HENRIETTA RAE

(MRS. ERNEST NORMAND)

ARTHUR FISH

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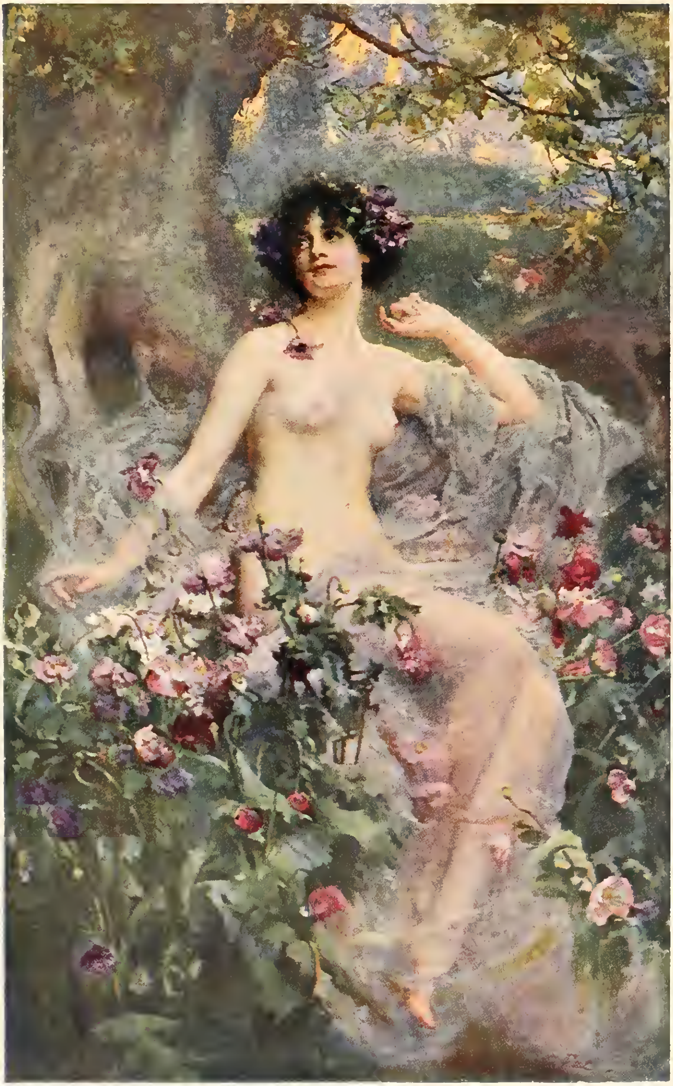

SONGS OF THE MORNING.

HENRIETTA RAE

(MRS. ERNEST NORMAND)

BY

ARTHUR FISH

WITH EIGHT REPRODUCTIONS IN COLOUR
AND THIRTY-TWO OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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UNIFORM WITH THIS WORK.

SIR LAWRENCE
ALMA-TADEMA,
O.M., R.A.

BY PERCY CROSS STANDING.

With Photogravure Portrait, Four Illustrations in Colour, and numerous others in Black and White.

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PREFACE.

In presenting this record of Mrs. Normand's work it is necessary that I should acknowledge fully and unreservedly the assistance which Mr. Ernest Normand has accorded in its preparation. Without his help the book could not have been written, for from him alone could be obtained the information which it contains. With unfailing courtesy and kindly patience he has devoted many hours of the past summer to the orderly arraying of facts and incidents in the career of his wife; to the searching of faded documents and letters for the verification of memory notes, and, indeed, to endless trouble to secure the accurate presentation of this biography.

Thanks, too, are due to the owners of pictures who have allowed their reproduction in this book. There are but few instances in which the request has met with refusal, or conditions suggested that have been unacceptable by the publishers. Generally speaking, it has been possible, by the courtesy of the various owners, to present a series of illustrations whereby the growth and development of Mrs. Normand's art can be traced from its beginning.

A. F.

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HENRIETTA RAE

(MRS. ERNEST NORMAND).

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE chronicle of events in the life of a woman artist is in the natural order of things a circumscribed one. As a rule there is little exciting, little out of the way to record; the record is comprised of a few years of study, a few years of work more or less successful in its results, a great many efforts and few achievements of note; making a sum total of a life of placidity tempered with seasons of disappointment. To compile such a chronicle while the artist is in full vigour of life, with her best ideals still unfulfilled, but determinedly hopeful of realisation, is perhaps a little premature. It can only be justified by the fact that the artist has accomplished work which has been submitted for judgment in the world's art centres and received with favour; work which has made her name prominent among those of the women-painters of to-day, and marked her career with success. Mrs. Normand herself, as becomes an artist, is, it is needless to say, dissatisfied with her productions; she believes that her best work is yet to be accomplished—was there ever an artist who did not so long as life remained? The ideal is ever in view, but like the Fata Morgana it eludes the grasp just when it appears to be within reach. The finished work is always unsatisfactory: it is that which is not yet begun that is to be the "masterpiece." So Mrs. Normand is never sparing in self-criticism and self-depreciation; as an artist she is without vanity.

It must be borne in mind that the position of women in art has only quite recently been definitely assigned, and that even now in England official honours as artists are denied them because they are women. While acknowledging women to be possessed of fine, even acute, taste in art matters, of a sensitive artistic temperament, and great capabilities of its expression, men, in their folly, have declined to go further. Public facilities for the acquisition of technical knowledge and training in relation to art—always under the control of men—have been grudgingly granted to women. When a woman has succeeded as an artist it has been in spite of the lack of such facilities, and by sheer force of will and talent. For instance, when Mrs. Normand gained entrance to the Royal Academy Schools, women students were not allowed to draw from the undraped model: a serious handicap in the race for artistic proficiency, and an altogether illogical restriction. She and her fellow girl-students had proved themselves, by the Academy's own test, suitably efficient for tuition in its classes; but, with a perversity that is beyond understanding, it declined to give them full advantage of the means at its disposal for their instruction and improvement. Did they wish to acquire the indispensable knowledge to be gained only by the study of the model? Then they must themselves provide the material—the Academy could, or rather would not.

This and many other anomalies in the art-training of women have now been removed, and they are given equal facilities with the men in the acquisition of knowledge and experience. But the full recognition of women artists by the Royal Academy is still withheld. The reason would be difficult to state. In the early days of its existence women were included in the membership, and there is nothing in its instrument of foundation to debar others from election, but the honour is steadfastly refused. The prejudice has been challenged again and again, and on one occasion a woman missed an associateship by one vote only. During the last thirty years several women have been fully worthy of election, but beyond accepting their works for the annual exhibition the Academy has not recognised their claims. Other important societies have long since broken the barriers which excluded women from their membership, and have thus fallen into line with the fact that woman is a force in the art of to-day.

It is, of course, readily granted that women are handicapped by nature against the attainment of high distinction in the practice of art. Those who overcame these inherent difficulties when facilities for doing so were rare, or non-existent, were but few; and even in these days when with equal training facilities with their male competitors the numbers who pass the preliminary exercise are many, those who achieve distinction are startlingly few. Their staying powers are not to be relied upon; there are so many other considerations to claim attention that art is—regretfully, without doubt—relegated to a secondary, or even lower, position in their lives. There have been women students in the various art schools who have exhibited talent of extraordinary power, who when the student days were over have disappeared from the world of art: the promise has failed when it has come to the point where practical work commenced. Some there are, like the late Rosa Bonheur, who disowning, or at least disregarding, their sex, rigorously exclude everything that would stand between them and their art; but it must be confessed that these are so few that the artist named stands alone as having attained distinction. But on the other hand there are some who have been willing to take all the responsibilities pertaining to them as women, and in spite of them have asserted their skill as artists. The fact has proved them possessed of the artistic temperament in the highest degree; a temperament capable of overcoming adverse circumstances, and finding expression in works which exhibit ability and force far above the average level of merit.

Such is the position of Mrs. Ernest Normand; in spite of her sex she is an artist, and a successful artist, too. Without any special advantages in her circumstances, she has achieved success in the usual ordinary manner: by sheer persistent hard work; by a strong, determined fight against the disabilities and discouragements that hinder a woman in the battle of life. In this she has, it is true, been fortunate in her husband, for in him she has had a ready helpmeet, who has done all that was possible to make the road smooth for her; who has relieved her of all business responsibilities, and who has, moreover, worked side by side with her from her student days. This has all meant much to her in her artistic career. This close and harmonious association with a fellow artist, with its intimate criticism and encouragement, could not be otherwise than advantageous. Each has worked on independent lines, so that, despite the intimacy, there is no undue influence of the one apparent in the art of the other. They have always worked together in one studio, compared ideas, discussed compositions and ways and means of execution, yet their actual output of work has been totally dissimilar.

To say that Mrs. Normand has not been influenced at all by her husband in her art would be obviously absurd, but the influence has not been solely and directly upon her art. It has rather been such as is exercised by a strong companion on a physically weak person in a time of danger. The knowledge that her position was always secure nerved her to venturesome effort; she was encouraged to "try her strength," and did so, knowing that her husband had full belief in her powers—even if she herself faltered. He was there with his criticism, with practical assistance in questions of perspective and other abstruse technicalities, and, withal, with his cheerful incitement to full effort. But beyond this the influence was not exercised; the art of Henrietta Rae and that of Ernest Normand are distinct and separate; each is independent of the other in subject, style, and technique. No better opportunity to judge this could be afforded than in the comparison of the two wall-paintings in the Royal Exchange. Painted in the same studio, under the same conditions, by two artists trained in the same schools, under the same masters, who had worked together for nearly twenty years, yet there is not the slightest trace of similarity visible throughout the two pictures. It is the more curious in that Mrs. Normand has a peculiarly sensitive temperament, artistically, which several times has proved itself amenable to outside influences. But even then her artistic individuality soon reasserted its authority, and, generally speaking, her pictures betray no marked impression of extraneous influence.

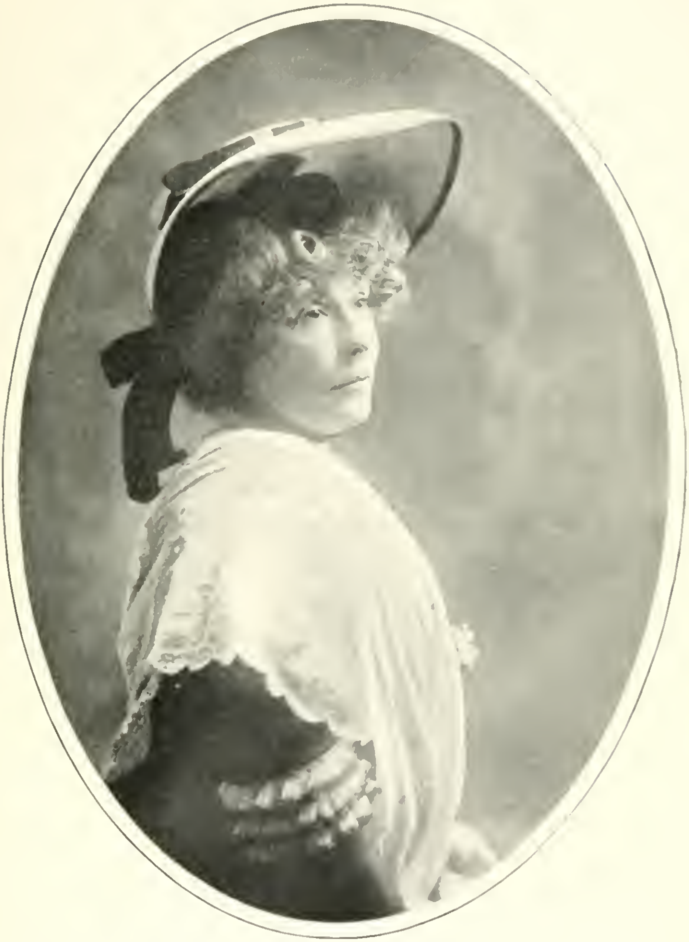
The work already accomplished by Mrs. Normand affords sufficient evidence that her life has been a strenuous one: each year has witnessed some addition to the list of her pictures. Success has reduced the strain of necessitous and continuous work, and leisure is afforded for more thoughtful choice of subject and its application. So that it may be taken that this record is but preliminary. There is to be a residence in Italy, and doubtless there will be renewed and invigorated effort in response to the influence of classic scenes and atmosphere.

CHAPTER II.

1859–1878.

Early Life and Studies.

HENRIETTA RAE was born at Hammersmith in 1859, but her first recollections are centred at Holloway, where her childhood was passed. Her father, a kindly, indulgent man with his three sons and four daughters (of whom Henrietta was the youngest), held an appointment in the Civil Service; her mother, a musical artist of great ability, was at one time a pupil of Mendelssohn. Mr. Rae appears to have done his best to impress his children that life was, after all, not a very serious matter, and was, in return, loved devotedly by them. As honorary secretary of the Whittington Club, a Bohemian society of literary and dramatic gentlemen which met in Arundel Street, he was acquainted with many of the leading members of these two professions, among whom were Thackeray, Dickens, Mark Lemon, Dion Boucicault, and many others who have since become famous in the world of letters and histrionic art. In connection with this club an interesting letter from Thackeray to Mr. Thomas Burbey Rae was published in the *English Illustrated Magazine* for



HENRIETTA RAE

(Mrs. Ernest Normand.

From a Photograph by Kate Pragnell, Brompton Square

November, 1904, from which it would appear that Thackeray was treasurer to the club and had to advance money for its liabilities:—

13, Young Street, Kensington,
July 18, 1848.

My Dear Sir,

Times have been bad with me, and I have not been able until now to spare the sum necessary for the gas company and Major Smyth. I have now £30 at your orders, for which I send a cheque.

Will you kindly acknowledge it, and send me the receipt of the Gas Company?

Very Faithfully Yours, Dear Sir,
To T. B. Rae, Esq. W. M. Thackeray.

There was connected with the club an amateur theatrical section that was famous in its day, and the honorary secretary himself had strong inclinations dramatically, for among Mrs. Normand's earlier recollections are theatrical evenings at home in which William Terriss and W. S. Penley were prominent participants. Recollections of fun, merriment and music, in which she, as the youngest child, took no more active part than that of listener.

Mrs. Rae, herself, undertook the development of such musical tastes as the children possessed, but for some reason—possibly the inaptitude of the pupil—the musical education of Henrietta was of a very desultory nature. There was no severe grounding in the theory and practice of music such as had been given to the elder sisters, but chief attention was devoted to the development and training of her voice for concert use. It was, indeed, her mother's intention that she should become a professional singer, it being necessary that a means of livelihood and self-support should be provided. The limited income of the head of the family, and the increasing demands of the growing family, precluded the possibility of the formation of a reserve fund of any extent, and it was foreordained that the girls as well as the boys would have to be self-supporting.

Henrietta was not thought to be possessed of any special ability, and beyond the singing lessons, to which reference has been made, her education was, in a general sense, irregular and desultory in character. One of her elder sisters was considered to have artistic tastes and proclivities, and was provided with drawing materials by an uncle, Mr. Charles Rae, who had been one of Cruikshank's pupils and worked in his master's manner. The child found interest in her sister's exercises, and through her, vicariously, her artistic cravings found expression until such time as she could herself use a pencil. But there is no precocious display of talent to record, or even extraordinary skill in her childish attempts at drawing. Nothing, in fact, to suggest the desirability of regular training. So the time went on until she was nearly thirteen years of age, when the musical career planned by her mother seemed to be her prospective destination. She received her preliminary engagement as a professional singer, and earned two guineas by singing at a concert "Meet me by moonlight alone" and "Sigh no more, Ladies." But her thoughts were all for art: her efforts to draw were incessant, and absorbed every moment of liberty. Some, by chance, attracted the attention of her artist-uncle, who at once desired to see more, and found in them sufficient promise to justify a recommendation to an art training. Her father at once agreed to accept the recommendation, and Henrietta was entered as a pupil of the Queen Square School—now the Royal Female School of Art. Hand in hand with her father, whose habit it was to walk each day to his office in Bedford Row, she went from Holloway to Bloomsbury to her lessons. At the school she obtained her first experience in regularity and discipline, and doubtless it was all exceedingly dull and unpleasant.

