UC-NRLF
$B 121 491

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

Class

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/essaysonart00carrrich

ESSAYS ON ART

ESSAYS ON ART

BY

J. COMYNS CARR

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1879

[*All rights reserved*]

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

I AM INDEBTED to the conductors of several magazines and periodicals for the liberty to make use of some of the longer papers included in the present volume. The chapters on the Drawings by the Old Masters originally appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but they have since been enlarged and in some cases re-written. A portion of the article on Cruikshank is reprinted by permission from the *Saturday Review.*

221496

CONTENTS.

PART I.

ART AND LITERATURE.

PAGE

I. THE ARTISTIC SPIRIT IN MODERN ENGLISH POETRY . 3

II. WILLIAM BLAKE, POET AND PAINTER 35

PART II.

THE IDEALS OF ART.

DRAWINGS BY THE OLD MASTERS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM:

I. THE EARLY ITALIAN MASTERS 83

II. THE ITALIAN MASTERS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY 100

III. THE GERMAN MASTERS 117

IV. THE DUTCH AND FLEMISH MASTERS 131

V. THE FRENCH AND SPANISH MASTERS 151

VI. THE ENGLISH MASTERS 163

COROT AND MILLET 174

FREDERICK WALKER 198

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK 223

THREE ENGLISH SCULPTORS 234

PART I.

ART AND LITERATURE.

I.

THE ARTISTIC SPIRIT IN MODERN ENGLISH POETRY.

OUT of the company of poets who gave a voice to the early years of the present century, there is only one who has touched with any influence the chord that keeps poetry in sympathy with art. The genius of Keats promised so much, that we are apt to forget that the achievement also was great, and, in regret for what was lost to us, to undervalue the strength and beauty of what was actually given. And yet there is no man of the time whose work stands out more clearly as a thing of independent invention, nor among the gifts granted to him was there any more noteworthy than that by which he apprehended the true relations of art and poetry. When the author of 'Endymion' undertook to reshape for himself the material of his craft, recent revolt had brought tumult into the realm of verse, and with it an impatience of order and control. Poetry in its new birth was as yet only a spirit and emotion, eager, searching, and passionately free, but without a form to clothe and fitly express its soul. The dead, outworn

B 2

form had but lately been cast away. There was no inclination to submit again to new bondage, even if there had been no other causes at work to disturb the serenity of verse; but linked to the purely poetic impulse, and partly controlling it, were other aims, political or humanitarian, which drew the poet from his place, and kept the spirit ever eager in the pursuit of vague ideals. Poets had, indeed, undertaken strange burdens. They were striving to carry upon their own shoulders all the weight of the revolution, and were impatient to invade the social and political world with the keen, perilous weapon of impetuous verse. Such a temper, serviceable in some other respects, was fatally opposed to the influences which come to poetry from art. The abstract method of sculpture, and even the more vivid realisation of painting, instinctively refuse to incur these inappropriate labours. Neither in the one nor the other can the artist without manifest violence to his office consent to take up arms in a social or philosophical crusade. The correspondence with the facts of physical nature is too close, the devotion to physical beauty too strong to permit any aërial pilgrimages, however rich the proffered reward. It is not that plastic art is careless of the burdens of the spirit, or powerless to express their pressure; to effect such a divorce of mind and body has been the occupation of distinguished pedants but never of great artists, and to Winckelmann,

not to Phidias, we owe a prevalent superstition that Greek art rejected energetic movement and shunned intensity of passion. But it is true, nevertheless, that plastic art can never forget physical beauty or take aught else in exchange. It can never mistake any scheme of life for life itself: it can never dream of any heaven in which there is no resurrection of the body. In this limitation inherent in its nature lies an element of security that poetry cannot always claim. The greatest poets, like the greatest painters or sculptors, are guided instinctively to what is of permanent force and beauty to the neglect of all philosophies speculative or humanitarian, but there are certain epochs when the distinction is hard to make, and when there is a more than common danger lest the poet should loose his moorings and drift away into strange waters.

It was so at the beginning of the present century. Poetry found itself suddenly confronted with new and untried problems; its world became extended both in fact and spirit, and many emotions that as yet had hardly found their place in actual life, pressed urgently for the utterance of verse. With the unexpected advent of fresh material there came the difficulty that always makes itself felt when the substance, suddenly overpowers the means, of expression. Form was lost in feeling. The keen sympathies of the great leaders of poetry yielded to the victorious influences of

the time, and the higher claims of the artist were imperilled amid the conflict of confused and unsettled passions. As politics became the arena for the play of wild fancy and unfettered invention, so, on the other hand, humanitarian and social impulses forced themselves into the ideal realm of the poet. For a while the boundary lines between philosophic speculation and the worship of unchanging beauty were borne away. Wordsworth undertook to answer Malthus, and Shelley discussed the principles of a social revolution. The things of practical life were thus mingled with the remoter and graver realities of the calm life of the imagination, and now, as we look back—though the space of time is but brief that separates us from the work of these men—we already see how much that was only of passing significance had attached itself to the lasting qualities of highest poetry.

The poet had lost for a while his hold on the calm spirit proper to all imaginative production, and which in plastic art receives its fullest expression. The rush and tumult of new passions, the rich outlook over new ideas, left him for a while at the mercy of his material, and in the sudden illumination of men's minds it was indeed difficult to distinguish rightly between the beauty that would stay and the brightness that was only fleeting. The purely artistic control which should be left to the workman, in the presence of even the most splendid

images, was continually yielding to the new onset of unforeseen ideas ; and in this season of confused outlines and rich but unshapen material, the poet often struggled ineffectually for the final shape that should be unalterably fixed.

If there had then existed any noble pictorial art, we can imagine how helpful would have been its influence to the poets in their own domain. We can conceive of art and verse striving harmoniously to reduce the new world of thought to ordered and rhythmic expression—verse reflecting the passion, and yearning, and disappointment that filled men's hearts, and art transporting the image of these things within her own stricter limits, and keeping still unspoiled that sense of majestic silence which should rest upon all great work, as the seal of a perfected vision. In this fellowship the mute formality of art would have reacted upon the full speech of verse, and would have helped to that calmer attitude of which verse stood so much in need. But such art as existed offered but a poor companionship ; all that was sincere in its achievement was concerned with the grace or the emotions of domestic life ; it was not yet conscious of the larger problems which beset the progress of poetry, or if partly conscious was without the needful technical gifts for so high an endeavour. It becomes interesting, therefore, to trace out by what means and through whom verse was to work out its own salvation,

and to note from what causes several of the great leaders of imagination were more or less shut out from the artistic influence.

Byron, the most popular poet of the century, probably felt less than any of his fellows the value of the artistic spirit. Though he hurls his brilliant rhetoric at the 'dull spoiler' of the Parthenon, yet he gives nowhere any sign that the beauty of ancient art had so entered into his nature as to affect his own creations. It may even be said that the successes of his genius depended, in great measure, upon the deliberate abandonment of that quiet vision belonging, as of right, to the sculptor or the painter. In all the greatest of his writings which affect to be purely poetic, the motive is always romantic, the method brilliantly restless. He had not the power to dwell upon any subject until it should yield up to him its ultimate secret of beauty; but content with what was nearer, he seized with eager and effective grasp upon old forms of pathos, touching them with new and splendid fire. He possessed an uncommon sympathy with the more common states of feeling; and, as with all imaginative work that is not quite complete in its vision, his poetry keeps about it a savour of morality. There is an implied reference to a standard of good and evil: an accent of either penitence or rebellion, even in the moments of freest utterance. The perplexed and troubled attitude towards moral problems, great and small,

survived and dominated the other phases of his genius. It availed finally to turn the poet into the satirist. For satire, however audacious its utterance, must needs possess some standpoint of morality; all its fiercest attacks and its cruellest laughter spring from the contemplation of a world of neglected duties, with its grim contrasts of faith and practice. 'Don Juan' was the complete expression of one side of Byron's genius; and as it helped to perfect the portrait of its author, so also it increased his hold upon the popular imagination. To acknowledge a system of moral law, and at the same time to violate its rules, has a certain fascination, even for the most orthodox. The career does not disturb the empire of punishments and rewards, and the daring of the chief actor, with its 'eternal perils,' only stimulates attention into wonderment. But this spirit of revolt against morality, or acquiescence in its control, finds itself in opposition to the calm of pure poetic invention; and even when perplexity yields to a cynical self-possession, it has little in common with the noblest artistic vision which penetrates and leaves behind the problems of a moral world. The true mission of poetry, no less than of art, is directed to this goal. It seeks to snatch beauty from out of the tumult of an existence controlled by the laws of good and evil, and to crown her queen of a quiet land. In sculpture, this is done absolutely and literally. The figures carved for us by Greek artists

are the figures of men and women, of living and sentient beauty, whose loveliness has been suddenly transfixed in a passionless dream. Sometimes in perfect physical repose, or in the performance of some simple duty of graceful limbs, but not less often in the full energy of excited action,—these figures nevertheless constantly keep firm hold upon the essential calm of art. In the very noblest specimens of Greek work that survive to us —the pediments of the Parthenon and its frieze, and the frieze of the Mausoleum—there is a full expression of energetic movement, and even of violent encounter. But the movement, with its inexhaustible patterns of beauty, has outlived the passion that suggested it; and here, in the final shape given by art, it remains only as an added means of grace. In these battles of Amazons and armed warriors, the uplifted arm is stayed for beauty's sake; this figure in swift flight upon the pediment seems but to pursue its one fair attitude; while these Grecian youths imaged in the Panathenaic procession guide their impetuous steeds in obedience to a hidden law of harmony.

Painting, as we know it best, is a thing of more modern date: its world comes nearer to the world that lies close around us. Colour, with its more vivid reality of effect, compels a closer imitation of the changing passions, the passing fears of actual life; but the wider and minuter experience of emotion is still controlled by

the same spirit which holds dominion in the earlier art. In poetry, this sense of silence rests as the goal to which all passion tends. The tumult and conflict of tragedy are only useful to reach the ultimate repose that follows tumult, and gives to passion its fixed shape and firm outline ; and if we would note the way in which this end is gained by the poet, whose genius, better than others, could track life through every movement, we have only to dwell upon the closing scenes of Shakespeare's King Lear, wherein all the previous suffering and human anguish seem suddenly to pass into the perfect tranquillity of a dream.

Byron's genius had no access to this spirit in poetry. His understanding of passion is not of the deeper sort, that reaches to an outer light beyond the present gloom; and the highest occupation of his verse is but to reflect the darkness and confused human trouble, not to penetrate its mystery. Passionately sympathetic within the range of his sympathies, and bitterly regretful of all the ills that he knew, he yet never reached to that wider knowledge and profounder pity which come with the artist's assured possession of the secrets of beauty. Even in the lesser attributes of the poet, his achievement misses the intensity of definition belonging no less to literature than to art. A rhetorical splendour in the record of vague influences, a brilliant command of illustration, summoned boldly from every source, suffice to

set forth to the world whatever of possible fascination lies in a single personality. All else is but dimly seen and imperfectly apprehended; and his verse has, therefore, no power to carve out in the mind an exact image of some form of loveliness in clear and steadfast outline. Here, not for the first, nor for the last time, the poet has been found without the artist's highest gift. The 'mortal's agony with an immortal patience blending,' was not for him; in his art, the agony is divorced from patience, and the struggle against the maladies of life never yields the enduring outline granted to the marble. The greatly gifted artist is never thus at the mercy of any passion; he is partly a spectator, even of his own ills, and can watch the movement and tumult of life as one may look upon the troubled line of a storm-beaten landscape cast up against a twilight sky. He has few tears, for what to others bring only grief, to him savours also of beauty. But Byron is too full of remorse for things done, of pity for his fate; and thus it happens that not only the form of his work as a whole, but even the forms of separate thoughts and images, lose something of ideal influence and independent strength.

It is noticeable that Wordsworth and Shelley—men of genius, distinct, and in some sense opposed to that of Byron—also failed in giving to their verse the sensuous character of art. Both were irresistibly attracted towards the purely intellectual limits of poetry. Through them,

more clearly than through Byron, we may note the extent of the new conquests then being made by verse; for while they were losing hold of the formal beauty of the actual world, their spirit—sped on a new flight—had already reached to far-off undiscovered recesses of personal emotion. With both, but in different ways, the sentient life and growth of things was but a point of departure. Passion, and the lips and language of passion, grew distant and intangible in their verse; and even the facts of outward nature were dissolved into voices of the air. We may think of the genius of Shelley as of a cloud of changing colour and uncertain form borne music-laden above our heads, and touching the earth of real grass and flowers only for brief moments, and at its topmost places.

> 'He who would question him
> Must sail alone at sunset, where the stream
> Of ocean sleeps around those foamless isles,
> When the young moon is westering as now,
> And evening airs wander upon the wave.'

His spirit, overcome by the passion of the intellect, turned seldom towards our world; and in a fleet pursuit of far-off untried ideals, half forgot the undying beauty of things that fade and die. His verse is, therefore, most real when its material is most remote from reality. Clearly detached from substantial forms, it takes a new coherence, but in a realm far beyond the reach of the influence of art. There, new images group themselves

under new laws, with no bondage of fact to fret a spirit that has sought to pass beyond the strict confines of the tangible earth. It is only in dealing with known things, and with actual passions and sorrows, that Shelley's genius becomes incredible. The 'Cenci' is a drama of terrible masks and fair faces; its presentment of an awful crime is harmless as an intellectual invention, unsubstantial as a sick dream, and even the pure and suffering voice of Beatrice herself scarcely echoes to the limits of our known world. In the 'Alastor,' or 'the Revolt of Islam,' or the 'Prometheus,' the position is reversed. The machinery is here deliberately unreal; but, in the end, each one of these poems brings to us a conviction of its truth. And this is so, because the characters who speak and move are no more than eloquent exponents of Shelley's warm, high hopes, and of a poet's dreams for the world. The chosen phantasy has thus a force not found in the relation of credible fact. The wild, free vision that creates the land it loves, the delight in beauty that has no form or line, and the determined transmutation of our common nature into new, aërial being, do not destroy for us the loveliness or the power of the poet's work; for we feel that these things, though we may seek them in vain in our world, nevertheless belong truly and credibly to the chosen realm of Shelley's genius. They become, in this sense, the expression of an exalted emotion, which is human, seeing

that it is his, and through him, also ours, and which worthily claims verse as the means of its utterance.

Thus we see that, not through defect of artistic power, but by reason of the special devotion of his genius to a chosen task, Shelley was shut out from the peculiarly artistic influence. It was the special function of his genius to enlarge the realm of poetry on that side that was furthest from the realms of the sculptor or the painter. He opened through the awakened activity of the intellect, new ways untrodden before by the poet, bearing thence back to earth a rich experience of new emotions. He lit up philosophy with the bright light of passion, and, with the strong fellowship of unfailing music, penetrated securely into many remote and shadowy places.

To penetrate the things of the intellect with poetic heat and fire was in truth the task which Shelley had set himself to accomplish. The dull order of the world had already been shaken by actual events, and speculation was busy in the invention of all the possible forms into which disturbed society might re-shape itself. These wild dreams, false to fact, had a poetic reality, and the poet, seizing the ideal element in the routine of vain logic, quickly outstripped the conclusions of the most sanguine philosophy, and presented to the world the brightest picture of its own regeneration. And the picture was none the worse because it had no better

foundation than a poet's dream. It was, indeed, precisely because Shelley carried speculation clearly beyond the reach of possibility, that it has any right to the enduring utterance of verse. Had he been no more than a contributor to a barren controversy over social schemes, his fame would not have survived the failure of the principles of the revolution. But the use he made of those principles was a poet's use. Out of them he built up, with passionate hope and love of beauty penetrating at every point the inventions of his intellect, a new world for the forlorn spirit of man, far away from his present sphere of existence. He carried these wild but often beautiful visions to their proper goal in the firm land of his imagination, and combined them in such a way that they should be beyond the reach of any man's hope or knowledge but not beyond his love and worship. In this way he awoke in the things of the intellect new possibilities of emotion. He gave the vague dreams of philosophers a right to permanent existence, by showing the intense reality they had for his own nature; and he himself truly and credibly inhabited the invented and perfect world, which, for all common men, was destined to perish quickly.

But this realm of distant purity in which we find Shelley securely seated, has but slight contact with our present life. We can reach it only through a process of the intellect, or by the magic vehicle of his verse. And

the independence of outward fact, which is the one quality of this world, and is, besides, the essence of his genius, carries the poet far away from the substantial forms of art. For the painter and the sculptor there is no escape from the bondage of the earth. There is not even the desire of escape. The materials of their craft lie close around them. The forms of men and women, the shape and colour of flowers, the gold brilliance of sunlight, the sombre cloak of shadow—these things do not change—they cannot be invented. And the greatest victories possible to art—those wherein is expressed most clearly all that is divine in the thought and purpose of an artist—are only to be gained by reverent obedience to fact, and a loving and close dependence upon Nature as we know her. Thus the highest desire of the artist is not to tutor the spirit of man, but to know him in the flesh; recording patiently the beauty that survives, expressed in changing line and subtle flush of colour.

The soul, revealed to the poet with another and closer intimacy, appears to the artist only through its garment of the flesh, and altogether escapes his grasp unless the facts of the flesh, with all their subtilties of expression, are deeply penetrated and understood. All art which has striven for more than this, or has accomplished less, has so far fallen short of its rightful goal. Christian art had to wait for a full knowledge of the flesh before it reached its final mastery, and when this

mastery came there was no longer any thought for other ideals. The earlier and more distinct religious sentiment gradually yielded to the greater mystery of revealed humanity. Human faces are no more the exponents of simple worship, or of any single sentiment; they become, as in the faces of Da Vinci and Michael Angelo, the emblems of all human experience and aspiration and disappointment. Shelley's contact with man was seldom of this direct and immediate kind. When he approached the world at all, it was through the fascination of some harmless beauty of outward nature. The innocence of flowers, the freedom of moving waters, and the flight of high-soaring birds, were fit images for companionship with his soul; and with these images stamped clearly in the vaguer material of his verse, he withdrew again into his own distant and peculiar realm. Among the fragments of his prose writings left to us, there is a passage in which he describes the beauty of the figure of Niobe at Florence. After noting the impression of grandeur and power in the features, he passes to the elements of more human influence. 'Yet all this,' he writes, 'not only consists with, but is the cause of, the subtlest delicacy of clear and tender beauty—the expression at once of innocence and sublimity of soul, of purity and strength, of all that which touches the most removed and divine of the chords that make music in our thoughts.' Here, in truth, we find recorded the sources

of the poet's own particular gift. The 'most removed and divine of the chords that make music in our thoughts' are those over which his hand had unfailing mastery. No poet, it may be said, has carried human sympathy and human passion further from their common ways.

The career of Wordsworth, as a poet, was beset by philosophical speculation upon the basis of his art. Partly from the resistance offered to his early poems, and partly from natural inclination, he was led to commit himself to a series of rules and definitions which to us now seem of small significance. But among these definitions is one which fairly expresses a necessary element in noble poetic composition. To speak of poetry as 'emotion remembered in tranquillity' is, indeed, not so much to define the limits of the particular art, as to denote one of the stages through which all imaginative work has to pass. The sentence in this way recalls a precept of Leonardo da Vinci. 'In the silence of the night,' writes the painter, 'think over the significance of the things you have studied: grave in thought the outlines of the faces you have seen during the day; for where the spirit does not work with the hand there is no art.' The theories of an artist are sometimes most eloquent as commentaries upon his own work, and in these sentences, both taking thought of kindred elements in imaginative production, there is an index to the indivi-

dualities of the two men. The faces of the women drawn by Leonardo, with the gentle radiance of a remembered smile upon their lips, may be not inaptly likened to visions of the day cast up upon the 'silence of the night.' They are far off, these forms, though we may touch each precise curve of flesh, and note each undulating wave of the hair; they stand in firm outline, and yet their presence is mysterious with the light of a recollected dream.

Wordsworth's definition is also derived from elements special to his own poetry, but it needs to be changed slightly before it expresses truly the distinction between his unfailing tranquillity and the high calm proper to all great art. With Wordsworth, emotion is not only remembered, it is begotten in tranquillity. The highest and most sublime feeling expressed in his writings originates in reflection; it is far removed from the first motive to feeling, and is rather deliberately sought, than borne in upon the soul with any urgent force of present impressions. We may say of his poetry that the remoteness between the first vision of outward nature and the final imaginative utterance, is its chief and dominant characteristic. It is true we find there accurate knowledge of natural objects, of their forms of growth, and of their seasons. Wordsworth was studiously observant of every smallest incident in rustic scenery; but form and colour are not fixed in his verse by force of

emotion, for the emotional part of his nature made another use of these things. He endowed them with an independent life, but it was not the obvious sensuous life suggested by the qualities present to the eye. It was a life begotten in reflection by a remote and difficult association of natural beauty with certain qualities of the mind. In a very delicately appreciative essay on a certain aspect of Wordsworth's genius, Mr. Pater has spoken of this perception of life in inanimate things as coming of 'an exceptional susceptibility to the impressions of eye and ear,' as being, in short, 'at bottom a kind of sensuousness.' But the term would seem surely to be misapplied to a poet who possessed such an immediate control over the things of sense—who could at once translate the blinding beauty of a field of daffodils or the simple inexplicable loveliness of small flowers into a complex intellectual language. An artist who is susceptible to the impressions of eye and ear in a deeply sensuous way, finds himself, in the presence of outward nature, so moved by the beauty of actual forms and colours, that he is driven to reproduce, with intense definition, the effect of reality in his work.

And herein we may arrive at an understanding of the distinction between the perfect tractability of Wordsworth's genius and the supreme control which finally reduces the first emotions of sense to ordered expression. The stillness that pervades the

work of Michael Angelo implies of itself a foregone season of passionate preparation, wherein all the recesses of human passion have been sounded. This is not the impression given by even the most sublime of Wordsworth's poems, while in the less admirable parts of his work there is not even the evidence of restraint. The stillness is something inert and immovable, of sensibilities not quick to feel the changing pulse of things, of a nature, in short, that has no passion to unite itself closely with the thing it loves. And yet it remains true that he has discovered new and profound sources of human sympathy in the facts of natural scenery. For us, henceforth, through the might of his genius, there is a brooding personal presence in nature fit to commune with our own highest moods of meditation. We feel, in the loftiest moments of his poetry, that nature is not made up of separate images, that the sharply outlined forms of leaf or flower are only stray links whereby we may connect ourselves with a vague and distant personality underlying clouds and hills. Wordsworth's poetry, at its noblest pitch, represents for us the union of these large symbols in nature with the larger aspirings of our own minds. The thoughts that otherwise go without utterance, the strange potent emotions that grow out of these thoughts, become expressive through the recognition of the great brooding forces of the outward world. And in realising to his own consciousness the sense of

this strange fellowship with the vast shapes of the earth, the poet's thought passes into emotion ; the clear intellectual language of precise reflection is transmuted suddenly into an utterance trembling and deeply moved. But the tenderness so begotten, the tears that rise at the contemplation of 'the meanest flower that blows,' is far away from common pathos, and has no recollection of any passionate thought. The disturbance of feeling comes of the new sense of a great personality which sees itself reflected in the majestic grandeur of noble hills, in the solemn shadows cast by moving clouds, in the silence of deep waters. Emotion thus comes as the last reward of deep contemplation. With the most perfect art it precedes the final calm.

It is on the expressional side of his art that Keats stands in most clear contrast with his fellows. Life that breathes and moves, and breaks into form and flower, had a sweetness for him which it had lost for them ; nor was he ever led by force of any philosophy to tire of the beauty of things that are given us to see. His worship of nature was at once passionately near and tenderly remote, carrying away from earthly beauty the very taste and savour of its lips, and bearing into a chamber of distant dreams the minutest memories of living form and colour. The dying things of nature, as they passed into the new life of his verse, kept still unspoiled the uncareful joyousness of earliest growth. Their raiment

was not changed, nor its brilliance lost; but in their new world of poesy, they reappear as though transfixed with magic suddenness in all the roundness and reality of sensuous beauty. Keats possessed the joyous spirit of a discoverer to whom the whole world had been but newly found. 'I muse,' he writes in one of his letters, 'with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy. Their shapes and colour are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy.'

As the love of nature returns, there must, in these bright periods of renewal, always be some spirits like to Keats, who desire to attach no philosophy to the loveliness of grass and flowers. We weary with laments over our complex and infirm thoughts of the time—grown colourless for art; but beneath all sickly speculations, the world of flowers and of passions, that grow like flowers, still lies unspoiled for him who will cut straight to its centre; and it is this power of reverting to the direct vision of things that marks off clearly the man in whom the artistic spirit is supreme. Being of his time, Keats could not of course escape the fiercer influence of the eager, romantic spirit which colours the literature of the century. He felt it scarcely less keenly than Byron or Shelley, and far more keenly than Wordsworth. The searching and unsatisfied longing of the modern spirit, the dim light of modern feeling spread a visible atmo-

sphere over all his work; and in 'Endymion,' at least, we find the sentiment and even the sentimentalism that colour our later life. It was no picture of Greek love that he there drew, or, being so, would have been no genuine work of Keats's genius. The antique character sometimes claimed for his poetry is indeed, in that sense, not possible to any imaginative work, which cannot so escape from its own age to take refuge in another. But above the unconquerable elements of difference between the art of one age and that of another, there is a higher fellowship, of which criticism is always in danger of taking too little account. The treasures of the world, whether of art or literature, are a store to which each day may add, but from which no day can take away. No critical canons, illustrative of diverging taste, can destroy the love begotten by Greek sculpture or Italian painting, by Homer or by Shakespeare; and, therefore, to what is enduring in these works, the spirit may return as Keats returned, finding the old beauty still young and new.

But if Keats's work was no mere mechanical tracery of old patterns, and if it expressed, moreover, the dominant sentiment of the time, by what force, we may ask, was he enabled to give to his expression of the sentiment something of classic shape and line? Clear forms, bright with their proper colour, shine through the shadowy and romantic material of his verse. He could

not, by the pursuit of any thought, get far away from the tangible earth beneath his feet; the distinct images of the things that are of its growth strike up everywhere like flowers in the path of his imagination, and the poet's love of these images, stronger than the temptations of any philosophy, is continually forging new links to bind him a prisoner to the enduring beauty of the only world that we can ever truly know. At this point, Keats touched the ideal of the antique world. Not in the material of his poetry, for which the artist is always indebted to his time, but in the method of his workmanship, in the temper and spirit of his work, he reverted, by force of his own nature, to earlier models. He peopled the vague romantic world with defined forms, and without breaking away from the mystic sentiment, which remains as the atmosphere of his verse, he set even in its obscurer shadow some precise shape of natural loveliness. Thus, through the dimmer and more obscure light of our age, Keats pierced to the fair world of Nature that is unchangeable. Men and women, perfect in the flesh, with their feet on perfect flowers, move across his fancy as in twilight. The poet has reached to their perfection, and returns laden with rich memories of the senses, but, being of his time, he could not cast off the sombre uncertain cloud that hid the sun. The earlier light no longer remains. 'The bright chamber of maiden-thought,' to quote Keats's

own fanciful image, 'becomes gradually darkened; and, at the same time, on all sides of it many doors are set open, but all dark—all leading to dark passages.' To these dark passages other poets committed themselves, some finding, at last, a new light in another realm. Keats still kept in the bright chamber, even though its brightness was overshadowed. But the shadow that hangs about his work does not destroy its firm outline. The forms painted by Leonardo are so enclosed in darkened light; there is a veil across the pure substance of their beauty. The freshest flowers that grow at their feet are but dimly illumined, but the steadfast perfection and subtlest changes of outline penetrate the darkness and reveal their real and sensuous existence.

In this delight in the sensuous shapes and colours of outward nature, as distinct from any special message their beauty might have for the mind in reflection, we recognise the quality which at the outset separates his work from that of his fellows. They were continually troubled with thoughts about beauty. Keats was chiefly glad in its possession. What he added to this first seizure of the sensuous aspect of things was added in the same spirit. He brought no alchemy to dissolve the concrete images and recreate them in a new and unsubstantial world, but he multiplied these images so as to fill the whole space of his verse with firm symbols worked into an exquisite pattern. At those points where the

progress of his imagination becomes most distant and unreal to the view, his similes are bright pictures to keep the reader's vision from straying. The effect of Thea's speech to Saturn in the unfinished fragment of 'Hyperion' is rendered by a quick return to earthly and familiar shapes of beauty. In the speech itself there is the vague, cloud-like splendour of illimitable space, the suggestion of the colossal life and utterance of gods, but at its close we get the reflection of this far-off beauty in things of nearer grasp.

> 'As when upon a tranced summer-night,
> Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
> Tall oaks branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
> Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
> Save for one gradual solitary gust
> Which comes upon the silence, and dies off
> As if the ebbing air had but one wave,
> So came these words and went.'

The mind is thus borne securely across the shadowy space, and is received into light, pleasant halting-places, chambers filled with shapes of tangible beauty. This gift of planting defined images in the larger area of verse, Keats was always ready to perceive in the poetry of others. He is fascinated with Milton's use of the word 'vales,' as applied to the unknown land of heaven. 'Milton,' he writes, 'has put vales in heaven and hell with the utter affection and yearning of a great poet. It is a sort of Delphic abstraction—a beautiful thing made more beautiful by being reflected and put in a

mist.' And this love of things seen in the earth, and the gift of transporting them, with their earthly beauty still unspoiled, into the realm of the poet, are the elements in Keats's genius which first draws it into relation with the genius of art. The artistic vision, with its intense regard of nature, registers every minutest incident of form and colour; and the poet, borrowing this vision for his purpose, so gains for his verse a solid sensuous character.

But the higher and more essential communion of Keats's poetry with the artistic spirit is shown again, and in another way. The habit of treasuring up separate shapes of loveliness is only the last manifestation of a profounder quality. Throughout his career, Keats was ever making towards an ideal of perfect artistic control. 'I am scarcely content to write the best verses, from the fever they leave behind. I want to compose without this fever.' And again he says, 'Some think I have lost that poetic fire and ardour they say I once had;' and he adds a hope that he shall substitute 'a more thoughtful and quiet power.' This goal of quietness Keats never gained for himself in his own life, but it is reflected everywhere in his poetry. He gave to his verse what he could not claim for himself, and, unlike other poets who have let loose in their imaginative work the riot of their own brains, Keats kept the world of poetry always more sacred, admitting within its

portals only such shapes as were fit to inhabit an undisturbed kingdom. Thus we come again to a point whereat Keats breaks away from the manner of his time. For whereas he drew more passionately near to the earth, in his intense love of its beauty, than other poets could, so he retreated further from its present passions in the desire for a clear and untroubled vision. He desired to see life in its outlines, not to do battle with any moralities: he cared more for the constant forms of the world, its old and unchanging passions, than for the new phases of its intellectual doubt or ambition upon which other poets seized so sympathetically; and whatever of this more troubled and fluctuating material is to be found in his poetry, is there rather by force of the time than by deliberate purpose.

We have one exquisite poem in which Keats's understanding of the ideal of art is set down in terms that will themselves endure. The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' expresses, with a subtlety and beauty beyond praise, that sense of silence which is given equally by great sculpture or great painting, and which seems to depend upon our perception of the might of art to transport reality still fresh into the fixed and mute grasp of a dream. The outlines of a statue, the turn of its head, the swell of the breasts and throat, are for ever immovable; the life of the marble yields no change, and never

flushes with any chance gusts of passion. That is the final impression which art should give. But beneath this mute and motionless presence there is a vitality not less real, and this also is to be revealed. 'Art has but one sentence to utter;' but into this one sentence must be crowded many bright memories. Life is suddenly arrested, but not by Death; the one unchanging attitude has no pain of imprisonment upon it; it is free, though it cannot pass into new shapes. These two conflicting impressions—the sense of nearness to life, so that we catch the very perfume of flowers, and note each delicate curve of human flesh, and the other sense of remoteness and utter calm overpowering all further speech and onward movement, so that in the silence and stillness of sculpture we seem to feel that some word has just been spoken, some movement lately completed—these two impressions are imaged with rare sweetness in Keats's verse. I must quote the two stanzas into which is thrown the expression of his essential sympathy with art. They sum up and complete what has been but imperfectly said:—

> 'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
>   Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on,
> Not to the sensual ear, but more endear'd.
>   Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.
> Fair youth beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
>   Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare.
> Bold lover, never—never canst thou kiss,
> Though winning near the goal; yet do not grieve,

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair.

'Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
And happy melodist unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new.
More happy love—more happy, happy love,
For ever warm, and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead and a parching tongue.'

