drawing in the
Mitchell Library
Sydney

PLATE LIII.
18½ x 11 in.

Sydney from Kirribilli
Pencil Drawing in the
Dixson Collection
Sydney

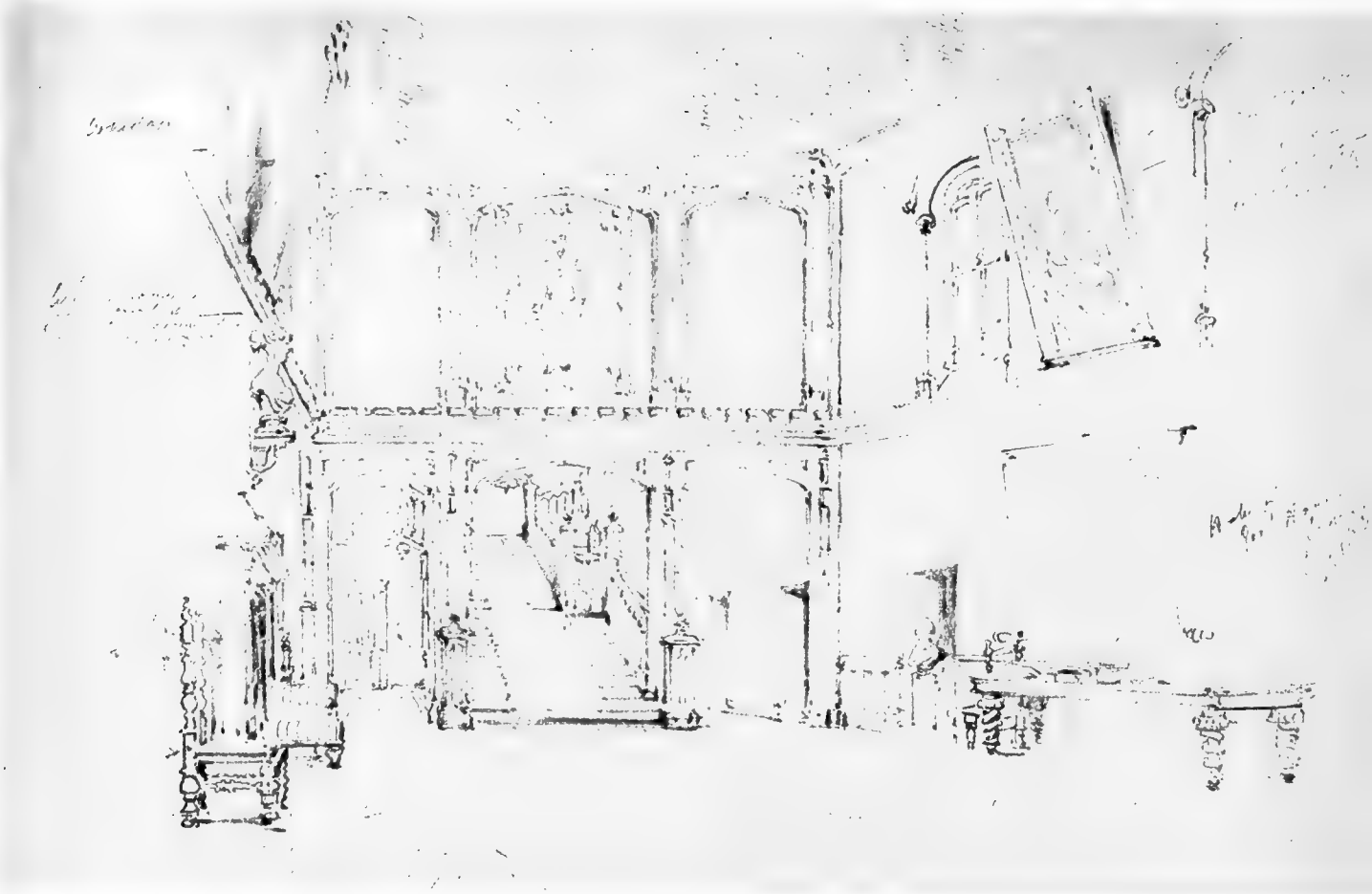

PLATE LIV.
17 x 11 in.

The Entrance Hall
Government House, Sydney
Pencil Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

PLATE LV.
11¾ x 6½ in.

Brisbane in 1851
Pencil Drawing
in the possession of the
Right Hon. Adrian Knox, C.J.

PLATE LVI.
12 x 6½ in.

The Landing Place
Ipswich, Q. (1851)
Pencil Drawing
in the possession of the
Right Hon. Adrian Knox, C.J.

PLATE LVII.
18½ x 11 in.

Sydney Harbour from Kirribilli (1852)
Pencil Drawing in the Dixson Collection

PLATE LVIII.
11⅝ x 7¼ in.

The Domain, Sydney
(1844)
Pencil Drawing in the
Dixson Collection

PLATE LIX.
11 x 7 in.

House at Kororareka
[Russell], N.Z. in 1835
Pencil Drawing in the
Mitchell Library
Sydney

Middle Harbour (1856)
Pencil Drawing
in the possession of
Mr. Leonard Dodds
Sydney

PLATE LX.
17 x 10 in.