Art training in those days was a most serious and depressing business, especially to a young, vivacious pupil. A rigorously enjoined course of freehand drawing (so-called) was in itself sufficient to cure an ordinary craving for the artistic life, and the irresponsible spirit of Henrietta Rae rebelled against its deadly dull routine. This was but the very "dry bones" of art; she was longing for something more attractive and inviting. When opportunity afforded the arid wastes of freehand would be deserted for the more desirable oasis of the life-class, but the order to return to the drudgery was always peremptory and immediate.

Two years were thus passed without any distinct advance being made. The young student wanted to get to business with paint, brush, and palette, but the only opportunity afforded her to indulge her fancy was during the vacation. Then free rein was given to her desire; with brown paper in lieu of canvas and old colour-tubes from her uncle's paint-box she painted everything that her imagination suggested, or, at least, endeavoured to do so. The efforts delighted her father, who discovered in them evidences of genius of no ordinary variety. The crude attempts of the child to express herself in colour were magnified by parental admiration into masterpieces of art. They were exhibited for the edification of friends and callers, who, it must be recorded, were not impressed by them to the same extent as the proud father. But the time spent on these early efforts was not wasted; the experience gained in the use of colour, in the drawing from nature, even if the results were not altogether satisfactory, was all useful. It opened to the young student's eyes the possibilities that were before her, and increased her desire to extend her knowledge by other means than those afforded by the School of Art.

The outcome of it was the determination to join the ranks of the free-lances who studied art in the Antique Galleries of the British Museum, and in 1874 this was done. "Life went very well then"; the morning walk with her father was extended to the Museum gates, and the day was passed in the company of kindred spirits amid the glorious fragments of classic art. The galleries were crowded with students of both sexes, who vied with each other in rendering in black and white the glories of the Elgin marbles. Work was interspersed with talk; there was much interchange of criticism, of thoughts not always immediately connected with the work of the moment; flirtations alternated with spasmodic attacks of serious drawing. There were difficulties of foreshortening that could only be surmounted by the aid of a more skilful student, and plans, and hopes, and fears for the future to be discussed and advised upon. It was under these circumstances that Mr. and Mrs. Normand first met, and commenced the friendship which culminated in marriage.

The immediate goal of these Museum students was the Royal Academy School, and all their efforts were centred upon the necessary qualification of proficiency in drawing. It could only be acquired by diligent and unceasing labour, and the environments were not altogether conducive to that. Miss Rae, in any case, found it difficult to bring her mind to it; but in spite of dilatoriness and intermittent industry her natural facility enabled her to make a good show, sufficient to win the esteem of her fellow students as of one above their average. The earnest desire to become an artist, which really existed despite the apparent lack of interest, again prompted her to adopt further methods of advancement, and the study at the Museum was supplemented by attendance at the evening classes at Heatherley's School of Art in Newman Street, in which she was the first woman pupil.

"Heatherley's" was the leading School of Art of the day, and was the recognised recruiting ground for the Royal Academy Schools. It carried on the traditions of Leigh's, of which it was the direct successor, and among its pupils may be counted many of the most prominent artists of our time. Mr. Heatherley—who, at the time of writing, is still living—seems to have been as distinct a personality in his school as was Mr. Sass, that other celebrated art master, of whom Mr. Frith has recorded so much in his "Reminiscences." On one occasion a student who was to carry home a canvas was much concerned that he could not cover it sufficiently to hide it from the eyes of the public: he "did not want everyone to know he was an artist." "Carry it with the painted side outwards and no one will make that mistake," was the master's retort. Once there was extra noise from the students on the staircase, and Heatherley, coming from his room, asked them "to be kind enough not to bray so loudly."

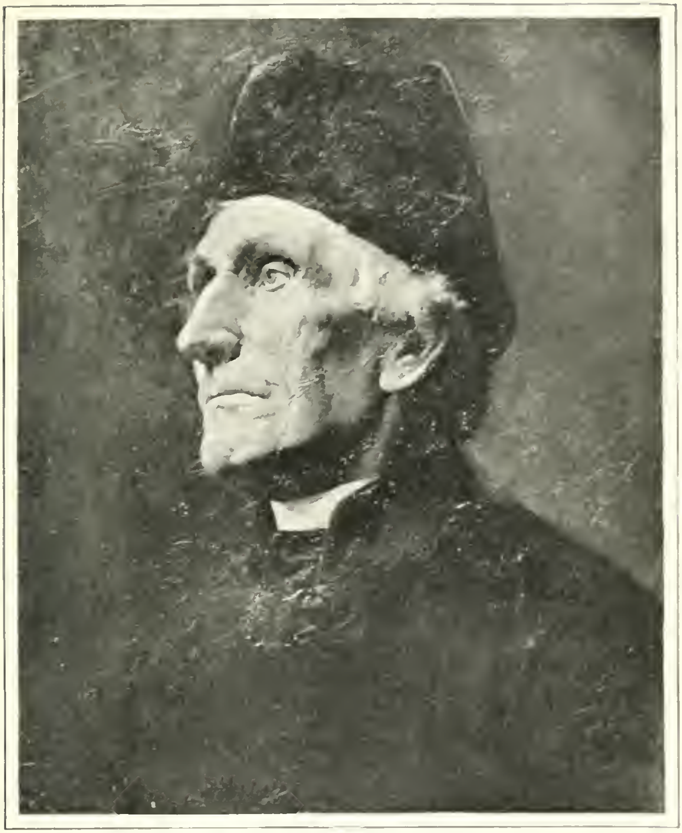
Among those who were contemporary with Mrs. Normand at Heatherley's were Messrs. S. J. Solomon, A.R.A., Blair Leighton, T. C. Gotch, Claude Hayes, and H. M. and Sidney Paget.

At this time then our student had settled down to a course of steady hard work—in the daytime at the British Museum, in the evenings at Heatherley's. She fully realised that it was necessary, for her art was to be no mere "accomplishment" but a means whereby she was to live; she was to be a professional artist, not a dilettante amateur with Art as a recreation. Her first effort then was directed towards securing entry into the Royal Academy Schools, with its course of free tuition and study. The conditions under which students were admitted as probationers were less difficult in those days than they are at present, for with the greatly increased number of applicants the terms of the competitive test have become considerably more severe. Students of painting were then required to send with their application papers "as a specimen of ability a finished drawing in chalk, about two feet high, of an undraped antique statue; or if of the 'Theseus' or of the 'Ilyssus' (the only mutilated figures admissible) it must be accompanied by drawings of a head, hand, and foot."

If this drawing was approved the student was admitted to a three months' probationership, in which time another set of drawings was to be completed. This set comprised another finished drawing from an undraped antique statue, and outline drawings of the same figure anatomised, showing the bones and muscles with references to each particular anatomical point. If these drawings, with the first one submitted, were considered satisfactory by the Council, the probationer was duly admitted as a student for a period of seven years.

It was not until 1877, after five unsuccessful attempts, that Henrietta Rae gained the coveted goal. The failures were not altogether due to inability to pass the test, for on one occasion her name appeared on the list of those accepted as students, and then it was found that the number of vacancies was exceeded by one, and her name was struck off. At the fifth trial she was excluded from the final competition. The old dilatoriness had reasserted itself; drawing from the antique had probably becoming irksome, and its monotony was varied by the young girl student with exercises in caricature, with the curator as a subject. At the next attempt, six months later, admission was obtained, and the seven years' studentship entered upon.

They were halcyon days, full of the joy of life; a time of good feeling and companionship, and, above all, of hard work. There was a brilliant band of students at the Academy,



M. LE CURE.

A Royal Academy School Study

and competition must have been keen. Among others were Margaret Dicksee, Alfred Gilbert, Arthur Hacker, Solomon J. Solomon, H. H. La Thangue, Stanhope Forbes, A. S. Cope, Melton Fisher, and Ernest Normand, all of whom, with two exceptions, had entered the schools with no other preliminary training than that gained in the galleries of the British Museum. With such competitors there can hardly be cause for surprise that none of the medals or scholarships fell to the lot of Henrietta Rae. Among the students themselves she was always first favourite; her facility won their admiration and confidence, of which they were always ready to assure her. Repeated disappointments failed to shake their belief in her ability, but their confidence continued misplaced. At the critical moment she always failed. In spite of this her popularity with the students remained; when she was late at the life class positions already taken were willingly sacrificed to her belated choice; her studies were eagerly bought by them—not at princely prices certainly, but the fact that they were bought at all exhibited a high degree of appreciation.

There were, too, at this time, indulgencies in the way of little studies on her own account, portraits of children, which brought in small but welcome amounts to her exchequer. Money was wanted to keep matters going, and as soon as proficiency was gained it was put to service. Studies executed in the schools were disposed of through Stannard, the frame maker, and every effort was made to prove that she was attaining practical success.

To supply the deficiency of the Academy School in respect to women students and the study from the undraped model, a proposal was made by Miss Margaret Dicksee to her fellow students that they should form a life class of their own on co-operative principles. The proposal was enthusiastically received, and the class instituted in Mr. Dicksee's studio in Fitzroy Square. The attendances were made in the evening after the day's work at the Academy.

Among the visitors to the schools at this time were Professor von Herkomer, Sir L. Alma-Tadema, Mr. Frank Dicksee, and Mr. W. P. Frith, and of these Sir Alma-Tadema chiefly influenced Miss Rae. At one time, indeed, she passed through a "Tadema phase," from which arose an interesting incident. On one of the occasions of that artist's "visitorship" he posed the model in the attitude of one of the figures in his picture "Sappho," and Miss Rae's study attracted his attention. Taking her brush he commenced to work on her canvas, and after a short time it assumed the appearance of one of his original works. The pupil was delighted at the prospect afforded by such a possession, a delight that was cut short by the artist saying, "There, that's what I wanted to show you,"—and wiping out all his work.

CHAPTER III.

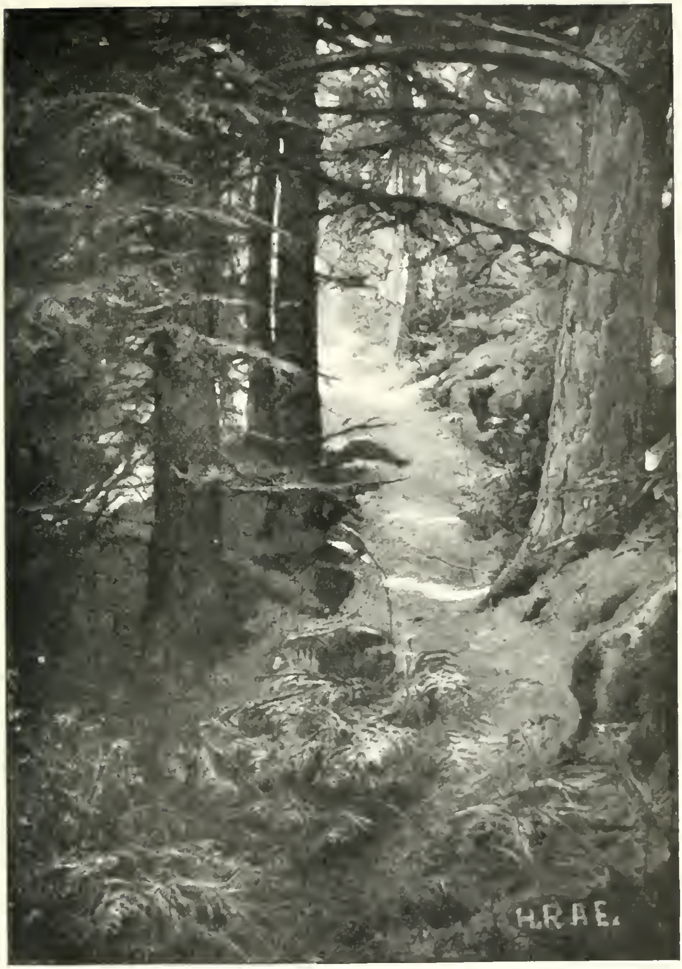
1879–1884.

Practical Work: Early Exhibits and Commissions: Marriage.

IN the second year of her studentship at the Academy Schools Miss Rae ventured to send to the Royal Society of British Artists a small landscape for the Spring exhibition, which was duly accepted. The catalogue entry of this, her first exhibited work, stands "'Sketch near Lee,' £3. 3. 0." At the following winter exhibition of the same society she was represented by two landscapes: "A Glimpse of Sunshine," and "The way is dark and cold and drear." At the Dudley Gallery Exhibition of the same period—the winter of 1879–80—her first figure subject, a portrait study of herself in Empire costume, was shown under the title of "La fille de l'Ancienne Noblesse."

In 1880 the name of Henrietta Rae appeared for the first time in the Royal Academy Catalogue, in connection with a figure entitled "Chloe," which, again, was a portrait study of herself. Work at the schools was varied with landscape study from nature during the ensuing summer, and the principal result was an oil study, "Through the Woods" (a reminiscence of the Redlands, Coldharbour), which appeared at the winter exhibition at Suffolk Street of 1880–1. It is of interest that the catalogue price of this work is £7 7 0—more than double that of her first exhibit of two years previous.

By this time Mr. Ernest Normand and Miss Henrietta Rae had determined to link their fortunes together, and the engagement was duly announced and ratified. Marriage was an event connected with "the dim and distant future," and the meantime was to be occupied by each with hard work and strenuous study for the provision of current necessities. A friendship with John Steeple, the water-colour painter—who took a practical interest in the young couple—led to several introductions whereby grist was brought to their mill. Principal among these was that to Mr. Samuel Thacker, who purchased several of Miss Rae's school studies, and in 1881 commissioned her to paint portraits of his two children. In that year she was represented at the British Artists' Spring exhibition by two head studies, which were catalogued "A Study from Life" and "A Bavarian Peasant Girl," and one of these brought her first outside commission. A Leicester clergyman's attention was attracted by the style and handling, and he wrote to her—although he addressed his letter to "H. Rae, Esq."—ex-



THROUGH THE WOODS.