The tone of this poem is representative of the controlling power of Keats's poetic work. I have said that his vision of the world was at once passionately near and tenderly remote, and it is this double sense of nearness and distance which is imaged in the 'leaf-fringed legend' carven upon the Grecian urn. At every point the breath and passion of the underlying life penetrate, without disturbing, the supreme calm. All forms of movement range themselves finally in a fair network of lines and colours, all passionate utterance is controlled by a surrounding silence. Keats's love of the sensuous beauty of the world was intense and strong. There is no sign of uncertain knowledge of cold inaccurate remembrance in his figures and forms, and yet these things which he worshipped he also over-mastered. And this mastery over his material, by force of which he is set in contrast with the other poets of the century, was gained

by the clear and unfailing recognition of a world of art distinct from the world of actual life. Into that sacred realm of ideal truth Byron and Wordsworth and Shelley had each admitted some fleeting thing that could not live in the purer air. Much injury has been done to Keats's fame by an accumulated pity given without knowledge of his nature, but it should be remembered that he himself never bore about 'the pageant of a bleeding heart'; that if he had sorrows they found no utterance from lips that were moulded for higher melody. Unlike Byron, he could not have written his own elegy, and unlike Shelley he could not turn his verse into a means of social redemption. These men struck chords over which his power was less strong, but he at least held fast to the great law of art which they sometimes forgot. Throughout all the history of great imaginative work this recognition of a separate realm for the artist has been constantly present. The Greek face with its passionless security could not have been the face of the actual world, it was the face of the quiet land into which the artist strove to transport humanity. The faces drawn by Leonardo and Michael Angelo with all the later passions held in brooding calm suspense, were not assuredly the faces of real life. They too suffered the subtle change of art. And this change, perceived so plainly in sculpture and painting, is also true of the processes of imaginative production in poetry. Here,

too, the calm possession of the secrets of beauty severs the facts of life, choosing some and rejecting some, and over all casting a severe control; and it is in this gift given to Keats that we may perceive his sympathy with the artist's spirit.

II.

WILLIAM BLAKE, POET AND PAINTER.

THE genius of William Blake has a peculiar fascination for the student of art. Apart from the intrinsic value of the work that he produced, his individuality must always be deeply interesting by reason of the force and emphasis with which it affirms certain great principles of imaginative production. That artistic sense which we have found partly wanting to some of the great poets of our century, reached in him, who was both poet and painter, to a point of morbid development. It was so far in excess of his other faculties, and so entirely overmastered them, as to leave him open to the charge of madness, a charge that it would be now as idle to deny as to reiterate. All that need be said on this score is that Blake's madness is more instructive than the sanity of many others. The force by which his mind was overbalanced is as rare as it is great, and the extreme form which it assumed with him only renders easier the task of examination and analysis. From the morbid activity and intensity of his vision we are able the more clearly to apprehend the nature of the imaginative func-

tion and to infer its healthy action. Further, the fact that he was himself both a poet and a painter affords a rare opportunity of considering the relation of the two arts, and of appreciating the value in each of that peculiar power of vision which in Blake became nothing short of a disease.

It is now nearly seventy years ago since the first exhibition of the works of William Blake was opened to the London public. The painter, then upwards of fifty years of age, was living with his brother James Blake at the corner of Broad Street, Golden Square, and in the rooms above his brother's shop he arranged for view sixteen examples of his work, boldly inviting the public to come and judge of his talent. But the public were for the most part indifferent to the appeal, and the exhibition failed. In this, indeed, there is no cause for wonder. Blake's deep and incurable ignorance of the world and its ways, supplies a sufficient reason for the little recognition that he gained from the world. Though he never lacked the will to assert strongly what he believed to be his own great powers in art, he nearly always missed the right means of securing a hearing. Gentle in nature, but not docile in temper, he was apt to be violent and was sure to be imprudent in the expression of convictions deeply and firmly held; and yet, though he did not measure his terms when he had an error to denounce, he never possessed that particular

kind of combative power, so eminently possessed by Haydon, for example, which serves in itself as a source of attraction. But while we can well understand how Blake's exhibition in Broad Street should have failed, it remains surprising that, during the years that have since elapsed, no effort should have been made to bring his designs together. In the brief history of modern English art there is no more remarkable figure than his. If he produced no single work that is perfect in itself, at least there is nothing from his hand that is not deeply suggestive of the great problems with which art has to deal. All that he does touches the very essence of pictorial invention, and awakens a new and profound consideration of the highest laws that control the artist in his work. No Englishman had ever before so powerfully and persistently asserted the place of high imagination in pictorial design, and it may be said further that no one better appreciated the great and enduring distinctions between the language of art and of literature, or more completely understood the means by which the vague and abstract images of the one are to be translated into the fixed and certain outlines of the other. These reasons are in themselves sufficient to render Blake a most fascinating subject of study to the critic and student of art, and it is certainly surprising that it should have been left to the generous effort of the Burlington Club, a year ago, to collect for the first time

the designs of a man who holds a unique place in the history of English art.

I have referred to this earlier exhibition organised by Blake himself, because the famous descriptive catalogue which he then put forward by way of commentary upon his designs, contains a very forcible statement of his artistic faith. It is best, where it is possible, to let a man speak for himself, and although Blake's utterances often want coherence, and not uncommonly stand in need of interpretation, they contain much that may help us to a true understanding of his position. But before examining the contents of the Descriptive Catalogue it may be well to touch briefly upon some of the chief facts of the artist's earlier career. In the year 1809, when Blake opened his exhibition, and issued his catalogue, he was by no means entirely unknown. The words 'pictor ignotus,' which Mr. Gilchrist attached to the title page of his biography, are apt to convey and to perpetuate a false impression, and to imply that he never, at any time, nor from any influential body of men, received the praise due to his genius. In the stricter significance of the term this no doubt is true. To the end of his life he certainly remained but little known as a painter, nor need the neglect of the world be attributed to any other cause than the limited range of his own powers in the use of colour. Mr. Scott, in his introduction to the Catalogue of the Burlington Club, justly observes

that 'it is in vain to consider Blake as a master in the use of the palette, though he had a lovely sense of colour.' These words deserve to be remembered. Why it was that with this lovely sense of colour, and with an industry that was equal to every endeavour, he never became in any full sense of the word a painter, I shall presently try to consider, but for the moment it is enough to remark that no one who has studied his works as they were lately collectively displayed, would be disposed to dispute Mr. Scott's conclusion. As a painter, therefore, it is true that Blake was obscure. He had joined the schools of the newly-formed Royal Academy in the year 1778, and had subsequently contributed some five times to the Academy exhibition; on the last occasion in the year 1808, when he sent the beautiful invention of 'Jacob's Dream,' recently exhibited in the Burlington Club. His contributions were usually hung in the drawing and miniature rooms, and were obviously not seriously regarded by the Academicians as the works of a painter. It is, however, by no means true that Blake's gifts of design had remained entirely unappreciated. In the year 1796 he had been employed by Edwards, of New Bond Street, to execute a series of illustrations to Young's 'Night Thoughts,' and in the preface to the publication, conjectured to have been written by Fuseli, Blake's genius as an inventor is liberally recognised. And again, in 1805, when he had

executed a series of designs to Blair's 'Grave,' the artist's portrait was set as a frontispiece to the volume containing them, and the members of the Royal Academy bore their testimony to the grandeur of the inventions. Fuseli again introduces Blake to the public, and this time in ample terms of praise. We know that the first edition of the work secured upwards of six hundred subscribers; while, as a result of the publication of these designs, we find Blake, in the year 1807, engaged on a drawing of the 'Last Judgment,' commissioned by the Countess of Egremont.

Thus, in 1809, Blake's reputation was so far established as to give him a fair right to appeal to the public on his own behalf. The opening of his exhibition at a time when his name had just been made widely known by a highly successful publication was no mere piece of eccentric folly; and although Blake, with his essential unworldliness, would be sure to carry out the scheme in the most ineffective manner, there is no reason for regarding it as the wayward enterprise of an obscure and unknown artist. At any rate it may be said that at no time before had he reached so near to popularity, nor was there any subsequent period of his life when his reputation stood so high. Thus the moment is specially favourable for learning from Blake himself what were his views in Art, and in what he felt himself to be most clearly antagonistic to the prevailing ideas of his time.

It is probable that the exhibition itself was the immediate result of a recent quarrel with Stothard and the publisher Cromek. Blake felt himself to be deeply aggrieved by the rejection of his large designs in illustration of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Pilgrims,' and the exhibition was in fact an attempt to appeal from what he believed to be an ignorant prejudice on the part of a few, to the more liberal judgment of the public. This fact must be borne in mind, because the soreness of his own personal feeling has undoubtedly imported a combative element into the statement of his views as set forth in the catalogue. All that he has to say of himself, or of his rivals, is thrown into the extremest form, and, forgetting that his avowed object was to conciliate the attention of a public ignorant of private quarrels among artists, he seizes the occasion to expound his own view by a constant, and by no means measured, reference to what he believes to be the fallacies of others. But here again is another consideration that adds significance to the utterances of the catalogue. He had never shrunk at any time from expressing his opinions about his art, but now he felt that his ideas, and the embodiment he had been able to give them, were on their trial, and he therefore states with a peculiar distinctness and emphasis all the thoughts that have been maturing themselves during fifty years. It cannot be but that this confession of faith, if we understand it rightly, must help us to under-

stand the qualities of his design, and to appreciate what there is of beauty in his work.

One of the chief contentions of Blake, stated in this catalogue and elsewhere, concerns the right and power of plastic Art to follow the imagination in its most sublime flights of vision. Under a *tempera* painting of the Bard from Gray, which was to be seen on the walls of the Burlington Club, he quotes some of the verses of the poet, and then adds this comment of his own :—

'Weaving the winding sheet of Edward's race, by means of sounds of spiritual music and its accompanying expressions of articulate speech, is a bold and daring and most masterly conception, that the public have embraced and approved with avidity. Poetry consists in these conceptions; and shall painting be confined to the sordid drudgery of facsimile representations of merely mortal and perishing substances, and not be, as poetry and music are, elevated into its own proper sphere of invention and visionary conception? No, it shall not be so! Painting, as well as poetry and music, exults in immortal thoughts.'

These sentences express the constant aspiration of Blake's art. To raise design to the ideal level of poetry and music was the desire of all his life. So wide to him were the possibilities of plastic expression, so quick the sense which brought for every great thought its corresponding image, that he could not understand the law

or the custom which had excluded the higher imagination from the realm of the artist. And yet it is a fact altogether indisputable, that English painting was then, and still continues, far below the imaginative level of English literature. To literature it has always been permitted to attempt the highest triumphs, and the writer has not been thought mad who has chosen in the research of beauty to leave the world of common things and to desert the portraiture of manners. But in English art it is not so. The standard here has always been lower, and the artist has seldom ventured at all, and has always ventured at his peril, to trust like the poet to the strength of his invention. It would take too long to enter upon a consideration of all the causes that have led to this result. But the fact remains that, since the Reformation, art in England has held only a subordinate place in the history of the imagination, and has never from the first attempted to mirror to men's eyes the great world of beauty and passion that the ruin of the old order of things set free. All the force of the English renaissance seems to have found its way into English literature. Imaginative art was left to perish with the system that had given it birth and encouraged its earliest efforts. In the new birth it had no part. It was not rightly prepared or adequately equipped to take over and shape to its own uses the vast inheritance of the modern spirit, and the time was already too late to

gain from the art of other nations the support and example that might have armed the English artist for so great a labour. The splendid vision of the Elizabethan poetry, with its rich outlook over the great problems of life, and its deep understanding of the secrets of human beauty, found no help or fellowship in the realm of painting. The painter had neither the means nor the ambition to fathom these things. He was not even sensible of the greater triumphs that were possible to his craft, and was deeply ignorant of the means by which they might be secured; and thus placed at the mercy of any external influence, English painting was content to follow the lead of a long line of foreign portrait painters, whose precepts were at last naturalised and carried to perfection in the brilliant achievements of Reynolds and Gainsborough.

But before these men had appeared, there was one Englishman who had ventured to make of his art a means of intellectual expression. It is by a curious coincidence that Blake should have engraved one of Hogarth's designs. These two men stood at the very opposite poles of the ideal world: their ambitions and their resources were as different as it is possible to conceive. Hogarth, a master in the use of the brush, was in close and immediate sympathy with the life of his time: Blake, always an imperfect painter, was only inspired by the shapes of a distant world of

vision. And yet they were deeply allied in this, that they both sought by all the means in their power, and by methods that owed little to tradition, to bring their art into new correspondence with the world of intellectual ideas. The first, as a realist and a satirist, drove home, with a force that even the literature of his century can only equal, a fierce denunciation of human vice and folly ; and he did this, it must always be remembered, with an unfailing sense of what was due to his own art. The more Hogarth is studied in these days, the more clearly does it appear that he was before all things a painter. His power in the use of colour, his delicacy and refinement in the management of tone, were not inferior to what can be shown either by Reynolds or Gainsborough ; and yet, without neglecting or violating the requirements and the laws of painting, he managed to restore, or perhaps it should be said to create, that alliance with the movement of ideas without which art has never risen to any adequate representation of human life. For this, too, Blake strove with all his strength, but he chose for the material of his invention, not the creatures of artificial existence, costumed and mannered and beset with triviality and folly, but the ideal figures of an abstract world, through whom he sought to shape and image and bring near to men's sight the most distant beauties of the imagination. This is what he means when he declares, in the words affixed

to his picture of the Bard, that painting, as well as poetry and music, exults in immortal thoughts, and it is this ambition which he has in mind when he asks if 'painting is to be confined to the sordid drudgery of facsimile representations of merely mortal and perishing substances, and not be, as poetry and music are, elevated into its own proper sphere of invention and visionary conception?' And then, lest it should seem that he sought to pursue some intangible phantom of the brain, without form or shape for art to render, he adds, 'a spirit or a vision is not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing; they are organised and minutely articulated, beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light, than his perishing mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all.'

With these cardinal points of Blake's creed in our minds, we may understand and appreciate the more remarkable qualities of his art In all his designs, nothing is more immediately observable than the definiteness and extreme precision of his method, the unflinching determination of his lines. Nothing is uncertainly seen or falteringly expressed. However lofty the theme, however remote from human experience the image that he seeks, his imagination is never tempted to surrender, or to leave even the last word untold. In this sense no

works that were ever produced are more perfectly finished than his—none, that is to say, contain a more complete utterance of the thoughts that have inspired them. This fact deserves to be noted, because the obscurity of Blake is a charge commonly repeated; and if the man be considered in his double capacity of poet and painter, the charge has unquestionable foundation. Not even the earliest writings of Blake are free from obscurity, and the latest are scarcely intelligible; and yet, while he was producing those dark poetic riddles called the 'Prophetic Books,' he was also producing designs the essential attribute of which is a clear and precise expression. This apparent contradiction in the exercise of his double faculty suggests one of the most interesting problems that criticism can take heed of. Blake himself was never tired of asserting the need of clear and intelligible expression, and his gravest charge against the work of other men is, that they blot and blur and confuse their inventions by dark and cloudy colour. In this he was entirely sincere. Anyone who has studied the exhibition of his works will admit that he did not tolerate indefiniteness or obscurity; sometimes, where he fails most, the failure indeed comes, not from a want, but from an excess of simplicity, and we are apt to feel, in the presence of some of his most sublime inventions, that a mode of treatment so intimate and familiar springs from the

trusting vision of a child rather than from the serious imagination of a man. The secret of this apparent inconsistency is to be found, I think, in a distinction that has already been briefly noted. It has been said that, although Blake strove to raise art to the ideal level of poetry, he was not forgetful of the particular conditions that control the artist, and that he was never tempted to leave the images of the one as vague as those of the other. It would be more correct to say that in Blake's nature the artistic sense was morbidly developed. It was not merely that he was able to translate grand and sublime thoughts into the language appropriate to art, but that he scarcely possessed the power of apprehending them in any other way. The process was immediate and instantaneous; the thought struck itself into symbol at the first sudden and certain vision, and what to other men is the result of reflection, and sometimes of long experiment, came to him almost unsought. Thus we have in Blake the most interesting, because the most extreme, expression of the essential art gift. When we say of a man that he possesses a genius for art, we do not mean merely that his imagination is strong or his love of beauty true, but that, by a faculty specially his own, he is able to find for the things of vision a sensuous image; and that within the strict limits of a craft that has only lines and colours for its symbols, he is able to fix such a graceful pattern as shall for ever keep imprisoned

some secret of beauty. This special faculty of the artist is, and must always be, as rare as imagination itself. It comes of a peculiar intensity of mental vision, joined to a deep and familiar knowledge of the expressional resources of the things of the actual world. In England, where the special conditions of art and its resources are even yet only imperfectly mastered, where the painter is constantly striving, not merely to emulate the triumphs of the writer, but to steal his methods and to appropriate his language, even the value of this gift is scarcely understood. The great majority of English painters have not possessed it; they have not known and have not felt how much their art was powerless to do, or how potent it could be made if rightly directed. Thus the work of Blake, which yields to none that has been produced in the freedom and audacity of its invention, and which yet always observes the laws that bind the artist, must be a constant wonder, and in some sense, too, an enduring example. 'Every class of artists,' said Fuseli, in his introduction to Blair's 'Grave,' 'in every stage of their progress or attainments, from the student to the finished master, and from the contriver of ornament to the painter of history, will find here materials of art and hints of improvement.'

But how was it, one may ask, that this power of imagery did not serve Blake in his poetry as well as in his painting? Why is it that, from the time he

produced the 'Songs of Innocence' and the 'Songs of Experience,' his poetic faculty gradually failed in coherence, until at last his utterances became a chaos which even a brother poet with the best will and the highest power may not reduce to order? Mr. Swinburne's attempted interpretation of the 'Prophetic Books' is an effort of genius which those will best appreciate who have tried to become familiar with this part of Blake's writings; but even Mr. Swinburne would not claim to have reduced his author to coherence. And yet, during the period of the production of these works, and after, Blake executed designs of the utmost beauty and simplicity, finishing his career with the engravings to 'Job' and to 'Dante,' efforts that take rank among the highest and the simplest of his achievements.

To this riddle which Blake's life presents, it has seemed to many persons sufficient solution to say that he was mad. Mad he may have been, and it is perhaps better to admit that he was; but this short word, though it satisfies many minds, does not at all help to the understanding of the problem of the artist's life. To me, I confess, there is nearly always in Blake's design a touch of that excessive simplicity which in a child we call childishness, and in a man the world will call insanity. His invention touches sublime things with so familiar a grasp, and invades the supernatural realm with a step so confident, sometimes so audacious, that

the result does not always assure or convince us that he was aware of the long flight between earth and heaven. His trust is like that of a child who stretches out his hand to seize the stars. But, admitting so much, the problem still remains unsettled, why the one faculty that he possessed should have suffered so far in excess of the other—and to explain this, it is necessary to consider again what has been called the morbid development of the artistic gift. Being himself both a poet and a painter, Blake presents the most forcible illustration that can be conceived both of the sympathy and the distinction of the two arts. To the poet who has to mould the intellectual material of language to the uses of beauty, the logical faculty is as indispensable as the imaginative gift. He may dwell upon the sensuous and figurative element in language; but this sensuous element must subserve the logical, and the verse must first satisfy the conditions of intellectual expression before it can find its way to delight the sense of music, or form, or colour. In Blake the logical faculty was from the first feeble, and grew gradually weaker as his brain became thronged with images that overpowered his resources. At the first, when the themes he chose were simple, his poetic means were sufficient; but in later life, when he sought to enter into abstruse and difficult speculation, his feeble power of ranging ideas in their intellectual order utterly failed, and he was driven by

the dominant influences of his nature to substitute a series of images for a logical sequence of ideas. He endeavoured, in fact, to use words as though they were distinct images endowed with sensuous form and colour. And, to those who have tried to fathom the 'Prophetic Books,' it will seem plain that to him they were so. His verse is a piece of elaborate symbolism, to which he alone possessed the key; and for every word that now stands as a puzzle to all readers, there existed in his brain a radiant image robed in lovely colour and fixed in determined line. Hence we have in Blake the exact converse of the common failure of modern art. Instead of trying, as so many of our painters have done, to use the material of art as if it could be moulded by the intellectual processes of language, he strove to invade the realm of the poet with the instruments of painting, and to employ words as if they were fixed symbols, fair for the eye to see. This, in truth, is the artistic faculty in a state of morbid development. And it was no wonder that, when the faculty gained supremacy in his mind, his essays as a poet should have become a chaos that is beyond human power to set in order. But the failure of the poet scarcely touched the inventions of the artist. That overmastering inclination to apprehend and to express ideas by images is the very life and essence of all pictorial design. By the potent help of such a gift, all the vague world of vision is made

populous with living forms ; the thought that the mind can scarcely grasp for its terror or sublimity is fixed in an image for the eye to see, so that even the splendid symbolism of Hebrew poetry takes form and colour ; and, in a picture of inexpressible beauty, we are able to realise what a sight it was 'when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.'

These, in truth, are the scenes in which Blake's invention stands alone. The series of splendid illustrations to the Book of Job were known before the exhibition of the Burlington Club was thought of ; but in that exhibition were to be found many examples of equal sublimity that must have been new even to the majority of those who have tried to know Blake well. Take, for instance, the design of 'Jacob's Ladder,' exhibited by the artist in the Royal Academy of 1808. Most artists have been content to take the earthly figure as the chief feature of their composition, and have only timidly ventured some few steps up the steep path that leads to heaven. A flood of light, a few angel forms descending and near the ground—these, with the sleeping body of Jacob, have been enough to satisfy those who have attempted to present the miracle. But for Blake the heavens were opened, and it was the pathway through the skies that the Bible story brought most vividly to his eyes. The winding stair mounts through the blue vault of sky, that is lit with white stars, until it

reaches higher up to the golden effulgence of the throne, that is seen far away and yet distinct. And up and down this winding stair the angels are ascending and descending with no uncertain tread. Their forms are familiar, and yet lacking nothing of sublimity; simple, and still divine; as though imaged by one who felt no surprise at the sight of this celestial vision, and whose sympathies were nevertheless fresh to enjoy its awful beauty. Sometimes, as in the painting of 'The Wise and Foolish Virgins,' Blake touches a tragic note; but the tragedy in the painting, as in the parable, has something more and something less than human significance. Something more; because to Blake this sublime symbol of human fate had a reality that it had not for others. It remained abstract; but it also became intense and determined in its presentment, and took human shape without sinking into the place of merely human fortune. And something less than a picture of life all Blake's work must be, because his imagination never penetrated the circumstances of the actual world as it penetrated the world of vision. 'Blake's originality,' as Mr. Scott has aptly observed, 'was guarded about by ignorance; his was the most childlike manhood we are acquainted with; he retained his morning freshness throughout his long day: with him it was as with Wordsworth's ideal infancy, which comes "trailing clouds of glory;" and neither the clouds nor the glory ever left him.' This is

profoundly true. Though he lived to a good old age, Blake never can be said to have lived in the world. He kept always on the spiritual side of the human confines, and he never understood that kind of passion which is complicated and enriched by the infinite trial of human circumstance. This fact about Blake, associated with the excess of simplicity already remarked, imposed a distinct limitation upon his genius, while at the same time it granted to his invention an extraordinary freedom in realms where others must tread insecurely. Passion, emotion, character, he understood only in their most extreme and simple expression. Perfect innocence, as of angels and children; and incommensurable evil, as of Satan and his angels; terror, like the 'clustered woes,' in his illustrations to Young's 'Night Thoughts,' in the book belonging to Mr. Bain; or absolute peace and tranquillity, as in the vision of Job's children singing around him: over all of these things his genius had command. But he had not that power, of which Michael Angelo may be taken as the supreme exponent, of stamping humanity itself with all its complex problems of character and fate, and making of a single human form an image of all the world. What Blake could do was to employ the forms of natural men and women to express the progress of supernatural drama. He never knew, and could not interpret, the great realities of life, nor had he any control over that kind of beauty which

springs from the pressure of experience; but once set his spirit free in another realm, and he could make the vision of it real and living, in a degree impossible even to the dreams of other men. It was no wonder if to a man so endowed the air should seem inhabited by spirits invisible and dumb to all the world but him. That he actually believed in the presence of these spirits, and thought not merely that he had seen them, but that they had been there to see, is only a proof that in him the faculty of vision reached the point of disease. It was by a morbid overwrought intensity of the imagination that Blake was led to such a belief, and at this point we may admit the madness that so many desire to assert of him; but the disease, it must also be said, was only the excess of a great quality infinitely more rare than the insanity that went with it.

For, if the excess of simplicity is morbid, simplicity itself is the very highest endowment of genius. The power which Blake possessed of inventing without the artifice and apparatus of a feeble vision, of reducing the most sublime theme to familiar expression without sacrificing its sublimity, is the noblest that art can claim. The secret of the grace of Greek art lies in this power of exhibiting heroic character by means of the simplest and most spontaneous movement, the avoidance of all that is rhetorical in gesture, the dependence upon all that is familiar and unconscious. In the best of Blake's works

these qualities are evident. There is a directness and sincerity in his choice of attitude which stamps conviction upon the result; a neglect of all graces that come by seeking and elaboration, showing that the inventor has worked without hindrance or hesitation. Even in a work like the 'Last Judgment' all is precisely and confidently made out, and we have Blake's own explanation of the significance of every group. Nothing could be fitter than his own description of the part of the design which presents the opening of a happy immortality. 'Before the throne of Christ on the right hand,' he says, 'the just in humiliation and exultation rise through the air with their children and families. Some of them are bowing before the Book of Life, which is opened on clouds by two angels; many groups arise in exultation; among them is a figure crowned with stars and the moon beneath her feet, with six infants around her,—she represents the Christian Church; green hills appear beneath, with the graves of the Blessed, which are seen bursting with their births of immortality. Parents and children, wives and husbands, embrace and arise together.'

Hitherto, I have touched rather upon the quality of Blake's imagination than his technical resources; but it will be interesting to consider for a moment his opinion upon different methods of art, and how far they affected his own practice. Here, again, the 'Descriptive Catalogue' prepared for his exhibition in 1809 will help

inquiry. Of all the works displayed at the Burlington Club there was none more remarkable for power of lighting, and depth of colour, than the painting of 'Satan calling up his Legions.' This was exhibited by the artist in 1809, and is described by Blake himself as 'having been painted at intervals for experiment on colour without any oily vehicle.' 'It is worth attention,' he adds, 'not only on account of its composition, but of the great labour that has been bestowed on it: three or four times as much as would have finished a more perfect picture. The labour has destroyed the lineaments: it was with difficulty brought back again to a certain effect which it had at first when all the lineaments were perfect.' And then he concludes with a general statement about this and others of his works which throws not a little light upon his difficulties as a painter, and partly explains his imperfect mastery of colour. 'These pictures,' he writes,' among numerous others, painted for experiment, were the result of temptation and perturbations labouring to destroy imaginative power by means of that infernal machine called chiaro oscuro in the hands of Venetian and Flemish demons: whose enmity to the painter himself and to all artists who study in the Florentine and Roman schools, may be removed by an exhibition and exposure of their vile tricks. They cause that everything in art shall become a machine. They cause that the execution shall be all blocked up with

brown shadows. They put the original artist in fear and doubt of his own original conception. The spirit of Titian was particularly active in raising doubts concerning the possibility of executing without a model; and, when once he had raised the doubt, it became easy for him to snatch away the vision time after time.' In another passage Blake says, 'I have now discovered that without nature before the painter's eye he can never produce anything in the walks of natural painting. Historical' (by which he means imaginative) 'art is one thing, and portrait is another. Happy would the man be who could unite them!'

All these utterances have a very definite meaning, and deserve the attention of anyone who would understand Blake's paintings. Little as at that time he could have seen of Italian art, his distinction between the schools of Venice and Florence is nevertheless true and profound. Venice, whatever the themes of its painters, is pre-eminently the school of portrait, and not of imagination. It was in Venice that art first found out the charm of skilful imitation, the beauty of nature itself minutely and magically rendered. Portrait, and landscape, which is the portraiture of nature, took the place of the religious ideal at Venice, just as human passion and the worship of the antique took the place of the religious ideal at Florence; and in one case abstract design, and in the other realistic colour, assumed su-

preme control. Now it happened that at the time when Blake was striving to restore imagination to its place in art, and to revive the practice of design, the example of Venice was in the ascendant in England. Sir Joshua always professed the utmost reverence for Michael Angelo, but he gained his own power by the imitation of the Venetian models. Gainsborough, without any powerful influence from without, was a born naturalist of the same school, and showed both in portrait and in landscape the kind of execution which is based upon reality rather than imagination. Blake perceived clearly enough that this kind of execution, whatever its merits, was altogether unfitted for the higher kind of invention to which he devoted himself. He perceived that the imitation of nature, as this was understood by the Venetians, and by the men of his own time who so nobly revived the Venetian tradition, only disturbed the expression of imaginative art and destroyed its magic. The colouring of Venice, with its exquisite distinctions of tone and its endless enjoyment of the most minute realities, cannot be fitly employed in the service of abstract design; but Blake, who perceived this truth clearly, was not able to find out and perfect for himself another and more appropriate system. In his drawing, and even in his management of light and shade, he could take counsel from the works of the Italian engravers, which he had begun to collect from a boy; but it is

probable that he had no other means of familiarising himself with the painting of the one school that is pre-eminent in the qualities of the imagination.

If, without having seen any of Blake's attempts in colour, one were asked, on the evidence of his drawing or engraving, what school he would follow, the answer most certainly would be—the school of Florence. The early Florentine painters, had he known their works, would have supplied him with a model in which abstract design and lovely colour were blended. They would have shown him that, without attempting the naturalism of Venice, it was still possible for the painter to enrich his work with splendid hues, wrought out by a system of precise and solid execution. As it was, Blake never was able to conquer the difficulty. He remained to the last possessing, as Mr. Scott has observed, 'a lovely sense of colour,' but without the knowledge that could alone have given it a full expression. The examples that were offered to him in the art of his time only irritated without helping him, and there was no one able to point the way to a practice more in sympathy with his aims. Thus Blake remains, in this sense at least, the 'pictor ignotus' that his biographer has styled him. In the choice of colour his imagination guided him aright, but in the use of colour he never became in the full sense a painter. Here his work seldom passes beyond a grand suggestiveness or the record of a beautiful in-

stinct in the selection of harmonious tints ; but it is not to be thought, because he failed himself, that his principles on this point were false or foolish. He was certainly right in the belief that realistic colouring was unfit for the purposes of his design ; and it is no wonder that, standing alone amid the painters of his day, he was unable to work out for himself a better method

But although Blake never became in any full sense of the word a painter, his career was not merely that of an inspired dreamer. He lives and he will live not as a mere theorist upon art but by right of an inexhaustible and often exquisite invention, which found in pictorial design its appropriate mode of expression. How quick and delicate was his artistic faculty, how swiftly it responded to all the movements of his mind we have already tried to show. That dialect of art which is to others strange and difficult was to him a mother tongue. There was no forced assumption in his command of its resources, no awkward restraint in his ready obedience to its laws. In a series of illustrations by Blake, only recently discovered, this extraordinary suppleness and ingenuity of his invention are very prominently expressed, and if we wish to understand the peculiar source of his power, we can scarcely do better than examine in detail some of the designs which he executed for Young's 'Night Thoughts.'