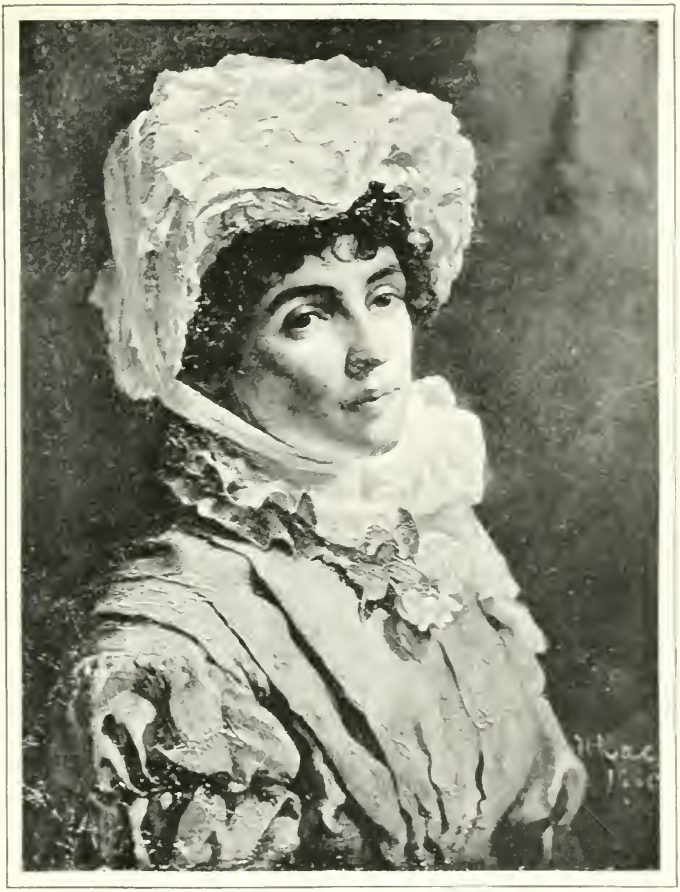
Charcoal Drawing.

pressing his appreciation, and his desire for a portrait of himself by the same artist. Mrs. Normand relates the subsequent story as follows: "As I then had no studio I made an appointment to see him in the corridor of the Academy Schools. I can see his surprised look now as a girl student came tripping along, with heels clattering on the stone pavement, bearing his visiting card. 'I want to see Mr. Rae,' he began. 'There is no one else here of the name of Rae,' I replied. 'But H. Rae, whose head study I have seen at the Society of British Artists,' he urged; and he was quite put out when I explained that it was my signature."

The matter was, however, definitely arranged and the commission duly given. The difficulty connected with the want of a studio was surmounted by Mr. Normand becoming the responsible tenant for one situate at 5, Fitzroy Square, next to that of Mr. Dicksee. Here the sittings for the portrait were given and the work finished early in 1882.

In 1881 there are other exhibits to be noted. At the Royal Academy there was a portrait of Miss Warman, and at the Black and White Exhibition at the Dudley Gallery a charcoal study of the British Artists' landscape of the previous winter, and another entitled "Still Waters." The first of these drawings s here reproduced, and the illustration, though greatly reduced, will serve to show the feeling of the artist at this time for landscape. The colour-studies which she—or her husband—have managed to retain prove, indeed, that she possessed all the ability for the making of a successful landscape painter. Her inclinations, too, tended in that direction, but necessity knows no law and makes no concessions to preference. Money had to be earned, and portrait painting pointed to a possible means to that end. The reproductions of the portrait of Miss Warman, and of an Academy School study, "M. le Curé," executed about this time, will show the style of the painter and how exactly opposite it is to that of her work of to-day. In the latter there is minute, almost pre-Raphaelite handling in the brush-work, with a subdued scheme of colour: the careful, laboured work of a young student gradually feeling her way to an individualist means of expression.

The winter exhibition at Suffolk Street of 1881–2 contained two studies, "The Time of Roses" and "A Day's Sketching," which were sent from the Fitzroy Square studio, and which were her last contributions to that gallery. Eighteen hundred and eighty-two was a busy year. In addition to the portrait of the Rev. W. Beardmore (of Leicester), already referred to, there were five other portraits executed, one of which, "Ernest Normand, Esq.," represented her work at the Royal Academy. The others were a three-quarter length of Mrs. S. Thacker, two of Mr. George Barten Normand,



MISS WARMAN.

By Permission of T. Watt Cafe, Esq.

her future father-in-law, and one of Mr. W. A. Surridge.

In 1883 further progress was made, for Henrietta Rae's name appears twice in the Royal Academy Catalogue with "Miriam"—a school study—and a portrait of Miss Lilian Woodcock, a commission brought about by the further good offices of John Steeple, who had introduced the young artist to his dealer, Mr. Woodcock. To this gentleman went also her first subject picture "Love's Young Dream," which was painted in this year. Mr. Steeple himself showed a practical interest in her welfare by purchasing the "Sappho" study and others executed in the schools and by giving her a commission to paint his wife's portrait. These works were dispersed at the sale of Mr. Steeple's belongings after his death, and all trace of them has unfortunately been lost. The study of "Miriam" was purchased in the Academy by C. Sharland, Esq., and another, "Passion Flowers," was also acquired by that gentleman in this year. A charcoal landscape study, which was exhibited at the Mendoza Gallery, was also sold, the purchaser being Mr. G. P. Baker.

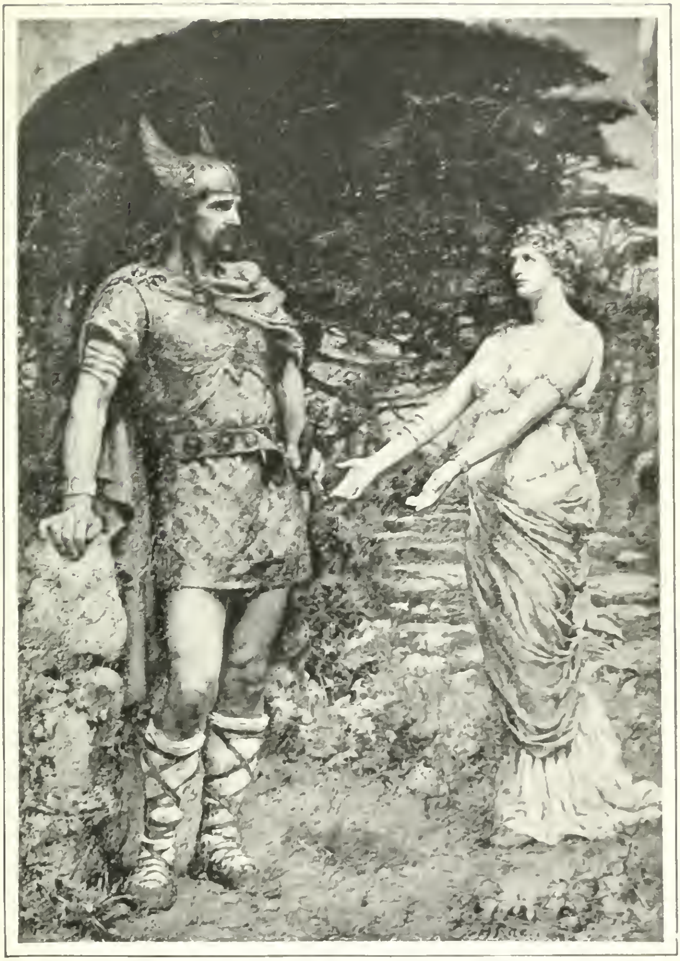
The following year was an eventful one in the life of Mrs. Normand; the success of 1883 was followed by the acceptance for the Academy Exhibition of the most important figure picture she had yet painted—"Lancelot and Elaine." Elaborate pains were taken to secure a good result. The dress of Lancelot was designed and worked out by the artist and careful studies made in the grounds of the Crystal Palace for the background of foliage. The picture, of course, illustrates the story as given by Tennyson in his "Idylls of the King," and is based on the following passage:—

" . . . . one morn it chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,
Seeing I go to-day;' then out she brake:

'Going? and we shall never see you more,
And I must die for want of one bold word.'
'Speak; that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:

'I have gone mad. I love you; let me die!'
'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'
And innocently extending her white arms,
'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be your wife.'"

As may be seen from the reproduction of the picture it is an ambitious effort for a young artist, and if she has caught the pose of the models and overlooked the passion that surged through the originals of the characters they were representing, this and much else must be forgiven. The great thing for her was that the picture was hung—and fairly well hung—in the Academy Exhibition. The crowning success of its sale did not, unfortunately, follow, and it now serves as a record of a style which the artist never indulged in before



LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

or since. "The artist-colourman's friend" is the fitting name that has been bestowed upon it from the amount of paint used in its execution.

Other work of this year was a replica of "Love's Young Dream," which was made for Mr. Steeple, and portraits of John Steeple and George Underbay, Esq.

But the most important event of 1884 was her marriage with Mr. Ernest Normand, who had been fortunate enough to sell his Academy picture—"A Palace, yet a Prison"—for the respectable sum of three hundred guineas. The opportunity was too good to be neglected, and a wedding with a honeymoon trip to Paris was the immediate outcome.

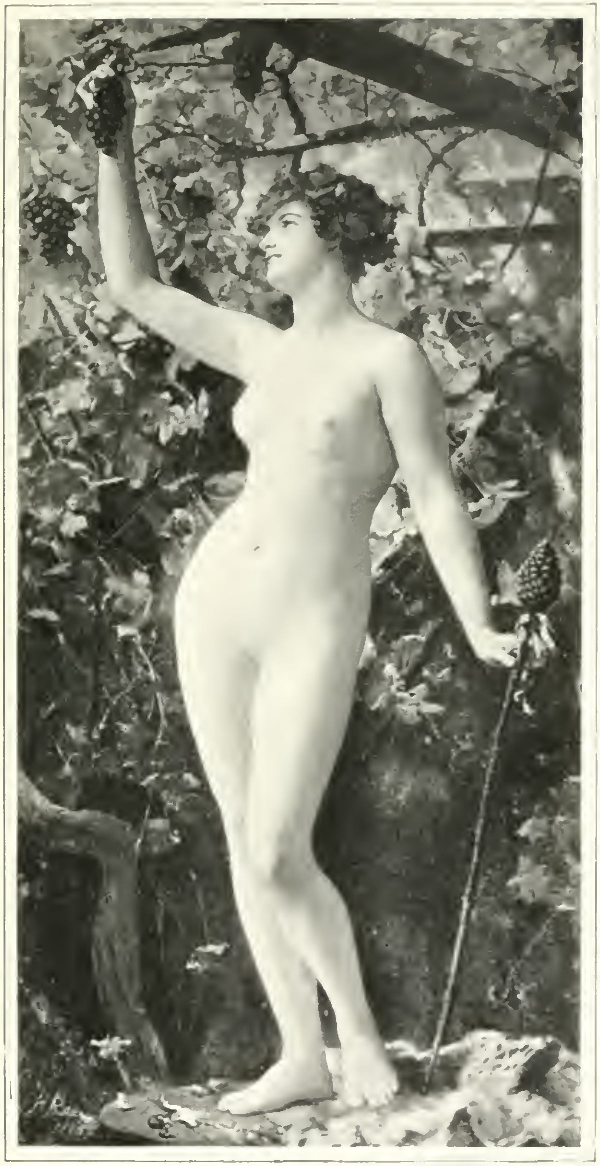
CHAPTER IV.

1885–1888.

"ARIADNE"; "ELAINE GUARDING THE SHIELD OF LANCELOT"; "DOUBTS"; "EURYDICE SINKING BACK TO HADES"; "A NAIAD"; "ZEPHYRUS WOOING FLORA"; "A REVERIE."

ON the return to London Mr. and Mrs. Normand settled down in a studio in Wright's Lane, Kensington. Life was now a very serious matter to them, and hard work was to be the order of the day for both, for it was agreed between them that theirs was to be a working partnership. The long and close association of the student days had given each a confident belief in the ability of the other; and each now determined that the belief should be justified. No time was lost, therefore, and the canvases for their next Academy pictures were prepared and subjects discussed and planned.

Mrs. Normand determined to give expression to a long-entertained love for classic legends and characters. The desultory reading of her childhood had included Pope's and Lemprière's translations of the wonderful myths of Greece and Rome, and the spell had fallen



A BACCHANTE.

heavily upon her. Its fascination had remained with her through the student days; had indeed been strengthened by the intimate study of the beauties of Greek sculpture at the British Museum. Now that opportunity served, the desire to paint a classic subject could not be denied; the plaintive story of Ariadne was chosen for this first effort, and her desertion at Naxos by Theseus for special treatment. In addition to this picture there was also put in hand a life-size nude figure of "A Bacchante," which was to accompany it to the judgment seat of the Academy.

Only a few months were spent in the Wright Lane studio, for the Normands then took a house in Holland Park Road, next door to Val Prinsep's and next but one to Leighton's. Here the two pictures were finished and duly sent to Burlington House. Both were accepted, and the "Ariadne" was well hung on the low line in the first room. Ariadne is represented seated on the sea shore, with arms extended in front of her on the rock, the right hand over the left and clutching it convulsively; the whole attitude expressive of grief at the departure of her lover, and of desire for his presence. The full rounded figure of the young girl shows clear and bright through a transparent gossamer veil. The bid for success was a bold one; for a woman painter to submit two studies from the nude—for "Ariadne" was practically such—and have them accepted was quite out of the usual, but the success justified the attempt. "Ariadne" was purchased in the Exhibition by Mr. Pochin, and the copyright secured by the Berlin Photographic Co.

There is no question that Mrs. Normand's love of flesh painting, with its charm and delicacy of colour, and its demand for tender treatment, influenced her as much as the classic legends in her choice of subject. The subtle tints of the living human flesh and the beautiful modelling of the figure appealed to her by their very difficulty of interpretation, and she deliberately set herself to conquer the difficulty. Even in these first pictures she attained an amount of success that marked her as a painter of more than average ability; there was nothing in them to suggest that they were the work of a young artist barely out of the schools.

As paintings of the nude, of course, they attracted a certain amount of adverse criticism from that irresponsible section of the public which sees in this class of subject nothing but impropriety or indecency. One of these self-constituted guardians of artists' and the public's morals wrote to Mrs. Normand as a new exhibitor; implored her "to pause upon the brink" and not pervert her artistic gifts by painting such works. When the letter reached her she was rejoicing in the presence of her infant son, who had been born shortly after the opening of the exhibition. The letter was shown to the doctor who was in attendance, and he made the suggestion that the artist should reply to the letter and state that she had recently given birth to a son "who came into the world entirely naked," which fact seemed to suggest to her that there was no impropriety in representing the human form as it was created.

The suggestion recalls the story of John Gibson, R.A., the sculptor who was questioned by a Scotch lady in the following manner: "Pray, Mr. Gibson, why do sculptors always indulge in representations of the nude human form? It is so indecent and demoralising." "Madam," was the reply, "it is because we think that God Almighty knew how to represent the human form far better than the tailor or the milliner; and, as to indecency, I should have no opinion of the modesty of a woman who could not look on the noblest works of creation without a blush."