In the fifteenth chapter of the 'Life' Mr. Gilchrist

refers to the illustrations to Young's poems, but only to the engraved and published plates. These were forty-three in number, extending only to the fourth night of the tedious series, and they were published by Edwards, of New Bond Street, in 1797. But neither the biographer nor Mr. William Rossetti, who compiled the catalogue of Blake's works, appears to have been aware of the existence of the designs to which we now draw attention. In place of the incomplete series of forty-three engravings, somewhat cold and thin in effect, we have now five hundred and thirty-seven original designs, drawn and coloured by Blake's own hand. The whole poem is here passed under the artist's strange process of interpretation; and it was from this complete work, executed about 1794 for Edwards, that the published selection was afterwards made. A uniform method of illustration is observed throughout the whole poem. In the centre of a large sheet of drawing paper, 16½ in. by 13, the text of a folio edition of Young is inlaid, and around the text the design is distributed according to the fancy and judgment of the painter. As a sample of Blake's genius the work is for several reasons of unique importance. It gives expression to his sense of colour as well as to his powers of design, and it retains the purely decorative quality which from the first had always had a fascination for the painter. In the 'Songs of Innocence and Experience' the text and the illustration unite for a

single effect; both are the work of the painter's hand, and by many a skilful and delicate touch the engraved words are linked with the flowers and figures that surround them, until they too appear a growth of art, and not merely an intellectual symbol. The process, as it was followed in these songs, was appropriate only in dealing with small spaces, and where the imaginative sense of the designs could be made subordinate to their decorative character. The delicate elaboration by which every corner of the page left unoccupied by the writing is filled at once with curving flame that branches inwards from the margin, or by some floating form of angel broken away from a graceful tree that shoots up by the side of the text, and whose boughs are still populous with angel forms, would not serve and would not be possible on a larger scale, where the illustration itself becomes a thing of independent intellectual effort working in obedience to its own laws of design. But although this earlier and richly ornamental system was not practicable in the case of the 'Night Thoughts,' Blake still managed to satisfy his constant desire for decorative effect. The text is not linked with the drawing, but the space occupied by the text forms a part of the scheme of illustration. In every case the design is conceived and conducted in relation to this space, and both in the distribution of the figures and in the arrangement of colour the effect of this square island of print is duly

considered. Thus it will be seen that Blake did set himself really to illustrate these two folio volumes, and the way in which he proceeded was to make each leaf a thing of beauty in itself. Before we have time to consider the fitness of the picture in an intellectual sense, we are forced to acknowledge the harmonious effect of the page. And judging the work only from this point of view, taking it merely as an attempt to render the leaves of a volume lovely with varied colour and intricate pattern, there is another distinction to be noted which separates the illustrations from the earlier efforts of the artist. In the Songs the page is full; the hand of the artist has travelled all over it, enriching every corner with ornament, and leaving the whole surface brilliantly enamelled. But in the larger spaces of the 'Night Thoughts' a different and a bolder system has been adopted. A great part of the page is very often left untouched, and clear both of colour and drawing. In this gift of painting upon a part of the space at his disposal in such a way as to leave the impression that he has painted upon the whole, this work of Blake's shows the decorative power of Japanese art. There is the same refined and sensitive judgment as to relation of masses, the same confident taste as to the required strength of colour. It would be impossible to give by description any notion of this particular quality in the designs. As we turn over leaf after leaf of the extraor-

F

dinary volumes, new patterns of colour and fresh inventions of line surprise and satisfy our sense of ornamental beauty. The colouring is often no more than a delicate distribution of even tints, but even in the least finished of the drawings there is always evident the artist's desire to render his work admirable in the first and most simple sense. Other and deeper qualities follow, but this one condition of the art is seldom disturbed or sacrificed; and if the designs themselves were not worth comprehension, or were not comprehensible, the book would still remain an interesting achievement in the realm of decorative art.

It is likely that no book could have served much better for the display of Blake's genius than Young's 'Night Thoughts.' The poet says so much and means so little that the artist is left with a wide range of selection, and without the harassing restrictions that a coherent text might have brought. It is interesting to note with what facility Blake transports the vague metaphors of the poet into the certain dialect of art. A less independent and confident genius would have taken no account of Young's audacious personifications, or would have rendered their image in art absurd. But Blake both obeys the text and rises above it. Sometimes he turns the artifice of the poem into grandeur by simple acceptance of its terms. He realises the scene which to the poet had only been vaguely shadowed, and

gives to the large words, used without weight in the verse, the splendour and dignity which belong to them by right. At other times he escapes altogether from the text through the loophole of a stray simile. When Young introduces the comparison of Eve gazing on the Lake, Blake at once presents the kneeling and nude figure of a lovely woman looking into the depths of a quiet pool, with long loosened hair flowing down her back, and hands brought together in a gesture of soft and rapt surprise; and when the poet, innocent of any terrible suggestion, speaks of 'clustered woes,' the painter seizes the words as the text of one of his grandest inventions. He actually presents the image of woes in human form. Through the darkened air float strange islands, composed of men and women, locked together in an agony of despair. This is a good instance of the way in which Blake accepts the facts stated in the text without sacrifice of grand imaginative effect. In the tangled mass of human beings, writhing in every attitude of pain, and yet compactly bound together, we get the physical image of 'clustering woes.' The idea is presented in its simplest and yet most potent form, and in that strange way, known only to genius, the deeper poetic truth is thus enclosed in the commoner reality of physical fact. This union of physical truth and profound poetic meaning has been the mark of great art of all times. It is the sign whereby we know that

the strength of the craftsman is working in harmony with the vision of the poet, for in the highest product as much scope is given to the one quality as to the other, and when we meet with efforts to express sentiment and passion without including this natural truth, then we may be assured that the art is either immature or in decay.

There are instances in these volumes where absolute fidelity to the poet's description leads the artist to very beautiful results. In one passage, Young, who was never at all afraid of elaborate metaphors, presents Thought as a murderer led through the desert of the Past, and there meeting with the ghosts of Departed Joys. It is very probable that the gifted author never gave himself the trouble to realise with any clearness the image he had coined, but in Blake's mind, where the artistic sense was always supreme, every image at once struck itself into outline, and took a form as certain as the commonest reality. In the illustration he has set to the verse the thought loses its fantastic extravagance, and becomes a grave and solemn vision. The painter's strength and sureness of sight have forced the loose sense into grand design, and yet no part of the metaphor is sacrificed or omitted. The picture becomes in the largest sense representative of Murder and Remorse. In the midst of a barren landscape of desert hills outlined against the dull sky lies the murdered body, and by its

side is the murderer. He stands, the right hand still grasping the knife, with head turned away, and remorseful face thrown up despairingly into the night; and there above him, and meeting his gaze, are the wailing and pitiful ghosts of past hopes and joys, little weeping figures circled in the sky. Both the principal figures are nude, and that of the murderer is drawn with fine choice of attitude and forcible expression. And here again we must remark how perfectly the illustration fulfils its first purpose of decorating the page upon which it is set; how the flesh tints against the deep-toned hills, and the faintly-hued robes of the little figures who inhabit the night, make up a perfect harmony of colour, and how, moreover, the lines and masses of the composition are so disposed as to keep the whole space balanced.

But Blake does not draw his inspiration only from words or passages that suggest terror. Some of the most impressive designs in these volumes are also the sweetest. He could touch things of innocence without losing strength, and could give the full impression of gladness and delight without sacrifice of severity in style. One of the most perfect of these illustrations represents Christ as the father of all children, sitting enthroned in the sky. On every side the golden heavens are peopled with childish forms, flying with glad faces towards the form of Christ. Already, one little nude boy has reached

the bosom of Jesus, and others circle close around, borne in, as it were, on the radiating lines of light that spring from the central figure. It is a vision of all the world become as little children, and making their way to heaven. The glad, untroubled faces, with an expression of happiness too easily begotten to be over-intense, are lit with a light of freer and more innocent worship than any painter has imaged in religious art. And it may be remarked in this picture, as in many others, with what perfect reality Blake renders the truth of flying forms. These little figures, the boys nude and the girls demurely draped in close fitting garments, have not even wings to assist the impression of aerial support, and yet their presence in the air is perfectly credible to us; their confident flight through the sky suggests no doubt or question as to its means. This power of dealing with supernatural effects in a natural way is a part of Blake's strong imaginative gift. He did not merely think of boys and girls flying through the sky: he saw them; and to his intense vision, always gazing familiarly on what to other men is distant or uncertain, the attitude of flying was as natural as any other. Thus we find in all cases, that his floating or flying figures, whether winged or wingless, have an extraordinary impression of physical reality as well as ideal beauty. With that strong impulse towards purely natural truth which controls all his inventions, he reconciles us at once to the merely prac-

tical difficulties of the theme, and leaves us in quiet possession of all its higher meaning, untroubled by the doubts that a less gifted workman would arouse. And this same familiarity of Blake with the circumstances of an ideal world tells with equal effect in his treatment of nude form. Other painters may be, and surely have been, more correct in the drawing of the figure, but no painter has ever given in a higher degree the perfect unconscious freedom that Blake gives to his nude figures. This impression, altogether invaluable in imaginative art, cannot be gained by any amount of copying from the model: it springs only from the painter's power of vividly realising an existing world of nude figures. That is the only way in which the figures of art can be made to look as if their nakedness was natural to them. The nude female forms to be found in these illustrations to Young, are often of surprising beauty. We have already referred to the figure of Eve bending over the water of the lake, and those who know the published engravings will remember the symbolic representation of Sense running wild, with the dark pall of death spread above her. But the coloured drawing of this subject very far surpasses the engraving. It is difficult to imagine anything more beautiful than the wild freedom of this youthful woman, with long yellow hair blown about her shoulders, racing heedlessly over the green hills, while above, the pall of death is fast descending. Another

instance of graceful management of nude form, and an example of the artist's method of illustration, is to be found in the drawing which accompanies the following lines. The poet is speaking of Heaven, and he says—

> Song, Beauty, Youth, Love, Virtue, Joy,—this group
> Of bright ideas, flowers of Paradise
> As yet imperfect, in one blaze we bind,
> Kneel and present it to the skies as all
> We guess of Heaven.

Here Blake has literally followed the poet's image. Against a sky of intense blue the scroll of flame is set, and within the flame the floating figures of the heavenly virtues which a kneeling figure presents to the skies. The forms of Song, Beauty, and Youth, and the rest, each with some appropriate emblem, are exquisitely disposed in the space of flame, and they have that peculiar quality of freedom in their nakedness that Blake always knew how to gain. Another illustration presents a symbolic figure of the soul mounting to heaven. With folded arms the naked man ascends a sky of blue towards the yellow light that streams downward from the opening clouds above him. The attitude is severely graceful, and it is, moreover, directly suggestive of the idea of upward movement. Still keeping to examples of nude form, we come upon a design showing with what perfect independence Blake sometimes saw fit to treat the text of his author. Young enlarging upon the qualities of friendship thus inquires :—

> Know'st thou, Lorenzo, what a friend contains?
> As bees mixed nectar draw from fragrant flowers,
> So men from Friendship, Wisdom and Delight,
> Twins ty'd by nature, if they part they die.

Blake in this design realises, not friendship, but the two qualities which, according to the poet, friendship yields. Wisdom, a learned shepherd with crook and book, advances in close company with the more youthful figure of Delight, whose more alert look and younger face is skilfully contrasted with the sober countenance of his companion. In the background is Blake's favourite symbol of a peaceful and happy life—ranks of sheep with bent heads quietly cropping the short grass. The figures in this design, both nude, are of statuesque grace and dignity. They bear themselves as men long used to the ways of the ideal world they inhabit, and their unconscious beauty brings to the spectator a conviction of such a world's existence.

A noticeable feature of these illustrations, and the last to which we shall call attention, is the artist's consistent treatment of the physical image of Death. Neither here, nor indeed anywhere in Blake's art, is there found any faltering or doubt as to the individual qualities with which these abstract creations are to be endowed. The great form that does duty for Death has not been created out of a series of tentative efforts. There is no trace of experiment in the result. It has the perfect precision and distinct character of a portrait

a reality as of a form absolutely seen by the painter, if by no one else. But side by side with this impression of strong portraiture, there is a sense of a supernatural and terrible presence. Blake has not permitted the exactness of the representation to take from the awful character of the subject. The vision is confident, but it is like the vision of Sleep, which brings things near to us without rendering them familiar. Thus, about these images of death, that are frequent throughout the series, even where the action is most energetic and most relentless, we feel that it is fatal rather than malicious, and that Death himself is like a blind actor in a drama without purpose. The ancient face with closed eyes and mouth buried in the long white hair that appears in the front of the first volume, is typical of the character given to Death in these designs. We may note, too, the labour he performs as, with one colossal hand, he sweeps an innocent family beneath his shadow, while upon the other, calmly out-stretched upon the great knees, and unconscious of its use, a naked and enfranchised soul is gazing up to the angels imaged in the sky, her loosened hair already caught by the winds of heaven.

In treating of a series of upwards of five hundred designs, it is impossible, by a few examples, to give any idea of the endless fertility of the painter's invention. In this respect alone these volumes form a most remarkable witness to Blake's powers. No other work is of the

same extent; and as this was executed when the painter was of a ripe age and still young, we may suppose that no other work received a larger share of energy and patient labour. Certainly it seems, as we turn over the richly adorned leaves, that at no time could Blake have been more aptly disposed for setting his thoughts in design. On the side of execution, though very much is beautiful, there are faults that further experience availed to correct; and for perfection in this respect, so far at least as drawing is concerned, the illustrations to Job, put forward many years later, must always hold the highest place. But these marvellous drawings for the 'Night Thoughts' have a special interest, as in some sense the store-house from which future inventions were to be drawn. At this time perhaps more than any other the artist's brain was ready to create, and so it happens that we find here the first germs of ideas employed afterwards in other works. The designs for Blair's 'Grave' borrow largely from this source; and one of the most beautiful ideas in the plates to Job, the rank of angels singing together with crossed hands and ordered wings, is to be found partly expressed in the second volume of Young.

In this review of his work Blake has been spoken of only as an artist. It would have been easy to have discussed at equal length his qualities as a poet, but both praise and criticism of Blake's poetry have been amply anticipated. Mr. Swinburne's examination into

the mysteries of the Prophetic Books remains a performance of extraordinary power which no after effort could readily rival; and quite recently Mr. William Rossetti has done for the more easily intelligible of Blake's poems all that needs to be done in order to render them acceptable to the public. And if this were not so, it would still remain in our judgment true that Blake's art is the greater of his achievements, and the one most powerfully claiming recognition. His poetry takes its place with equal and greater English verse; but in certain qualities of his art, the qualities that our painters have most often needed, and most often missed, Blake as an Englishman stands almost alone.

PART II.

THE IDEALS OF ART.

DRAWINGS BY THE OLD MASTERS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

Of all the various forms of artistic expression, a drawing by the hand of a great master is perhaps the most fascinating; a finished picture claims our respectful homage as the considered and final utterance of its author's thought, but a sketch or a study made in preparation for such a picture charms us with the magic of familiar speech. In no other way are we allowed to approach so nearly to the source of a great individuality; by no other evidence can we hope to learn so much of the means by which the artist wins his power over us and over nature. To the painting of the different schools we must continually return as a witness of the gradual development of technical resource, for it is in the use of colour that the art of one age differs most decisively from that of another, and it is here therefore that the distinction between what is archaic and what is modern is most strikingly expressed. But a drawing, by the greater simplicity of its process, carries us more directly to the artist himself, and affords a more intimate view of the modes of his invention. We are allowed to note the first suggestive utterance of the idea before it

has been referred to the test of reality, or to observe the artist's willing dependence upon the teaching of nature while the intellectual impulse has not yet stepped in to mould the fruits of research.

Here then for a while the master becomes a student, and there are instances even among the most famous names where the work of the student leaves the pleasanter impression. The exact and faithful study of nature which remains as the only sure foundation of every great style is sometimes obscured in the gradual progress of the work towards completed performance. It may be that the taint of artifice has intruded itself into the exercise of the imaginative faculty, or that some defect of technical power has caused the loss by the way of the first fresh and vivid impression. In either case the sketches and studies of the painter serve to vindicate the sincerity of his love for nature. We feel as we turn over the numerous drawings of a great master of landscape like Claude, that we have never before sufficiently realised the modesty of his genius. The studied elegance displayed in his pictures would sometimes encourage the suspicion that he was not familiar with the freer and less formal ways of nature, but after a survey of his drawings, which contain the record of so much patient and simple labour, it becomes evident that it was by deliberate choice and not through any lack of knowledge that he pressed the shapes of the outward world into a

preordained pattern of so-called classic grace. By the help of his drawings we thus arrive at a new understanding of the sure foundation of his art. Under their influence the conventional scheme of his composition discovers an unsuspected vitality. And even the work of a painter like Raphael will sometimes suggest a similar reflection. In many of the most famous of his finished paintings there is a rhetorical emphasis of dramatic effect that is not suggestive either of the most spontaneous invention or of the keenest insight into reality. His imagination, it would seem, was not of the kind to gradually enrich itself by prolonged consideration of a theme. The first thoughts were with him often the happiest, and these are to be found registered in the numerous studies that are scattered over the collections of Europe.

In a certain sense, then, the sketches of the great masters afford the truest measure of individual strength. By laying bare the successive processes of artistic production they in effect supply the material for an exhaustive analysis of style such as no criticism, however penetrating its method, could hope to achieve. The different elements that are at last fused into the forms of completed art are here still separate and distinguishable. We are able in every instance to note how much is due to the direct inspiration of nature, and to what extent the simple truth is modified by the presence of the artist's ideal. And of the worth of this ideal we can

sometimes judge more clearly than by reference to fresco or canvas. For in his drawings the artist labours for himself, and, left to himself, returns again and again to the conceptions that have taken strongest hold of his imagination, to the types of character or to the shapes of beauty that have rooted themselves most firmly in his mind. And the constant repetition here leaves no sense of fatigue, because at each step we feel that some new secret is being won from nature to receive the stamp of the artist's personality.

I.

THE EARLY ITALIAN MASTERS.

THE series of Italian drawings possessed by the British Museum is arranged in nineteen portfolios. The collection may be said to offer a fair representation of nearly every school, and it is, perhaps, specially rich in examples illustrative of the earlier efforts of Italian art. In the presence of such a mass of material, all that can be said by way of description must of necessity give but a very imperfect impression of the whole. It will only be possible, indeed, to indicate very briefly the main currents of artistic progress, and to note the principal examples of individual masters. Of the great art centres of Florence and Venice the record, as might be expected, is sufficiently ample; nor is it wonderful, having regard to the distinct tendencies of these schools, that the drawings of the Florentine masters should claim precedence. Like all art that is concerned with the expression of great ideas, the painting of Florence was from the first sustained by the power of precise and noble design. Urged forward by the force of a splendid imaginative impulse, it was constantly tasking nature

for the material wherewith to express the shapes of an ideal invention. The most simple studies of the school have for this reason always something more than a merely realistic strength. They are deeply impressed with the personality of the artist, and are coloured by the intellectual purpose that inspired his research.

To Giotto himself, the founder of the school, a single drawing is here attributed. It is a composition of five figures, executed upon parchment with the point of the brush. The severe grace of the drapery and the very delicate modelling of the faces are points of especial beauty in a drawing that is altogether beautiful, though it is probably not the work of the master to whom it is assigned. Coming from the Crozat collection, it is there described as a study for one of the frescoes at Avignon, and this fact, together with the peculiar type of the faces represented, justifies Waagen's surmise that the drawing is not Giotto's, but by Giotto's great contemporary, Simone Martini. In the treatment of the countenance, refined almost to the point of affectation, the manner of the drawing certainly bears a strong resemblance to a painting by Simone at Florence, and when we consider the beauty of the composition and the tenderness of sentiment employed in interpreting the face it is not to be wondered at that Petrarch should have coupled the names of 'Giotto of Florence, whose fame amongst the moderns is great, and Simone of Sienna,' as of men

worthy to rank together. As a point in the further development of painting, when it began to take from sculpture the lessons of ordered distribution and classic grace in form, we have here a drawing assigned to Lorenzo Ghiberti, himself both a sculptor and a painter. But the most interesting specimens of Florentine art are from masters whose names are more familiar, and who in their own work created distinct ideals that have since held a lasting association with their genius. The religious passion of Angelico, gentle and yet intense, marks an epoch in painting, and its tender fascination may be traced in his drawings and studies. We have here a small design of a youthful saint arrayed in a costume of long hanging sleeves, and with both hands resting upon the hilt of a heavy sword. There is grace enough in the drawing, but the paper upon which it is executed is interesting chiefly by reason of the studies of heads upon the back of it. These heads, set in profile, and executed with that perfect precision of touch that is as far as possible from the modern notion of sketching, bear in the countenance the mixed tenderness and passion of worship which is the full expression of a kind of rapture still unconscious of dramatic effect. In another corner of the paper is a study of a horseman in Eastern costume, and on the back of a second drawing are more saints, studied this time in full length, and a careful drawing of the head of an ox. These are the

single notes out of which we may construct for ourselves one of Angelico's constant religious visions; slight records through which we may see how the inspired image connected itself with common facts of nature, and wherein we may already note the signs of that religious fervour without which the painter laboured not at all.

It would be possible to follow the subsequent development of this religious spirit in painting, as it reappears with more conscious grace in the designs of Perugino, and to note its final utterance in the sentimental exaggeration of Francia's tearful faces. But even while Angelico was still at work a more liberal ideal had already asserted itself. Not to elevate the human face by charging it with a single and overpowering expression of divine rapture, but to penetrate its subtleties of fixed character and to be profoundly familiar with all truth of physical form or movement—these were the aims of the Florentine painters whose art survived the earlier study of devotional sentiment. And yet this revolution implied no change of spirit, but only an enlargement of scope. The art of Florence was to the last intensely religious, but it was no longer content to work in the strict service of religion. It was about to transfer its allegiance from the legends of the Church to the deeper truths of human life, to abandon as an exclusive subject of study the saintly sufferings

of monks and martyrs in order to secure a deeper rendering of the passions and the sorrows of a present world. It is easy to perceive how, in their several ways, Donatello and the two Lippi, Pollajuolo, and, most of all, Botticelli and Signorelli, helped to prepare the way for the greater masters by whom this ideal was to be perfected. Here and there also individual painters may be distinguished who, although swept along by the general tendencies of the school, were rather destined by their temperament for the practice of a different kind of art. We are forcibly reminded of these subordinate currents in Florentine painting by the presence in the Museum of two delightful drawings by Domenico Ghirlandajo. In the lack of a certain fire and intensity of invention Ghirlandajo stood almost alone. In any other school less richly endowed with these qualities his imagination might have seemed great by comparison : here, on the contrary, it falls by comparison into the second rank. A little while ago the perception of this truth took such violent hold of Mr. Ruskin as to betray him into the most exaggerated depreciation of Ghirlandajo's frescoes at Florence. It is always a pity to depreciate beautiful work, however brilliant the rhetoric employed in the process, and it was certainly misleading to speak ill of the frescoes at Santa Maria Novella. But the distinction which Mr. Ruskin marked with such excess of emphasis is one that must have occurred to

very many students of art who have carefully studied these frescoes. They are not devoid of the general characteristics of Florentine art, but these characteristics are not of their essence. The genius of Ghirlandajo, in short, was based upon power in portrait rather than upon intensity of passion, and his presence in the school is in this sense a very interesting phenomenon, to be studied with attention, not to be reprobated. The dignity and beauty of the individual figures which crowd these frescoes can scarcely be overrated, and it is surely instructive for once to see what could be done in portraiture by a painter whose practice was founded upon a different tradition. For in his general scheme of rendering the facts of nature, Ghirlandajo was led by the example of the school to which he belonged. He painted like a Florentine, although his individuality was not deeply engaged by the ideals which prevailed at Florence, and thus we may observe that he did not seek for the kind of realistic effect towards which those painters of Venice were drawn, whose practice was almost entirely controlled by the sense of the value of truth in portraiture.

The two drawings in the Museum are both of the finest quality, and they are specially interesting by reason of their contrast of widely different types of character. Waagen suggests that the more beautiful face is from the hand of Filippino Lippi; but the features and the

expression present considerable resemblance to those of the youthful son of Sassetti, Ghirlandajo's patron, whose portrait was recently exhibited in Burlington House. In the drawing, however, the face is turned in full gaze upon the spectator, the head slightly inclined on one side. The large quiet eyes and delicate mouth combine for an effect of singular sweetness, and the long hair, straying waywardly from beneath a small Florentine cap, completes the faultless grace of the picture. In complete contrast stands the stronger and older face of a woman in the second drawing. Here the full lips are firmly held, the eyes gaze keenly and unflinchingly, and the tightly ordered braids of the hair, surrounding a face that would be heavy if it were not so penetrated by expression, skilfully supports the general sense of an individuality of strength and independence. Some studies by Massaccio, executed with the silver point and heightened with white upon grey tinted paper, are also among the interesting specimens of the school; and the growing tendency towards energetic design is illustrated by a very spirited drawing by Antonio Pollajuolo, and by studies from the nude by Andrea del Verrochio, the master of Lionardo da Vinci and of Lorenzo di Credi. A fine study of an old man's head by the last-named painter, in expression almost grotesque, marks very clearly the influence of Lionardo; and the same feeling, in the treatment of the heads, is noticeable in several

studies for pictures also by Lorenzo di Credi. The collection, out of which we have named only a few prominent features, contains several drawings by Filippino Lippi, and by his pupil, Raffaellino del Garbo, by Pesellino, and also one masterly study of three horsemen by Luca Signorelli.

But we pass now to the record of art progress in the north of Italy. Here the central figure must always be that of Andrea Mantegna, and with his name the names of the Bellini naturally suggest themselves. Of the Bellini and of Mantegna the record presented by the drawings in the Museum is of the very highest importance. The connection between these artists and the influence they exercised over one another are among the most interesting problems of art history. It is only necessary to study the 'Christ on the Mount' in the National Gallery to be assured of the great Paduan's influence on Giovanni Bellini; while, for the ideas which partly controlled and directed the taste of both these younger men, we must turn to the work of Jacopo Bellini, Mantegna's father-in-law and Giovanni's father. The sketch-book belonging to this painter now rests in the Print Room at the Museum. It is a volume of large size, containing ninety-nine pages, thickly covered with sketches and designs. The drawings are executed in black chalk, here and there retouched with pen and ink, and sometimes slightly tinted in water colours. From the

very first the book was regarded as a precious possession, for it is mentioned in the will of Gentile Bellini, by whom it was left to his younger brother Giovanni. The book has changed hands many times, and finally it passed into the possession of Girolamo Mantovani, whose heir disposed of it for 400 napoleons to the British Museum. Its importance is the greater because the authentic works of Jacopo are few, and Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle in their history of painting in North Italy draw largely upon its resources in forming their estimate of the elder Bellini's genius. It would be impossible to describe the multitude of subjects either slightly suggested or carefully elaborated in the pages of this volume. We shall do better to give the general impression of the artist's strength which its study yields, and to suggest from it what may have been the weight of Jacopo's influence upon the art of the younger Bellini and Mantegna. To me it seems that, in respect of all the higher qualities of art, the gift of invention in design and the technical knowledge through which design becomes possible in execution, there is little that Bellini could have taught to Mantegna. Throughout the sketch-book we have always to recognise a wide line of separation between the thought and its expression. On the one hand there are here a number of direct studies from nature at once faithful and picturesque, wherein we may perceive that the artist possessed the power to seize and

carry away the living impression of things actually seen. To this class belong the numerous and highly interesting drawings of animal life, the sketches of peasants in movement, and the occasional studies of rustic scenes. The idyllic element in art, afterwards more fully developed in the work of Gian Bellini, is already recognised, and this fact alone separates the character of the achievement very clearly from that of Mantegna. The landscape of the Paduan is always stern and barren, uninhabited save for the great figures of the central design; while in these compositions by Bellini there is always some record of rustic life and occupation introduced without reference to the action of the figures employed in the chief incident. An instance of this is to be found in the flight of woodcutters in a drawing of St. George and the Dragon; and in the painting of the younger Bellini the same idyllic sense is manifested, as for example in the figures of the peasants in the background of the 'Death of Peter Martyr,' now in the National Gallery. This direct imitation of nature as it presented itself to the eyes of the artist must be considered together with a richness of invention also decisively manifested by the drawings in this volume. As a record of artistic ideas the volume is indeed of exceptional interest, and it shows Bellini to have been, in respect of freedom of invention, a worthy leader of the art of his time. It is possible that his counsel and example were here of great

service to Mantegna, and it is certain that he has thrown into a pictorial form many subjects that had not been previously approached by painting. We may instance the beautiful drawing of Amazons in their camp, with one figure of exceptional grace just pushing aside the curtains of her tent. The next page represents the scene of the conflict, and is less successful in effect, because its design required a mastery over energetic movement which Bellini did not possess. Another drawing, of 'Christ on the Mount,' evidently formed the basis of Gian Bellini's picture in the National Gallery, and there is a drawing of the Flagellation which may perhaps have suggested Mantegna's treatment of the same theme. But, speaking generally, it must be said that of the qualities in which Mantegna stood supreme these sketches give very little indication. The two artists had in essence a different aim, and in Bellini's work there is scarcely a suggestion of that mastery over human form which is in truth the ideal of Mantegna's art. To him all other elements of picturesque effect yielded to this; throughout his career he was gradually finding within the limits of the body the sources of the profoundest and most sublime expression, and therefore all mere skilful reproduction of nature without a touch of abstract grace, and mere invention of subject without the support of technical science, were to him equally without value. If he could have learned the luxury of

Bellini's softer line and more delicate sentiment, his vision of beauty might have been wider and more comprehensive. But the work that he had set himself to do was more than enough for individual energies; and if we find in the stress of his labour that the result occasionally lacks some lesser kind of grace, we are to reflect how great were the duties he had undertaken and how splendid the achievement.

It was the special function of Mantegna's art to discover anew the contact between classic grace and absolute reality. To some of his contemporaries his figures seemed more like statues than living men and women; but their vitality has survived all reproach, and the student of his drawings may now better appreciate the true result of his labours. His strongly marked style, with its firm hold over the resources of physical expression, suggests no copy of an antique model. It bears the most conclusive evidence, not that the artist was striving to reproduce Greek work, but that he was himself seeking in nature for the kind of beauty that Greek artists had discovered and perfected. Mantegna imitated not the result so much as the artistic process that made the result possible, and we may see everywhere in his work precisely how much he had accomplished, and how far the work still fell short of the ideal. His drawings in the Print Room are numerous and important. They are of special interest from the fact that

in general they are not mere sketches, but finished compositions, executed probably for the purpose of engraving. One, however, and certainly not the least beautiful of the series, is only a fragment representing two youths in conflict, doubtless forming part of a larger design. The drawing of the bodies, which are completely nude, is both graceful and energetic, the lines harmoniously disposed, and the surfaces of flesh delicately divided into spaces of light and shade. One of the youths whose back is turned holds a club with both hands, while his shoulder is grasped by the left hand of his companion, who also holds a weapon in the hand of the right arm that is uplifted above his head. In the treatment of the heads the hair is a point of special beauty, free in design, and yet successfully suggestive of the carved outlines of sculptured locks. Another drawing, executed in red and brown colour heightened with white, illustrates the tendency of Mantegna's genius towards allegorical satire. Its meaning is not altogether easy to decipher, but it may be described generally as an ideal representation of Folly made up of materials gathered from the antique. A fat figure, perhaps of Ignorance, sits enthroned in one corner of the design, while a man and a woman, blinded and led by a dog, are tempted over the edge of a chasm by the music and direction of two monsters with eagles' claws, asses' ears, and bats' wings. In the engraving of this work we are shown the lower

part of the chasm crowded with falling bodies, and leading to a ruinous place filled with broken masonry. The second of the coloured drawings is wholly classic in subject, and in its noble treatment of nude form it approaches also to the spirit of classic work. It is executed in bistre and shadowed with lake and ultramarine, and the subject is composed of three figures of Mars, Diana, and Venus. We may specially observe the drawing of the hands of Diana, and the strong and yet graceful modelling of the figure of Mars. Here again it may be seen how the painter was striving to unite his own knowledge of nature with the ideal of sculpture, and we may note, too, how nearly the combination is secured. It wants nothing in vitality, and only a little for the perfect order and grace of design; the strength of the artist is not completely controlled to the purposes of beauty, and the studentship of common nature has not quite reached to the qualities of abstract form. But perhaps the most interesting of the series of Mantegna's drawings is a representation of the Calumny of Apelles. This was a favourite subject with the painters of the Renaissance. There is a drawing of it by Raphael which is now in Paris. Botticelli also used the theme, and among lesser men who have been attracted by its beauty are Luca Penni and Federigo Zucchero. Mantegna's treatment of the legend does not yield to that of either Botticelli or Raphael. The subject gives

opportunity for a long frieze-shaped composition, in the management of which his mastery is unfailing. The figure of Credulity is enthroned on the left of the picture between two female forms of Mistrust and Ignorance. He stretches out his hand to take the hand of Envy, who leads in Calumny, she in turn dragging the infant form of Innocence by the hair. Behind are Deceit and Villany, followed at a little distance by Penitence, while the noble figure of Truth stands motionless and alone at the end of the advancing group. Comparing this work with the splendid painting called the 'Triumph of Scipio,' in the National Gallery, we may see how carefully considered was Mantegna's system of expression. In both the movement of the figures is slowly and subtly brought to a pause within the limits of the composition. Here, in the open space between the two groups, where there is still room for quick movement, the action is bold and energetic, and this emphasis of expression gradually yields to repose as the artist approaches the standing figure of Truth, which terminates the scheme of the drawing. There are other drawings of Mantegna of less importance, and in further illustration of the art of the Bellini we find an important little study of Eastern figures by Gentile, the elder of the two brothers.

In the presence of these drawings by Mantegna it is impossible to escape the conclusion that he, more clearly

than any other painter of the time, forecast the ultimate triumph which the art of Italy was to achieve. That triumph was complete when the study of the antique and the knowledge of nature were perfectly fused in the creation of a new style, but such a result could not be hurried forward, even by a genius like Mantegna: it awaited for its fulfilment the advent of Lionardo, of Raphael, and of Michael Angelo. But if the Paduan painter did not touch the goal, he pushed on persistently in the right path. He, earlier than others, perceived that the two streams must somewhere meet, and during the whole of his career he lost sight of neither. In the same design, and often in the same figure, we see the two opposite influences at work; and because the union was not complete, their presence sometimes leaves the impression of antagonism. There is something startling in the sudden association of classic grace and common reality, and the contrast between the two modes of feeling—both equally within the painter's control—serves to set forth with effect the two great labours which painting had to accomplish. If Mantegna had not been so uncompromising a student of nature, he might have gained the suggestion of antique elegance upon easier terms; if he had not felt so strongly the value of style, he might easily have satisfied himself in the imitation of actual fact. But his perception of the needs of art was so clear, and his energy so inexhaustible, that he became

in a double sense the leader in the historic development of art. His understanding of the principles of ancient art was greater than that of any other painter of his time, his knowledge of nature not less; and in his work he has drawn fairly upon both resources, giving with a lavish hand the rich fruit of his labours.

II.

THE ITALIAN MASTERS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

SEEING how rare are the finished works of Lionardo, the numerous drawings from his hand that survive to us have a peculiar value. We may trace in them with unfailing distinctness his always strongly-marked individuality; we gain from them a new impression of the extent of his researches, and of the variety of the material upon which his genius was employed. Looking to the collections at Windsor, at Milan, and at Venice, we find that there was scarcely any aspect of nature that he did not investigate, leaving everywhere, and with every touch of his pencil, the record of a curious intensity of style. Studies of drapery, precise and delightful drawings of fruit and flowers, passages of landscape imaged with the searching realism of Albert Durer, and anatomical drawings of the most patient and elaborate execution, serve to bear witness to the unwearying industry of hand and brain; while the varied types of human countenance, charged with every changing mood of feeling, help us to understand the means he used to

gain such marvellous command over the finer truths of facial expression. It is here, indeed, that the art of Lionardo attains its highest triumphs. For the complete discovery of the energy and grace of human form we must look in different ways to the work of Michael Angelo and Raphael, but his fame lives with theirs in virtue of his profound understanding of the human countenance. In the study of the face there was nothing that could escape him. He could arrest the transient smile that flits like a ray of sunlight across lovely features, and yet he was not repelled by the most hideous deformities of grotesque character. And even in the treatment of the grotesque he contrives to secure an impression of artistic beauty. The play of light and shade is so finely balanced that the shapeless heads and hideous features take from his hand something of order and symmetry. Their deformities, precisely outlined, seem to own obedience to some difficult law of form, and the artist, conscious perhaps of the power to reduce all wayward monstrosity to the conditions of pictorial expression, is fond of presenting these extreme manifestations of ugliness, imaging them with the same exactness of design that is bestowed upon the most delicate types of beauty. There are several specimens of these grotesque heads in the Museum collection, and there is besides a very fine drawing of an old man's head, of a type constantly repeated in Lionardo's drawings. Here

it is in full face, the whole surface of the flesh broken by the lines of age, and the shadows worked into a complex and delicate pattern. Another drawing of a man's head in profile, marked by extraordinary animation and alertness of facial gesture, recalls a similar study in the Louvre.

This constant observance of eccentric form, to be rightly understood, must be considered not in contrast but in connection with Lionardo's power of interpreting the most exquisite refinement of female beauty. It was the same searching curiosity that conducted him in each case to a result far beyond the reach of any powers but his own. We cannot perhaps define the means by which he infused a certain harmony into monstrous features, nor can we tell how it is that the smile upon the lips of his women should avail to bring all the features into perfect agreement of expression, or how the system of finely balanced shadows should give even to his portraits the significance of abstract character. These are the secrets of his genius; and in every picture and almost in every study from his hand admiration is intensified by the sense of a problem incapable of solution. The most beautiful of the Museum sketches are slight studies of the Virgin and Child drawn rapidly with the pen. The face of the mother, bending and in profile, is little more than suggested, but already it possesses the delicate smile and the grace of line which

seems to make all the features set one way for the sake of a single and harmonious expression. On the back of the paper the same design is repeated ; and here, too, as if to bear witness in a small compass to the strange combination of the artist's gifts, are a small grotesque head and a design for some works of engineering. Two other drawings give numerous designs for a Virgin and Child with a cat, the idea being repeatedly worked out in different forms, and in one at least of these studies the Virgin's face is of exquisite loveliness. But perhaps the most curious is a small design showing a confused fight between a dragon and other animals. At one side is a figure of a man holding a shield from which the sun is reflected on to the group of fighting animals ; but, although the drawing is finely finished, its precise significance is difficult to determine. It is interesting, however, as belonging to a class of subjects with some strange attraction for the painter's genius. In the gallery of the Uffizzi at Florence there is a remarkably fine drawing of a fight between a dragon and a lion, and of this drawing the British Museum has lately acquired a unique engraving supposed to be by the hand of Lionardo himself. The traces of the painter's accomplishment in this direction are few, and the engraving already mentioned, together with the head of Mona Lisa, also in the Print Room, are therefore to be regarded as of high historical importance. Scarcely less interesting

from an historical point of view is a small sketch which was lately purchased at the sale of the Galichon collection. It represents the first draught of the design for the cartoon of the Virgin and St. Anne now in the possession of the Royal Academy.

But to what great conclusions the development of Italian art was tending even the work of Lionardo cannot wholly reveal. The genius of Michael Angelo was necessary to carry to its goal the splendid tradition of imaginative design that Florence had cherished since the days of Giotto, and to gather up and perfect the scattered ideals to be found in the work of his predecessors. In this quality of comprehension Michael Angelo stands alone. The Greek ideal is perhaps not less profound than his, and their appreciation of the beauties of action and energetic expression is far beyond what the pedantries of a certain phase of criticism would have us believe; but the Greek artists did not attempt to charge the human face and form with the secrets and the trials of passion and suffering. This was the task that Michael Angelo undertook, and even by the masters of the school to which he belonged its full significance had not yet been understood. Others before him had represented with more or less completeness some one aspect of spiritual life or physical beauty, developing therein an exceptional sympathy with things religious or with things profane. But with Michael Angelo, who came

to combine in a new harmony these varied elements, it is not any particular aspect of life, but life itself that becomes the central theme of art. The creations of his pencil are no longer restricted to the simple duty of illustrating the particular legend to which they are attached: they suffice in themselves as an image of the world, and in their faces are reflected as in a mirror the splendid hopes and the tragic fortunes of our race. Humanity, as interpreted by the shapes of his invention, keeps, like Hercules, the recollection of vast labours accomplished and the anticipation of trials yet to come. With an energy that is sublime they preserve a sadness and pity that is more than human.

In commenting upon the drawings of the master these facts should not be forgotten; for we find in the numberless studies of single limbs and of strange attitudes the means by which he perfected his mastery over the resources of expression. To him the outward repose proper to art, the sense of which is never destroyed even in his most energetic design, concealed endless suggestions of movement. His figures always reveal some action lately completed or about to begin; the calm of the face is that which comes after emotion—it bears the record of passion already endured, of suffering that is past. And when we once apprehend the means by which Michael Angelo secured this impression we shall see that the movements of his ideal figures are as

abstract as those of ancient sculpture. This element in Michael Angelo's art—the presence of emotions for which the chosen theme gives no direct warrant—is of the essence of his genius. It is to be traced in his portraits as in his ideal compositions. In the collection of drawings in the Print Room are two examples of Michael Angelo's portraiture, and in both the impress of this spirit may be perceived. One is a study of a woman, drawn with pen and ink heightened with red chalk. On one side of the paper she is shown in full face, characteristically clad in raiment that looks like armour, the broad belt firmly drawn round the waist, and the breasts, as in the portrait of Vittoria Colonna at Florence, girt round with bands sustained upon the shoulders. On the other side of the paper we see what seems to be the same face in profile. The head is slightly bent, the eyes cast down, and upon the whole face there is an expression far removed from the freedom of untroubled beauty. This drawing, together with that of a young girl in profile, holding a distaff in her hand, and with long waving hair falling over her shoulders, forms part of a larger series acquired in 1859 from members of the Buonarotti family. At the same time there passed into the hands of the Museum a large mass of original correspondence of Michael Angelo and his contemporaries, much of which has been recently published. It would serve no purpose to describe at length the numerous studies of nude form to

be found among the drawings of Michael Angelo here collected. To the student they will need no recommendation, and it is perhaps only to the student that these single limbs and isolated fragments of Titanic bodies will have much interest. We must mention, however, among the slighter sketches, one splendid drawing, in pen and ink, of a complete male form standing upright and with head turned away; nor must we omit to notice a paper covered with suggestions for a design of the Virgin and Child, on which is written, in the bold handwriting of Michael Angelo, as if in admonishment of some slothful pupil, 'Disegna Antonio, disegna Antonio, disegna e non perder tempo.' In this class of slighter sketches must be placed the numerous architectural studies and two rapidly executed designs for the Massacre of the Innocents, and Christ driving the money-changers from the Temple. There still remain many drawings deserving careful notice, and from among the number we shall select the compositions of Holy Families and an energetic design for the Resurrection. Of the former, there is one finished drawing representing the Virgin with the infant Christ and St. John. In the poise of the Virgin's head, turned so as to give the grand outline of the neck, and in the ample grace of the shoulders, we may recognise the strongly marked principles of the master's design. The right hand droops upon the knees, the left gathers in a fold

the mass of drapery that hangs heavily beneath the broad band passed beneath the breasts; at her feet is the nude figure of the infant Christ; and her face, turned towards him and bent down, shows the heavy eyelids and the full lips in shadow. The drawing of the Resurrection in black chalk shows the body of Christ, with arms crossed upon the breast, rising from the tomb into the air, while round about are the forms of the terrified soldiers. There are drawings of the same subject in the gallery of the Louvre, at Windsor, and in other collections.

The genius of Raphael is represented with even greater fulness than that of Michael Angelo. His drawings, many of them highly finished and all of them bearing some trace of the master's peculiar sweetness of invention, form a very remarkable series in the store of art treasures hidden away in the Print Room. First we shall notice a head of the life size, in coloured crayons, a portrait of the painter's friend Timoteo della Vite. It is not too much to say that this is one of the most beautiful works of its kind in existence. Passavant has cast a doubt upon the assumed authorship of Raphael, and has suggested that the drawing is from the hand of Timoteo himself; but study only strengthens the conviction that none but Raphael could have produced such a work. The face, set in full view, bears the dignified and temperate expression that belongs to the very highest order of portraiture; there

is vitality without loss of calm, repose and yet no lack of energy. It is difficult, indeed, to conceive of a more distinguished simplicity of countenance. The eyes are fearless and yet not over-bold; the firm lips capable and yet reticent of expression; the delicate nostrils sensitive, without recording any passing excitement. And the execution is everywhere equal to the requirements of the design. Particularly we may note the masterly drawing of the beard growing broadly on the face, and the solidity with which the head is modelled, set in the shadow of a heavy cap that falls down at the back in folds below the ears. It is the perfect mastery of art without display; for as there is no seeking for sudden effect in the expression of the face, so there is no mere brilliant device in the execution. Such a work illustrates the very highest phase of Raphael's genius. His command of the resources of graceful invention is never so well directed as when it is employed about the most simple theme. In the loftiest flights of imaginative design we may feel that the sweetness wants strength and that the grace has only served to ennoble the lighter realities of a serious theme. This defect may be felt in another of the remarkable drawings to be found here—a study for the picture of the Entombment. There is a reminiscence of Mantegna in the scheme of the composition; but how remote from Mantegna's energy of expression is the delicate sentiment discovered in this group of graceful figures! Comparing the draw-

ing with the finished picture, a further criticism suggests itself. In the processes of developing the idea of the design Raphael has lost some of its direct force and simplicity. The action becomes more effective but less sincere, the sentiment is unduly emphasised, and the obviously dramatic elements of the scene are brought forward, to the partial ruin of simplicity in the result. Raphael made a large number of studies for this picture, and in nearly all that we have seen we detect more sincerity of conception than the finished picture itself conveys. In the drawing now under notice we may observe with what exquisite tenderness the woman at the back of the group bends to kiss the dead hand of Christ: in the picture she is gazing with an overstrained expression of countenance into the dead face. And here, too, the women who in the drawing watch and follow the carriage of the body to the tomb are differently grouped: the Virgin has fainted and fallen to the ground, introducing a new incident into the composition and breaking the simplicity of the design. On the whole, it may be said that whatever defects are noticeable in the drawing spring from the limitations of Raphael's genius. The artist has not been sufficiently moved by the pathos of the scene to invent a new scheme in which to dispose the figures of his design; in attempting to invest these figures with the deeper tragic grace proper to the theme he partly fails.

To see the natural grace of the painter exercised without embarrassment we have only to turn to a beautiful study for the Virgin and Child, which forms one of the gems of the collection. It is drawn with the silver-point upon pink-tinted paper, and may be described as a subtle study of natural expression, childlike and feminine, without the suggestion of religious fervour. The composition presents little more than the two heads inclined in different ways, and with a perfect contrast and balance in expression. Between the laughter on the infant's countenance and the quieter and more subdued sweetness on the face of the mother, there is no discord; both are free and of untroubled beauty. The grace that is in them is as true and as simple as the grace of a flower. Another drawing, also executed with simple reference to physical grace and truth, is that of a mother and two children, one upon her shoulder and one by her side, designed for the composition of Noah's wife. In the engraving by Marc Antonio, and in the completed drawing at Florence, we may see that the group is advancing from the doorway, the woman's right foot resting upon a lower step, and the left hip thrown out in support of the child upon her shoulder. Another of Raphael's drawings to be found here is a large study for the Massacre of the Innocents, remarkable especially as showing his excellent management of nude form. This subject also has been engraved by Marc

Antonio, and here again it is interesting to note the changes between the first invention and the final shape given to it by the master. The figures of the mothers, some with infants in their arms and some whose children have been already snatched away, are in sudden confusion, fleeing this way and that in a flight that has no exit, for on all sides are the swords of the murderers. Out of this scene of terror and despair the artist has devised a very beautiful picture full of the grace of physical movement, giving the spectator a powerful impression of confusion that nevertheless yields readily to the painter's ordering hand. The drawing contains only a few of the figures that people the finished composition; in the engraving the space is more thickly crowded, the action perhaps more energetic and effective. But the drawing contains all the essential qualities of the invention, and in certain features—as, for instance, in the figure darting forward from the back of the group —the expression is finer and more complete. Of the remaining drawings by Raphael our notice must be brief. To one a peculiar interest attaches from the fact that upon the paper the painter himself has inscribed one of the few of his sonnets that are left to us. The drawing is a study of some figures for the Dispute of the Sacrament, and on another study for the same work in the Albertina Gallery at Vienna is found the rough draft of the same sonnet. Among other studies are the

figures of Sappho and Virgil for the fresco of Mount Parnassus, delicately executed in silver-point on tinted paper, a group of naked youths holding weapons, and a portrait of a young girl with head half turned in profile and with loosely flowing hair.

The collection comprises several very fine drawings by Titian, nearly all of which attest the painter's love and study of landscape. One is a highly finished drawing for the death of Peter Martyr, and for the same work we find here separate studies of foliage of even finer execution. Two drawings executed with the pen are devoted to the interpretation of scenery; in one the only figure is that of a peasant heavily laden, who moves across the foreground; in the other two figures recline on a bank to the right of the drawing, while at the back we get a full and accurate study of a low hill surmounted by a village or hamlet of rough wooden houses.

This delight in the beauties of outward nature to which Titian gives so noble an expression, was in part the result of a deeply-rooted tendency in Venetian painting towards the study of realistic effect. We have noticed earlier manifestations of this spirit of portraiture, even so far back as the time of Jacopo Bellini; but it was Titian himself who was mainly instrumental in fixing the ideal permanently upon Venetian painting. At the time when he entered upon his career there was a possible alternative even within the school itself. The

influence of Mantegna, one of the greatest masters of imaginative design that ever lived, was still powerful. It had partly moulded the genius of Gian Bellini, and it was destined to exercise an inexhaustible fascination over individual artists of nearly every school and every age. But for Titian this charm seems scarcely to have existed at all, and from the first he willingly yielded himself to those counter influences that were already giving to Venetian painting its final shape and character. On the side of design, Carpaccio, enlarging the initiative of Gentile Bellini, was beginning to introduce into art a freer and more familiar style, crowding his canvases with incident and action imported directly from observation of the life of his time. In his system of invention the painting of history approaches very closely to the principles of *genre*. With a *naïveté* more liberal but less intense than that of the Florentine painters, he was able to attain more nearly to a precise and vivid imitation of Nature; and while the ideal of portraiture was thus surely introduced into the mode of composition, a kindred tendency was even further developed in the realm of colour. Here the efforts of Gian Bellini, and still more of the elder Palma and Giorgione, had gone far to decide the future direction of Venetian style. The new use of the oil medium, with its larger imitative resources, was opening out new triumphs to painting, was in fact creating a new race of painters. Under

these circumstances it is perhaps scarcely just to say that Titian's choice was free. Had he been endowed with the highest imagination he might still no doubt have seized and revived the tradition Mantegna had left, enlarging it, as it was enlarged at Florence by Michael Angelo or Raphael. But his genius was not of a sort to arrest a movement already begun; its peculiar power consisted rather in the ability to give to this movement a full development. In his hands a magnificent artifice took the place of passionate invention, and severity in style yielded to a rhetorical splendour of design. The intellectual significance of art was gradually overpowered by the new forces of its realism. We admire a Venus by Titian not because she is like a goddess, but because her flesh is like flesh. The beauty, the refinement of the work dwells not in the idea but in the execution, not in the draughtsmanship but in the colouring; it depends upon the painter's minute and subtle observation of the endless gradations of tone and upon his wondrous power of translating what he perceives by means so magical that art reveals no failure and Nature owns no loss. A Florentine painter used colour as he used lines—to express an idea. His desire was not so much to repeat the appearances of nature as to arrest the shapes of his own imagination, and therefore the imitative effects of his art, though more precise and more sharply defined, are not so vivid,

and have not the same power of illusion as those of the Venetian painter. Realism is, in short, the accident of Florentine painting, not its essence, so that even the portraits of the school admit more of the individuality of the artist, and have a higher imaginative quality, than subject pictures of the later Venetian school. We need not pause to consider which of these two ideals is the nobler, for the world would not willingly lose the fruit of either, but we know from experience which was the safer and more secure. The spirit of portraiture that was the basis of Venetian art kept the products of the school sound and healthy when the great imaginative style of Florence was already in decadence. An art that peoples a world of its own with types of its own creation is beset by perils from which realism is exempt. It is only safe when it is directed by men of great gifts and perfect sincerity; it will not bear the touch of mediocrity, it perishes altogether so soon as its faith yields to cold and settled rule. It is not, therefore, surprising that, of the two schools, that of Venice endured longer, and was more fruitful in example to Northern masters. Her splendid practice, employed always upon the triumphs of portraiture, escaped the taint of a declining intellectual life. It was inherited by the great masters of Flanders, and was finally transmitted to the portrait painters of our own school.

III.

THE GERMAN MASTERS.

THE comparison of German and Italian art has an endless fascination for the student of style. The elements of contrast, and even of antagonism, are so many and so deep that we are left in wonder at the compass of a craft which can permit such varied and splendid achievement, and never is this wonder greater than in the presence of the work of Albert Durer. If it had not been for Durer, German art must have taken necessarily an inferior rank. The tremendous intellectual significance of his design seems suddenly to enlarge the limits of a style that otherwise could not compete with the more sublime system of Italy, and takes us at once to the consideration of the sources of an imaginative power that cannot be doubted or denied.

In the Print Room at the British Museum is a large folio volume, marked on the outside with Durer's monogram, and bearing the date 1637. It formed a part of the Sloane, and, earlier, of the Arundel, collection, and is supposed, on imperfect authority, to have been at one time the property of one of Durer's friends.

Its interest for us now lies in the fact that it contains a highly valuable, but little known, series of Durer's drawings. Next to the collection in the Albertina Gallery in Vienna this must take rank as the most important set of Durer's drawings in existence, and it is only surprising that the biographers of the painter have not made greater use of its contents. Mr. W. B. Scott, in his 'Life of Durer,' enters into some examination of the volume, but it is deserving of more complete and systematic study. No one, I think, who has looked over all of the drawings would venture to assert that all were by Durer: there are several that bear the unmistakable impress of an Italian origin, and which belong to a later date; others, again, can only have been the work of pupils or imitators of the master's style, and their imitation has been often blundering and unskilful. But, putting aside examples of both kinds, we have left to us a very large number of drawings that bear the stamp of Durer's genius. I do not propose here to attempt anything like a complete examination of these drawings, many of them of surpassing beauty and power, but merely to choose here and there examples that serve best to illustrate the dominant qualities of his work, or to mark its less familiar phases.

One of the most interesting parts of Durer's art in its relation with the work of modern artists is his system of landscape. There are in this volume several

very beautiful studies from nature, executed both in colour and with the pen. One of these studies is of the scene which the artist has introduced into his engraved design of the *Virgin with the Monkey*, but here it has the added grace and interest of colour. The artist has painted every part of the scene with the utmost finish and perfection, and has left a landscape that is minutely faithful in its imitation of the truth of nature, and at the same time profoundly impressive as a work in which the imagination has been constantly present. In studying its beauty, and in marking its absolute precision of workmanship, we encounter again the two qualities whose union gives to Durer's art its extraordinary control over our spirits. In this simple scene, made up of the commonest materials, all is familiar, and yet, by some magic of art, the familiar things seem distant and remote. By a thousand signs of patient labour we may know that the contact with nature is close and absolute; every minutest fact is stamped with individual existence; all the parts of the landscape—the wide expanse of idle water, the narrow house against the sunset sky, the rough banks with their image mirrored in the stream, and the old boat moored to the side—are revealed with the vivid and literal exactness only to be given by a witness keen to perceive all the delicate details of his subject, and strong to reproduce them in his work. Nevertheless, all these minute realities seem here to

inhabit an ideal and distant world. They are brought near to us as the shapes of a dream, but they escape all common touch and refuse all common sympathy. It is impossible to deny, it is impossible quite to explain, the source of the profound ideal significance of such a design. Here, no less than in the most difficult of his compositions, is hidden the secret of Durer's power over nature, as well as of his dominion over our minds. Nothing is exaggerated or deliberately forced for an effect, and from one point of view the drawing seems no more than a literal copy of the materials spread out before the artist. But as we gaze longer, and look deeper, it takes a grandeur and solemnity of effect that is beyond the reach of mere literal imitation. Though no individual fact of nature is lost or changed, there is about the whole picture a profound sadness and desolation. The silent distance of quiet water looks as if it had never served any purpose but to mirror the sky above; the tufts of grass growing on the low, barren shores, with each blade sharply outlined, have the appearance of things not merely seen but stamped eternally in remembrance; and the few signs of human life, the lonely house and the deserted boat that lies upon its shadow in the stream, only strengthen the impression of remoteness and sadness, the look as of something seen long ago and minutely remembered.

It is pardonable to dwell here upon the spiritual

effect of these landscape-paintings, because the element of splendid portraiture that is in them, the mere power of painting things as they are, and with a searching fidelity that nothing escapes, has been long ago an admitted quality of Durer's art, and because the whole interest of the performance in a higher sense lies in the artist's ability to add something more to this strict record of fact. And further, it is to be borne in mind that the principles that give passion and beauty to this realistic landscape have a special significance for us at the present time, when there is a new desire to paint the facts of scenery with exactness and truth. Our painters are once more striving for the intense vision of nature which is not content with the mere imitation of the dramatic movement of weather. They have begun to perceive that if landscape-painting is to have control over the imagination, the system of interpretation must go much deeper, and the painter must show to us not only the special colour and tone of a momentary effect of light or cloud, but also reveal to us the unchanging character of the scene that endures beneath these shifting changes of atmosphere. To accomplish this, and still to give room for the spiritual control of the painter, is the problem of greatest difficulty in landscape art. How the two things were secured by Durer through the resources of light and shade is familiar to all students of his engravings, and it is interesting to find the same

relation maintained under the more trying conditions of colour. The technical method of the artist in the use of water-colour is to be seen to better advantage in a second unfinished sketch. This is a study of fir-trees surrounding a pool of stagnant water that is darkened by the reflected colours of the sky. The foreground alone is complete as regards execution, and here we may trace the painter's delicate system of workmanship. Upon a ground of green the forms of the blades of grass are picked out in body-colour, and we note the same laborious process carried into the precise painting of the reeds that grow out of the water. Other parts of the drawing—the foliage of the fir-trees, and the mound of earth out of which they spring, are only filled in with even washes of colour; but here, as well as in the treatment of the evening clouds, we may see how perfect was Durer's instinct for the harmonious colouring of landscape. There are other landscape studies in the volume, and among them one, of the broken face of a cliff with sparse growth of vegetation on its crest, is specially remarkable for the fullness and patience of the execution. Each subtle variety of tint in the different strata of the rock is precisely repeated in Durer's drawing.

It would be interesting to institute a comparison between Durer's system of landscape and that of the Italian painters, to contrast the German's unflinching

realisation of the whole of a scene with the Southern artist's liberty of selection, to show how both by a sense of formal beauty gave to landscape a decorative value—to show also how Durer gave something more. The modern feeling for nature as it appears later in Titian's work, with its more striking realisation of atmospheric effect, is of a different kind to Durer's profound and penetrating insight into natural beauty: new truths had been embraced and some older and deeper truths abandoned. All things considered, then, Durer's was the most impressive landscape that had yet appeared; formal, yet not without spirit, and combining in the most potent way the minute record of actual fact with a sense of the imaginative influence of the particular scene, and even of the particular hour. But I must pass now to another side of Durer's genius, amply illustrated by his drawings, and wherein the contrast with the contemporary art of Italy is even more striking and instructive.

It is reported that while Durer was at Venice in 1506 he was invited by Andrea Mantegna to pay a visit to Mantua, but in the September of that year the Paduan painter died, and the meeting much desired by both never came to pass. We possess certain evidence of Durer's respect and admiration for Mantegna's genius. In the Albertina Gallery at Vienna are two drawings copied from compositions which Mantegna engraved.

These drawings were executed as early as the year 1494, and in the volume in the British Museum are several studies in which we may trace very clearly Mantegna's influence. One in particular, a half-length nude male form, is executed in the slanting strokes so often employed by Mantegna in his drawings. The features of the face, and the long curling hair that falls with an effect almost sculpturesque, suggest the teaching of a master familiar with the antique, and we may suppose that this knowledge, never completely embodied in Durer's work, had come to him from Mantegna. There are also other signs, as, for example, in the copies of the Tarocchi cards, which serve to show that Durer's inclination lay towards the style of the Italian painters, and from his letters written from Venice we may judge he would gladly have remained in the circle of artists whose chief, Gian Bellini, was his constant admirer and friend. But, whatever may have been Durer's ambition, it is certain that his real gift in art was not to perfect a noble type either of face or form, but to penetrate, with a power never surpassed, individual qualities of character and expression. Portraiture, as we have said, rests as the strongest element even of his most poetical inventions, and it is to his wonderful gifts in this direction that the present volume bears such ample evidence. In the faces of children, no less than in those where age and character are strongly marked, the artist has power

to distinguish subtle differences of individual expression. One of the most beautiful drawings in the volume, ideal beyond the wont of Durer's faces—perhaps because it is the face of an infant—represents the winged head of a cherub. It is drawn in black on green tinted paper, heightened here and there with body colour, and touched upon the cheek with a delicate flesh tint. The head, half turned away, reclines upon the feathers of the wing that springs from the neck; the eyes are cast downwards, the lips half open, and the hair clustering in curls around the brow. On the next page are two more infant faces, drawn with the pen, and evidently from a different model. Comparing the one with the other, although it is true that the childish countenances do not present marked distinctions of character, we may nevertheless perceive how finely the qualities of each individual face have been discerned by the artist. Still in the department of child-portraiture, we must mention the drawing of a baby face and bust, where the artist appears to have had to deal with a refractory model; and last, the head of a boy with short hair growing upon a forehead of full development, and with an expression of deep pathos in the large eyes and delicately moulded lips.

Several of the portrait heads in the volume are almost of life size. These larger drawings are boldly executed in black chalk, and they show, among other

and higher qualities, a perfect ease and mastery in dealing with accidents of costume. There is a very beautiful drawing in which the sitter wears a large broad-brimmed hat, skilfully employed by the artist as an important part of the design. The handsome face is turned half in profile, and the hat, set well back upon the head so as not to conceal the long curling hair, serves as a sort of frame for the face. Another of the large portraits is of an old man's face taken in humorous expression, and in a third we have the likeness of Fräulein Fronica, a wood engraver of Durer's time. A large number of the smaller heads are highly finished in colour, and in several instances they have been executed by Durer as studies for his paintings. Thus we have here two water-colour drawings of old men's faces made for pictures now in Munich. Apart from the character, in each case finely and strongly rendered, both these drawings are remarkable by reason of the perfection of the workmanship expended upon them. The colouring is fresh and bright, and yet harmonious, and in each instance the drawing of the beard is a marvel of patient and effective labour. This successful imitation of the texture of hair is a point worth remark in Durer's painting. He appears to have possessed the power of drawing with the point of a brush as finely as with a needle; and we may observe in both these little

pictures that almost each single hair of the long flowing beards is separately traced in body colour. Further illustration of the delicacy of his execution in colour may be found in the elaborate drawing of a dead bird of brilliant plumage, and in the drawings of two fish, coloured with as much labour as would be expended upon the most beautiful face.

We must omit all mention of the numerous portraits that still remain, and which render the volume of such sustained interest, in order to refer to two important works of Durer in a different kind. One of these is a design carefully executed in pen and ink, and apparently intended for engraving. The subject is Apollo. The sun god is represented as advancing and bearing the sun upon his left hand. Behind, and apparently dazzled by the rays that dart in every direction, is the crouching figure of Diana, and, farther away, the beginnings of a landscape. The face of Apollo seems to have been taken from the same model as that of Adam in the engraved plate of Adam and Eve, and we may see in the drawing how the artist has intended to add long flowing locks, in order to render the head fit for his conception of the god. The figure, which is completely nude, is full of dignity in expression, and the execution of the work, so far as it has gone, is in Durer's best manner. The only other example of the artist's genius

that we shall mention is a carving exhibited in one of the glass cases in the Print Room. The subject is the birth of John the Baptist, and the composition, which includes a number of figures, is carved on a plate only seven inches and a half long and five and a half broad. In the general scheme of the design, as well as in the attempt to simulate the effect of perspective, Durer has followed a pictorial rather than a sculpturesque treatment; but, although the special conditions of the particular art are not observed, the technical power displayed in the execution of the work is of an extraordinary kind.

Of the works of Durer's pupils and followers the collection gives a fair representation. The group of artists known as the 'Little Masters,' from the generally small size of their works, were all more or less indebted to Albert Durer, as their drawings and engravings surely testify. The designs of the chief of them—Albert Altdorfer—have sometimes been mistaken for those of Durer. They may be generally distinguished by a more fanciful and picturesque style of treatment and by less studious reserve in the expression of sentiment or emotion. There are here several very admirable drawings from his hand, and among them a curious landscape drawn with the pen showing the rays of the setting sun reflected in a river. The drawings of Hans Sebald Beham—especially the long frieze-shaped de-

corative pieces—exhibit a nearer approach to the principles of Italian design, and this element in them we may possibly ascribe to the teaching of his relative, Bartholomew Beham, who had visited Italy, as well as to the general influence of Marc Antonio's engravings. Aldegraver and Hans Brosamer are also represented by several drawings.[1]

The collection of drawings by Holbein, though not so large as that of Durer, is nevertheless important and interesting. It is specially rich in designs for silver work and personal ornament. The series of drawings of the Passion are pronounced by Mr. Wornum, Holbein's biographer, to be careful copies of those at Basel. 'The execution,' he says, 'is masterly and beautiful, but they appear to have been made from some other drawings; they want the carelessness and imperfections of original sketches.' Without presuming to controvert this judgment we may observe that a study of the drawings leads us to the belief that in some few instances the expression is firmer and more effective than in those at Basel. But one of the most interesting of Holbein's drawings to be found here is an elaborate design for a gold cup or vase, executed for Henry VIII. Upon the lid is inscribed the motto of Jane Seymour, 'Bound to obey

[1] Professor Colvin, in a series of papers published in the *Portfolio*, has discussed with admirable fulness and learning Durer's relations with his contemporaries and his followers.

and serve.' There is also an elaborate design for a clock, which was presented by Sir Anthony Denny to the King on New Year's Day, 1545, and a large number of drawings for jewellery, many of them elaborately covered with ornament.

IV.

THE DUTCH AND FLEMISH MASTERS.