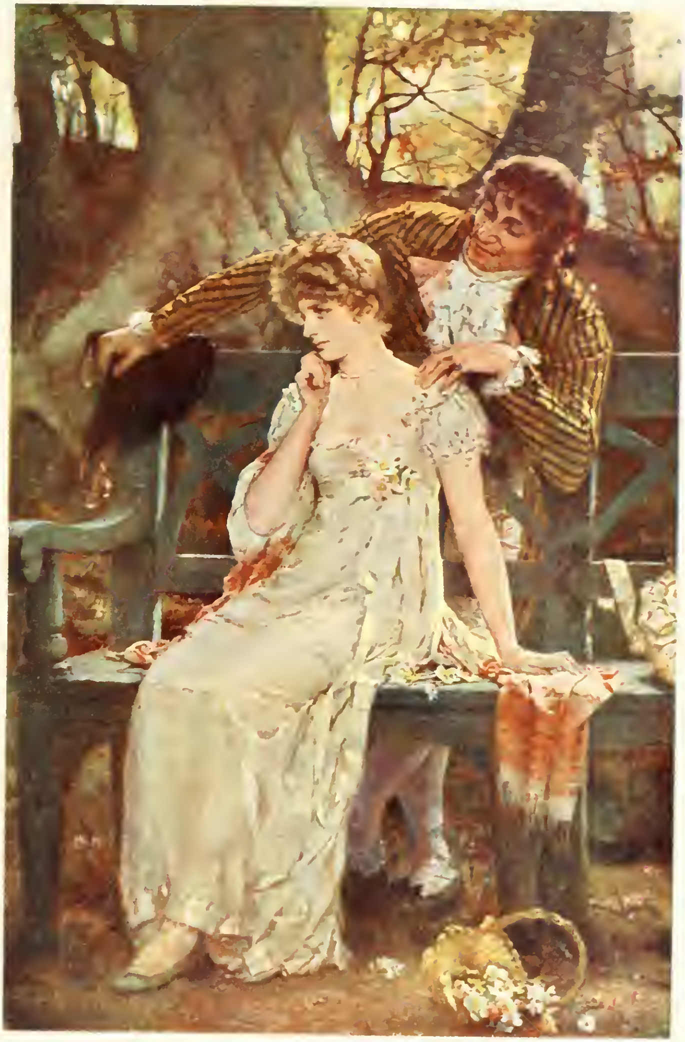
Curiously enough, a critic in the *Art Journal* fell foul of Mrs. Normand for clothing Ariadne too bounteously. He described the picture as "a good instance of the attempt at a compromise between classicism and conventionality, and by it an otherwise clever picture is marred"; he suggested that the artist would have done better to follow the example of others in the exhibition and go in boldly for the completely nude in such subjects.

At the Grosvenor Gallery exhibition of this year, too, was a small picture "Elaine

Guarding the Shield of Lancelot," for which Mrs. Normand again found inspiration in Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine." The love-smitten girl, robed in green, is seated in a richly-draped chamber, gazing at the shield of her hero, which she supports in front of her. With head resting on her other hand she dreamily weaves her romantic fancies round this war-scarred emblem of Lancelot's prowess. She

"Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dent a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it."

The year 1886 was productive of but one picture, for the cares of maternity absorbed much of Mrs. Normand's time. "Doubts" was sent to the Academy, where it was accepted and accorded a good position near to Sargent's portrait of the Misses Vickers. Classicism was for the time being abandoned, and a return made to the style of the first subject-picture "Love's Young Dream," which was suggestive of that of Mr. Marcus Stone. On Private View Day Mr. Stone expressed his opinion of the attempt as "Charming! Charming!" The reproduction in colour of this picture precludes the necessity of any description. It marked a distinct advance in technique, and was received favourably by the critics.

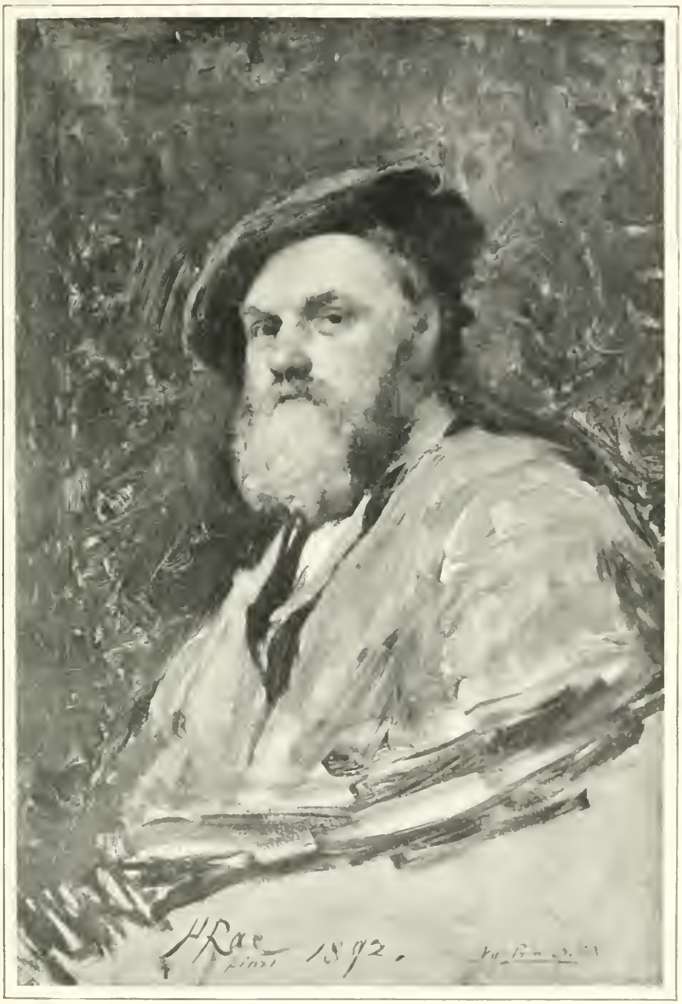


DOUBTS.

It was while this picture was in progress that their neighbour, the late Val Prinsep, R.A., introduced himself to Mr. and Mrs. Normand, and proffered the request that he might call and see their work. This was the commencement of a close and intimate friendship with that artist, which brought them into the innermost circle of the Holland Park coterie of which Lord Leighton was the centre. Each Sunday the Prinseps' lawn was devoted to tennis, tea, and talk, to which came all the artistic celebrities of the adjacent Melbury Road, and many other people of note, among whom Browning was occasionally numbered.

At Prinsep's suggestion they made a formal call upon Lord Leighton—a call undertaken in fear and trembling at their temerity and of awe of the President of the Royal Academy. It was all needless, for they were most warmly welcomed by Leighton, who promised to come the next day "to see what they were doing." The promise was fulfilled, and from that time Leighton took the greatest possible interest in the work of his young neighbours. A frequent visitor to their studio he was ready with advice, criticism, and practical demonstration to assist them in their work. The value of such assistance cannot, of course, be too highly appreciated. Leighton was, without doubt, the most accomplished man of his time: a perfect master of the technicalities of art, every hint and suggestion that fell from him was to the purpose and of the utmost value to the recipients. From the academic point of view he was a perfect artist; composition, the laws of light and shade, tone and colour values, were all at his command. As a draughtsman few could equal him, and his methods of work kept his skill in this direction in constant and untiring practice. All this knowledge and experience he cheerfully drew upon for the benefit of these two beginners in practical artistry, and in every way possible he endeavoured to put them on the right track. His dominating personality, with its confidence in its own strength, told somewhat against the desirability of such close fellowship in matters artistic; it unconsciously led him to endeavour to mould others into his methods, and to the adoption of his point of view. To an impressionable nature such an influence was irresistible, and its continuous exercise on such an one must have meant artistic ruin.

Leighton had a method peculiarly his own for the design and construction of his pictures, a method that was the outcome of his experience and extraordinary knowledge and skill. A design once thought out was never departed from in its essentials. Once recorded—even but in chalk on brown paper, which was the favourite method—it was carefully followed up


H Rae pinxt 1892.

VAL PRINSEP, R.A.

step by step to completion. So far as the design was concerned the picture had birth with the idea. With this design fixed on paper the details were then entered upon. Studies in chalk on brown paper were made of each separate part. The model posed, drawings were first made from the nude figure, and then the drapery added and drawn from.

"There is my next picture," he said on one occasion, pointing to a drawerful of these brown paper sketches. Not until each detail had been worked out was the canvas prepared and the design placed upon it. Then there was thin painting in burnt sienna and white, so thin that the ground of the canvas was never lost, and then on to the full colour scheme, working from the detailed drawings to the finish.

To Leighton this was all very simple; the system suited his style completely, and he believed in it thoroughly and confidently. For himself and his own requirements there is no doubt that it was efficacious; he could always secure his own particular end by its means. But curiously enough he had the idea that the system could be adapted to any requirements and would suit any style and temperament. When he had known the Normands for some time he proposed that they should execute a work by his method—with which, of course, they were by then thoroughly familiar. "I want you," he said, "each to paint a head.

I will send you two canvases prepared in the same manner in which mine are prepared, together with a set of brushes such as I use. You are to pose the model; make your design from the first and never depart from it; keep your shadows open and stage by stage bring your work to completion. Let me see which of you can the more intelligently render your impressions of the model in my method, and with my materials."

The proposal was laughingly accepted, but with no very confident hopes of success. The model was posed and draped as Leightonesquely as possible, and the prescribed method duly followed as closely as was practicable to the two novices in its application. Progress was not very satisfactory: the studies dragged in their difficulty; and their instigator was for the time avoided. But at length he had to be met, and the first question was: "Well, when am I to come and see those two studies?"

Mr. Normand replied, "We would like you to leave it for a week or so, for I am rather in a mess with mine."

"Mess! My dear Normand, there is no mess in my method!" responded the President.

But he had to acknowledge that it was not a method for everybody's use when he saw the resultant effects. They were but two weak, far-away reflections of a Leighton study, without individuality or strength. They had been carried out according to instructions, to which close adherence had been given by the artists, who were prompted by the prevailing idea of pleasing Leighton through the performance. Seated in a comfortable chair (his necessary position for criticism) in front of the canvases, the President drew a deep sigh as he resigned his cherished opinion of his method and its universal adaptability.

"Oh, well, I suppose it's no use trying to graft one's methods upon people whose work inclines to a different groove. I think that you had better paint them out."

The suggestion was not adopted, and later on Mrs. Normand painted over her study in thicker colour, and by chance, four years later, Leighton happened to catch sight of it. "Whose pretty work is that?" he asked, and the history of the sketch had to be recalled to his mind.

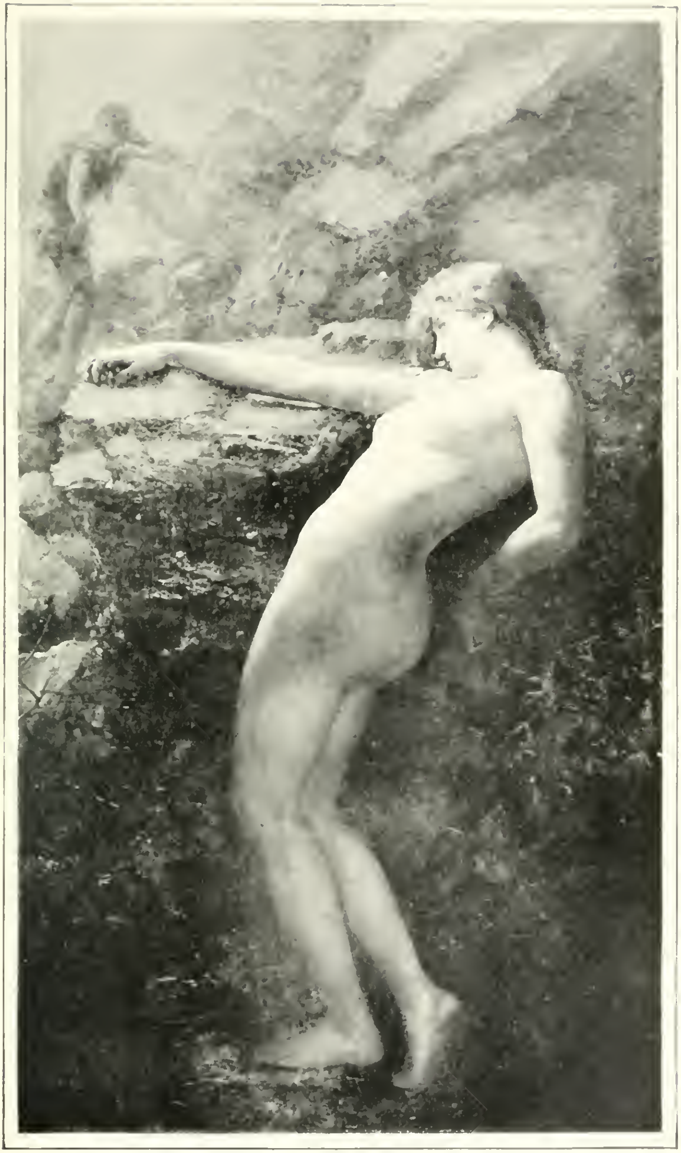
With a predilection for classic subjects already existing in her mind it is no matter for surprise that, under the influence of Leighton, Mrs. Normand should directly turn to them for her next pictures. The success of the "Ariadne" had, before this, naturally encouraged her bias towards classicism, and the conviction was now definitely formed that such subjects were her *métier*. Two canvases were laid down for the Royal Academy of 1887, and the subjects selected for them were

"Eurydice Sinking Back to Hades" and "A Naiad."

The former was the most important canvas yet attempted, both in point of subject and size—its dimensions being seven feet by four feet.

It is an original and daring attempt to illustrate the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. The moment chosen for illustration is that when, as the result of Orpheus's backward glance, Eurydice sinks down, lifeless and inert, to the depths from which she had so joyfully risen at the bidding of her hero. It was a difficult subject to render on canvas, and one from which many would have shrunk intuitively; but Mrs. Normand is at her best when difficulties are in the way, and Eurydice was, without question, her most successful work up to this point.

Eurydice is shown in profile in the centre of the forefront of the picture; one hand is extended convulsively to clutch at the jutting rock; her legs are doubling lifelessly and her body is swaying backwards into the dark gulf from which she has but just emerged. Her fast closing eyes are passionately fixed on Orpheus, who is seen over the corner of the rock higher up the path, turning the fateful glance which sent his beloved back to Hades. The beauty of the figure of Eurydice, and the delicacy of the flesh painting, formed a veritable triumph for



EURYDICE SINKING BACK TO HADES.

In the possession of G. L. Beeforth, Esq.

Mrs. Normand. The picture was hung in the sixth room at the Academy, and attracted considerable attention. It afterwards passed into the collection of Mr. G. L. Beeforth, of Scarborough, by whose courtesy we are enabled to reproduce it in these pages.

The second picture, "A Naiad," was hung on the line in the last room, and brought additional repute to the artist. The *Times* referred to it as "the best study of the nude that Miss Henrietta Rae has ever painted. 'The Naiad' is treated with very great ability, intelligence, and delicacy."

Curiously enough, there were but few nude subjects, not more than three or four altogether, in the exhibition; whether this was due to the recently completed "British matron" campaign which had been raging in the newspapers for some time previously or not cannot now be said. The opportunity, however, was not lost. The *Echo* thus summarised the matter: "It is not an exhibition at which the British matron will be shocked, for, with two exceptions painted by a British matron herself, there is hardly a nude figure on the walls."

The "Eurydice" exhibited Mrs. Normand as an artist as well as a painter, for there are imagination and feeling in this work such as had not been displayed in any other, save in a lesser degree, in the "Ariadne." It marked a very distinct advance in her art, her powers of expression, and ability as a painter. The critics, generally, wrote well of it, though the *Daily Telegraph*, after congratulating the artist on "her courage in dealing with unadorned beauty," went on to say that "she can scarcely be felicitated on the beauty of her models, who are given to attenuation, or on the attitude of Eurydice, which is strained and disagreeable."