THE collection of Dutch and Flemish drawings possessed by the Museum is at once so vast and so varied that it would be idle within the limits of a single chapter to attempt anything like a full notice of the masters represented. Nor in this case is the extent of the material the sole difficulty which criticism has to encounter. The task of discussing in detail the contents of twenty-nine portfolios would be in itself sufficiently formidable, but it might still be possible to give some general impression of the whole if the efforts of individual masters were found to be united by a combined purpose, and to be directed towards a common goal. In the art of Italy the influence of certain great ideas for a long time sustained and partly controlled the labours of successive generations of painters. Up to a certain point the development of the schools of Florence and Venice was steady and continuous, and every worker in these schools, without sacrifice of his own personality, willingly contributed to the perfecting of a great ideal. But when the Dutch and Flemish schools reached to matu-

rity the history of art had already entered upon a new phase. Venice herself, in the person of her later representatives, had partly prepared the way for a revolution that was destined to be completed in the North. The corruption of imaginative design which followed upon the final triumphs of Michael Angelo's genius favoured the growth of that new feeling for outward nature which Titian was the first to embody with complete mastery; but it is only when we get in contact with the masters of Holland that we are able to recognise how many new forms of art this quickened interest in the realities of nature was destined to produce.

The masters of Italy had employed the appearances of the external world only as symbols to express an intellectual conception: the painters of the Dutch and Flemish schools, less preoccupied with the problems of the spirit, threw themselves frankly upon the resources of nature, and studied the varied forms of the life that surrounded them with the desire to discover and record of each its appropriate character. They allowed themselves to be inspired by the facts that were offered for their imitation, and passing, as it were, from the prison of their own minds to the freer atmosphere of reality, conquered a new kingdom for art, and established upon a lasting foundation new forms of artistic power. And so varied are the phenomena which nature offers, so exacting the requirements of an art based upon per-

fection of imitative skill, that from this time we date the classification of painters according to the nature of the objects to which they devoted an exclusive attention. Marine painters and painters of landscape, animal painters, students of *genre*, and masters of portrait, begin now to fall into separate categories. All these classes are amply represented in the drawings collected in the Museum, and it is because the work they produced under the impulse of these separate studies is so distinct in character that it is impossible, in any general review, to do justice to all. The sea pieces and views of shipping of William Vandevelde and Ludolph Backhuysen, the spirited animal drawings of Theodore Maas, Paul Potter, and Berghem, and the suggestive studies of portrait and landscape from a long list of masters, both Flemish and Dutch, form a series of most interesting features in the Museum collection, and to do justice to the qualities displayed in them would demand the separate discussion of their several aims, and of the individuals by whose genius they were developed.

Of the earlier efforts of either of these two great schools the examples, as might be expected, are both less numerous and less significant. The Flemish painters of the fifteenth century are but sparingly represented, nor does the serious and simple religious feeling that animates the precise draughtsmanship of Memling and Van Eyck help much towards the appreciation of that

more liberal rendering of nature which was destined to overpower all other ideals. So long as art submitted itself wholly to the service of religion its efforts were marked by a certain community of aim and even a similarity of technical practice that partly held in check characteristics that afterwards became dominant. There are, however, in the Museum Collection some quaint and curious drawings by men like Jerome Bos and Henri de Bles which show how soon a feeling for the familiar treatment of common things began to assert itself. We may already perceive, in a form as yet rigid and meagre, the beginnings of that keen observation of the ways of daily life which afterwards produced the incomparable *genre* pieces of Ostade and Bega, Maas, De Hooghe, and Metzu.

But even amid the varied products of these great northern schools, where the labourers are widely distributed over many fields, we find individual artists whose commanding genius enabled them to survey almost the entire domain. When we speak of Flanders, we think of Rubens, and when we do honour to the art of Holland more than half our respect is instinctively paid to the memory of Rembrandt. As the light of his genius falls upon the sombre and vulgar realities which crowd the canvases of his fellows, they borrow a momentary radiance, and we have to admit the dignity as well as

the veracity of these simple pictures of simple and neglected things.

The drawings by Rembrandt are arranged in two portfolios set apart for themselves. They form a very varied series, giving example of the painter's roughest system of execution, and of his most finished style; some of them being mere rapid notes made with the pen; others again carefully completed in colour; but all bearing witness to a splendid technical power and a wholly independent attitude towards nature. For Rembrandt's art owes nothing to external influences, though all Dutch art, and in truth, all painting that chooses to interpret the familiar aspects of life, are deeply indebted to Rembrandt. In these sketches even more clearly perhaps than in his finished paintings we are able to recognize the source of that power by which he granted a kind of enchantment to the incidents of a common world, and to perceive how the mysterious beauty of sunlight and shadow which came at last to seem a thing of his own invention was in fact the fruit of the most patient observation of nature. His perception of the truths of light and shade was in its different manner as delicate and profound as that of Lionardo himself, while in combining these truths with certain qualities of colour his powers do not yield even to the greatest of the Venetians. The shadows that he loves to render are

deep but never impenetrable; they vary but do not kill the tint over which they are laid, and their presence in the picture or in the drawing, so far from limiting the resources of the painter, becomes an added means of giving effect to his chosen scheme of colour. In the representation of these shifting truths of light and shade Rembrandt found the ideal element of his art, and by their help he was able to give to the realities of portraiture a more than common significance. Herein, we fancy, lies the explanation of the many different portraits of himself that remain to us. The individual face and form were little more than the material by which he chose to express finer but less substantial beauties of luminous air, and although the facts of intellectual character are never neglected or carelessly rendered by him, they are ennobled by the beauty of sunlight and the mystery of shadow that surround and control them.

There are two little studies here which very admirably illustrate this aspect of his art. In one a figure, with back turned, is seated at work before a window that forms the sole light to the room. The dark form with bent head is thrown into bold relief against the white light that marks out for itself a space upon the floor, and, if one may judge from the powerful effect of the work, it would seem that the artist has intended in this arrangement of light and shade to reveal more clearly

the simple pathos of his subject, and that he has perceived the ideal suggestiveness of thus isolating the figure of the student who labours on at his task quite unconscious of the prominence that has been given to him. It is by this choice of moments when light and shadow are clearly divided and distinguished that Rembrandt gives form and coherence to what is otherwise formless art, and in this way he grants a poetic setting to the most simple theme. The second sketch shows something of the same effect of light, but the window here is larger and the force of the sunshine more subdued. There are no figures in the drawing, but there is a wide window-ledge over which the evening sun plays tenderly and softly. The steady glow from the window gradually loses strength as it penetrates the dark recesses of the chamber, and the evident delight with which the artist has observed this struggle of brightness and gloom, and the subtle art with which he has expressed the simple truth before him, give a fascination to the sketch not easily to be described. To judge how commonplace and deformed were some of the incidents of his art, and how much they stood in need of an ideal atmosphere, we have only to turn to the numerous studies of peasants to be found among the drawings. The artist seems to have chosen forms as far as possible from beauty, and faces wherein eccentricities of individual character constantly approach the grotesque. In one or two instances

he has even taken cripples for his models; and in all cases he appears to have been indifferent to beauty in his subjects, if only they bore a sufficiently strong impress of reality.

Something of the same instinct seems to have guided him in his studies of scenery, only that here, as the need for selection is not so great, a beautiful result is not so easily missed. The play of light and shade, if accurately recorded, is almost enough in itself to give fascination to the commonest landscape, and certainly it is from no trace of loveliness in the chosen scene that these sketches of barren uneventful country become artistically interesting. Many of these sketches from nature are deserving of the closest study simply by reason of the very small means with which the vivid impression of reality has been secured. Sometimes the artist would seem to have striven after nothing but economy of labour, noting down in the fewest possible lines the rough result of his impressions. There is a drawing here in sepia of a windmill and a few cottages standing on the verge of a broad river. For indication of water we have only the rough reflected image of the objects upon the banks, put in with such perfect calculation of the right depth of tone that the broad expanse of untouched paper is transformed at once, and as if by magic, into a mirror of motionless water. The forms of the houses are represented by a few bold

lines and patches of shadow. In themselves they might be mere blots upon the paper, but they take order and place when we perceive with what perfect mastery the artist has employed them for the effect desired. But the most wonderful instance of slight and yet sufficient execution is the rough drawing of an elephant. In a few lines of black chalk that might almost be counted, the artist has given not only the general truth of the animal's form and character, but he has managed also to convey the sense of texture, and to realise the appearance of the loose hanging skin and clumsily disposed flesh. As illustrating the different manner of two artists and two schools, this drawing may be compared with the elaborate piece of workmanship in which Albert Durer has portrayed the rhinoceros.

We have mentioned some of the slighter sketches of landscape, but there are a few where the execution is more finished and where the theme shows a greater sense of beauty, and these deserve a separate word of notice. There is one, a little sketch in sepia, of fishing boats in full sail scudding across a wind-swept sea. The sky is overclouded, but against the horizon the darkness is broken by a space of white light, and it is noticeable as a mere piece of technical dexterity how the painter against this light has contrived to mark out in full relief the white sails of the boats. But perhaps the most interesting of the drawings are those wherein

he deals with the effect of light on colour. We find here about half a dozen highly finished drawings in water colour of the most delicate beauty of workmanship touched with deep poetic feeling. Several of them are studies of evening light, and one of these, of a quiet river with grassy banks steadily reflected in the stream, is remarkable not less for the beauty of the scene than for the superb realisation of atmospheric truth. The different depths of colour as the facts of the landscape recede farther into the distance of the twilight are perfectly calculated, so as to make a painting entirely complete and carefully graduated in tone and yet expressed in only a few simple tints. There is another sketch, also of evening, of a little village half hidden by surrounding trees. The clear sky above, where the church tower and red roofs of houses are firmly outlined, is set in effective contrast with the sombre depths of thick foliage where the sense of colour is almost lost in shadow.

The drawings of Rubens, of whom the collection contains many excellent examples, will be found to have a peculiar interest that is independent of their intrinsic value as works of art. They are so rich in biographical memoranda that in possessing them we may almost be said to possess a secret history of his taste and of his genius. They speak to us not merely of what he was, but of what he loved: they take us with him in his travels, and as we study them we seem to be standing

by the side of their author, listening to his enthusiastic praises of the great masters of Venice and Florence. And yet so absolute is the individuality of Rubens that he is never so much himself as when he is paying homage to another. No man's appreciation of his fellows was ever more liberal, or more sincere. There was nothing great that he did not love, and of nearly all that he loved in art he has left us some record in his drawings. But his personality was greater than his affection. While we are under his guidance we seem to see only one school, only one master. We forget that Raphael was Italian; Mantegna, we see, is but Rubens in his youth; Veronese is his most promising pupil; even in the sublime dialect of Michael Angelo we detect a Flemish accent.

At first it is hard to remember that each of these men had an individuality of his own; afterwards, when we have recalled their separate styles and distinct achievements, the drawings of Rubens reveal a new source of interest. They are like the finest and most masterly criticisms. With a subtlety which no words can approach, and with the most fearless emphasis, they show the sympathy and antagonism of various ideals of art. They measure the distance between one school and another: they balance the gain and loss of different epochs, in invention, in colour, and in design. A drawing by Rubens after Raphael is more

like Rubens than like Raphael; the individuality of the copyist is so frankly expressed that we can detect in the contrast of his work with the original all the points of agreement and divergence between the two artists. In short, a teacher who desired to lecture on style could not do better than take these drawings by Rubens after the Italian masters as his illustrations. By their help he could conduct his audience from Flanders to Venice, from Venice to Florence. He could point out to them how far asunder lie the Flemish and the Florentine ideals, and he could describe how midway between them stands the ideal of Venice. And for the whole of his discourse the drawings of Rubens would alone serve at once as proof and illustration. There is a drawing by Rubens in the British Museum of one of the figures from the *Incendio del Borgo* which is more eloquent than volumes of criticism. The copies by his hand after Titian and Veronese to be found in the collections of Mr. Malcolm and Mr. Russell are scarcely less instructive, and the oil painting after Mantegna in the National Gallery may perhaps be selected as the capital example of the complete transformation to which he sometimes subjected earlier masters. Nothing, perhaps, could be less like Mantegna, certainly nothing could be so much like Rubens.

It was in virtue of this unconquerable independence of style, which neither the authority nor example of any

earlier art could efface, that Rubens was able to give a new life and impetus to the art of his time. With unerring instinct he perceived how much could be saved from the shipwreck of the Italian schools: how much on the other hand must be given up for lost. No man was ever so entirely free from the pedantry of art and from the pathetic failures which are the fruit of pedantry. As a painter he carried northwards in his practice all that was still vital in the teaching of Italy. He reverenced the imaginative design of Florence but he did not attempt its revival. The terrible and sublime invention of Michael Angelo had exhausted the significance of the facts upon which it was employed. The clay with which he had worked could not be modelled again into new shapes: it would not yield to the touch of other hands. There was nothing left therefore but to seek new clay, to go back to nature to find fresh material for art. It was inevitable, in short, that such splendid triumphs of imagination as had been gained by the Florentine school should be succeeded by a long period of realism, and it is the chief merit of Rubens that he frankly accepted this destiny for his art and knew the right means to employ for its fulfilment.

Rubens was in essence a realist, and the new secrets that he won from nature, the new truths for which he found a place in art, have been the birthright of all painters since his time. So wide has been the empire

of his genius that not only his immediate followers but all who have come after him have practically accepted the style he created. All modern painting of the first importance has been, in essence, realistic: it has been based upon veracity of portraiture rather than upon intensity of passion. It has exchanged severity of line for luxury of colour; losing something in dignity of invention, gaining much in splendour and charm of execution. In the presence of a great work of the Florentine school the beauty of the idea makes us half forget the workmanship, but in the masterpieces of modern painting the power and subtlety of the workmanship makes us forget the idea. Rubens was the first great master whose painting frankly expressed this change. Through him we know at last that the old order of things is dead and that a new order has arisen. His respect and reverence for the great idealists of Italy was all the more disinterested because he could not inherit their glory. It was a respect due to the dead; and having magnificently discharged the debt, he passed on with the perfect sincerity of genius to create a new world of his own.

The peculiar possessions of the schools of art that date from the beginning of the seventeenth century have been landscape and portrait. Wherever we turn we find these are *genres* which dominate all others, and when we look back to Rubens we see that both

branches of art found expression in his genius. And in thus forecasting the future direction of painting, Rubens knew well where, among the masters of the past, to seek guidance and example. By his sketches we know well that he did not neglect or despise the great masters of Florence, and his invention, no doubt, retained to the end a reflection of the beauty that was theirs. But if we consider what is essential in his style we shall discover a nearer and deeper alliance with Venice. Nor is this unnatural, for at Venice realism, in its modern sense, was already born; portrait had found a long line of eminent professors, and landscape, in our understanding of the term, had been given to the world by Titian. As compared with the other schools of Italy, the Venetian painters had already developed the resources of imitative art. They had founded a system of execution capable of the most brilliant effects, under the influence of which the new study of nature had already begun. This tradition, passing into the hands of Rubens, was liberated and enlarged. He was the legitimate heir of the Venetians, but he added a new splendour to his inheritance.

But it is time to speak of the drawings which have suggested these stray thoughts upon the master's style.

The Print Room does not contain a very large number of studies from his hand, but they are nearly all of high interest and value. One of the curiosities

of the collection is a book containing a number of pen-and-ink studies of costume, executed with minute care, and with the utmost attention to detail. It is supposed that these studies were made by Rubens for a series of illustrations to a projected history of the Counts of Flanders. They are chiefly interesting now as showing the patience and labour which even a genius of so much facility could bestow in order to secure accuracy in detail. Many of the drawings bear memoranda referring to the colour or texture of different parts of the costume, which were evidently to serve the artist in a larger work. But these sketches are suggestive, apart from their special purpose, as showing the irrepressible vitality of every touch from his hand. He could not draw a lay figure, even if he would. Every one of the forms upon which he has disposed these costumes has a life and individuality of its own: every face has the character and interest of a portrait. The artist's constant observation of varied types of character is proved again in a sheet containing eleven heads in different attitude and expression. This is one of the very finest examples in the collection. It is executed in black chalk, shaded with the brush, and the execution reveals a kind of ease and certainty of power that it would be hard to match in the works of any other master.

A complete and very impressive example of Rubens's

power in portrait is given in the full-length of a man holding a book in one hand and a pen in the other. This drawing, executed in red and black chalk, was formerly in Lord Egremont's collection, and has been sometimes attributed to Velasquez, but the treatment of the costume in a manner similar to that afterwards adopted by Vandyck would seem to confirm the authorship of Rubens.

Several of the remaining drawings illustrate the variety of subjects which Rubens illustrated in his art. A study in black chalk for the figure of Silenus gives us a hint of his conception of the antique. Sacred history is represented by two small but very beautiful designs for St. Christopher bearing the Infant Christ; and to classic mythology belongs the complete composition of Aglauros, the daughter of Cecrops, discovering Erichthonius to her sisters. This drawing has no special charm of execution, and is chiefly interesting in giving the master's design. We return again to portrait in the vigorous sketch of a head and bust drawn with a reed pen, and in a gentle female face of rare sweetness and tenderness of sentiment.

Of Rubens's pupil Vandyck we have here a number of portrait studies in black chalk upon tinted paper, slightly executed, as was the manner of the artist, and made apparently for the purpose of determining the characteristic attitudes of his sitters. Among them

may be mentioned the full-length of the Duchess of Richmond, and another of the Earl of Arundel, the great patron of painters whom Rubens termed 'an evangelist to the world of art.' There are also a few studies for Vandyck's subject pictures. A little design of Paris and Mercury, executed in pen and ink, is particularly noticeable for the masterly drawing of the dog in the foreground. Mary Magdalen dying, supported by angels, is a more finished piece of work. It is executed also in pen and ink, heightened with white, and has an effect more spirited and vigorous than is common with the poetical inventions of Vandyck. The Magdalen, however, was a specially favoured subject with the painter, and we find several studies in which he has evidently adopted for his purpose the type of face and the emotional expression so often reproduced in the works of the later Italian artists. A few of the sketches are interesting for the confirmation they give of the truth that portrait painters are often attentive students of natural scenery. Some of the landscape studies are executed in water-colour, and one at least is remarkable for the very modern treatment of light clouds that drift across the sky.

Other masters of these two schools are represented with more or less completeness, and we shall briefly mention some of their drawings as they occur to us. Henricus Goltzius, an artist with some pretensions to

style, shows the traces of Italian training in several admirable drawings, all remarkable for careful and elaborate workmanship and a sense of firm outline. A life-size study of a head, executed in pen and ink, is one of the finest drawings in the collection. Goltzius, like Martin Hemskerk, is said to have imitated Michael Angelo, but the signs of imitation are more apparent in the work of the latter. There is here a very fine drawing by Hemskerk, executed with the pen, of the 'Rape of the Sabines.' The subject is treated with considerable force of action, and the arrangement of the composition, as well as the distribution of light and shade, show the hand of an artist who genuinely appreciated the beauties of the style he was striving to imitate. There are a few curious drawings by an early Dutch master, Jerome Bos, compositions of quaint and extravagant invention, marked by a laborious and seldom successful endeavour after humour. Peter Breughel and his son, nicknamed 'Hellish Breughel,' from his delight in depicting the infernal world, are also represented, and the work of the latter bears a certain resemblance to the earlier efforts of Jerome Bos. Ferdinand Bol, of the school of Rembrandt, is present in several admirable studies of light and shade, and a portrait also by him of a warrior standing sideways, with hand resting on the hip and face turned in full view, is a very masterly piece of work, bold in drawing and of finished execution. Among the

landscape painters of the seventeenth century Everdingen holds a prominent place in the collection by some spirited drawings of rocky scenery on the coast of Norway ; and the genius of Cuyp and Hobbema is also represented. The collection contains two portrait studies by Frank Hals, a delightful *genre* composition by Peter de Hooghe, and a large and important drawing by Teniers. It also possesses a vigorous hunting scene by Snyders, two exquisite studies by Metzu, one of a peasant woman sitting with hands joined across her knees and head turned away ; and, last but certainly not least, two highly finished compositions by Adrian Van Ostade.

V.

THE FRENCH AND SPANISH MASTERS.

If we think of the French school it is generally of the school of the eighteenth century and of the works of Boucher, Watteau, and Greuze. The career of Poussin belongs rather to the history of Italian art, and the landscape of Claude stands apart as a distinct achievement. Concerning the earlier development of French painting the information obtainable is neither very full nor very clear, and the individual masters whose names and works are known have not been fortunate enough to gain independent fame. Of Jean Cousin, sometimes regarded as the founder of the French school, the British Museum possesses three drawings. They form in some sense a connected illustration of the last episode in the life of Christ, representing the Crucifixion, the Descent from the Cross, and the Entombment. The last of the series is finely finished in pen and ink, and is altogether a remarkable piece of work. The composition is energetic, and the execution shows a considerable technical mastery. But a more interesting illustration of the first efforts of French art is afforded by the crayon portraits

of François Clouet. The Museum possesses a number of these heads, executed with surprising fidelity and power, and recalling in their method and even in their grasp of character the portraiture of Holbein. With these finely finished heads by François Clouet must be mentioned some work in the same kind by Pierre Dumoustier. There are several members of this family whose names are connected with the growth of French art, but the information concerning their lives is very meagre, and even the relationship between them is not clearly ascertained. It is generally agreed, however, that Pierre Dumoustier worked chiefly at Rome, and of this fact we have interesting confirmation from one of his drawings. The drawing itself is a careful and very beautiful study of a woman's hand, and above there is inscribed a sentence which shows the painter to have been possessed of a spirit of graceful courtesy, scarcely less interesting than his undoubted artistic talent. 'Faict à Rome,' so runs the inscription, 'par Pierre du Moustier, Parisien, le dernier de Décembre, 1625, après la digne main de l'excellente et savante Artemise, gentile donna Romaine. Les mains de l'Aurore sont louées et renommées pour leur rare beauté, mais celle'cy plus digne, le doit estre mille plus fois, pour faire sçavoir ses merveilles qui ravissent les yeux des plus judicieux.' There are besides this drawing some admirable portrait heads in colour, vigorously executed, and full of strong character.

One in particular, of the face of an old man with wrinkled skin and deeply marked features, is almost worthy to rank with some of the studies of Durer himself. It possesses the same convincing impression of fidelity to the model, and something of the same mastery over the colour and texture of flesh and hair.

The masters of the seventeenth century are in many respects admirably represented in the British Museum collection. The designs by Poussin are not numerous; but there are two—a drawing of boys chasing a butterfly, and a finished and spirited composition of Venus and Adonis—which deserve special mention. A great part of the collection is taken up with a splendid series of original drawings by Claude Lorrain. They number nearly three hundred examples, and exhibit nearly every style of execution, from a careful pen-and-ink drawing to the most rapid sketch washed with sepia and recording merely a passing effect of light and shade. From these drawings, better perhaps than from any other source, we may gain some idea of the painter's constant and serious studentship of the facts of actual scenery. The poetical and partly artificial composition of Claude's pictures may or may not be a defect in itself; but these studies will at any rate prove that its introduction by the painter was deliberate, and did not by any means spring from an imperfect knowledge of natural truth. There are sketches here which have the vigour and

fidelity of Rembrandt. They record in the same way, and even by the same means, the harmonious effects wrought upon the commonest facts of landscape by natural light and shade. There is one in particular, of a narrow stream of quiet water with dark and overhanging trees, in which it may be seen that the artist has been attracted solely by the play of shadow upon the high grass banks and the reflected light upon the motionless water. The sketch, dated 1662, may be taken as a representative of a large number in the collection in which the painter strives, by means of broad washes of a single tint, to record the kind of harmony in effect that may be gained from following out a natural and even momentary disposition of shadow. Another part of the series may be said to be devoted to the study of form in scenery. There are careful drawings of rocks and trees, rapid sketches of the arrangement of distant hills, studies of ruined buildings, and bits of foreground with plants and foliage closely imitated. And besides these two classes of drawings, which are essentially studies for landscape, we find a number of highly finished designs for pictures. In many of these we may perceive, among other things, how poor was Claude's power of expression in dealing with human form. The figures are often drawn with precision, but they are nearly always without vitality, and from the prominence sometimes given to them in the drawings we may

suppose that the painter did not fail in this direction from any lack of labour. It may be safely said of the whole series of drawings that their study is likely to modify any preconceived judgment of Claude's powers. They bring us into contact with a side of the painter's genius that in his pictures is often obscured. The great inventor of landscape, often fanciful and artificial, is here shown as an earnest and attentive student of the ways of nature. He can copy faithfully the least attractive passages of scenery, and spend labour over the minutest materials of his art; and thus with the knowledge of Claude to be gained from these drawings we are more likely to judge fairly and fully of the merits of his pictures. Of Callot, better known as an engraver than a painter, there are some excellent drawings. The most important from its subject is a large study for the Temptation of St. Anthony, elaborately finished but somewhat injured by time. This is one of many studies executed for the engraving, and the peculiar care bestowed by the artist upon an invention so strangely grotesque may be taken as an index to the general character of his design. There are, however, in a different manner, some interesting pen drawings of landscape, including a view of Marseilles and some very fine studies of horses. Le Brun is represented by two finished designs; Eustache Lesueur by a large chalk drawing of an angel flying through the air; and there are also

examples of Jacques Courtois, Philippe de Champaigne, and Raymond la Fage. The drawings of this last-named artist are highly remarkable for the sense of design they reveal, as well as for a style in the treatment of the figure not often to be found in other painters of the same epoch. A sketch of Job tempted and tormented is a good example of the master's gift of vigorous expression; and a large composition in pen and ink, of which the subject is somewhat uncertain, may be instanced for the mastery displayed in disposing a crowd of figures in harmonious relation.

The drawings of Watteau and Boucher bring us into the presence of a wholly characteristic product of French art. Here the severe graces of style which Poussin somewhat ineffectually pursued are exchanged for the lighter and at least more genuine charms of refined manners and pretty conventions. All thought of deeply poetic beauty is to be abandoned, and in its place we have a fanciful invention that is never coarse though it is often trivial, and which seldom fails of the sort of fascination belonging to a skilful rendering of superficial grace. How carefully these painters prepared themselves for a result scarcely intended to bear the look of much labour may be learned from their numerous studies of hands and arms, and the attention they bestow upon the fall and flow of fashionable drapery. This is specially true of Watteau, whose drawings have the

attraction of being always careful pieces of workmanship. The elegant rusticity of his finished compositions had a certain strong basis of nature if not of simplicity, and even the air of artifice that controls them has the merit of assisting the truth of the painter's portraiture of his age. In the studies of Watteau we see the kind of material out of which shepherds and shepherdesses were manufactured. A certain refinement belonging both to the artist and to the manners of the time marks all these studies; but there is something besides which still renders these daintily drawn heads and delicate hands things of interest and attraction. Watteau's art went deeper than was needful for the representation of *fêtes champêtres*. His figures, though they make false and foolish shepherds, have a strong force of portraiture. Every attitude is true to nature—if the artifice of the time may go by the name of nature; all the grouping and composition of his scenes have a permanent sense of dramatic reality. Among the drawings here collected are two admirable studies for the figure playing the guitar in the picture called 'La Game d'Amour.' The individuality of the man's face, partly subdued in the finished composition, is here strongly marked; the action of the hand upon the strings has all the ease of reality faithfully rendered, and the obvious affectation in the chosen attitude is seen to belong not to the work of the painter but to the character of his model. This

element of fidelity in Watteau's art, through which it has kept fresh till now, is particularly noticeable in his finished studies of heads. There are two studies in coloured crayons of the face of a negro boy that are admirable examples of portraiture ; and the same talent of seizing the qualities of a face, combined with the truth of momentary attitude, is made evident in his full-length drawings of ladies attired in fashionable costume. The drawings by Boucher are neither so numerous nor so important. There is a drawing in red chalk of a nude female figure, a study for the picture of Jupiter and Leda ; and there is also another drawing of a somewhat unshapely nymph, intended for the design of Venus and the Graces at the bath. Of the remaining examples, the most interesting are some studies of peasant children for the picture called 'Le Cheval Fondu,' and a study in red chalk of a girl with a child upon her back and another at her side. Compared with Watteau's work, these designs of Boucher show more artifice and less art. He had not the genius to give to his figures the truth of life, and, on the other hand, his invention is not sufficient in itself to atone for any technical shortcomings. It is the misfortune of painters of his class that they will be for ever treating of themes where the idea of native innocence plays a prominent part. Boucher's young children are always endowed with a precocious knowledge of the world ; his grown

women have so little of individual character as to seem almost children. And he had not even the necessary power to give force to subjects better suited to his individual tastes. He plays with sensual themes without availing to give reality to his inventions, and he makes up little passionate dramas where Adonis is only a baby and Venus scarcely in her teens. In leaving the masters of the French school we must not omit to mention two very remarkable specimens of Greuze, one of which is a finished study for the engraving called 'Retour de Nourice.'

The drawings by Spanish artists form a comparatively small series. The prominent masters of the school, Murillo and Velasquez, are only scantily represented, and some of the remaining examples belong to artists whose pictures are comparatively little known in England. The best of Murillo's drawings is a study of a group of cherubs for the Immaculate Conception, where the faces are very delicately executed and are distinguished by strong individual character. We have also, as illustrating the religious art of the master, a full-length drawing in chalk of a Saint kneeling in adoration, and a very beautiful study of the Infant St. John. The more vigorous side of Murillo's art, his interpretation of the truths of peasant life, is represented by two drawings of a woman selling fruit, and a small ragged urchin with torn shirt, who stands with the right arm fully extended

in the act of pointing to some object. Marked with the name of Velasquez is a drawing of a woman with hands clasped in prayer; the face wears an earnest expression, and the hands are finely modelled. Two other examples of his art belong to the department of portrait, and of these the half-length of a little girl executed in black chalk has all the qualities of strongly marked character and life-like effect, which we have a right to expect from the master.

The portraiture of Velasquez at its best possesses indeed a kind of simplicity reached by no other painter. In comparison with his, all other work seems considered and composed; there is a sense of separation between the reality and its image, and some suggestion of a scheme into which nature has been forced. Even the noble efforts in this kind by the painters of Venice reveal a trace of artifice when compared with the work of Velasquez—for with him the actual appearances of things seem to be suddenly arrested and carried into the realm of art without any conscious process of composition or arrangement. All the force of his genius appears to be thrown into the duties of interpreting perfectly the facts presented to him; the grouping of the figures, the harmony of colour, and the management of design, are all so many happy accidents of reality, a fitness in nature suddenly perceived and faithfully reproduced. As the eye travels over the canvas and

examines its various parts, nothing is found to have escaped his vision, and nowhere has his hand faltered. Every kind of truth that painting may interpret—the truth of character in the face and of vivacity in the gesture, the truth of texture in the painting of costume, and the truth of colour in the realisation of separate tints, and in their perfect relation—all these elements are combined without destroying the impression of absolute simplicity and directness which is the crowning merit of the work. It is in this power of seeing at once all that he can interpret, and of executing without hesitation or faltering all that he can see, that Velasquez so far outstrips all competitors in the same range of art. Sir Joshua Reynolds in one of his lectures has said that 'art has but one sentence to utter,' but with Velasquez it is but one word. It would be easy to enumerate many triumphs proper to art which Velasquez did not achieve; but on the other hand it may be said of him—what perhaps can be said of no other painter with equal truth—that he achieved in absolute completeness all that he attempted. In his work there is no gap between the motive and its expression. Partly because the bent of his genius naturally inclined him to limit his efforts to things clearly attainable by painting, and still more because of his extraordinary gifts as an executant which made possible to him what was impossible to others, his works are likely to remain unapproachable in their kind—

the product of a perfect correspondence between hand and brain.

The collection contains a few drawings by Spagnoletto and Alonzo Cano ; and it also possesses a very beautiful study of a female head, attributed to Blas del Prado, a painter whose existing works are not numerous. This drawing, executed in black chalk, gives a view of the face in profile with the eyes cast down, and the light and shadow carefully distributed over the features in a manner suggestive of the system of Lionardo. Of more modern drawings the most interesting is a study by Francesco Goya for the etching called 'El Garotte.'

VI.

THE ENGLISH MASTERS.

THE drawings of the English school, which form a large and important part of the collection, may, for the purposes of criticism, be roughly divided into two classes. In the first we get a tolerably complete account of the progress of English art from the middle of the seventeenth century. Of the earlier professors of the school, practically unknown by their pictures, these drawings often afford very interesting illustration, and to the student who desires to make research into this part of our art history the material here provided in the shape of drawings and engravings is of the highest value. The second class of drawings refers to a development of English art of more modern interest. The growth of water-colour painting in England has been steady and continuous, and up to a certain point the achievements of successive painters represented an increasing power over the resources of the art. Here in the Print Room of the Museum may be found a series of water-colour drawings that forms almost a complete illustration of this branch of painting. There is scarcely one

eminent name that is absent from the list, and in some instances it will be found that men little known to the world have given very powerful aid to the gradual perfecting of their art. Taking these two classes together the collection must be regarded as unique in its resources of historical illustration. If the labour involved in compiling a history of English painting should ever be seriously undertaken, the drawings in the Print Room would be found of no small value. In the meantime we may point out that they are often something more than trustworthy witnesses to history. In both classes, and especially in the splendid collection of water-colours, there are examples of high artistic beauty, and to some of these we shall now call attention.