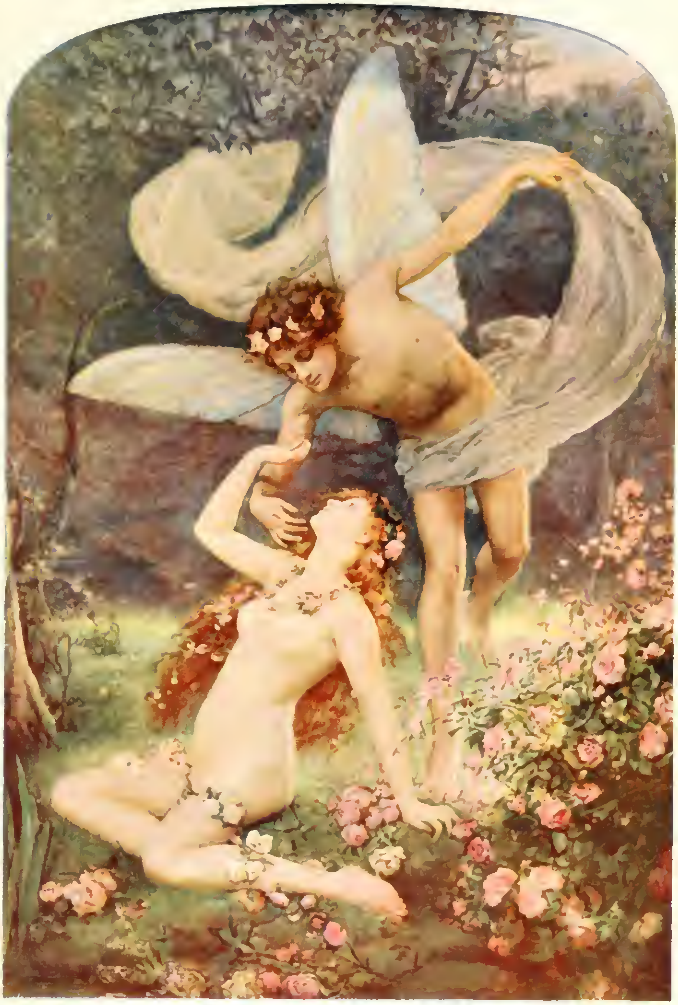
Punch favoured the picture with a small caricature, emphasising this same point, which was inscribed "After Six Lessons, Lady Amateur Imitating Eminent Tragedian."

The two pictures undoubtedly greatly enhanced Mrs. Normand's reputation, and marked her as one of the most promising women artists of the day, as well as one of the most refined and skilful painters of the nude then exhibiting in England. The absurd argument of the purists that such works were degrading and sensual in their conception and influence was confuted and set at naught by these canvases painted by a woman, for such considerations were, under these conditions, futile. The success of the pictures was material, and not merely one of repute, for both canvases were sold (the copyright of the "Naiad" was secured by the Berlin Photographic Company), perhaps the most satisfactory form of success that can be desired by an artist. In any case there can be no doubt that it is the most encouraging, for it denotes to the artist that full appreciation of his, or her, efforts which is the greatest incentive to good work.

The "Eurydice" was sent to the International Exhibitions at Paris (1889) and Chicago, and was awarded an Honourable Mention at the former and a medal at the latter.

By this time Mr. and Mrs. Normand had thoroughly settled down in Holland Park Road, and had been adopted as the protégés of the older artists among whom they lived. Their studio was constantly visited by Leighton, Millais, Prinsep, Watts and others, who each, in a measure, seemed to hold themselves responsible for the work they happened to have in hand. Criticisms and advice were freely offered, which, if not in every case accepted, was chiefly for the reason that the *obiter dictum* of one artist was negatived by that of another. The consequence, often enough, was that all had to be abandoned, and their own schemes and plans carried through without regard to the suggestions of their many friends. The close interest manifested by Leighton was, however, of the greatest value to them. His wonderful knowledge and skilful help were always at their disposal and unstintingly bestowed to their advantage. His criticisms were always kindly and to the point; his advice always sound and reliable. With a piece of pastel he would demonstrate on the canvas the point which he was urging, and with a few deft touches prove his acumen and his skill. His kindness and patience were unfailing; no trouble was too great for him to take in a matter in which he was really interested, and that the work of Mrs. Normand was such there is no shadow of doubt. That Mrs. Normand owes much to him she has long since acknowledged. In an autobiographical sketch published in 1901 she wrote: "To Leighton, perhaps, I owe the deepest debt of gratitude. His dominating personality from the outset exercised on my impressionable nature a most wonderful and permanent influence, and to his fostering care I attribute the development of any powers of design I may possess. His criticisms, though severe, and at times almost scathing, always left me with the feeling that he expected me some day to do good work, and the very persistence with which for years he superintended our productions, especially in the early stages of composition and design, was in itself a compliment. To use one of his own expressions, one felt one was working 'in an atmosphere of sympathy.'"

Sir John Millais and Val Prinsep, too, were equally generous. The former would devote his advice almost entirely to questions of colour, and would tender it in the bluff, genial manner which was his great characteristic. Prinsep was notably unsparing in his criticisms; the closer his friendship the more frank, or rather blunt, were his criticisms. Mrs. Normand was not exempt from the



ZEPHYRUS WOOING FLORA.

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Owners of the Copyright.

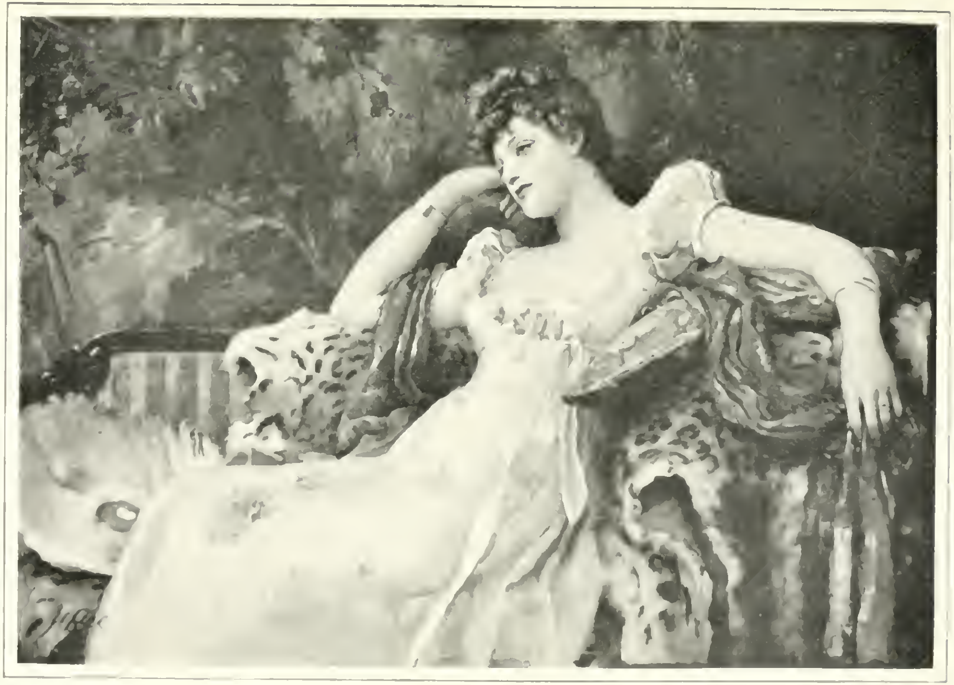
smart of his caustic remarks; her work was as remorselessly dealt with as that of his other intimate friends; the fault-finding was probably all perfectly just, and the criticism true, but the resentment roused by the untoned brusqueness of its presentment doubtless greatly interfered with the salutary effect it was intended to have.

It was under such conditions of tutelage, therefore, that Mrs. Normand's next work was prepared. "Zephyrus wooing Flora" was submitted to the Royal Academy in 1888, and duly accepted. The picture was even more ambitious than the "Eurydice," and in its result showed that the progress of the previous year was being maintained. Decorative in treatment, the whole scheme gave the artist an opportunity to reveal her powers more fully as a colourist, an opportunity of which she availed herself to the utmost. The reproduction of this picture will serve as a memorandum of its general colour scheme, for the great reduction, of course, does not allow of the facsimile rendering of the beautiful details. The skilful, almost perfect, flesh painting of the two figures, the wondrous iridescence of the wings of Zephyrus, the mass of flowers among which the goddess is seated, and with which she is garlanded, and the bright green of the background of foliage, make a whole which is a veritable feast of colour. The figure of Zephyrus floats downward to meet that of

Flora, whose pose expresses an exultant welcome, as with head thrown back she presents her lips for the expected kiss.

In connection with this picture there is an incident relative to the late G. F. Watts which illustrates his extraordinary knowledge of anatomy—a knowledge which enabled him to paint without models for the greater part of his working life. He visited Mrs. Normand's studio while "Zephyrus and Flora" was in course of progress, and at once discovered a flaw in the foreshortening of the figure of Zephyrus. To demonstrate his point he drew on the canvas, over the figure, the complete foreshortened skeleton to show "where you must make an alteration in the swing of the figure, to account for the design, and make it correct with nature."

This picture was hung on the line in the eighth room at the Academy, where it attracted considerable attention and gained from the critics a cordial reception. Even the *Athenæum*, in a grandfatherly way, gave its benison: "'Zephyrus wooing Flora,'" said its critic, "is an interesting illustration of a lady's skill and taste in painting nudities and an amorous subject in a way reminding us of Bronzino's 'Venus and Cupid' in the National Gallery. The slender deity stoops over the willing goddess in her rose-bower. A dainty design, it is nicely as well as ably drawn. The carnations are bright, pure, and varied; the faces are a



A REVERIE.

In the possession of Ernest de la Rue, Esq

little thin, and the forms are too slender, but do not lack grace, appropriateness, or elegance. Zephyrus's large and splendidly nacreous moth's wings are very pretty, and the landscape is pleasing and true. A little more fibre and solidity would have justified the lady's hopes of high distinction in her art."

This extract forms a characteristic example of the position taken up by some of the older art critics of the day in relation to women-artists. Acknowledgment of skill was grudgingly given, and was always tempered with that touch of superiority and condescension which irritates and annoys.

At the Grosvenor Gallery of this year Mrs. Normand was represented by "A Reverie," a picture now in the possession of Mr. Ernest De la Rue. It is a study from the model who sat for "Doubts" dressed in a somewhat similar Directoire gown, seated on a couch over which is placed a tiger-skin rug.

CHAPTER V.

1889–1890.

"The Death of Procris," "Sleep," "Sylvia," "Ophelia," Paris.

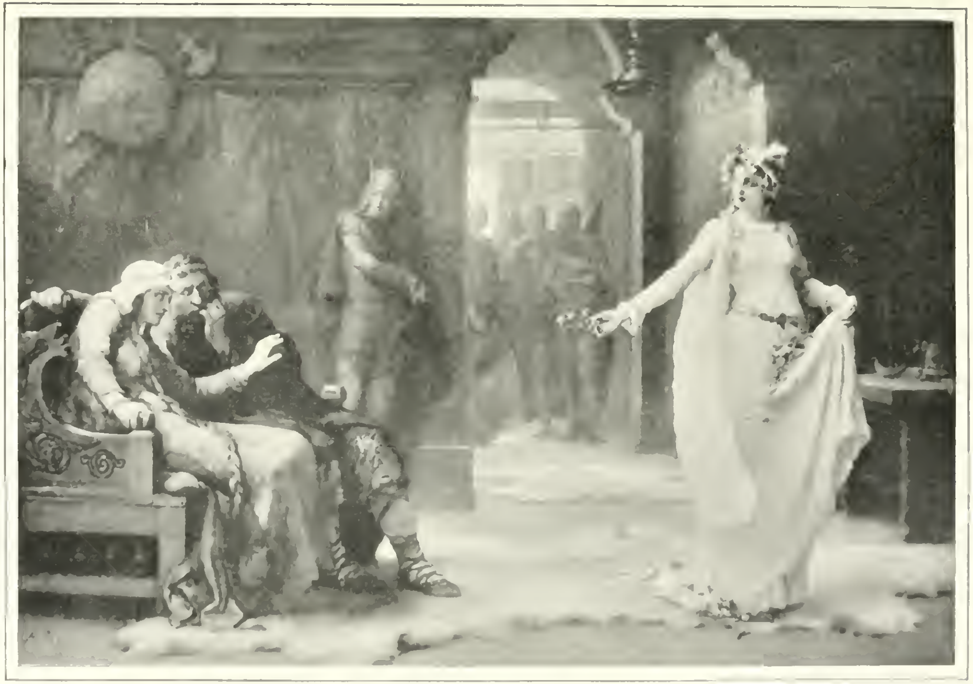
THE important work of the following year, 1889, was the "Death of Procris," another classic semi-nude subject. The myth of Cephalus and Procris, with its poetry and pathetic tragedy, inspired the artist to make yet another effort to outshine her previous work. The moment chosen for illustration is that when the fatal dart shot by Cephalus has pierced the bosom of the loving, jealous daughter of Erechtheus, who in her search for her supposed rival has thus drawn death upon herself through the medium of her husband's hands. Procris has sunk to earth with one hand clasped to her wounded breast; she lies across the foreground of the picture with her back to the spectator, leaning heavily on her right hand; her beautiful face raised in grief and pain to Heaven is seen in profile. On the left of the picture the figure of Cephalus is seen breaking madly through the forest growth, with terror in his eyes as he realises the quarry brought down by his shot at a venture.

The difficulties—self-imposed be it remembered—connected with the execution of this work were many and great. It would seem that Mrs. Normand deliberately set herself difficult problems to solve for the sheer delight of wrestling with, and overcoming them. It would have been so much easier to have painted pretty little costume pieces, which would have sold far more quickly and taken far less time to paint than these gallery pictures with their ingenious evasions of the commonplace and conventional. But such was not Mrs. Normand's nature. Easy success was, to her, not worth achievement, and so with the justifiable pride of ambition she set herself to solve difficulties of her own creation. The pose of Procris, predetermined from the first conception of the idea for the picture, was one that could not be sustained by a model for any useful length of time; the strain upon the back and arm was too great to be borne. What was to be done? Mrs. Normand, unlike Mr. J. C. Horsley, was in the habit of working from the living model; it was absolutely necessary for her to do so if correctness was to be attained and maintained in her studies.

The progress of "The Death of Procris" was being carefully followed by the academic neighbours, friends and advisers, and this difficulty was duly explained to them, and ways and means of meeting it formed the subject of eager discussion. Leighton it was who offered a practical solution, and his suggestion was that a small figure should be modelled in clay. "It's the only way out of it," he said. "Work from the living model and get it cast, as I do. Have the arms cast separately so that you can arrange miniature draperies on the figure."

This, as was very well known, was Leighton's frequent course of procedure. Modelling in clay or wax was to him as easy as drawing or painting, but Mrs. Normand's attention had been given exclusively to the one art, and modelling was altogether out of her domain. Here Mr. Normand came to the rescue, as he so often did when obstacles to progress demanded extraneous skill or knowledge. He is peculiarly gifted with constructional ability, and he set to work to model the "Procris" with as light a heart as, on another occasion, he did to make a bow of peculiar build for Leighton's use when he was painting "Hit."

Moreover, nearly all the members of the coterie felt bound to have a finger in the clay, and it became a question as to whom the credit was to go for the construction of the figure. Each, of course, laid claim to the good points as they were developed, but when it was creditably finished, and the cast made, Mr.



OPHELIA.

"THERE'S RUE FOR YOU."

In the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Normand decided definitely that it was his, and that to him alone belonged the glory. It was seen by Onslow Ford, who praised it, and Mr. Normand thought that was sufficient incentive to finish it for casting in bronze. Eager for further commendation from the sculptor he enquired of him tentatively, "How long would it have taken you to do?"

"Oh, about a day-and-a-half," was Ford's reply.

"Good heavens!" was the involuntary ejaculation, "it's taken us a week! But how long would it take you to get it ready for bronze?"

"Well, I should put another three months' work into it," said Ford, a reply which effectually destroyed the project. The plaster cast of the miniature "Procris" still reposes on a bracket in the studio, dusty and mutilated by Time—a mute record of a difficulty and a co-operative solution.

The background of this picture was painted at Coldharbour, but the foliage through which Cephalus is forcing his way was studied from nut saplings which grew in Holland Park. The gardener there was another willing helper in the train of the artist, and kept her supplied each day with saplings until that portion of the work was finished.

With "The Death of Procris" Mrs. Normand again secured a good position in the

Academy Exhibition, and the picture and copyright were sold, during the course of the exhibition, to Mr. George Woodiwiss, of Bath.

In 1889 "Sleep" and "Sylvia," studies of heads, which afforded relief from the more serious work in hand, were exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery and the Society of Lady Artists respectively. The former picture met with an untimely end at the hands of the artist's son whilst he was indulging in some gymnastic exercises.

Classic subjects were now to be abandoned for a few years; for the following year's Academy picture Mrs. Normand turned to Shakespeare, and decided to add her contribution to the long list of paintings of "Ophelia." Originality of treatment was an absolute necessity if success was to be gained with such a subject, for "Ophelia" is doubtless the most be-painted character of any created by Shakespeare. In the majority of cases artists have centred all their strength on the depiction of "Ophelia" alone, at one or other stage of her dementation. Mrs. Normand's scheme was for an important composition in which "Ophelia" should take her place with others in the representation of her tragedy. The outcome was the picture which now hangs in the Walker Art Gallery, at Liverpool, the property of the Liverpool Corporation.

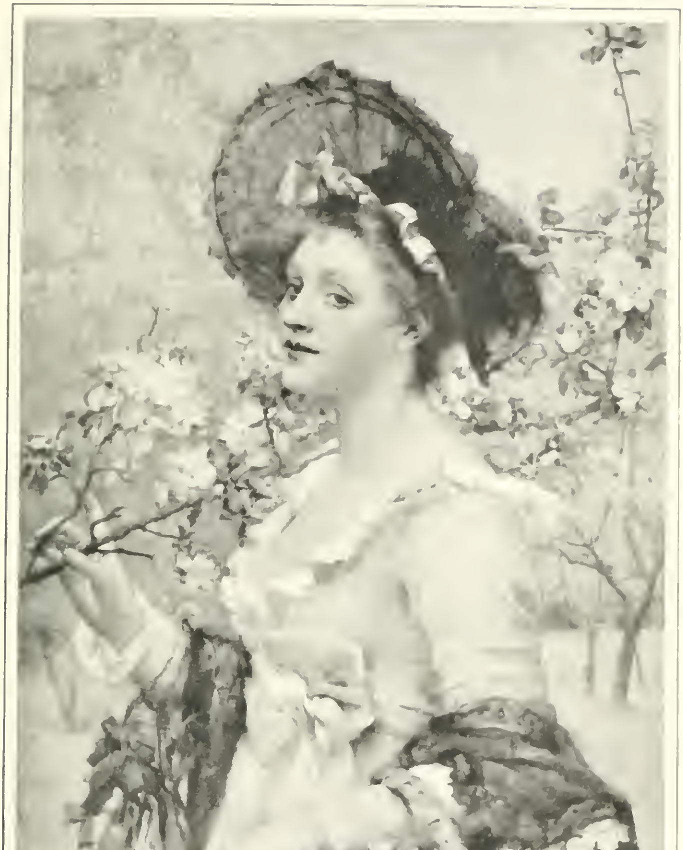
Ophelia is shown as she passes through the court of the palace in which are seated the king and queen: a beautiful figure, with the strained, intense look of insanity in her eyes as she glances at the occupants of the room. With flowers entwined in her hair, and others trailing from her uplifted skirt, she offers to the startled pair a twig of rue—"There's rue for you,"—while Laertes and his Danes stand in the background.

During the painting of this picture Mrs. Normand was again overwhelmed by the criticisms and suggestions of her numerous artistic godfathers. The composition of the king and queen group was to them a great cause of worry, far more so than it would have been to the artist had she insisted on following her own design. Instead of doing this she endeavoured to please her friends by following their advice, with the usual result that she gave herself unnecessary labour on the picture and offended, rather than pleased, her critics. The position of the heads was the source of contention; one was for placing them one way, and another suggested something totally different, while the perplexed artist spent her time in shifting the heads to suit the various opinions. Leighton had watched these continuous alterations with growing impatience, for it was, of course, opposed to all his principles of design. At length he could contain his feelings no longer. Turning to Mrs. Normand he said, sharply: "This is becoming folly; there's now only one place where you haven't put that king's head, and that's on the floor."

He would have nothing more to do with the picture, and steadfastly declined to express another opinion upon it. "I have nothing to say about it," was all that could be obtained from him.

The picture was accepted by the Academy, but on varnishing day a great disappointment awaited both Mrs. Normand and her husband. For some years before this they had each been fortunate in the positions given their works by the Hanging Committee, but on this occasion they found "Ophelia" placed pendant to "Vashti Deposed"—Mr. Normand's picture —on either side of a doorway, above the line, in one of the smaller rooms. They looked with dismay—with a strong blend of disgust—at the positions awarded them, and whilst they were contemplating the arrangement, Edwin Long who proved to be the "hanger," came upon the scene. "Well, Normand," he said, "how do you like your positions?" The reply, naturally, was not an enthusiastic one, and the hope was murmured that the pictures would have proved worthy of a place on the line. "Ah, but you must understand that you can't take a lease of centres on the line at the Academy, you know," was the retort, and the disconsolate pair were left to their pictures.

Sir John Millais commiserated with them,

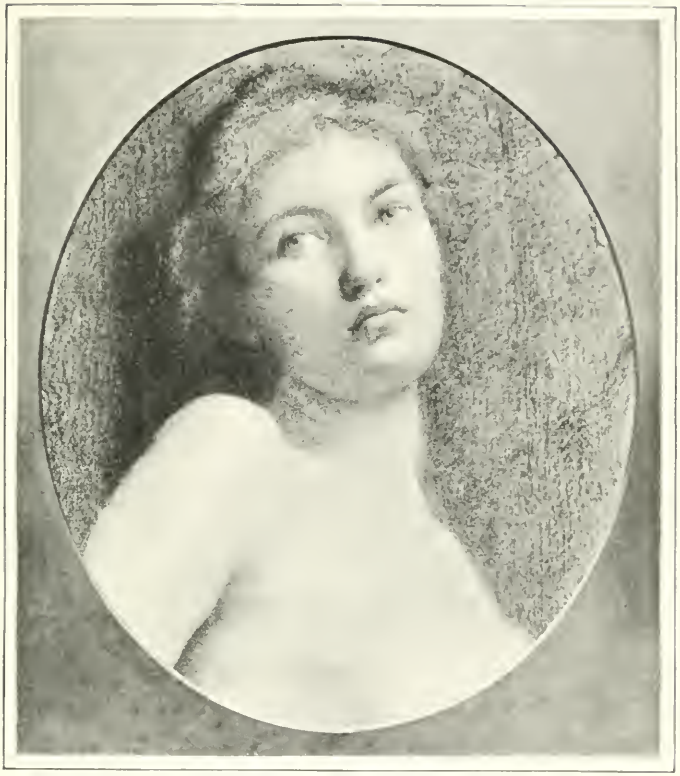


APPLE-BLOSSOM.

and suggested that if the pictures were tilted a little they would look better. This suggestion had already been made and Long had declined to accede to it, as it "would interfere with the little pictures down the sides" —small canvases that had been hung to fill the space between the wall and the frames of the two larger works. Millais was not satisfied with that, and went himself to seek Long and bring him to the scene of discontent.

"Now, Long," he said, "can't you manage to tilt these pictures of the Normands'—— Eh? What? Oh d—n the little pictures down the sides!"—and the point was gained. Both pictures, curiously enough, were subsequently purchased for Corporation collections, "Ophelia" for Liverpool, and "Vashti" for Oldham.

The rebuff, for so it was considered by both Mr. and Mrs. Normand gave rise to serious questionings and communings between them. Was the hanging justified by the quality of the work? Did it really mean that there was deterioration—that their standard of achievement was lower instead of higher? If so, what could be done to arrest the falling off of power; to bring back the full vigour of their artistic health and strength? In their disheartened and dispirited condition they came to the conclusion that the only means of grace lay in their once more going to school, and that the road to salvation ran through Paris. The conclusion reached, decisive action followed. The house at Kensington was let, as it stood, to Mr. John Charlton; the child was sent to the country with his nurse, and the two seekers after knowledge took up their quarters in Paris and entered their names at the *Atelier* Julian.



STUDY OF A HEAD IN CHALK.

Drawn in Paris, 1890.

CHAPTER VI.

1890.

STUDY IN PARIS: LIFE AT GREZ.

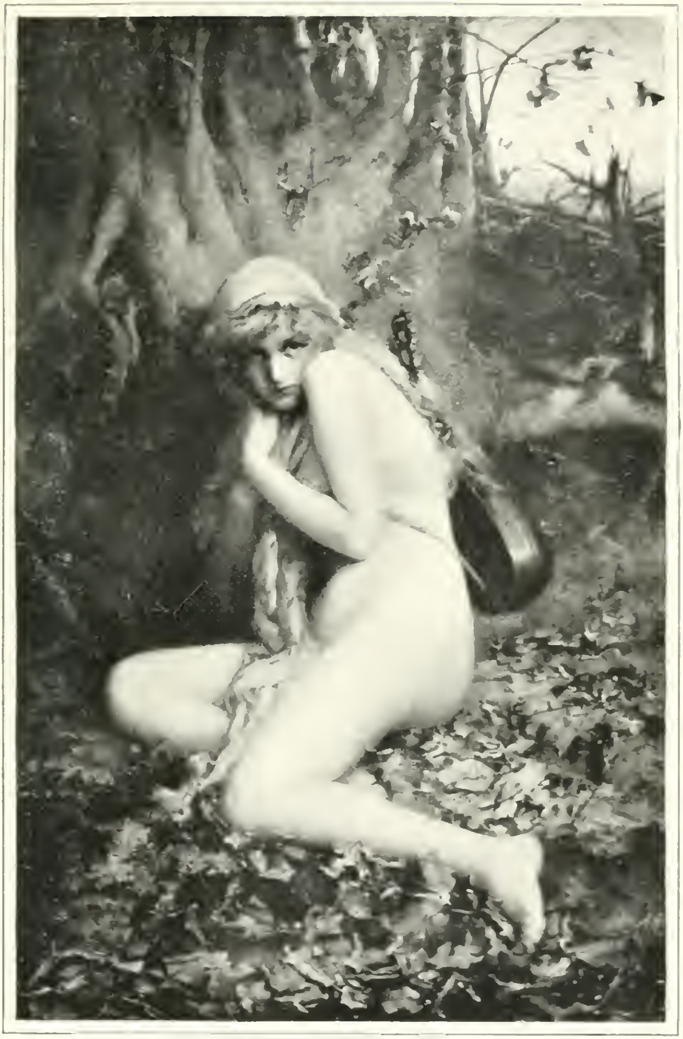
ONE of the first persons they met in Paris, whom they knew, was Edwin Long, the unwitting cause of their presence there. Asked by him as to their reason for being in Paris, he was told that their experience at the Royal Academy had led them to believe that there was something wrong in their work, so they had decided "to go to school again." The chastened humility of the reply should have softened the heart of the Academician, and given him cause to think whether his application of the rod had not, in the circumstances, been rather more severe than was necessary.

However, to school they went; through the ordinary curriculum of Julian's, working alternately under Benjamin-Constant and Jules Lefèbvre. It was not easy, after the pleasures of her own studio, for Mrs. Normand to settle down to work in a crowded *atelier;* after the delights of independence, to become a pupil and work to order; to be reprimanded even, for not diligently adhering to the school routine, On one occasion, after setting the model, Benjamin-Constant examined her work. There was not the close realistic following of the model expected of the student, but rather the selection and general treatment of the experienced artist who used the model just so far as it was needed. Benjamin-Constant protested; she was not working as a student should; she had entered as a pupil at Julian's, and must abide by the rules and regulations laid down for her guidance and benefit; she "must please adhere to the faithfully accurate copying of the model."

The same day the master visited the men's *atelier* and saw Mr. Normand doing exactly the same kind of work for which he had administered a reprimand in the morning—although, of course, nothing was known by Benjamin-Constant of the relationship of the two students.

"A most extraordinary coincidence!" exclaimed the master; "when superintending the women's work to-day, I had to complain of the work of one of them which was equally wrong with yours. This might be permissible in a finished artist, but we cannot allow it in our pupils."

Neither Benjamin-Constant nor Lefèbvre was aware that their pupils had been for some years constant exhibitors at the Royal Academy, but it must have been obvious to them that in entering as ordinary students they were, in a sense, sailing under false colours. But both Mrs. Normand and her husband worked hard and conscientiously in the schools, and gained

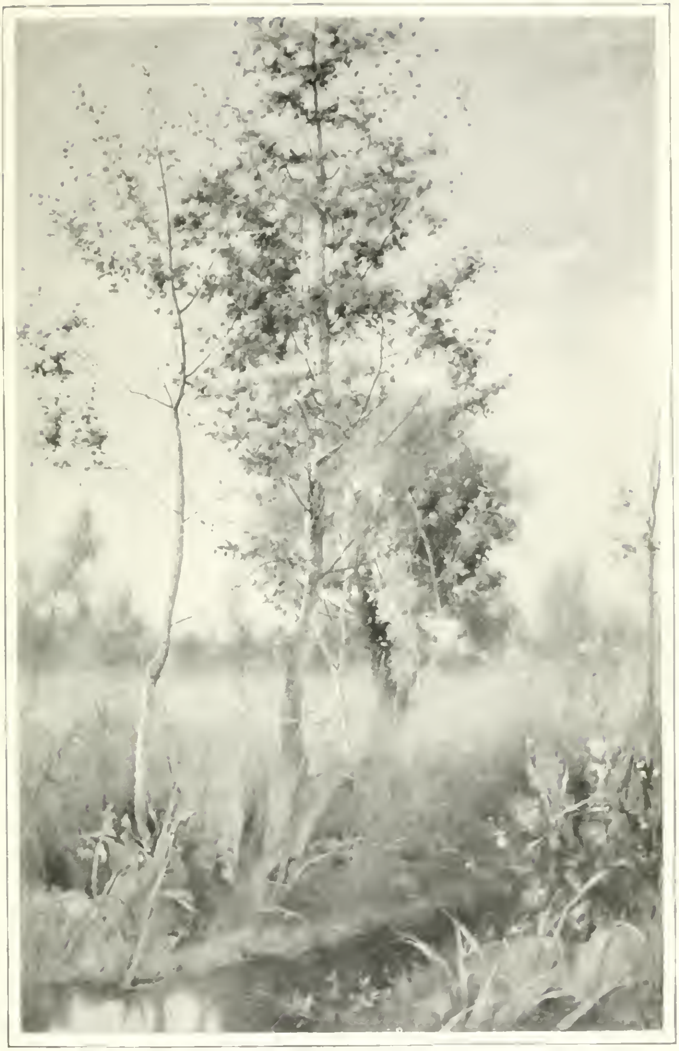


LA CIGALE.

By Permission of Messrs. H. Graves & Co., Ltd., Owners of the Copyright.

many complimentary remarks from the visiting artists. After a few months of *atelier* life, in the hottest part of the year, Mrs. Normand felt the need of a fresher atmosphere in every sense of the word. They had made their temporary home in the Latin Quarter, and, in spite of daily sketching excursions up the river, the life in town was a great strain upon her. A move was, therefore, decided upon, and acting on the advice of some of their Paris friends they pitched their camp at Grez par Nemours, the rival artists' resort to Barbizon.