Francis Barlow is one of the early English artists about whom very little is known. The year of his birth is roughly given as 1626, and, according to George Vertue, whose careful memoranda Walpole 'digested' into his 'Anecdotes of Painting,' he was born in Lincolnshire, 'and placed with one Sheperd, a face painter; but his taste lay to birds, fish, and animals, in which he made great figure, though his colouring was not equal to his designs.' These are nearly the only facts of the painter's biography that survive to us, except that, according to another author, 'he lived near the Drum, in Drury Lane, and received £8 for a picture of fishes,'

and that he designed the hearse for the funeral of General Monk. But Barlow's best work is the series of illustrations to an edition of Æsop's Fables, the original designs for which are now in the Museum. These designs prove him to have possessed admirable gifts of drawing and the finest perception of animal character. His humour is so delicately and skilfully expressed that even in the illustrations to the fables the animal portraiture never degenerates into caricature, and in the plates which illustrate the life of Æsop we may observe how perfectly the identity of his hero is maintained, and how carefully the groups of figures are drawn and composed. In the manner of execution his drawings bear some resemblance to those of Holbein: the outlines are always carefully marked, and the shadows slightly washed with Indian ink; and he exhibits, like Holbein, a delight in decorative design, evidenced in this particular series by the borders to the illustrations, where all sorts of birds and beasts are worked into an orderly pattern without loss of individual character. In 1671 Hollar engraved, after his designs, a series of illustrations of hunting, hawking, and fishing; and for this work also we find here many of the original drawings. By Hollar himself there is an interesting series of drawings; and, although he cannot be reckoned by right of birth a member of the English school, his residence here for many years renders his career impor-

tant in the record of English art. There are also a few drawings in water-colour by Francis Place, a pupil of Hollar, and two sheets of studies in pen and ink by Inigo Jones.

From these early efforts of English art we may pass to the time of Hogarth, merely mentioning by the way some chalk heads by Kneller, and a few portraits of very much finer quality by Jonathan Richardson. There are, also, two portfolios full of the designs of Sir James Thornhill, the decorator of St. Paul's; but it is better not to observe too closely these premature efforts of English art after the great style, and to turn for the moment to a more genuine product. The most interesting relic of Hogarth's art possessed by the Museum is the original diary of the famous tour, or 'five days' peregrination,' undertaken by Tothall, Scott, Hogarth, Thornhill, and Forrest, including the drawings by Hogarth and Scott in illustration of the adventure. Apart, however, from the humorous and skilful drawing by Hogarth of the wayfarers undergoing the process of shaving, the book contains little of purely artistic interest, and for evidence of Hogarth's extraordinary powers as a draughtsman and a colourist we must turn to a series of drawings separately mounted. Two of these are sketches in oil of the most masterly executive finish. The first, a portrait of a lady with blue dress and a white cap set upon a head of light brown hair,

is enough in itself to prove how great was Hogarth's command of the technical resources of his art. The execution is slight, but the modelling of the features is as forcible and solid as the most elaborate painting could present; and on the side of colour the little work is a brilliant example of those qualities of tone which English painting has so often neglected. There is no lack of decision in individual tints, but they are combined with a perfect sense of their relation in the picture. The second oil sketch, which has been left partly incomplete, represents Orator Henley christening a child. The etching of this work was published by Samuel Ireland, and it was conjectured by him, from a calculation of the 'Orator's' age, that the sketch was executed about the year 1745. Here, too, we find the same admirable manipulation of colour, and the figure of the mother, with whose beauty the devout parson is somewhat too much occupied, has a charming grace of attitude. Among other drawings by Hogarth are some studies in pen and ink of limbs and faces, and a series of four humorous sketches representing the life at Button's Coffee-house, and including portraits of Pope, Arbuthnot, Addison, and Steele. The style of ambitious art, which Hogarth constantly derided, flourished to a certain extent during his lifetime, and re-asserted itself with increased pretensions after his death. Speaking in reference to his place in the history of English

art, the painter of the 'Harlot's Progress' may be represented as wedged in between the grandiose compositions of his father-in-law, Thornhill, and the facile sublimity of Benjamin West. The fanciful compositions of Angelica Kauffmann stand on a separate footing, and, after admission of all faults of style and defects of science, her drawings, several of which are contained in this collection, still possess something of genuine charm. With her name may be mentioned that of her engraver, Bartolozzi, who is represented here by a clever portrait in red and black chalk. The portrait painters, with Reynolds and Gainsborough at their head, also hold a distinct place. Of the former, the Museum possesses a few drawings, and it has besides two sketch books containing an artistic record of the painter's tour in Italy. Here rapid sketches of figures out of the works of great masters are interspersed with criticisms of different styles. Occasionally there is a rough study from nature —some suggestion of graceful attitude or expression which the artist has desired to keep fresh; but, as a rule, the drawings are taken from pictures or statues, and the diary is wholly concerned with matters of artistic interest. Gainsborough is represented in both branches of his art. There are studies of landscape, sometimes in black chalk and sometimes with an added wash of bistre; and there are also a few portraits, of which the most important is a full-length figure of

himself, said to be the original sketch for the picture in which he is painted with his wife.

Some of the drawings by Benjamin West exhibit a simplicity of manner and a skill in execution not to be found in his paintings; but such beauty as they possess depends altogether upon the degree in which they convince us of being direct studies from nature, and not inventions of the artist's brain. The elaborate and mechanical system of composition which reduces his pictures to dulness is happily absent from these pen-and-ink sketches; and there are one or two studies of a mother and child which have genuine simplicity and grace. For the presence of any real force or fire of imagination we must look not to West, nor even to Barry, who is also represented here by a series of designs in pen and ink, but to two artists who enjoyed less reputation. Fuseli and Blake both understood in some measure the principles of imaginative art. In the best of their works the design is the direct expression of a strong and passionate invention. The attitude and action of the figures are not separately contrived and then awkwardly fitted with appropriate sentiment: the one is suggested and controlled by the other, and the technical and the poetic elements of the art are found in harmony. Of the two men Blake is incomparably the greater, and the kind of effect that retains in his work an impression of grave and simple sincerity, assumes

in the hands of Fuseli something of rhetorical artifice. If we may judge from some of Fuseli's drawings in the Museum, his remark about Blake, that he was 'damned good to steal from,' must be taken as a confession as well as a comment. These drawings, however, express also a strong original power, and strengthen the conviction that Fuseli's art has not yet received the attention it deserves. The works of Blake possessed by the Museum consist of original drawings and a series of the artist's colour-printed designs. Of the former class, the finest is a design for the dedication to Blair's 'Grave.' 'The subject,' says Mr. Rossetti, in his catalogue of Blake's works, 'is the deliverance of the Human Soul from Death, and the Ascension of the Just. Above are two angels, one sheathing the sword, another holding an unequally poised balance and a sealed roll; a third descends with a key to unlock the fetters of the grave.' At the foot of the design a mother with her children is seen rising through the air, and on the other side are figures with broken fetters offering praise for their deliverance. The drawing is as masterly in execution as in design, the nude forms beautifully drawn and delicately coloured, and the faces full of expression. There are other drawings by Blake, and the whole series of printed books is to be regarded as in some sense the work of his own hand, seeing that he not only executed the engraving, but afterwards co-

loured the designs himself. Blake's rival, Stothard, is also well represented, and there is, among other examples of his art, a pen-and-ink drawing of the 'Canterbury Pilgrims,' the picture which was the occasion of quarrel between the two friends. Smaller works by the same hand exhibit the artist's graceful sentiment with better effect, and we may mention in particular a very beautiful little design of four angels flying through the air, and a finely-finished study in colour for an illustration to the 'Vicar of Wakefield.' The sculptors, Flaxman and Gibson, are represented by a few drawings, and there are interesting examples by the figure-painters, Cosway, Hilton, Hamilton, Mortimer, Wilkie, and Leslie.

The series of water-colour drawings is chiefly illustrative of the progress of landscape art in England. A view of Jerusalem, dated 1715, by John Alexander, shows a topographical rather than a pictorial effect, and the carefully finished sketches of Chinese scenery, by William Alexander, do not attain a very high artistic interest. We find a more distinct feeling for the beauty of nature in some of the drawings which William Pars executed in Greece in 1764. The painter's remarkable power of giving sharpness and solidity to the forms of architecture is combined with a very delicate perception of the qualities of sunlight, although it must be confessed that the general scheme of colour often wants

force and brightness. A very much higher power is shown in the drawings of John Robert Cozens. The Museum possesses a few drawings by the father, Alexander Cozens, the natural son of Peter the Great, but they are not of much value in themselves, and are chiefly interesting from the strange chance by which they were lost and recovered. In 1746 the portfolio in which they were contained dropped from the artist's saddle as he was riding through Germany, and in 1776 they were purchased by the son, John Cozens, from a printseller at Florence. The drawings by the younger of these two painters occupy a very important position in the continuous development of English water-colour art, and the splendid examples possessed by the Museum go far to justify Constable's enthusiastic comment that the works of Cozens 'were all poetry.' The most beautiful specimens in the collection are some views of Sicilian scenery. One of these is a drawing with Mount Etna in the distance, and a foreground of rough rocks that stand out against a space of quiet sea. The different distances in the scene are perfectly measured by a decreasing sharpness of line and graduated strength of colour, and yet the whole drawing is governed by a single effect of light and one uniform tone, influencing the different colours and bringing them into right relation. The distinguishing mark of this and other drawings by Cozens is the

simplicity of the means by which a poetic effect is gained, a simplicity that seems to be the result of profound knowledge and consideration. Of other water-colour painters, to whose fame the present collection does ample justice, the names of Girtin and Cotman must be mentioned. The former, who died at the early age of twenty-seven years, has nevertheless left enough to place him in the very front rank of English land-scape painters, and his large drawing of Bridgenorth, presented to the Museum by Mr. Chambers Hall, is altogether a magnificent specimen of water-colour. In respect of truth of atmosphere and grave solemnity of colour, the artist seems in this drawing to have ex-hausted the resources of his craft, and proves himself something more than the messenger to announce the advent of Turner. Of Turner himself the Museum possesses only three drawings. Bonington, another eminent master of the English school, who has also the distinction of being recognised abroad, is represented by a fine drawing of Rouen, and a sketch-book con-taining numerous studies, chiefly of costume. Varley, David Cox, and De Wint also have a place in the collection.

VII.

COROT AND MILLET.

THÉOPHILE SILVESTRE, in his 'Studies of Living Painters,' published in 1856, reports a remark uttered by Corot in the presence of a picture by Delacroix. 'C'est un aigle,' said the landscape painter, 'et je ne suis qu'une alouette, je pousse de petites chansons dans mes nuages gris.' The sentence contains a suggestive truth concerning the nature of Corot's gifts in art. 'Mes nuages gris' is recognisable as a rough but fit description of the painter's domain in nature, and the qualification of his painting as a lyric note sent forth from this domain has a precise and real significance. No criticism of Corot's work can be complete, or even vital, which does not take account of these two qualities —the one essential, the other belonging to his chosen system of artistic expression. For at sight of a picture by Corot, the dominion of the clouds is the first thing noticeable. He himself, it is said, began each picture with the painting of the sky; and it is certain that from this point the spectator is compelled to begin his survey. To the sky and its influence all common facts of land-

scape are made subject. If there is a pool of water, its first function is to image the fleeting forms and uncertain colours of the heavens. The grass at our feet loses its hues of vivid green, and becomes pale to whiteness in obedience to the fleecy clouds that whiten the sky. The forms of trees and the outlines of distant hills are held imprisoned in a mystery of delicate light and floating mist, and even the remote blue of the sky beyond the clouds loses its intensity, and becomes faint and pale as it passes under the control of 'mes nuages gris.' And having recognised this constant aspect of Corot's painting, we are left to seek its motive. Of what service to the painter are these forms that advance and recede, now penetrating the substantial air so far as to become half-distinct and tangible shapes of nature, and again retreating till they are no more than mere vague symbols in a world of shifting lights and shadows? For what purpose does he thus summon these shapes into momentary existence, leaving all else concealed? and of what beauty are the songs of which these are the few stray notes?

Dealing for the moment only with the method of the painter, and considering his work as the latest phase of landscape art, it is remarkable how strong is the contrast of this with all earlier ideals. In the landscape painting of the early Italian painters nothing is willingly left untold, for the painter's aim is a precise and faultless

definition of all that comes within his reach. The sky is clear, and against it the leaves of the trees and the forms of the hills weave an ordered pattern. There is selection but no suppression of truth. The harmony of colour is made up of a number of positive tints, each faithful to nature, and all in beautiful agreement. Here it is not only the scene that fascinates and attracts us but all the materials that compose the scene. We know by the faultless imagery that the painter has loved and known the beauty of separate flowers, the individual growth of each single tree, the tracery and network of leaves that preserve their native intensity of green. The light serves to reveal all these things, and therefore it is beautiful: wind and storm only disfigure the exquisite pattern of the landscape, and hence are to be avoided by the painter. The influence of the clouds, if it were admitted, would destroy the natural brightness of grass and leaves and flowers; in mist the firm lines would lose their sharpness, the whole scheme of the design be lost. And thus for the earlier painter the even sunlight of noonday, when the landscape is still and sharply seen, is the best season for his art. Next come the lights of evening or early dawn, but never the seasons of conflicting cloud and changing light. This is altered a little, but only a little, in the landscapes of Titian. The interpretation of scenery is moved one point further from abstract beauty. Titian's spirit is the spirit of

portraiture, and his treatment of nature, as his treatment of men and women, was based on the desire of faithful portraiture. With Lionardo and Raphael, men in whom imagination still guided and controlled execution, landscape retained its abstract and unchanging character. But Titian, as he refined less upon the type of the human model before him, so also he refined less upon the types of natural scenery. In his most poetical compositions he is something of a realist, and we are at leisure to turn from the beauty of the design to own the magic truth of his flesh tints. And the spirit of realistic portraiture he carried into the treatment of landscape as well as of human form. The flowers of the foreground are still represented with the feeling of a master of design, but the general aspect of the landscape suggests not only the likeness of a single scene, but also of a single hour of the day. The earlier design, with all its exactness and precision, did not so forcibly impress us with the conviction that the scene before us is one chosen out of many: it was more abstract, for all its minute detail, than these less certain visions of blue hill and sunlit water that make up the distances of Titian's pictures.

In the work of Titian the modern ideal takes its birth. The study of realistic landscape has begun, and already the painter perceives the dramatic movement of nature and its infinite variety of changing appearances.

Just as a face changes from passion to melancholy, and from laughter to tears, so the enduring character of a scene may be merged in its different moods as it passes under the influence of cloud and sunshine and wind and storm. The bright green of the grass may take a sinister hue as a raincloud darkens the sun; the even grace of the forms of trees may grow tumultuous in the presence of a powerful breeze. These rapid alternations in the aspect of natural scenery are the opportunities of the modern painter. From Titian to Turner the distance may be measured. There are all shades of increasing fidelity to this particular kind of truth, but the difference between one painter and another is only of degree. I say from Titian to Turner, but it must be remembered that it is only on one side of Turner's art that he belongs to the modern school of landscape: on another he is still seeking to realise the abstract beauty of nature. Where he fails, it is from the conflict of the two ideals. A more complete exponent of the modern spirit may be found in Constable, and from Constable the transition to the landscape painters of France is easy and natural.

But although the French landscape painters acknowledge the power of Constable's work, and even admit its guidance, the distinction between men like Constable and Corot is important. The art of the English painter, though it employs all the moods of nature, employs

them in a way that is essentially dramatic. We do not receive from any of his pictures the impression of a distinct personal sentiment in the mind of the painter. All the powers of the air are admitted to set the landscape in motion, but the artist's observation is still fresh and unprejudiced in its sympathy, and the particular moment chosen for artistic expression is like a moment chosen from a drama where the passion, though strong and energetic, is not the passion of the author. Every picture from his hand records some sudden concord in the things of outward nature—some moment when bright blue sky and drifting cloud, the hues of running water and the restless branches of blown trees, meet to register a phase of fleeting beauty. And as a result of this impartial selection from the moods of landscape, the first and most impressive quality of Constable's work is the fidelity of the portraiture. True to a land where fair and foul weather come in rapid succession, his landscape is neither over-bright nor over-gloomy. If we carry away from his pictures the remembrance of heavy clouds and advancing shadows, we may also recall the sharp green of leaves dancing in sunshine, and spaces of sky of bright and laughing blue. The brightness is no longer the brightness of the earlier painters, because it belongs to a single moment and is not of the enduring character of the scene. And in this truth of the moment, in the impression of movement and progress, as of

drama, lies the strength of Constable's art. The facts of scenery merely as such are neglected or suppressed. No one would seek from the painter of the 'Cornfield' or the 'Leaping Horse' an exact imitation of separate flowers, or a precise outline of the leaves that seem to rustle in each passing breeze. It is no longer the scene itself, but the appearance of the scene as it yields to passing influences of weather, that the painter strives to interpret; and it is his perception of the appropriate colour of each changing aspect, whether of gloom or gladness, that gives to his work its unapproached merit.

But the later school of landscape, as represented with so much fascination by Corot, goes further than this. To understand the distinctive quality of his work, we must recall his own phrase:—'Je ne suis qu'une alouette; je pousse de petites chansons dans mes nuages gris.' The art is no longer dramatic, it no longer registers with impartiality the changing moods of weather, taking the grave and the gay as they alternate in the actual world. If these men were poets instead of painters, we should denote the distinction by saying that it was an exchange of the dramatic for the lyrical faculty; and even in painting these words will serve for a symbol of what we mean. Using this symbol, then, as Corot himself used it, the fitness of his own description of his art becomes very evident. His pictures are in reality songs sent forth from the grey clouds that over-

spread the world of his art. For, to turn to the first appearance of Corot's pictures, what is it that most distinguishes them? As compared with Constable's painting there is everywhere a failure of local colour. The harmony of colour, not less perfect, is reduced to narrower dimensions; the separate incidents of each scene, grass and flowers, trees, and the sky itself, sacrifice more of their individual character, and take a tone more uniform, and even personal. As compared with early representations of landscape, these pictures may be roughly said to have the qualities that belong also to Constable; there is in both the record of weather as a principal agent in controlling the appearance of the scene, and in both the consequent neglect of precise form and minute details of colour. But in comparison with Constable himself, new features are revealed in Corot's art. We detect at once the source and the expression of the French painter's originality, we recognise the freshness and distinction of his attitude towards nature. Still keeping to the criticism of his technical method, it may be observed how marked is the increased importance given to the use of tone. At the first sight, Corot's works scarcely suggest the presence of colour; all tints are so far subdued that we recognise scarcely more than their agreement on some neutral ground of grey. On the side of form a similar tendency is manifest. Constable's drawing of a tree is

precision itself, compared with what serves for drawing in Corot; his definition of a scene is full and exact by the side of the French painter's timid and tremulous outlines, that lose themselves in a pale uncertain sky. And when these appearances in Corot's painting are taken in connection with the effect they are intended to produce, it is seen at once that they are deliberately given, and are not the results of carelessness or imperfect resource. Outward nature to him is a means of expressing himself. Constable perceived and interpreted the drama of wind and clouds, of sun and shadow. But to Corot these changing aspects of the earth are serviceable only as interpreters of different phases of personal emotion. The artist employs the moods of nature as a musician employs the notes of music, and invests the facts of scenery with particular sentiments, charging them with the colour of his own thoughts. It is because this purpose is the controlling element in his art that his pictures of scenery, merely as pictures, are permitted to be imperfect. From a single scene he selects only a few of the features important to his design—the rest are left half-concealed or wholly hidden. And with this desire to select a few things out of many, to summon here and there as he wills the shapes and colours of the earth, the presence of atmosphere and the constant control of mist and cloud are valuable assistants. Behind these clouds the landscape rests under the

dominion of the painter. What he needs for the thought he would express may be brought into view —all else may be suppressed without loss of natural truth; for the changes of atmosphere afford all degrees of distinctness, and the painter familiar with all may choose what he will.

From the final impression given by Corot's painting we may turn for a moment to the actual facts of his career. Even in the case of artists endowed with the strongest originality, the product bears traces of early training as well as of individual impulse, and with respect to Corot there are certain things that can only be explained by a reference to the influences by which he was surrounded in his youth. Born in Paris on the 29th of July, 1796, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot came of an humble stock. His father was a shopman, his mother a milliner, and the artist himself was at first apprenticed to a woollen-draper in the Rue St. Honoré. But the higher talent quickly asserted itself; Corot studied his art first in secret, afterwards openly, and finally he was placed in the studio of Michallon, a painter without great gifts, and thoroughly infected with the principles of the historical school of landscape painting. M. Paul Mantz has admirably and humorously expressed the traditions of this school, and its attitude towards the things of rustic life. Speaking of the accepted type of peasant at the time, he says, 'It is a performer from the

Opéra Comique who approaches with his hands full of flowers to warble some delicate romance, or, if Greuze is to be believed, it is a sentimentalist who has had disagreements with his family, who has read Diderot, and who makes grandiose and emphatic gestures.' Michallon died, and Corot was transferred to the studio of Bertin, another professor of the grand style, whose system was supposed to be founded on classic models. It is asserted, and probably with truth, that this early training under the classicist Bertin, left lasting traces upon Corot's art. Certainly it would be difficult in any other way to account for the constant recurrence to classic themes, and the fondness of the painter for introducing into a landscape beset with northern mists the figures of Grecian nymphs. If we suppose that he acquired this love of classic themes from his master, it may be very well understood how the sentiment was retained. Corot, with all his originality, was not a strong revolutionist in art. His perception, though true and delicate, was not sufficiently profound to penetrate to the heart of his subject, and his imagination was scarcely of the kind to remodel the whole material of his art. To the end of his days he kept his fondness for historical themes, and he retained his Grecian nymphs as he had inherited them from Bertin; and to the things which he thus possessed by accident he added his own discoveries in the realm of nature. But, although the influence of early training

must have been considerable, Corot himself was not very sensible of it. 'I had passed,' he says, in speaking of his sojourn in Italy, 'two winters with M. Bertin, learning so little that on arriving at Rome I could not complete the smallest sketch. Two men would stop to gossip together. I would attempt to draw them in detail, beginning, say, with their heads; they separate, and I am left with only two morsels on my paper. Two children would be seated on the steps of a church. I make a beginning, the mother summons them, and my sketch-books would be thus left full of the ends of noses and tresses of hair. I resolved not to return home without something complete, and I tried for the first time to design rapidly and in masses, the only possible method, and which, moreover, is to-day one of the chief gifts of our modern artists. I set myself, then, to circumscribe at a glance the first group that presented itself. If it only remained for a moment in position, I had at least seized the general character; if it continued, I could complete the details.' Here we find the natural bent of Corot's genius gradually asserting itself. Whether he had learned little or much in the studio of Bertin, it would be of small service to him for the accomplishment of his particular aims in art; the study of classic models would help very little towards the rapid seizure of momentary effects of light and shade, which was, after all, what Corot most desired. M. Bertin could give him

the nymphs, but the rest he had no power to give ; and it is therefore from this point, when the painter began to feel the need of this gift of rapid interpretation of nature, that we may regard Corot as having undertaken the cultivation of his own talent.

M. Jean Rousseau, writing in *L'Art*, has endeavoured to claim for Corot the spirit of Greek art, and has boldly defended his position by pointing out, in Corot's landscape, these very nymphs that we have supposed the painter to have inherited. But the hypothesis is overstrained, and will not bear consideration. From whatsoever source acquired, these classical figures scarcely belong by any profound tie to the scenes they inhabit. They are not of the essence of the picture ; and if they show anything, it is in the way of limitation to the genius that has invented them. If Corot's vision of nature had been more passionate and intense, it would not have tolerated the presence of these unreal images of an antique world ; if his sympathy with the spirit of Greek beauty had been powerful, it would have created an appropriate scene in which to enshrine them. But Corot's penetration into the loveliness of nature was guided rather by sentiment than passion, and such tender sentiment as he sought was not disturbed or hindered in its expression by these signs of harmless artifice. The truth is, that Corot's claims do not rest upon these more ambitious efforts. The landscapes,

with historical titles, are not those by which he will be best remembered, or that best express the delicate poetry of his art. It is in his smaller and slighter sketches—and, for the purpose, none is too small or too slight—that we get into contact with the artist's personality, and it is the personality of the artist that his art was specially designed to reveal.

Accepting the lyrical or personal quality of Corot's painting as its most noticeable feature, it is worth considering in how far the general tendency of French art has assisted its successful expression. For some time past the sacrifice of colour to tone has been the recognised rule of French painters. Not only in landscape, but in figure subjects, in the treatment of the most ideal as well as the most realistic themes, this tendency has been remarkable. The artist, brought more and more into contact with the subjects of common life, and having to deal with the coarse and unselected colours of modern costume, has been compelled to devise some means to keep his work artistic if not beautiful. And so far the endeavour has been successful. There probably has never been at any time a school producing work, in certain respects, more artistic than the work of the modern French school. Its professors have successfully dealt with material that would at first sight seem impossible for art, as it certainly is barren of beauty, and this success has been almost entirely dependent upon

technical dexterity in handling conflicting elements of colour. There is no longer, under this system, any need for the harmonious arrangement of pure and positive tints; by the potent use of tone any tints may be brought into possible companionship. There is no contrast so hideous but that it may acquire in this way a certain artistic fitness; but at the same time it must be remembered that the system, although it thus avoids vulgarity in appearance, destroys all hope of noble and splendid colouring. The painter who has constantly accustomed himself to reduce all colour to the point at which it becomes harmless, is incapable on a sudden of restoring its purity to bright and beautiful tints. And thus it happens that in all subjects of ideal art, the absence of noble colour is the one constant and invincible defect of French artists. They can force inharmonious tints into agreement, but they cannot, save in a few isolated instances, give to arrangements harmonious in themselves the strength and purity needed for perfect beauty. But although destructive to ideal beauty in colour, this cultivation of the qualities of tone has greatly assisted the progress of realistic art. Specially has it been serviceable in the department of landscape, for here the changing moods of weather by their dominion over the colours of the scene suggest the employment of the painter's device to secure harmony. Such suppression of local colour as Corot indulged, was

only the extreme exercise of a control possessed by nature herself. The painter has caught and perfected the device of the storm and the clouds, and although he subdues the facts of scenery to his own purposes, the system he employs is brought into play whenever a cloud passes over the sun.

And thus it is that, although Corot used the moods of nature for the expression of an almost personal sentiment, his pictures are still true to nature. No one has so delicately or so faithfully interpreted certain elements of landscape, and in certain effects of light and air he has been the first to attempt and perfect pictorial expression. In looking at one of these landscapes where the colours of the earth and sky curiously unite, the white fleecy clouds above blanching the green of leaves and grass, and turning the pools of water to their own likeness, we feel as if the face of nature were as sensible to passing emotions as the human face. So refined and unobtrusive is the portraiture, that the momentary aspect of the scene seems to have been unconsciously arrested. The painter has caught, in the sudden agreement of changing lights and flitting shadows, a beauty that was almost too delicate for portraiture, and has also given the sense of impending movement and the impression of a shifting and changing world. The swaying, restless trees take an uncertain outline against the white sky, the movement of the

leaves blurs their image on the canvas ; so that we feel not only that the artist has seized a beautiful moment, but that it is only a moment, and that the scene will pass in the next into some new harmony, wrought by the all-powerful rule of the weather. In admiring these pictorial visions of Corot, and in admitting their fidelity, it is not necessary to estimate the relative value of the truth they reveal. But as affecting the painter's place in the record of contemporary art, it should be said that his is not the only ideal of landscape possible to a modern painter. Since the growth of what was called the Pre-Raphaelite movement, there has existed in England a small school of colourists who have sought to revive the earlier aims of landscape art. A renewal of the taste for decorative beauty in painting has assisted the movement, and it has been found that brilliant arrangements of colour and precision in design can only be gained in the case of landscape by abandoning the attempt to realise the kind of effect that gives their chief charm to so many of Corot's pictures.

But it is not only amongst our own painters that the feeling for design has lately renewed itself. Millet, whose name stands deservedly beside that of Corot, and whose loss is certainly not a less loss to art, possessed gifts of design of a very noble order. His greatest merit was to have brought to the interpretation of rustic themes the profoundest system of artistic expression,

and to have translated the rough energy and simple movement of peasant life into the calm and enduring language of art. This kind of serious consideration had never been granted to the particular class of subject with which Millet wholly occupied himself. Peasants had been treated from the purely picturesque or the purely artificial point of view: they had been painted by Wilkie, or by Boucher or Greuze, but no school of painters until quite recently had attempted a complete and serious study of the facts of their existence. The suggestive beauty of their daily life—suggestive, that is to say, in the invention of grand and energetic attitude, of vigorous and sincere elegance in form—had escaped notice, and this chiefly because most of the painters who had devoted themselves to the subject were equally ignorant of the principle of great design and of the deepest truths of rustic life. They came prepared to snatch the peasant from his mean existence, and to grant him the rosy cheeks and the sylvan garment, fit, as M. Mantz has said, for the Opéra Comique or for a Bal Masqué, or they were willing to embody him in their landscape in the same way as they would the moss-grown trunk of a tree; but for all other or deeper interpretation their resources were wholly inadequate. It is the special merit of Millet that he was equally prepared in both directions. He possessed both the instinct for style and an intimate knowledge of the

peasant's existence, and hence his art has revealed to us new secrets of beauty in a field already well trodden.

Jean François Millet was born on the 9th October, 1815, in the little village of Gréville, near Cherbourg. Brought up amid the simple occupations of the country, he was from the beginning a peasant in spirit, and his sympathy with the hardships and toil of the peasant's lot gave a permanent colour to his work in art. Proceeding to Paris, he entered the studio of Paul Delaroche, and here he found himself in natural opposition to the aims and system of his master. We hear of him that he used to be laughed at by his fellow pupils for talking much and often of Michael Angelo ; but for us now the fact that a student of the Romantic school could appreciate the excellences of style is important. It proves that Millet had in his genius something better than mere rebellion : he had the instinct to reconstruct the new materials, as well as to shatter the earlier edifice. He was able to give form to the new vision of nature. In 1840 he exhibited a portrait in the Salon, but immediately afterwards he retired from Paris, dwelling sometimes at his native place, and sometimes in the towns round about. About this time he made a long stay at Havre, where he employed himself in painting the portraits of these a captains for very small remuneration ; but in 1843 he was again in Paris, and we find

him then associated with Diaz in pushing forward the new gospel of romantic art. The artist, however, had not yet perfected his individuality. In the Salon of 1847 was exhibited 'Œdipe détaché de l'arbre,' a picture bearing the marks rather of rupture with the laws of others than of obedience to his own. The theme is more orthodox, and the treatment more aggressive than at a later period, showing that the painter was still without the power of selecting his own subject, or of treating it with confidence and calm. The first characteristic work was 'Le Vanneur,' exhibited in 1848, and it is said that Millet's rapid cultivation of his talent at this time was partly due to the friendship and influence of Théodore Rousseau, a painter full of a genuine love and reverence for nature. Each work now bore the stamp of a firm originality, and from the year 1851, when 'Le Semeur' was exhibited, his career has been only a succession of artistic triumphs.

We may take this picture of 'Le Semeur' as representative of the noblest qualities of Millet's art. No one who has seen it can have missed its grandeur or its simplicity, its grace or its truth. As we gaze at the darkened figure broadly scattering the grain, we perceive at once how close and accurate has been the painter's knowledge of the facts of rustic life. There is here neither ignorance nor shirking of common truth; the peasant is not unfit for his place on the hill-side, and

his gesture is strictly appropriate to the simple and world-worn duty he has to perform. But although this is a true peasant, presented with unerring fidelity by one who knows the reality of peasant life, it is also something more. Looking at the plan of the picture, the sloping line of the dark hill-side, the space of waning light, and the stress and energy of the sower, we note that the peasant has become a grand figure in a grand design The movement of his outstretched arm, the almost fierce energy of his progress across the barren landscape, seem to take a new significance. All sense of the individual labourer, all thought of his occupation, are lost in the contemplation of a splendid and majestic picture in which these things serve only as material. We pass with the painter from the obvious appearance of the scene to its deeper beauty. We perceive how out of this simple physical duty, performed again and again, he has drawn new discoveries of the dignity of human form. The very monotony of the employment helps the impressiveness of the picture; the figure of the sower, that by the painter's art is kept for ever in this one attitude of grace, seems to present in grand epic fashion an abstract of all human labour. There is a sadness in his persistent progress, a hopelessness that has been strangely imported into the aspect of this single figure, and which belongs rather to the vision of the painter than to his subject,—the expression of a

wider truth thrust into individual form. And when the full significance of this profounder motive has been realised we may again return to a simple view of the actual scene to note once more how all this has been expressed without disturbance of the obvious simplicity and direct truth of the view of rustic life. The sense of style and the familiarity with the employments of the country have united without conflict for a single and harmonious effect.