R. A. M. Stevenson has given the following picturesque description of the village: "Grez is one of the lesser dependencies of Fontainebleau. Barbizon and Marlotte are the greatest, though it was reported that the men of 1830 favoured Grez before Rousseau went to Barbizon. Grez looks as if it had crept down from the forest upland, drawing a long tail of tall poplars after it across a mile or so of rolling plain till it finally settled in a hollow by the sluggish stream that drains the Gatinais. But for a square in the middle and a stray house or two, the village consists of a single street, a strand running along the Loing—a river about as large as the Cam. Old gardens run down to the water and give each house its port or marine approach. Fronting the street, of course, all is stern stone, bare gable-ends, and big yard-doors. As in the East, all the life and amenity lie behind in the large courtyards and ample old terraced gardens. Tradition and the ruins of a castle are all that speak of a former existence greater and busier than the present. . . . I cannot explain the politics of a colony, nor tell how, as Grez rose, Barbizon declined, and became a place where diamonds glinted among blouses and the *cabotin* was seen in his glory. Such a lurid sunset ushers in the night of the outer world; the artist fades, and out comes an innumerable host of twinkling tourists, flitting past with guide-books and ready silver in their hands. Colonies arise in a village remote from the sophistication of the '*maison bourgeoise*.' . . . The artist of the earlier part of the century had few wants and was easily pleased, except professionally. Imposing neither in dress, conversation, nor manners, the painter soon propitiated the peasant at the blacksmith's or the carpenter's, at the inn and the village fêtes. Profit, too, attended the sojourn of the stranger, who was shaved, dressed, and supplied with picture cases, stretchers, easels, and other necessaries. Customs went on as usual, without grandeur or formality. Anything like a duty or a bore the denizens dodged with the instinctive zeal with which game avoids the hunter. The bonds and the circumspection of society kill enjoyment of nature and aptitude for landscape art. For the intolerable pastime duties of town life which were made to create work and amuse-



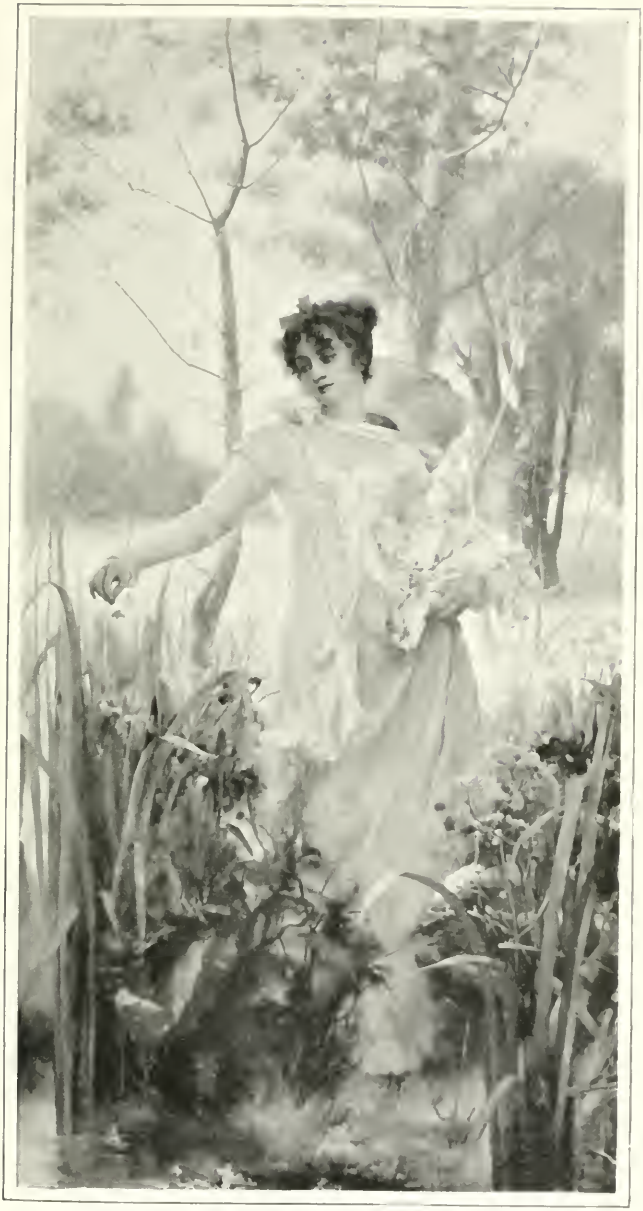
LANDSCAPE STUDY FOR
"FLOWERS PLUCKED AND CAST ASIDE."

In the possession of Sir Alfred Newton, Bart.

ment for people in Society, there is no room in a life already well stocked with both."

Such were the conditions of life in Grez when Mr. and Mrs. Normand arrived there in July of 1890. There was gathered there a cosmopolitan party of artists who, for the time being, were more or less rabid exponents of impressionistic art. The accommodation was strictly limited, being restricted to the single village inn and a *pension*, the guests of which, it was afterwards found, considered themselves, for some inscrutable reason, the elect and select of Grez. Application was first made to the *pension*, but there was no room for them there, a fact for which they were never sufficiently thankful. At the inn—Chevillon's—they were lucky enough to find a room which had that day been vacated. True, its door was lacking the upper panels—a tribute to the exuberance of the previous tenants' spirits—but in compensation its walls were beautifully decorated with caricatures in oil, which were amusing if not altogether decent. As for the door, the host suggested that two or three coats hung on the inside would effectually secure privacy for "Madame." "Madame," however, was not satisfied until the gaping breach had been securely boarded up. The incident, and its lightsome treatment by the proprietor of the inn, was suggestive of a Bohemianism that was somewhat appalling in its freedom even to Mrs. Normand and her husband, who were familiar with the free and easy manners of the artistic communities of London and Paris. The house reeked of an indefinable combination of cheap *caporal* and absinthe, and although easels and huge canvases impeded one's progress at every step, denoting the presence of painters, not a soul was visible save the *personnel* of the establishment. The arrangements for the apartment duly settled, an excursion was made through the village. A few yards across the bridge—an object familiarised to visitors to art exhibitions of those days—they were hailed by a familiar voice which emanated from a bronzed person in a Panama hat, shabby tweeds, and leggings, who proved to be their old friend Mr. Ernest Parton. To their delight they found that he and his wife were also staying at Chevillon's, and contentment drove out the fears raised by first impressions.

Mr. Parton had then been living at Grez for some time, and was evidently the *doyen* of the community at Chevillon's. He soon initiated the new-comers into the mysteries of life as they existed at Grez—curious, almost weird, in their cosmopolitan range. Here were gathered artists from all quarters of the earth, all eagerly industrious in the search for and interpretation of beauty in nature. Frenchmen, Englishmen, Americans, Danes, Swedes, and Japanese, of which last there were three representatives. So long as there was daylight the company was dispersed in the neighbourhood,



FLOWERS PLUCKED AND CAST ASIDE.

In the possession of J. Schulz, Esq., Moscow.

busily engaged on their painting, but when the twilight shadows eclipsed the last of the sunset afterglow easels and canvases were shouldered and all paths converged on Chevillon's. The painting paraphernalia was stowed away and the usual preliminaries of dinner observed—an absinthe and a plunge in the river, which ran at the bottom of the garden. Dinner was served at a long table under the lime trees in a manner as unconventional as the general habits of those who partook of it. The men sat down for the most part without coats or waistcoats, and during the intervals—for the serving was not so prompt as the appetites of the diners would wish—the whole company smoked furiously. At their first meal Mr. and Mrs. Normand made the acquaintance of the crowd, and under the introduction of Parton were warmly welcomed. On their part they found this curious company as clever and amusing as it was cosmopolitan. The freemasonry of art broke down every international barrier, and all were on terms of true "liberty, equality, and fraternity."

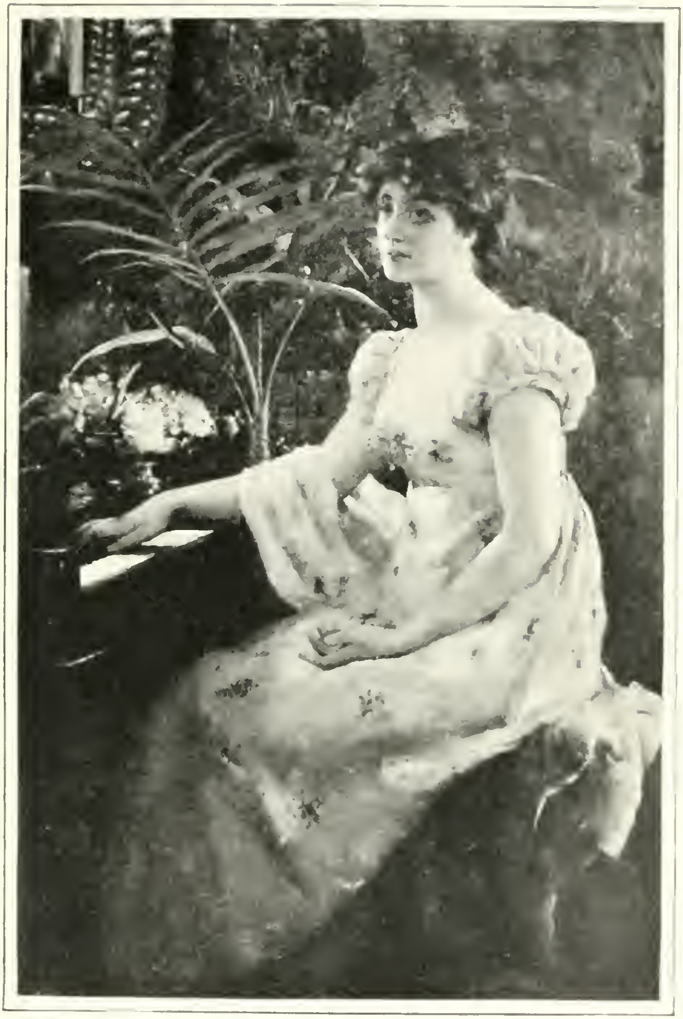
After dinner there was a dispersal. Some wandered in the moonlight by the river; for others there was music—of a sort—on an ancient and discordant piano, with songs in divers tongues, uproarious and hilarious. To these evening recreations came some of the guests of the *pension* whose preferences were for conviviality rather than the select conventionalities of their own establishment. It was all delightfully irresponsible — everyone was light-hearted, gay and joyous. There certainly were undercurrents of seriousness, of earnest sober thought, of pathos and tragedy even, but superficially all was smooth and unruffled *joie de vivre.* R. A. M. Stevenson has recorded this aspect of the grey colouring far better than anyone else can hope to do, and I make no excuse for quoting further from his article: "It is by no means my object," he says, "to describe the life of the French painting colonies where more than half of the ideals of the nineteenth century have been hatched. English people would condemn the manners without understanding the qualities or sympathising with the purposes of such a society. A whole theory of life would be necessary before I could venture to be honest; and honesty was virtue in those places. Hypocrisy scarcely recommended itself to men whose mental work lay in facing their own impressions of things and accepting their consequences in Art. Many writers could tell you that they found those colonies as fitted for the study of the human heart as for that of trees and rocks. You saw the very bones and muscles of the passions laid bare. But such anatomy disgusts the true Englishman. He dislikes this want of reserve no less than the old woman who said: 'Don't tell Mary Jane about her inside—it does her no good; besides, it's rude.' "

The morning saw the frivolity of the evening banished for the time being from the mind, for the day was for work; and work, after all, was the chief object of the community. The influence of impressionism was then rampant in France; the exponents of landscape art delighted in shadows of wonderful purple or violet hues, which stretched across their canvases with extraordinary uniformity, and Mrs. Normand says that even on grey days some of these painters of Grez still saw these same violet shadows—so enamoured were they of their new truths in art. The figure painters, too, worked *en plein air*, and they, also, were imbued with the purple shadow theory, which they found still more difficult of consistent application. The three Japanese went utterly to grief in attempting to assimilate this latest phase of Western art. They had a local girl model to themselves whom they posed under a tree, and steadily worked away all day at the solution of the mysteries of the vibration of atmosphere and light. Utterly oblivious of the fact of the sun's transit from East to West, shadows had no part nor lot in their productions. The studies usually developed into mere flat map-like drawings, the sole charm of which was the decorative quality inherent to their native art, which still managed to assert itself. To Mrs. Normand it was a continuous puzzle why they had a model at all, for they always represented her with almond eyes and a face of pronounced Japanese type. The only explanation that offered itself to her in relation to the matter was that they adopted this method of improving their French by getting the model to talk rather than pose.

It was under these conditions and amid such surroundings that the summer was spent. Mrs. Normand early fell under the prevalent spell of Monet, and became a proficient exponent of the impressionistic principles. Her old love of landscape re-asserted itself, and emulating the example of the painters around her she produced many sketches in their methods, with purple and violet shadows that ranked with the best of them. Her less impressionable husband was almost proof against such influences, and did not hesitate to discuss the exaggerated tendencies of the theorists with them after the evening meal. That such discussions were by no means dull can readily be imagined.

Mr. and Mrs. Normand worked here all through the remainder of the summer and autumn, and found it difficult to sever themselves from the charm of the place. The colony was continually changing its constituents, men went and came, and the interest never slackened. Friendships were formed that have stood the test of time, and antipathies developed that have proved as undying.

It was the recognised custom at Chevillon's



MEMORIES.

In the possession of J. Stewart, Esq., Paisley.

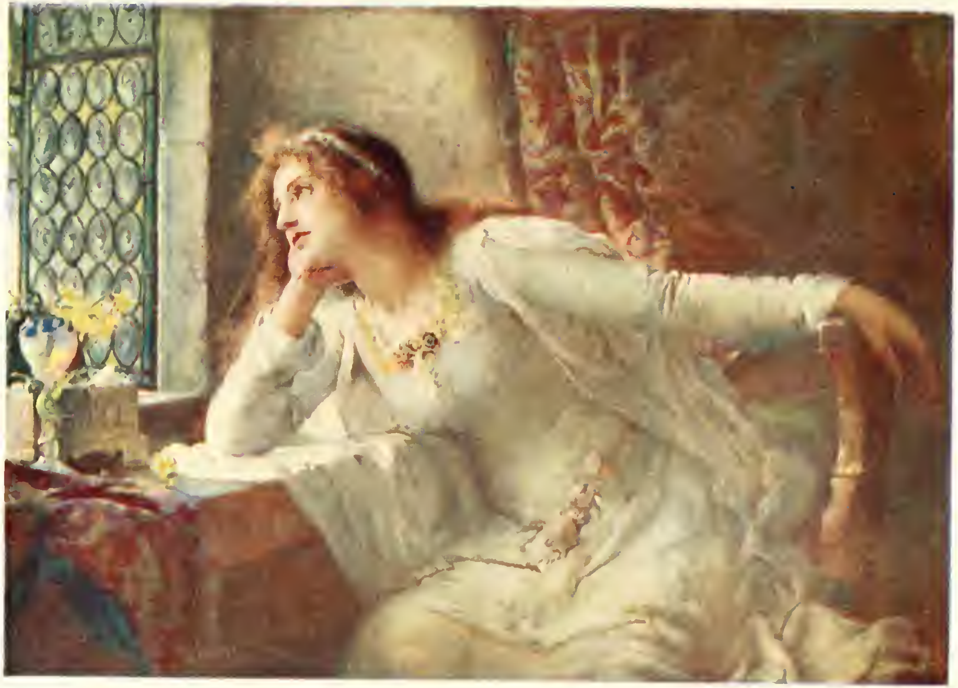
that before a man went away he should fill a panel on the dining-room wall with a specimen of his work. Many well-known names are represented there to this day, and many others are now represented where the owners never intended them to be. The panels of that room are never all filled; "mine host" has always a spare one or two, no matter how many may be the number of artists staying under his roof.