It has already been remarked how Corot retained to the last the traces of the artificial system that influenced his youth. His imagination was not sufficiently serious or intense to urge him to reform altogether the material of his art. He was satisfied to leave the unreal nymphs, although he transported them to a real landscape. But with Millet all such compromise was impossible. As the exponent of peasant life, Millet was too completely in earnest to admit any of these fairies of the opera; and, moreover, he had other figures more fit to people his stern landscapes. The intense sympathy of the painter with the fortunes of the class to which he devoted himself is a fact never to be forgotten in considering the qualities of his art. Sometimes, even in the figures themselves, it is almost fiercely expressed, and it always exercises a distinct influence over his treatment of natural beauty. In the lot of the peasant, Millet perceived what most

other painters have neglected—its hardships and its hopeless uneventful toil. He was never tired of giving emphasis to this side of his subject, and occasionally the influence of this feeling seems to have placed a limitation upon his power of interpreting beauty in nature. Less gifted painters than Millet have avoided altogether all but the appearance of jocund health that the country is supposed to grant to its inhabitants. The French painter, however, took a truer and, therefore, a more tragic view of his subject, and rendered his rustics faithful to life by displaying the sad endurance of their existence. And the qualities that he found in the people he transferred to the scenery. A more impartial vision might have presented as true a picture of toil and hardship in the midst of, and in contrast with, a world of bright flowers and sunny days, but Millet united the two rather harmoniously, and chose for the background of his serious compositions landscapes of sombre and even of savage character. As a master of design, endowed with a feeling for decorative beauty, he seldom made use of the atmospheric effects employed by Corot, but his scenes are nevertheless infected with a deeper sadness of spirit. Sometimes the threatening sky and the traces of bitter wind seem too much like constant accompaniments of field labour, and we are inclined to demand a vision of a brighter world. But the painter

kept steadily to the moods of weather most in sympathy with his own ; and as his purpose in art was to interpret the more serious side of peasant life he selected the aspects of nature that would best justify and support this purpose.

FREDERICK WALKER.

It is safe to speak of Frederick Walker as an artist of original talent. Sometimes we feel that the phrase carries with it too much of vague compliment, and we do not always realise what it implies, or strictly determine to what order of work it may be fitly attached. But towards the individuality of a painter like Walker the epithet is precise, for in his case it is possible to trace clearly the limits of a fresh invention and to distinguish the qualities with which he has enriched the art of his time. This, indeed, is what is meant by a painter's originality. Between the extreme limits of art and nature there lies a wide realm that patiently awaits the entry of genius rightly equipped for the adventure. Its treasures of beauty have not yet been transported into the narrower domain of art, and though much that is found there is already familiar to the student of nature, there is still wanting a master's hand to fashion it to the due perfection needed for painting or sculpture. It was Walker's privilege to be a discoverer in a part of the field already well trodden. His greatest triumphs were gained in the interpretation of a class of subjects

that has for long attracted English painters; but although he followed where others had been before him, his researches went far beyond theirs. He penetrated deeper and did not go so far afield, and he reached to a nobler order of beauty without so violently disturbing the common truth of things. In touching the simple facts of rustic life he did not need to invent pathetic incident or penetrate into domestic history; whatever the value of such research, it was not within his scope. The common employments of the country had for him a different attraction. Instead of urging him to the invention of pathos, they kept his vision intent upon themselves, yielding to him at last the suggestions of a kind of beauty deeper and more enduring than any beauty of mere sentiment. Other painters had studied the life and emotions of the peasant, but Walker was content to study the peasant himself, and in watching closely the simple duties of rustic labour he came upon new resources of graceful and energetic expression. This is the chief discovery which Frederick Walker, and those who worked with him, have made for modern painting; and in following more closely than others had done the actual facts of the life before them, they proved once again how high and noble, in a spiritual sense, that art may be which seems to concern itself most attentively with physical truth.

The career of this young painter, taken away long

before the ideal of his genius was fully satisfied, is in all ways interesting to the student of modern art. Considering, in the first place, the class of subjects that formed the material of his work, it is very remarkable how completely he broke with earlier methods of interpretation. In company with men like Mason and Millet he did much to restore to the interpretation of modern themes the forgotten qualities of form and design. These three men were close students of landscape, and yet in their work they did much to counteract the influence which the devotion to landscape had brought upon modern art. It is not surprising that a painter like Mr. Burne Jones, who deals with the subjects of abstract invention, should discover at once the value of precise and ordered design, for in no other way are the things of a mythical world to be made beautiful or credible to us. But Millet and Mason and Walker were employed in a kind of art whose professors had done most to discourage distinctness of line and ordered arrangement in composition. The painters of landscape and the painters of rustic life had for long abandoned all suggestion of style in their work. One of the first results of the new study of outward nature had been the inducement to neglect anything that seemed like artifice in the painter. He was to copy the appearance of things, not to reduce them to the conditions of pictorial expression. And yet out of this same devotion to

nature there has at last come, as we see, a powerful protest against the careless imitation of the facts presented to the painter. A closer knowledge of the forms of rustic life, a more intense vision of the beauty of landscape, have revealed to a few men, rightly gifted, a deeper reality in their subject. William Hunt was in his time a sincere and accurate observer of peasant life, and yet there is not in his peasant figures half the knowledge of reality that we find in a peasant figure drawn by the hand of Millet or Walker. We do not feel in the presence of Hunt's drawings that rustic life has been studied in its most truthful or most serious spirit; the rosy cheeks of his peasant boys do not satisfy every recollection of the country, although they suggest and recall the first impression of rustic things upon a mind not prepared for the perception of deeper truths. If we compare one of Hunt's boys with the lad who guides the horses in Walker's picture of 'Ploughing' we shall realise the distance between the two ideals. Passing from the one portrait to the other we are able to measure how much must have been added to the earlier knowledge before this second figure could be presented to us, and we can appreciate the new aims which the new knowledge brought with it. Every form of life is apt to seem an eternal comedy to those who look at it only from the outside, and there is nothing surprising in the fact that the first study of the peasant

and its surroundings should have yielded a series of happy pictures crowded with rosy portraits. But with Mason, and still more with Walker and Millet, the knowledge of the country and its inhabitants went one step further. The vision of the artist, as he watched more closely the process of rustic labour, became more intense and sympathetic, and he was compelled to exchange the earlier attractiveness for a beauty more consistent with exact observation. Thus we see the painter driven by the results of his own study to adopt the highest principles of pictorial design. It is no longer possible for him to neglect or falsify the physical truths of his subject, and he has therefore no choice but to seek for the kind of beauty that is most closely dependent upon physical form and movement. Instead of concerning himself any more with the broad grin upon the peasant's face, he watches faithfully, and faithfully records, the energetic movements of peasant life, and seizes the grace that attaches to all the expressive attitudes of toil. He is no longer in need of finding or inventing pathetic incidents of domestic existence, for he has found out that the most serious thing in the life of a labourer is his labour, and that the forms of rustic people, as they are imaged against the landscape, contain in themselves the highest kind of truth possible to art. It is manifest that this discovery is only possible to a mind already possessed of the principles

of pictorial design. The strength of an artist's work must always depend upon the choice of appropriate material, and mere sympathy with his subject could have yielded nothing to Walker unless he had the instinct to perceive the artistic value of the truth he had acquired. I have spoken of the deeper reality discovered in his painting as compared with that which it succeeded, but it remains to consider in what way he was able to make use of the materials of his study.

And here we are brought at once to the consideration of a tendency in his art that will always arouse a certain amount of criticism. It is observable in all movements of modern art that the increased knowledge of nature begets at a certain point a return to the beauty of antique sculpture. Taken in a large sense this may be said to describe the process of the painters of the Renaissance. So soon as the study of nature among the Italian painters became so serious that the body and its capabilities of expression overpowered the devotion to religious sentiment the value and beauty of the antique were freshly and clearly perceived. And this same process is repeated within narrow limits in the art of men like Millet and Walker. The desire to present faithfully and profoundly the physical facts of rustic life inevitably recalled the forms of an art that was based most firmly upon physical truth, and it is undeniable that in several of Walker's pictures the suggestions of

the grace of antique sculpture are consciously imported into the design. How far this process is legitimate, and to what extent it leaves the conviction that is sought by the artist, must depend in every case upon the point to which individual study has been previously carried. If the painter's mastery over nature has sufficiently prepared him for the adventure, the union may be made without danger, for then the antique grace comes only as the reward of his own research. For there cannot be a doubt that in themselves the simple duties of rustic labour are as fit to receive such grace as any of the occupations of the ancient world; and if in the result there is any sense of failure, the fault belongs to the artist and not to his subject. Of the three painters whose names have been associated, Millet seems to me to be the one who most entirely succeeded in this union of reality and grace. His work is not so constantly attractive as the work of the other two, but in his highest achievements it is not possible to question either the veracity or the grandeur of the image. Mason, whose sense of beauty never failed, seemed, nevertheless, to depart more often from absolute contact with reality, and there are occasions when the same imperfection has to be admitted in the case of Walker.

But even in those instances where the grace of the result has not been entirely discovered in the subject, and where the painter seems to have been compelled at

last to grant the perfection he could not find, the nobility and high influence of the work are not destroyed. It has been objected, for example, that the figure of the plougher in the picture already named has a conscious touch of this imported grace. It may be so; and it is likely enough that Walker did not possess all the technical resource in draughtsmanship which could alone endow such a figure with complete credibility. But although the work be so far imperfect, it does not follow that the kind of grace is in itself inappropriate, or that its presence destroys the imaginative force of the composition. To me this work seems not only to be the highest achievement of Walker's genius, but one of the noblest examples of our modern school. As a representation of labour it deserves to stand beside 'Le Semeur' of Millet; for it possesses the same serious and intent vision of its subject, the same severe neglect of all lesser sources of attraction. As we examine the design, it seems that to each figure has been assigned the attitude most enduringly associated with the duty to be performed: the subject has been watched so long and so closely that the different and changing movements of horses and men have at last yielded the one fixed outline that is expressive of them all. The measured tread of the horses, guided by the lad, who, to control them, has to throw his weight upon the rein, and the persistent energy of the man at the

shaft of the plough, are so imaged by the painter that in this individual group we get an abstract of hard toil. Set in the foreground of a field, where the upturned furrows tell of much work done, and where the last reflected blaze of sunset flushing the face of a distant cliff leaves an intervening space of twilight—in which we seem almost to hear the rushing of the brook and the monotonous sound of the advancing plough—this noble composition contains in itself the full record of the labour of the day just closing, and of other days past and to come. It marks, with more pathos than any invention of sentiment could yield, the constant and unvarying routine of rustic life, the loneliness and isolation of field labour; and it suggests the deep and meditative beauty which the vision of such a life brings to the artist. In the perfection with which the figures are attached to the soil, in that idyllic grasp of a scene, which locks together in a single image the landscape and the people who inhabit the landscape, the work may be reckoned equal, if not superior, to the work of the French painter. It is of the very essence of this kind of art that the subject should be associated with its surroundings in equal fellowship. As the design is conceived the figures recede into the landscape, and the facts of the landscape, charmed by the intense gaze of the painter, advance to surround and imprison the figures in a precise and ordered pattern. Walker's

management of this part of his task showed an impartiality that lay sometimes out of reach of the fiercer and more tragic imagination of Millet. He never, perhaps, attained to an equal grandeur of intellectual conception, but on the other hand, all that he produced was instinct with a certain grace and charm. Beauty, one may say, is the flower whereof truth is the tree, and there are moments in the art of the great Frenchman when the wintry boughs are bare of blossom and when the surroundings which he grants to his peasant figures seem to be even more sterile than the most inhospitable tracts of nature. But Walker was never tempted thus to disturb the sweetness of outward nature in order to bring it into sympathy with the sadness often imaged in his figures. He allowed the contrast to take its due effect ; and, however serious or pathetic the influence of his design, he never forgot the delightful beauty of flowers, or the intricate delicacy in tree-form and foliage. His genius was, in short, without any trace of the bitterness that went hand-in-hand with Millet's strength; and in this very picture of the plough the minute and noble realism of the foreground is of the utmost beauty in effect.

This same pleasure in the gladness of nature, never destroyed by his pursuit of a serious thought, is seen again in the 'Harbour of Refuge.' Here the subject is not labour, but repose, and the pathos is the simple

pathos of age rightly rendered and contrasted with the energy and grace of youth. Nothing from this design lives longer in the memory than the expanse of daisied lawn, where each separate flower seems to have had in the vision of the painter its distinct growth, and where the vivid green of the grass overpowers the twilight with its brightness. There is no story to tell; and yet the scene has so possessed the painter, that the picture is almost passionate in its utterance. He has so dwelt upon the image of contrasted youth and age that every simple fact seems to help and mark its pathos. It is expressed with an impartial hand in the full spring blossoms and the waning light, no less than in the two figures, a young girl and a tottering woman, who descend the old stone steps; and it is marked again in the flowers on the lawn not yet overtaken by the scythe of the mower, in the old sun-dial deserted by the sun, and in the groups of aged people who dream beneath the trees. The power which Walker possessed of associating things joyous and sad, and of surrounding a serious invention with all that is most delightful in nature, may be taken as the best proof of the probable development of his art, had he lived long enough to give his sympathies their full range. As it is, we are left to detect, from what is the product of little more than a single phase of his genius, the few slight suggestions of future growth. Nothing that he did is in

this way more valuable than the picture of 'The Bathers,' for although the execution will not compare with what came later, the design of this work, with its simple record of the unconscious grace of boyhood, is of most distinct originality. Here we are in the presence of a conception that has no sadness at all. There is no grave feeling to be expressed such as we find in the 'Ploughing' or the 'Harbour of Refuge'; and, so far as invention goes, the picture is no more than an attempt to see what could be done with a simple incident of boyish life. It is characteristic of Walker that he should have seized one of the few opportunities of modern life for dealing with nude design, and that this should be the only study of the nude from his hand. For it seems to have been one of the fixed principles of his art not to disturb or depart from the realities of the world about him. With his feeling for grace in form it might have been thought that he would have been led to a class of subjects where the difficulties of modern costume would not have confronted him. But, rightly or wrongly, this was not a part of his scheme. He seems at no time to have been tempted to create for himself an ideal world; but, on the contrary, he took especial pleasure in using only such materials as lay near to his hand, fashioning them to shapes of beauty without sacrificing any of the realities of modern life. In this picture of boys bathing he was able for once, and once only, to reach the nude

without departing from modern habit; and it is not surprising that he should have grasped the occasion, or that he should have turned it to good account. Some of these youthful figures prove very decisively that Walker's understanding of the sources of beauty in antique sculpture was no mere reminiscence of the masterpieces of antique art. He has found out for himself in these boy-figures a kindred grace; and here, at least, it may be said that the union of reality and refined beauty is successfully accomplished.

Frederick Walker was only just thirty-five years old at the date of his death. He was born in London in the year 1840, and his school days were passed at the North London College. There exists a volume of sketches executed by him at this time, but although they are interesting, as showing the early direction of his taste, they can scarcely be called remarkable in themselves. They are, in short, neither better nor worse than the ordinary exercises in drawing of a boy of average intelligence, nor do they supply any hint of the peculiar power which he afterwards developed. Walker, indeed, must have been still a mere lad when he quitted school, for at the age of sixteen we find him copying from the antique sculptures in the British Museum. This, we may suppose, was his first step in art education, and it is in a way significant of certain qualities in his design that he was always very careful

to cultivate and to preserve. Throughout the whole of his career the influence of Greek art was a real and permanent force in the direction of his talent, and it doubtless served, even in the treatment of domestic themes, to save him from the dangers which beset so many painters of *genre*.

But these days of quiet studentship were soon interrupted. By the advice of one of his uncles Walker was about this time sent to an architect's office, in the belief, perhaps, that his pronounced artistic tastes would be therein employed to the greatest practical advantage. The profession, however, was not of the lad's own choosing, and after eighteen months' uncongenial labour we find him once more at the British Museum, studying, as before, from the Elgin marbles. There he passed his days; and in the evening he attended the classes at Leigh's school in Newman Street, where he became acquainted with several other young artists, with whom he remained during the rest of his life on terms of the closest friendship. From this time there seems to have been no further hesitation as to the choice of a profession. His own persistence, we may suppose, had finally set at rest whatever doubts his friends might have entertained, for a little later he was entered as a student at the Royal Academy, and at the same time, having begun to draw upon the wood, he undertook a

three years' engagement in the establishment of Mr. T. W. Whymper.

This apprenticeship with Mr. Whymper, in whose service he passed three days a week, was a period of unceasing labour for the young artist. At first there was but little scope for the display of any original qualities. He was required to do his work rapidly, and in a manner prescribed by the taste of his master's customers. There was at the time a fixed fashion in the art of wood engraving, a fashion partly founded upon the facile productions of Sir John Gilbert, and to this particular style all the younger men were compelled to conform, suppressing as far as possible any tendency towards the exercise of their own individuality. To labour under such conditions must have been specially distasteful to an artist of Walker's peculiar temperament. His own method, even to the last, was always to dwell upon an idea, and by dint of long consideration gradually to perfect his design. Here, however, there was no time allowed him for experiment ; the subject was given to him, and he was expected forthwith to prepare his drawing, imitating as nearly as he could the model set before him. Under these circumstances it is scarcely astonishing that his earlier efforts as a draughtsman reveal very little of that charm and purity of style that is afterwards associated with his work. He doubtless acquired, during this time,

a certain technical facility and ease of execution which would have been very useful if he had been destined to remain a mere workman; but he had from the beginning a more serious ambition, and therefore, when his invention developed and his individuality began to assert itself, he was driven to cultivate a new system of technical procedure appropriate to the new ideas that he sought to present. Even as a draughtsman on the wood he entirely transformed the style which had been imposed upon him during his apprenticeship, and it is a proof of the vigour and independence of his talent that he was able so completely to emancipate himself from those rigid conventions which he had been compelled for a while to accept. But although this period of apprenticeship had but little influence in determining the manner he should afterwards adopt, it had the effect of attaching him for some time to the practice of a particular branch of art. Walker became known as an artist in black and white before he gave himself up to the practice of water-colour or painting in oil, and this first application of his talent exercised a permanent influence even upon his work in colour.

His earliest essay in the way of book illustration appeared in the pages of *Once a Week*, a periodical established in the year 1859. A number of artists of reputation were attached to its staff, and amongst them we find the names of Millais, Charles Keene, Tenniel,

John Leech, and Sandys. During the first year of its existence Walker was not a contributor, but in one of the numbers for 1860 there is a small sketch by him, not very remarkable either in design or workmanship, and certainly far inferior in both respects to the work of other men who were at the time engaged upon the journal. On the very next page, for example, to that which contains Walker's drawing we find a design by Mr. Millais that bears by comparison the stamp of a stronger originality and more assured resource. But it was no part of Walker's nature to leap at once to perfection: his natural gifts arrived to maturity only by a gradual process, gathering at each step some new element of grace and refinement. Indeed, the most remarkable feature of these youthful experiments is the almost complete absence from them of the ordinary signs of youthful ambition: they are studiously simple, both in sentiment and expression, and where they attract our attention at all it is in virtue of a certain delicacy of perception unostentatiously displayed. Here and there, in a drawing of only modest pretensions, the eye is suddenly arrested by some passage of subtle beauty: the expression of a childish face, the turn of a head, or some fortunate choice of gesture which seems new in art though familiar enough in nature,—these are the slight indications that already give notice of the existence in Walker of a special power of drawing from

reality some secret of beauty that escapes common observation. But as yet the exercise of this faculty does not suffice to give a distinct character to the work as a whole. We can readily recognise its manifestations now, because we look at these drawings by the light of his later achievements.

From 1860 to 1864 he was chiefly employed upon the magazines. Some time after his appearance in *Once a Week* he made the acquaintance of Mr. Thackeray, who was then the editor of the *Cornhill Magazine,* and was by him entrusted with the illustrations to 'Philip.' The first drawing by Walker was published in May, 1861, and from this date he became a regular contributor to the *Cornhill,* dividing the artistic honours with Mr. Millais. Walker used often to talk of his visits to Thackeray's house, where he went to settle the subjects for illustration. During a part of the time the great novelist was ill and confined to his room, and the young artist would sit on the side of the bed, listening to the story as it came from Thackeray's own lips. After 'Philip' came 'Denis Duval,' also illustrated by Walker, and still later, when Miss Thackeray began to publish a series of shorter stories in the Magazine, he was again employed to furnish the drawings.

A great part of the drawings executed during this period are in the artist's happiest vein. They are original alike in spirit and in manner, and they have often

the further interest in that we find amongst them the first expression of ideas that were afterwards developed in his painting. Nothing is more remarkable in the progress of his talent than his strong and enduring attachment to a motive that had once taken strong hold of his imagination. Of invention, in the vulgar sense of the word, he had comparatively little; nor did he possess the power of rapidly translating his impressions into the language of art. At the very outset of his career he seems to have felt the attraction of certain subjects which he never afterwards abandoned, his interpretation of them being gradually enlarged with the growth of his own powers, and attaining at last to completeness and maturity. The kind of temperament that passes with a sense of relief from thoughts that have once found utterance, reluctant to take them up again, was altogether foreign to him: on the contrary he returns again and again to his earliest inspirations, bringing always some added charm or profounder truth as the fruit of longer and more attentive study of nature. In his case most literally the child was father to the man, for all the ideas of his manhood were directly inherited from his youth. They were scarcely renewed but only developed. He seems rarely to have approached any subject without perceiving in it a deeper kind of beauty than his resources at the time allowed him to express, and it was his habit to keep such subjects by him until

by constant effort and repeated experiment he had entirely satisfied his idea. This disposition to exhaust the capabilities of a few cherished impressions availed to give to all his later work an extraordinary sense of conviction and intensity. Each group, each attitude one may say, is there inspired by a kind of grace that is only granted as the result of long and patient study. It is as though Nature, fascinated by the steadfast gaze of the painter, had at last let slip the veil that hides her beauties from common eyes.

This characteristic tendency of Walker's talent could be illustrated by numerous examples. Amongst his early designs executed for engraving there is one of two boys bathing, which formed part of a series of drawings illustrating the Seasons. At the sale of his works after his death there was to be seen a little sketch in water colour of the same subject. Here the figures are more numerous, and they carry the suggestion of a higher kind of grace, and by comparison of the two we may perceive how first the wood block and afterwards the little water colour prepared the way for the great picture of 'The Bathers,' exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1867. The first impression from nature was therein finally developed into the finished composition. The figures of the earlier experiments reappear, sometimes in the same attitude, sometimes with a slight but always significant change in the arrangement, while other

figures are added to render the picture a complete representation of the same. But there is to be found a yet more striking example of Walker's extraordinary constancy to his youthful impressions. Among the very earliest of his drawings published in *Once a Week* is a sketch of some emigrants landing from a boat upon the shores of an unknown coast. A little while before his death the painter had this sketch upon his easel, and one of the most important unfinished works that he left behind him was in truth no more than a development of the little drawing with which he began his career as a draughtsman on the wood. The picture of 'The Unknown Land' remained a mere fragment: before it could be completed the artist himself had started on a journey towards a still more distant shore.

While Walker was gaining fame by his illustrations on wood, he had already begun to study the more complex problems of colour. It is difficult to fix exactly the date of his first essays as a painter, but we know that in 1863 he exhibited a picture at the Royal Academy, and in 1864 he was made an associate of the Society of Painters in Water Colours. From this time nothing occurred to hinder the free expression of his talent. If in his earlier wood engravings we have to acknowledge the influence of his predecessors and to note a certain obedience to conventional modes of execution, in his painting, at any rate, he is from the first

entirely himself. There both his merits and his defects are clearly his own. In water-colours, as well as in oil, his practice has inspired a troupe of followers, but it would be hard to name a single painter to whom he himself was greatly indebted. Considered as a colourist, he possesses just those qualities we should expect from the tendencies of his art, as these had been previously expressed through the medium of engraving. We have already observed in his work the presence of a certain penetrating refinement of design as the result of a constant research of the less obvious elements of beauty. In his colouring, this feeling of refinement is scarcely less powerful. Here, again, it is by a certain exquisiteness of finish that he is most clearly distinguished from others who have occupied themselves in the treatment of familiar subjects. He is never content only to render the dominant hues of nature. These are to be found in his painting, and in perfect purity of tone, but associated always with a minute realisation of the subordinate tints, wrought with such delicacy of touch that the surface of the painting has almost a jewel-like quality. This, at least, is true of his highest efforts in water-colour; as a painter in oil he had not acquired an equal mastery. Even had he lived he would probably never have attained in either medium a very confident or facile manner of working, for by no rapid system of execution could he have hoped to

render the kind of beauty that was his constant study. But by longer practice he would doubtless have arrived at a better understanding of the special capabilities of oil painting, discovering for himself and by independent experiment methods appropriate to the scheme of his art. For it was not in his nature to seek counsel from others, or to benefit greatly by their example. In his ordinary conversation he rarely touched upon questions of art; the subject was, indeed, one that he seemed rather disposed to avoid. An intimate friend of Walker's relates how, whenever he visited the artist's studio, the easel was hastily wheeled round with its face to the wall. He rarely permitted his unfinished works to be seen, and when at last a picture from his hand made its appearance, it was often as much of a surprise to his friends as to the public. In observing so strict a reserve on the subject of his art, Walker probably only yielded to the exigencies of his own temperament. With a nature so keenly sensitive, his own criticism of himself was perhaps all that he could endure. The advice of others, however well intended, would only have had the effect of paralysing his efforts.

The measure of what he had still to learn as a painter in oil is partly supplied by the picture called 'At the Bar,' exhibited a few years before his death. The subject was a single figure, the size of life, of a woman standing in the dock of a criminal court. In

his treatment of the face, Walker here gave evidence of a power of passionate expression that is not revealed in any other of his works, and for this reason the experiment, although not entirely successful, must be regarded as of the highest interest, as an indication of the probable development of his talent. Its imperfections were solely due to his inability to adapt himself at once to so large a scale of execution, and not at all to any defect of imaginative resource. Unhappily, Walker was only too conscious of the need of improvement, and when the picture returned to his studio he scraped out the face, with the intention of repainting it. This intention, however, he did not live to carry out, and the work was left a mere wreck of what it had been, with scarce anything remaining beyond the general plan of the composition. But those who remember the picture as it was first exhibited, and who can recall the desperate and hunted aspect of the woman's face, and her expressive attitude in the dock, will certainly admit that a painter who could command such intensity of human feeling, and who could also present the careless beauty of such a subject as 'The Bathers,' must have been possessed of gifts that had not yet seen their full development.

The remaining facts of Walker's career, in so far as they affect the record of his art may be soon told. In 1866, the year preceding the exhibition of 'The Bathers,'

he was made a full member of the Society of Painters in Water Colours, and in 1867 he won a medal at the International Exhibition at Paris for a small water-colour drawing of 'Philip in Church.' The next picture sent to the Academy was called 'The Vagrants,' a work that in directness and simplicity of invention ranks as perhaps the most masculine of all his compositions. Of the value of his later achievements, the 'Ploughing' and 'The Harbour of Refuge,' something has already been said. The latter was exhibited in 1872, and in the two succeeding years Walker's name was not to be found in the catalogue of the Royal Academy. A part of this time he passed in Algiers for the sake of his health, but the climate did not suit him, and he grew restless under the enforced absence from those home scenes and surroundings that had been the constant material of his art. He exhibited again and for the last time in 1875, but while the little picture was still hanging upon the walls of Burlington House, the young artist had been suddenly taken from the scene of his labours. He had gone to Scotland on a fishing excursion, where he was seized with a violent cold, and almost before his friends had time to realise his danger the news came that he was dead. His body now lies in the little churchyard at Cookham, beside the pleasant waters of the river he had always loved and often painted.

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

THE death of George Cruikshank served rather to revive old associations than to mark the sense of present loss. His talent even in its maturity belonged altogether to an earlier generation, and in the particular department of art to which he mainly applied himself more modern influences have nearly wiped out all traces of his style. He lived indeed to be the contemporary of men who, in so far as their common art is concerned, were his successors without being his followers: who owed little or nothing to his example, and whose aims and method were in fact as far as possible remote from his own. It is as an illustrator of books that he will be chiefly remembered, and yet his illustrations scarcely offer points of comparison with those of more recent production. They cannot be judged by the standard now in force, for they rarely pretend to any fulness of technical knowledge, and they are almost totally devoid of the sense of serious beauty. Even their unfailing humour has a special dialect of its own which is partly foreign to us now, and they are perhaps most modern in their appeal in those occasional glimpses of weird and terrible

suggestion which we find in the illustrations to 'Oliver Twist,' or in designs purely fanciful, where the artist is free to roam among the creatures of an unreal world. We are not disposed to be over-exacting in the anatomy of elves and fairies so long as the action is sufficiently spirited and the invention does not flag, and in these points Cruikshank is irreproachable. His fancy is fresh and untiring. Where he is not bound by the conditions of reality his design nearly always carries conviction; for, with the peculiar capabilities and limitations of his art, it was easier to invent a new race of beings than to imitate living forms.

But Cruikshank was not always an illustrator of books. An artist who intends to live so long, maintaining his popularity to the last, must needs be versatile, and it is no wonder therefore to find that his art passed through many stages since its first entry into the world at the beginning of the century. At that time the genius of caricature was chiefly political. Hogarth's social satires had been succeeded by the fiercer sketches of Gillray, who found in the occupant of the throne the fittest material for political caricature. It was under this influence that young Cruikshank began his work in art, and those who know only his later drawings, where the scope of the design has become almost domestic, would be astonished at some of the broad and bitter political sketches which young George Cruikshank pro-

duced. One writer has said of his career that 'while promoting humour, he has rebuked vice, and reverenced virtue. His pencil has been the handmaid of morality, and his most playful sketches have imparted wisdom' These words are doubtless well meant, but they certainly fail to give a complete idea of the direction and scope of Cruikshank's genius. Such prim and pretty praise may possibly suit a modern taste, but it gives no sort of impression of the fierce and free caricature with which Cruikshank began his career. He had outlived the manners of the time which first made him famous, and he had therefore no choice but to be content to be known to the present generation by his later book illustrations, and by his work in advocacy of temperance; but being when he died some years older than the century, he must have had reminiscences of a time when caricature had a wider and freer range. The associate of Hone in the production of the famous political tracts, Mr. Cruikshank must have had recollections in presence of which all modern caricature would seem tame and very genteel. Some of the best of the artist's earlier designs were executed for these relentless satires, and there are many younger men who might be disposed to envy the reputation of a caricaturist who first rose to fame by ridiculing the Prince Regent. It is in these sketches, such for example as the illustrations to the 'Political House that Jack Built,' that the influence of

Gillray may be most clearly perceived. They are often of admirable force, and, although their Art quality is sometimes slight, they seldom miss their mark in a political sense. And if we wish to gain some idea of the different stages through which English caricature has passed during the century, gradually refining upon its earlier breadth and directness until it reaches the flat pictorial gentility of the present pages of *Punch*, it would be impossible to select better material than is afforded by these early designs of Cruikshank. Take for example the coloured etching in ridicule of the statue of Achilles erected in the park, where the humour runs broadly, and the shafts of satire are unmistakable; or take those very sketches executed for Hone, which are filled with the spirit of a time that was not careful to measure its contempt for fools in high places, and you will get some correct notion of the marvellous change in the national temper which one man's life may witness, and one man's work reflect. It is true that this is probably not the class of work with which Cruikshank's genius will be enduringly associated, but it is a product very interesting to recall at the present time when we are tempted to put in review the long life of a distinguished artist. And such work is certainly valuable in estimating the wealth and variety of Mr. Cruikshank's powers. The qualities needed for these fierce onslaughts on debauched royalty are very different from those

that Mr. Cruikshank afterwards developed in his book illustrations, and the workman who could pass from the one product to the other, gaining success in both, proves himself by that fact alone the possessor of remarkable gifts.

Seeing how restricted were Cruikshank's powers as a practical artist, it would be ungracious to dwell over-much upon the technical defects of his work. They need no detection, and do not greatly hinder the particular kind of expression in which he excelled. But these defects cannot be forgotten when over-zealous admirers seek to bracket his name with that of a man like Hogarth, who claims our regard as a great artist independently of other gifts that he possessed. Hogarth was a skilful and accomplished painter, while Cruikshank was scarcely a painter at all. The works that Hogarth has left are admirable in point of art, even though we should forget the particular message they seek to convey; but Cruikshank's works are chiefly admirable for qualities in which art has very little concern. And that is the main reason why they have rapidly become old-fashioned, and why it would be rash to predict for them a lasting fame. His illustrations to the early novelists seem already older than the works to which they are attached; the types that he created belong to an extinct race. The angular faces and emaciated figures, borne upon a most liberal length of

slender leg, have no counterpart among the inhabitants of the actual world. And yet, although such creations will not bear the test of any precise reference to nature, they have a certain fitness in relation to the writings to which they are attached. The spirit of restless activity with which Cruikshank could endow these ungainly forms makes them the appropriate exponents of the novel of adventure—of the kind of novel that Smollett wrote and Dickens loved, and wherein the eventful movement of the story, with its constant recurrence of humorous situation, is of more importance than exact and faithful portraiture. Cruikshank's illustrations scarcely profess refinement of characterisation, but they rarely miss the humour of the scene, and are never deficient in the sense of boisterous frolic. The strange slim figures that people his designs have an inexhaustible vitality, and their extravagant movements sometimes even outstrip the warrant of the text. But the exaggeration, where it occurs, is scarcely noticeable, for the author means to be extravagant, and the artist may be pardoned for being grotesque. Sometimes, as in the case of his illustrations to fairy tales, Cruikshank found even fuller liberty to indulge the caprices of his fancy, and the result is by so much the more effective.

Here the requirements in the way of human characterisation are of the slightest, and in the realisation of creations not human the artist was at his best. All the

inhabitants of an unreal world he could readily create; the little innocent devils that go by the name of elf and sprite leapt in full armour from his brain, and it is worth remark that nowhere is the artist's expressional power so happily exercised as in the faces and forms of these fanciful figures. The very freedom from the trammels of reality seemed to render his work more real, and being no longer called upon for sober human portraiture he was able to use action and gesture without fear of exaggeration in effect. Nothing in this kind could be better than his illustration to the story of the elves and the shoemaker. The honest shoemaker having found that whenever he left work unfinished overnight it was always done by the morning, determined to wait up with his wife and watch through the night. By this he discovered that his work was done for him by two little naked elves, who came in the middle of the night; and the good wife was so full of gratitude for their help that she determined to make them each a suit of clothes to cover their nakedness. The clothes were made and put upon the table where the leather had previously been set, and in the middle of the night the little elves came and found them. This is the incident that Cruikshank has taken for his illustration. Each little elf is in his etching scarcely a quarter of an inch high, but he has managed to fill their figures with humorous expression. They are represented in uncontrollable amuse

ment and delight at the novel idea of clothes. One little elf almost powerless with laughter is trying to draw a pair of breeches on to his spindle legs; the other, already half attired, is leaping into the air with pleasure, and brandishing above his head the jacket with which he is about to complete his toilet, while behind the curtain the satisfied shoemaker and his wife are keeping watch. The work is a model of humorous expression and delicate workmanship; and in looking at it we are half disposed to pardon Mr. Ruskin's most extravagant praise in saying of these etchings that they were 'the finest things next to Rembrandt's that had been done since etching was invented.'

This indeed was the one branch of technical art in which he could claim proficiency. His radical failure in regard to draughtsmanship is of course not less evident here than in his woodcuts or his drawings, but it is a failure partly counterbalanced by a genuine command over the particular resources of etching. His mode of execution, though never possessing all the freedom of which the art is capable, has a certain marked individuality. He manages the material in a way to give the best expression to his designs, and in certain effects of light and shade the result is sometimes impressive. There is genuine imagination in some of his dimly lighted interiors, and perhaps the best of all the illustrations to *Oliver Twist* is that of Fagin in his dark

cell, where the artist has represented a being that looks more like a caged bird than a man, but where the general impression of the scene entirely satisfies the idea of the author.

We have hinted at the radical distinction between this kind of illustration and the productions of a later school, and we realise the full extent of the change that Cruikshank lived to witness when we compare these illustrations to *Oliver Twist* with such designs as those which Mr. Leighton executed for the story of *Romola*. The difference is here not one of degree but of kind. A new demand is made upon the artist—a demand that was altogether beyond the range of Cruikshank's powers, and far outside of the scheme of his art. To emphasise the comic incidents of the story, to seize upon the available elements of grotesque or weird suggestion, is no longer sufficient. A more serious and consistent purpose on the part of the author requires a more sustained and searching principle of art for its adequate illustration. The interest of adventure has given place to the deeper interest of character, and the artist must be prepared to create individual types that shall be distinct without being exaggerated, and to present them in a form in which the idea of beauty shall take precedence of humour. It does not follow that all the exponents of this more modern phase of book illustration are superior to Cruikshank, any more than that the crowd of senti-

mental novelists of our day are superior to a writer like Smollett. We merely wish to point out that the entire scheme of art as supplied to book-illustration has undergone a revolution, and that the effects of this revolution have made themselves felt even in that special branch of art which deals with caricature. Such slender artistic resources as Cruikshank contrived in his time to make sufficient would now no longer be accepted, even though they were supported by humour as genuine and inexhaustible as his own. And yet when we look to the length of his career we are disposed to wonder, not that he should have partly failed to keep pace with his age, but that he should have adapted himself so readily to the changing requirements of successive generations. He began his career by the practice of a kind of drawing which carries us back into another century, and it is a high tribute to the versatility of Cruikshank's genius that he was able altogether to abandon this earlier phase, and adapt himself to the needs of a writer so modern as Dickens. But even the most versatile genius must bear some of the penalties of a long life, and Cruikshank's art did not advance beyond the point which it touched in the illustrations to *Oliver Twist*. We need not be surprised, therefore, that he and Dickens should afterwards have parted company. In later works the art of the novelist became more ambitious. The humorous element was not neglected, but it was associated with a more serious

attempt to arouse our interest in the conduct of the story and in the fortunes of the characters. The resources of the writer were far in advance of those of the illustrator, and as a necessary consequence they more easily adapted themselves to the spirit of the time. It may be true that Dickens's real strength did not lie in the expression of sentiment; but he was compelled nevertheless by the demands of his age to give increasing prominence to the serious side of life, to dwell with more emphasis upon pathos, and to strive for a kind of beauty which Cruikshank could not have interpreted. There are scenes and characters in *Dombey and Son* and in *Nicholas Nickleby* requiring a kind of illustration altogether foreign to the artist's powers, and it was well for both the writer and the draughtsman that the need of separation was recognised in time. Cruikshank, on his side, found in the works of a writer still living more appropriate occupation for his pencil. The romances of Mr. Harrison Ainsworth gave him all the liberty that he required, and some of the illustrations to *The Tower of London* are to be reckoned among his happiest efforts.

THREE ENGLISH SCULPTORS.

THOSE who are familiar with the Flaxman Gallery at University College will not need to be reminded of the large case of original drawings which forms perhaps the most interesting feature of the collection. The gallery was first established in the year 1847, when Miss Denman, the sister-in-law of the deceased artist, presented to the College the series of plaster casts from his principal sculptures; and on the death of that lady, in the year 1862, the College, by means of a subscription raised for the purpose, added to its treasures by the purchase of a number of Flaxman's original sketches that had been in Miss Denman's possession. There could not have been devised a more fitting supplement to the original gift. The presence of these drawings by his own hand are indeed almost indispensable to the just appreciation of his talent. Without them we are in danger of being misled by a certain appearance of coldness and formality that belongs even to his most successful works in the round or in relief, and of mistaking for an essential limitation of imaginative power what is rather to be regarded as a defect of technical skill either in

himself or his assistants. It is easy enough to distinguish in the marble the general direction of his art and to recognise the constant grace of arrangement and composition, but although these qualities are never wanting, it is nevertheless true that he sometimes failed to preserve to the end of his labours the force of the original impulse. The mode of his invention was in itself so simple—depending upon the most delicate rendering of sentiment and the most studious restraint of movement—that the slightest failure in the process of production could not but leave its mark upon the result. A style so sober was necessarily impoverished by the least added element of formality; it needed every touch of the artist's individuality, and it could spare no single detail, however slight, which would tend to bind the intellectual motive to the realities of the actual world. If Flaxman's imagination had been more passionately inspired these little defects of execution would have been less important; but, as it is, we are apt to miss at every turn the evidence of the artist's presence, and we instinctively demand some sign which the marble cannot give to reassure us that the abstract beauty of the composition has been won from actual contact with nature.

Some of the drawings in the Flaxman Gallery are avowedly studies of compositions which were afterwards worked out in marble; others are in preparation for the outline illustrations to the poets; others, again, are mere

direct studies from nature, not executed with any immediate purpose save that of recording some truth of gesture or combination of form which had been noted by the artist and which he wished to preserve. In this last class of drawings Flaxman was at his best. His sense of beauty was so far of the highest order that it was always keenly alive to what is most simple in action or expression. He was ever on the alert to register the unobserved and unconscious movements of men and women, and to get by this means to that quality of abstract grace which belongs to life undisturbed by intense passion or violent circumstance. And so long as he is in the presence of nature, taking from a living form or actual group before him the suggestion of the beauty that he seeks, his art has life as well as grace, and the sense of portraiture strengthens and enforces the charm of his design. This is what gives to all his studies a value and influence that his completed works, whether in sculpture or pictorial illustration, can rarely claim. Throughout the entire series of his drawings we can watch the artistic faculty continually at work appreciating and recording the multitude of natural forms which are fitted to serve the purposes of design, and the result, whether in regard to truth or art, is always strongest where it is seen to be most directly derived from the study of nature. Thus, to take only a single example, we find that the companionship of women and

children was a subject constantly occupying the artist's thoughts, and there are numberless drawings in the series which prove how keen and quick was his perception of the kind of beauty which this association offered, and how fortunate his power of selecting always the most characteristic and beautiful gestures for study and imitation. He appears never to have missed and never to have forgotten any graceful combination which the figures of mother and child would naturally and spontaneously assume; no movement that has in it a new suggestion of design escapes his notice; and so swiftly and surely has he seized upon the most minute and delicate truths of his subject that we pass from one drawing to another with the sense of following a process of continuous portraiture that is able to register every change of attitude and every variety of expression. Something of the same excellence belongs no doubt to Flaxman's finished works, but in his finished works we are apt to feel a failure of strong imaginative power which his studies from nature do not betray.

On the strength of Flaxman's feeling for abstract grace it has been the custom to speak of his art as being a thing entirely derived from the study of the antique. That he was deeply influenced by the revived interest in Greek art, which was characteristic of his time, there can be no doubt, but it would be a grave injustice to his talent to measure his achievement by so high a standard

as is implied in the comparison. So far as the avoidance of all that disturbs the serenity of life can be regarded as a distinguishing characteristic of the Greek imagination, the fitness of the modern artist to interpret its spirit is complete. But if we penetrate this first impression of serene composure common to much Greek and to all Flaxman's design, we discover distinctions that override the elements of similarity. The repose of the best antique art is the repose of strength; it is the elevated calm of a life equal to every conflict of passion or fate, but consciously lifted by the artist above the reach of either; while the repose which Flaxman secures is often no more than the placidity of a little life that is insensible to the greater issues that lie beyond its realm. Flaxman's creations, we think, are not great, and their calm is not deep, although it is true. It responds to the serenity of a simple domestic existence which is innocent of wider trouble; but this innocence is not to be confused with the passionless repose stamped by the power of art upon forms and faces of heroic mould.

This element of domestic beauty in Flaxman's design was altogether independent of any earlier influences. It was, in fact, widely characteristic of all the best art of his time. In common with painters like Reynolds and Gainsborough, he had learned to reproduce with the utmost refinement the grace that belonged to a phase of

social life that was at once simple and elegant. As Professor Colvin, in a recently published memoir of the artist, has truly remarked, 'He had watched and felt, as no one ever watched and felt before, the gestures and actions of natural household piety and innocence and affection'; and to this we think it might have been added that he had not studied any other phase of life with the same completeness or mastery. Looking through his designs, we may observe that the studies of the male form are never equal in fineness of perception to the studies of the forms of women and children, and that when he has to deal with subjects demanding knowledge of masculine character and gesture his imagination falters and his resources fail. But, accepting this limitation, it still remains true that in interpreting the grace of domestic life Flaxman developed a simplicity and directness of manner that is truly in sympathy with the spirit of Greek art. The class of subjects in which an artist of inferior power would have recognised only the material for piquant prettiness or sentimental expression he raised, by a cultivated perception and the gift of style, to the level of serious art. Much of the repose and calm that belong to his creations is to be ascribed to that lack of strong and high passion which stamps all the art of the period. With him, as with others, it is the sign rather of limited sensibilities than of grave reserve; but this fact rather adds to the tribute that

must be paid to Flaxman's individual genius when we consider that within the limits of a life that was ignorant alike of the triumphs and the perils of the higher imagination he nevertheless contrived to find out and interpret the qualities of enduring beauty.

The independence of Flaxman's talent, which is even more clearly asserted in his drawings than in his sculptures, is perhaps partly to be referred to the greater liberty that was then enjoyed by the student of antique art. The leaders of the classical revival had not as yet carried their criticism to the point of scientific precision which it has since attained. Winckelmann's analysis of the spirit of Greek art had not, in England at least, assumed complete and binding authority; the existing remains of Greek sculpture still awaited the kind of exact classification to which they have been more recently subjected. Flaxman witnessed the arrival in England of the Elgin marbles, and was foremost in recognising their extraordinary value, but his admiration of these works did not exclude a hearty enjoyment of some other examples of the antique that, by the judgment of a more learned criticism, have now been relegated to an inferior position. We cannot feel quite sure that the greater certainty which criticism has acquired is altogether favourable to the growth of living art. Flaxman, in the comparative ignorance of his generation, was free to believe that the ancient world was not altogether so

unlike our own. He was not afraid to trust to his imagination while he sought to follow the beauty of antique models, for no one had yet undertaken to prove that the modern spirit is separated by an impassable barrier from the spirit of the antique. Flaxman, therefore, was able to feel a kind of fellowship with Greek art which a later criticism has rendered impossible. His admiration was perhaps not always correct according to the modern standard, but it was vital and fruitful. His sympathy with Greek art was in this respect allied to the earlier passion for the ancient world that had been felt by the masters of the Renaissance. To them even more than to him there had been lacking the guidance of scientific research, but we need not greatly deplore a kind of ignorance which yields so rich a harvest of new and living beauty.

If we desire to see what became of the sculptor's art in England when the criticism of the antique had completed its labours, we have only to turn to a series of works that have recently been displayed to view in one of the rooms of the Royal Academy. It is now more than ten years ago since John Gibson bequeathed to the Academy a number of plaster casts fairly representing the labour of his life, and if these studies and reliefs could have been exhibited within any reasonable time after the artist's death they would doubtless have created a more favourable impression than can be ex-

pected for them now. For there then existed a stronger belief in the worth of the style in which they are executed.

Gibson's talent was not of the kind that could afford to wait for the judgment of a later generation. It was identified with a movement in art that had been fully developed before he entered upon his career, and which was nearly exhausted before that career had closed. He did little more, indeed, than perpetuate the tradition established by Canova and Thorwaldsen. The pupil of the one and an ardent admirer of both, his art was in truth the legitimate offspring of theirs. With more reserve of sentiment and greater severity of design than the former could command, and a more constant refinement of style than can be claimed for the works of Thorwaldsen, in the matter of invention he was inferior to either. To appreciate his work fairly, therefore, it must be judged in relation to the standard of taste which these men had created; and to measure the value of what he has left us we must decide upon the worth of the movement which they had initiated. In the memoir of Canova, written by Count Cicognara, the learned criticism of Winckelmann is mentioned as one of the principal influences by which the artist was assisted in his endeavour to revive the style of the antique; and to Winckelmann, therefore, we may fitly turn in order to understand what was the exact scope and significance of

that revival. There is perhaps no passage in the writings of the German critic so entirely characteristic of the particular conception of Greek art which he sought to impose upon the world as that in which he discusses the principles of action and movement as applicable to works in sculpture; and there is certainly none that would serve as a more apt comment upon the modern research of classic style as expressed in the works of such men as Canova and Gibson. 'Expression,' says Winckelmann, 'changes the features of the face and the posture of the limbs, and consequently alters those forms which constitute beauty. The greater the change the more unfavourable it is to beauty'; and further, he adds, 'a state of stillness and repose both in man and beast is that state which allows us to examine and discover their real nature and characteristics, just as one sees the bottom of a river only when its waters are still and unruffled; and consequently even art can express her own peculiar nature only in stillness.' Winckelmann, while claiming this as 'the most elevated idea of beauty,' admits, however, that it can never be completely satisfied by art, which has to deal with living human forms; but he is disposed generally to regard action as a necessary evil in sculpture, to be admitted, not for the sake of beauty, but as an indispensable element of truth. It is not difficult to perceive what would be the influence of such a pedantic creed as this when it passed from the

region of criticism and was accepted as a law of practical art. No interpretation, however false or illiberal, can spoil for us the masterpieces we already possess, and from Winckelmann's placid and nerveless version of the antique ideal we can always turn to enjoy the splendid energy that is imaged in the warriors and horses of the Parthenon frieze, or in the conflict of Greeks and amazons on the frieze of the Mausoleum. But the remedy is not so easy when such principles are accepted by artists whose work is yet to be done, and who set out with the attempt to base a new style upon a false and impoverished conception of the old. It was scarcely wonderful that under the influence of this exclusive worship of repose the sense of vitality in art should gradually grow weaker, and be at last extinguished altogether. Nature, with its endless changes of expression, failed to serve as a fit model for a style that was in truth the style of the decadence, and which was forced to go for a confirmation of its principles to the numerous examples of Greek art in decay. In the case of Flaxman, whose work did occasionally preserve the freshness and truth of nature, the triumph was limited to the scope of a purely domestic existence. But, wherever an attempt was made either by him or by others to interpret the beauty of a larger life, and to rise to the dignity of heroic character, the result only proved the poverty of the style that had been so laboriously perfected. For,

as the truth of drama is the supreme effort of literary art, so the truth of action is the highest problem of the arts of design. The sense of repose, which belongs not only to Greek art but to all art—to Michael Angelo no less than to Phidias—was never intended to destroy and suppress, but only to control and govern, energetic expression. It was here that the masters of the modern revival went astray. They missed the vitality of antique art in the desire to reproduce its calm, and blinded by the passionate force of the great masters of the Renaissance, they failed to recognise in them the spirit of artistic control. Hence the research of style never led to a close or strong sympathy with nature. In the living forms of men and women they found more to exclude than to accept, more to suppress than to interpret, until at last they could only satisfy their ideal at the sacrifice of life itself.

In the history of this revival, heralded by Winckelmann, and first made famous by the works of Canova, the name of Gibson deserves to hold a prominent place. No man ever laboured with a more constant fidelity to his principles of art; and in the presence of his collected works we may readily acknowledge the worth of such a career as an example of enthusiasm and rare devotion. In this, indeed, rather than in the art itself, students will find what is worthy of imitation; for, when these works have been dispassionately considered, there can scarcely be any hope or wish that they should

be accepted by younger sculptors as models of style. It is hard to understand how an artist who studied so constantly from nature can have contrived so completely to exclude the sense of nature from his art; and yet, as the sculptor's talent developed, he seems gradually to have become more and more enslaved by what he conceived to be the rules of antique art, and correspondingly inattentive to the facts of actual life. The 'Sleeping Shepherd Boy,' which he executed immediately after his arrival in Rome, carries with it an impression of simple truth that certainly cannot be claimed for many of the essays of a later date, and least of all for the group of 'Theseus and the Robber' that was left unfinished at his death. In this ambitious design the principles upon which Gibson worked may be said to have received their extreme embodiment. The subject demanded the fullest command of energetic expression, but as it is here rendered the action shrinks into insignificance, and the attitude becomes almost ludicrous in its pretence of force. Between these two works illustrating the earlier and the later phases of Gibson's talent, many others might be distinguished that would equally testify to the particular direction of his art. A certain feeling for graceful form he carried through all his design, and with it a simplicity of taste that saved him from vulgar failure. If an invention which is not strong enough to need restraint deserves to be praised for the

uniform control with which it is exercised, then such praise belongs always to Gibson. His art has no trace of the licence or exaggeration that often disfigures the products of more vigorous powers. Its composure and decorum are as complete as Winckelmann himself could have desired; but the tranquillity that he has bestowed upon his creations is that of natures not quick to feel or strong to act. It is, in short, the calm that belongs to an imperfect vitality.

As we contrast Gibson's work with that of Flaxman we may perceive how the growing ascendency of certain pedantic canons of taste had gradually extinguished whatever of vitality the revival originally possessed. Flaxman was by comparison so free in the range of his sympathies that he could enjoy without misgiving the efforts of the early sculptors of the Renaissance. When he was in Italy he made careful studies from their works, and he has left two spirited drawings after Lionardo's passionate composition for the cartoon of the 'Battle of the Standard,' in proof that he could still admire a kind of invention that was as far as possible removed from his own individual aims. But when Gibson entered upon his career the time had passed for such unorthodox diversions of study or taste. He had no choice, even if he had possessed the power or inclination, but to submit himself tranquilly to the strictly established rules of an art that was fast severing its connection with nature in

the desire to conform to certain principles presumably derived from the analysis of the antique. He did his best, we may admit, towards the consummation of a movement that is to be regarded rather as a triumph of criticism than a legitimate victory for art, but the best that he could do only tended to press forward the approaching reaction. As we consider the lifeless elegance of these sculptures so mournfully arrayed in the Academy, our only wonder will be that such reaction was so long delayed. In France, where sculpture has a real existence, the need of a more liberal acceptance of the truths of nature had already been admitted. François Rude had exhibited in 1833 his *Jeune Pêcheur napolitain*, and Barye, two years earlier, had been represented in the Salon by the energetic group of the 'Tiger devouring a Crocodile.' And when they had once escaped from the paralysing restraint of classic tradition the young sculptors of France turned instinctively towards the great masters of the Renaissance. They began to study, with a quickened appreciation of their beauty, the works of their own Jean Goujon and Germain Pilon, and at the same time they were led to seek in the life of the middle ages for the subjects of their design. The history of the sculptor's art in England is so pitifully meagre that we cannot hope to find in it many traces of this recent revival, but there is one English artist, only lately deceased, who was driven by the force of his own

genius to the source from which the new inspiration has been derived. Alfred Stevens was sent in early youth to Italy to study painting, and he returned to England to labour for years as an ornamental sculptor. In Italy he had readily yielded himself to the overpowering fascinations of the art of Florence. Among the sketches sold after his death were to be found numerous careful studies from the early Florentine frescoes, and in every inch of his own original work we may recognise the influence of the Florentine sculptors. The genius of Michael Angelo, which is to be reckoned as perhaps the greatest living force in the art of our time, had left a lasting impress upon the individuality of Stevens, nor did he make any effort to conceal the extent of his indebtedness by any vulgar assertion of an independent style. But although Stevens's art never quite passed beyond the imitative stage, we are not to confuse his devotion to the spirit of the Renaissance with the earlier obedience to the principles of classic taste. The distinction to be noted here is not of degree only but of kind. The modern conception of classicism required the reconciliation of all the essential realities of human passion and character. It curtly refused to bear the burdens of the modern spirit, or to associate itself with forms of expression that could be identified with the life of our time, and it was therefore no wonder that the works produced under its influence gradually lost the

impress of nature, and became at last as cold and spiritless as the marble out of which they had been carved. For it was impossible under such conditions to study nature at all without importing something which academic authority would pronounce inconsistent with the claims of style. When we turn to the masters of the Renaissance we do not find that they exact the same pledges from their worshippers. The ideal of Florence, gradually developed till it culminated in the passionate achievement of Michael Angelo, was based upon a constant endeavour to combine the interpretation of spiritual and physical truth. It never shirked the facts of the flesh, nor did it ever exclude the problems of intellectual life, and in adopting it for his own an artist like Alfred Stevens was not therefore compelled to sacrifice his individuality, or to withdraw his sympathies from the concerns of a present world.

It is not our purpose to attempt any general estimate of Stevens's powers, or to follow the growth of his talent as it successively employed itself upon the different forms of decorative design. His name has been mentioned because he stands alone among English sculptors in his appreciation of the new departure which art has taken, and of the larger opportunities which are thus offered to the artist. But in order to be convinced that he himself possessed the resources needed to carry these ideas into practice we need only recall to

mind the group of Valour and Cowardice, forming part of the Wellington monument, which was exhibited two years ago in the Royal Academy. When we consider the familiar and homely character of nearly all the sculpture that has been produced in this country, it becomes difficult to understand how Stevens so entirely escaped the prevailing influence as to rise to the dignity of this invention, or how he was enabled to find support for the cultivation of so broad and large a style as he has here displayed. Nor is this sense of breadth of style more remarkable than the simplicity and regard to nature with which the design has been worked out. There is no exaggeration of gesture, no seeking for effect by emphasis of character either in the forms or the faces of the two figures that make up the group, and yet by no artifice or violence of action could the sense of power have been so impressively rendered as by the grand repose of this seated figure, who bears in either hand the symbols of victory. The fine and almost delicate female form expressed through the most simple arrangement of drapery is far enough removed from the vulgar type of military prowess, and the calm face half-shadowed by the hood of the projecting lion's skin that covers the head and falls over the shoulders bears no trace of the excitement or exultation that might commonly be associated with valour. The conception penetrates deeper than this, and strives to present to us a

type of courage that bears itself gravely in the presence of danger, and is not forgetful of the terrible experience of conflict. In the firm lips, touched with a sadness that is almost tender, we get the sense of a character ready but not eager for triumph, and partly oppressed by the recollection of a fate from which not even valour may escape ; while in the large limbs prepared for movement, and in the arms outstretched on either side and supported with a strength that can afford repose, the artist has subtly marked the reserve of power that lies beneath this grave composure. The right hand of Valour grasps a heavy club, the base of which rests upon a large shield, and beneath this again is the crushed form of Cowardice, a male figure of heroic mould, whose face, thrust forward with a sudden gesture, comes into complete but very delicate contrast with the face of Valour ; for the artist, with the instinct of genius that chooses always the deeper and less emphatic modes of expressing character, has not selected a decidedly ignoble type for the head of Cowardice, but has represented the massive features disturbed and troubled by an ignoble excitement. True both to the imagination and to the artistic requirements of his subject, he has chosen this as the main element of distinction between the two parts of his group. All the action and energy of the design is compressed into the lower figure, and all the repose and calm of expression into the figure of Valour, and in these contrasted facts

of outward bearing we get the key to the artist's conception of the deeper contrast of moral qualities. The face of the victress is grave but not troubled, and her form, though it is disposed in quiet, leaves the conviction of strength; whereas in the face of Cowardice every feature is thrown into movement, and the great form writhes in every limb with the fruitless effort to get free.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

SMITH, ELDER, & CO.'S NEW BOOKS.

Just published, 2 vols. demy 8vo. 28*s.*

LIFE and LETTERS of SYDNEY DOBELL.

EDITED BY E. J.

With Steel Portrait and Photographic Illustrations.

The CLASSIC POETS: their Lives and their Times.
WITH THE EPICS EPITOMISED. By W. T. DOBSON.
Crown 8vo. 9*s.*

SKETCHES and STUDIES in ITALY. By JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS, Author of 'Renaissance in Italy' &c. Crown 8vo.

PATCHWORK. By FREDERICK LOCKER. Small crown 8vo. 5*s.*

MIXED ESSAYS. By MATTHEW ARNOLD. Crown 8vo.

HOURS in a LIBRARY. By LESLIE STEPHEN, Author of 'History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century' &c. &c. THIRD SERIES. Crown 8vo.

CONTENTS:—Massinger—Fielding—Cowper and Rousseau—Edinburgh Reviewers—Wordsworth's Ethics—Landor—Macaulay—Charlotte Brontë—Kingsley.

WILD LIFE in a SOUTHERN COUNTY. By the Author of 'The Gamekeeper at Home.' Crown 8vo.

SKETCHES from SHADY PLACES. Crown 8vo.

ETHICS and ÆSTHETICS of MODERN POETRY. By J. B. SELKIRK. Crown 8vo. 7*s.*

NEW EDITIONS.

SKETCHES in ITALY and GREECE. By JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS, Author of 'Renaissance in Italy' &c. &c. Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 9*s.*

The GAMEKEEPER at HOME; or, Sketches of Natural History, Poaching, and Rural Life. Third Edition. Crown 8vo. 5*s.*

NEW NOVELS JUST PUBLISHED.

NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE ROSE GARDEN.'

CARTOUCHE.

By the 'Author of 'The Rose Garden' &c. 2 vols. post 8vo.

'FOR PERCIVAL.'

By MARGARET VELEY. 3 vols.

NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF 'FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD.'

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE.

By THOMAS HARDY,
Author of 'Far from the Madding Crowd,' 'The Hand of Ethelberta,' &c. 3 vols.

NEW NOVELS NEARLY READY.

The ARTFUL VICAR. By the Author of 'The Member for Paris' &c. 2 vols.

The WORLD SHE AWOKE IN. A Narrative. By LIZZIE ALLDRIDGE, Author of By Love and Law.' 3 vols.

London: SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 Waterloo Place.

NEW AND CHEAPER ILLUSTRATED EDITION
OF
THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
W. M. THACKERAY
IN TWENTY-FOUR MONTHLY VOLUMES,

Price 3*s.* 6*d.*

Nearly all the small Woodcut Illustrations will appear in this Edition, and for those volumes which have not hitherto had the advantage of such embellishment, NEW ILLUSTRATIONS will be supplied by Eminent Artists.

VOLUMES NOW READY.

VANITY FAIR. Illustrated by the Author. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.* each.

PENDENNIS. With Illustrations by the Author. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.* each.

THE NEWCOMES. Illustrated by RICHARD DOYLE. 2 vols. 3*s.* 6*d.* each.

ESMOND. Illustrated by GEORGE DU MAURIER. 3*s.* 6*d.*

THE VIRGINIANS. 2 vols. Illustrated by the Author. Crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.* each.

THE ADVENTURES OF PHILIP. With Illustrations by the Author, FREDERICK WALKER, and R. B. WALLACE. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.* each.

THE GREAT HOGGARTY DIAMOND; A LITTLE DINNER AT TIMMINS'S; CORNHILL TO CAIRO. Illustrated by the Author. 1 vol. crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.*

CHRISTMAS BOOKS. Illustrated by the Author and RICHARD DOYLE. CONTENTS:—Mrs. Perkins's Ball; Our Street; Dr. Birch; Kickleburys on the Rhine; Rebecca and Rowena. 1 vol. crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.*

THE BOOK OF SNOBS: TRAVELS and SKETCHES. Illustrated by the Author. 1 vol. crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.*

BURLESQUES. Illustrated by the Author and GEORGE CRUIKSHANK. CONTENTS:—Novels by Eminent Hands; A Prize Novel; Jeames's Diary and Letters; History of the next French Revolution; A Legend of the Rhine; Major Gahagan. 1 vol. crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.*

A New Volume will be published on the First of each Month, till the conclusion of the Series.

OPINIONS ON THE FIRST VOLUMES OF THE SERIES.

'A cheap and yet elegant edition. The type is distinct, the paper is good, and the insertion of the author's own illustrations adds much to the attractions of an issue that ought to prove popular.' ATHENÆUM.

'We can heartily congratulate readers on the opportunity now offered of obtaining so handsome an edition at so cheap a rate. The type, paper, and binding are excellent.' DAILY NEWS.

'The new edition, which is to be complete in twenty-four volumes, has all the dear old woodcuts, so full of significance, so oddly pathetic, so quaintly humorous, so characteristic of their draughtsman. Good paper, sharp, clear type, and tasteful binding, ought to make this latest edition a genuine success.' THE WORLD.

'Thackeray's works, with nearly all the small woodcuts and some new ones, may now be bought for 3*s.* 6*d.* a volume. The first of the twenty-four volumes to be issued at this remarkably low price has now been published; and, as we look through the beautifully printed pages of "Vanity Fair," and scan for the thousandth time the well-remembered portraits, we would fain add another wreath to the crown of bays with which the world marked the literary immortality of William Makepeace Thackeray.' WHITEHALL REVIEW.

'This new edition of Thackeray's novels is got up in a style that deserves commendation, and the fact that the majority of Thackeray's own illustrations are used will add to the attractiveness of the volumes.' ALBION.

'A good many readers of books nowadays may very well have forgotten the illustrations as they first appeared, and, indeed, they take you back to a time long ago. That, however, will make the edition of greater value. If there be households into which Thackeray's works have not yet come, it may be expected that this edition will remove the reproach.' SCOTSMAN.

London: SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 Waterloo Place.

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH DAY AND TO $1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY OVERDUE.

NOV REC'D LD

FEB 10 1933

APR 4 1935

25May'54DD

MAY 11 1954 LU

17May'63ZF

REC'D LD

MAY 16 1963

DEC 17 1968 2

JAN 2 1969 28

JAN 16'69 -2 PM

LD 21-50m-8,'32

YC113713

N1445
C36

221496

Carr