It was just such an exhibition of the anatomy of passion referred to by Stevenson that broke up the particular colony to which the Normands belonged. A tragedy, peculiarly French in its concomitants—an adventuress, a young man ensnared, a life ruined, a pale drowned corpse in an outhouse, the cries of distraught parents, the horror of funeral ceremonials. It all weighed on the souls of the community, its terror overshadowed the place, and the hearts that had been so light and jovial were filled with depression and gloom. One by one the men packed their belongings and went their various ways, silently and thoughtfully, with this memory of the realism of life—and death—to temper the pleasant recollections of their stay at Grez.

Mr. and Mrs. Normand returned to London, and once more took possession of their house in Holland Park Road. There was much to show to their friends, and more to talk about. Their experiences were full of interest, and none more so than those relative to the impressionistic craze. Mrs. Normand's sketches were shown, and provoked a violent protest from Leighton against such perversions of nature and truth. Needless to say the matter had not been taken seriously by Mrs. Normand: she had yielded—almost irresistibly—to the influence of the enthusiastic exponents of impressionism at Grez: she had found the practice pleasant and recreative—and, after all, there was some truth in the theory, albeit it was magnified out of all proportion by its extremist supporters.

. . . .

As a footnote to the experiences of Grez, Mr. Normand has written to me to say: "Years after, in Paris, I told a friend that I would introduce him to a painting camp that would amuse him, for I doubted not that we should find another generation afoot there. The same wily host met us, and remembered my wife and myself. Ernestine, the maid, and Paul, the groom, were still there, but never an easel was to be seen. The outhouse was a bicycle-repairing shop, and the yard was full of cycle racks. The village was on the direct road from Paris to Nemours, and the votaries of the wheel had driven the painters away to 'fresh woods and pastures new.'"



MARIANA.

By Permission of the late James Cockshut, Esq.

CHAPTER VII.

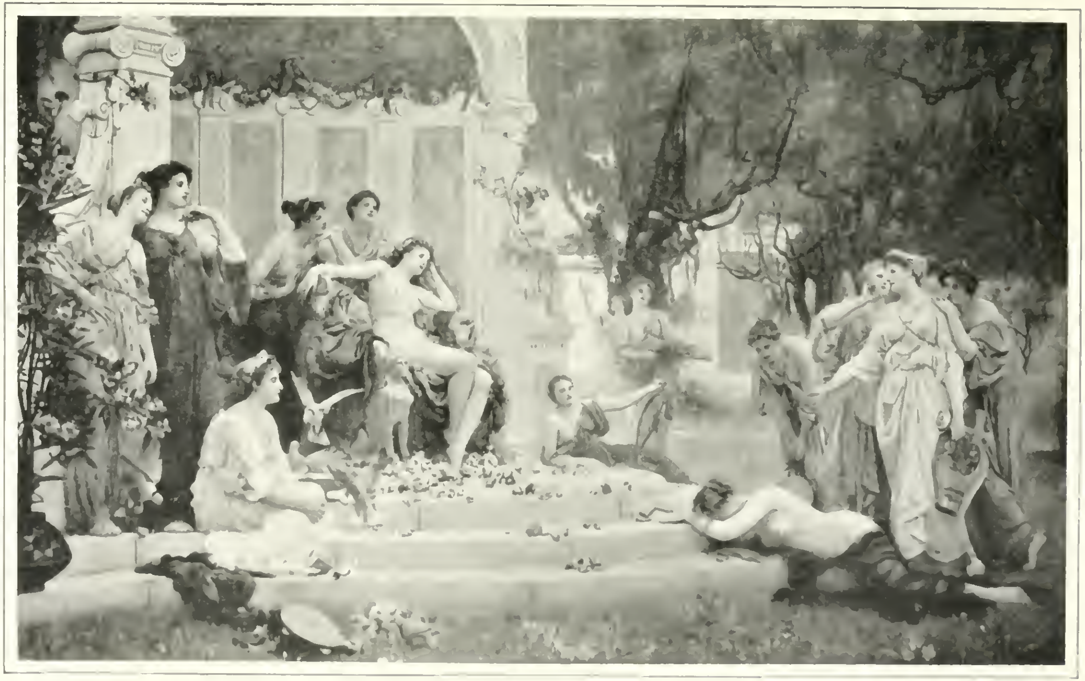
1891–1894.

"LA CIGALE"; "THE LADY OF THE LAMP"; "MARIANA"; "FLOWERS PLUCKED AND CAST ASIDE"; REMOVAL TO NORWOOD; "PSYCHE BEFORE THE THRONE OF VENUS."

THE first picture undertaken after the return from Paris was "La Cigale," a subject taken from La Fontaine's fable. All the summer, through the sunshiny days and balmy nights, "La Cigale," the grasshopper, had sung and sported, taking no heed to the morrow with its inevitable change of season. When the chill winds of autumn blew poor "Cigale" was driven to seek shelter and aid from her industrious neighbour, the ant, who had utilised the long summer days to the laying up of stores for the winter. Prudence reproaches folly and refuses assistance, and "La Cigale" has to find what comfort and shelter she can in the dry autumn leaves under the bare trees, until the cold hand of winter grips her and extinguishes the remaining sparks of life. "La Cigale," thoughtless, frivolous, foolish, crouches close to the tree in her effort to find shelter from the cold breath of the autumn evening; the setting sun is rapidly closing down its blaze of splendour, and soon the grey shadows will fold around the luckless minstrel, and darksome night engulf her.

In this picture full effect was given to the experience gained at Paris and Grez, both in drawing and colour. Whereas in all the pictures hitherto painted by Mrs. Normand the figures had been more or less "edgy," there was exhibited in "La Cigale" a determined effort to avoid this quality. The delicately painted figure is rounded off into the background with no suggestion of defined outline. This meant working in direct opposition to the teaching of Leighton, who insisted that all figures in nature had a certain amount of "edge," and that this should be represented in painting. It is a difficult question—one entirely for experts to settle, if there be a settlement to it. But Leighton was irate with "La Cigale" because of its lack of "edge." The autumn leaves on which the figure is seated, and with which the foreground is strewn, were the outcome of much time and labour on the part of the artist. They are painted crisp and sharp on the canvas, with well defined edges such as are seen in their natural prototypes. To Leighton these appealed with great force, and as he stooped to examine them closely he exclaimed, "Why paint these leaves so crisply, and deny all edge to the figure?"

The picture was accepted for the Academy



PSYCHE BEFORE THE THRONE OF VENUS.

In the possession of George McCulloch, Esq. An important Photogravure is published by Messrs. A. Tooth & Sons.

Exhibition of 1891, and once again the artist was gratified by seeing her work occupy "a centre" on the line. "La Cigale" afforded sufficient evidence that the fears of the previous year were groundless, but also that the course of tuition which the fears had dictated had been extremely beneficial. The work was stronger in every respect, the outcome of widened thought and experience. Congratulations were showered upon the artist, and none were more welcome than those of Sir John Millais, who in praising the picture said, "I would give my left hand to be able to paint flesh like that."

Both the picture and the copyright of "La Cigale" were sold, and at the International Exhibition at Paris of 1899 this work secured for the artist another Honourable Mention.

In 1891, too, "Day-Dreams," a small figure-subject, was shown at the Institute of Painters in Oil Colours, and "The Lady of the Lamp" was painted for Messrs. Cassell and Company. It was commissioned for reproduction by chromo-lithography in connection with *Yule-Tide*, Messrs. Cassell's Christmas annual. "The Lady of the Lamp" was Florence Nightingale going her round by night among the wounded in the hospital at Scutari.

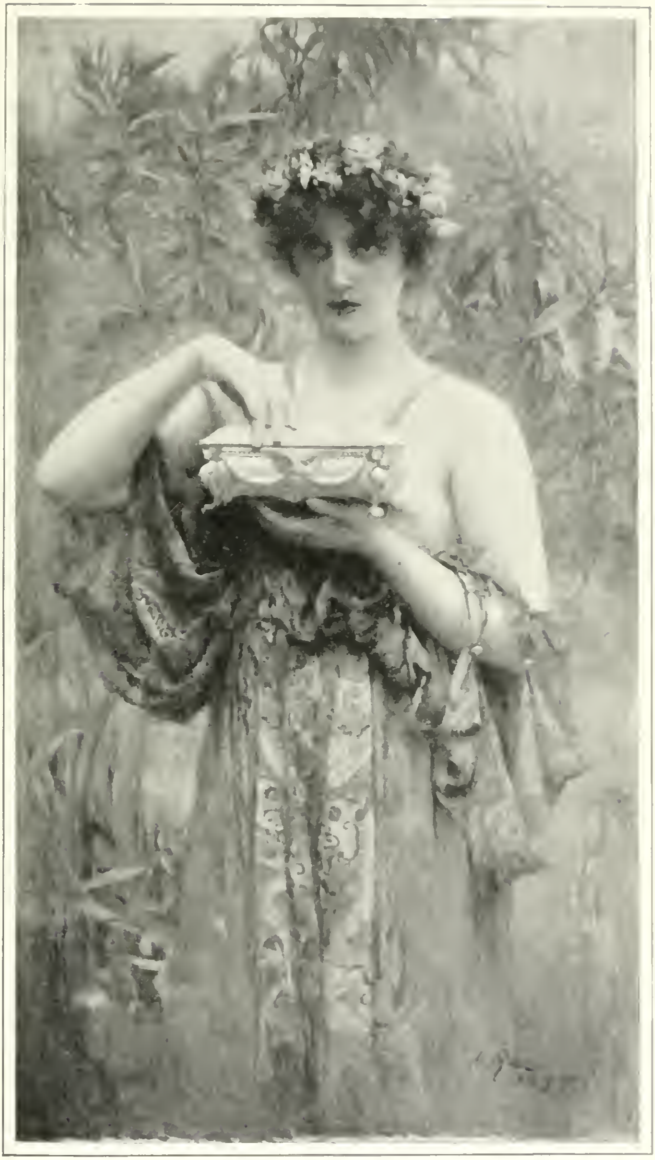
Eighteen hundred and ninety-two was not an important year from the point of view of exhibits, for it was then that was commenced the *chef d'œuvre*—"Psyche before the Throne of Venus"—and smaller works were put in hand to afford relief from the great labour that attached to this important canvas. At the Academy Mrs. Normand was represented by "Mariana," she of the "Moated Grange," of whom Tennyson sang:

> "She only said, 'My life is dreary,
> He cometh not,' she said;
> She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
> I would that I were dead.'"

At the Institute of that year was hung "Memories," a study of artificial light, which was purchased by Mr. Stewart, of Paisley.

In 1893 a daughter was born, and work in the earlier part of the year was consequently not very great in extent. At the Academy there was "Flowers Plucked and Cast Aside," in which almost as much importance attached to the landscape as to the figure. At the New Gallery Mrs. Normand was represented by one of the several studies entitled "Spring," and at the Institute by the charming little "Apple Blossom," which is here illustrated. In this year, too, a return was made to portraiture, the subject being Mr. Marcus Davis.

"Flowers Plucked and Cast Aside" was afterwards sent to Moscow to an exhibition of English art, and was purchased there by Mr. John Schulz.



PANDORA.

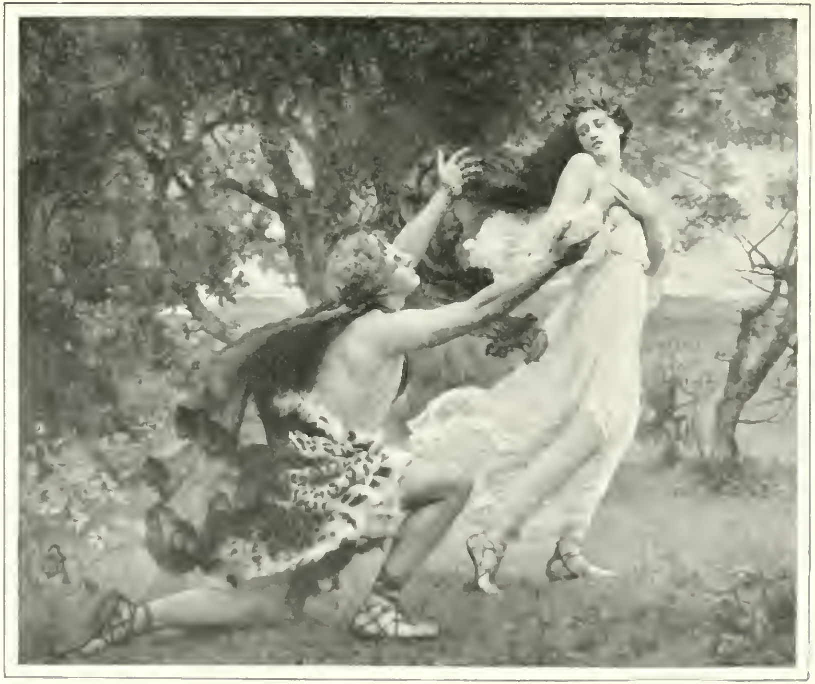
In the possession of C. Bowring, Esq.

The most important event of the year, however, was the removal from Holland Park Road. An offer had been made by Mr. Normand's father to build them a studio in the garden of his house, "Aucklands," at Norwood, if they would go to live near him. The removal meant the severance of many pleasant associations, and the discontinuance of the critical visits of their academic neighbours and friends. As a matter of fact, the latter objection was one of the strongest appeals in favour of the removal. Criticism and advice were good and welcome aids to work, but both Mr. and Mrs. Normand felt that they would now like to "run alone," and paint their pictures free from external influence. It was not inappreciation of the kindness of their friends, but merely the desire for independent action. They felt that the influence of Kensington was becoming stronger than was good for them, and that it would be better for them to shake it off before it fettered them in mannerisms.

The new studio was to include a glass house, in which "open air" effects could be secured, an innovation in artistic requirements which was then greatly in demand—much to the amusement of the older artists, who could not see the necessity for anything more than the ordinary top-lighted studio. But the influence of the French *plein air* school was rapidly extending, and next to completely working in the open, the glass studio afforded the best opportunity to follow its principles. For "Psyche before the Throne of Venus" it was a necessity, and this, with the considerations already mentioned, decided the accomplishment of the removal.

In the autumn of 1893, too, Mrs. Normand had the unique experience of being asked to serve as a "hanger" at the autumn exhibition of the Liverpool Corporation Art Galleries. The invitation was accepted, and a record created, for it was the first occasion on which a woman had served on the Hanging Committee of an important public art exhibition. The fact aroused much interest at the time in Liverpool, and Mrs. Normand was fêted by the various artistic bodies of the city. At a dinner of the Artists' Society a speech was demanded of her by the assembled company, a demand that was good humouredly insisted upon in spite of her evident anxiety to be excused. At length, in response to the continuous call, she stood up, and managed to express, in faltering tones, the conviction that "this is the happiest moment of my life," a statement that was so utterly at variance with her looks that it secured for her the compassion of the company, and she resumed her seat amidst laughter and applause.

It is the privilege of the "hangers" at the Liverpool Exhibition to act also as advisers to the Purchasing Committee of the gallery,

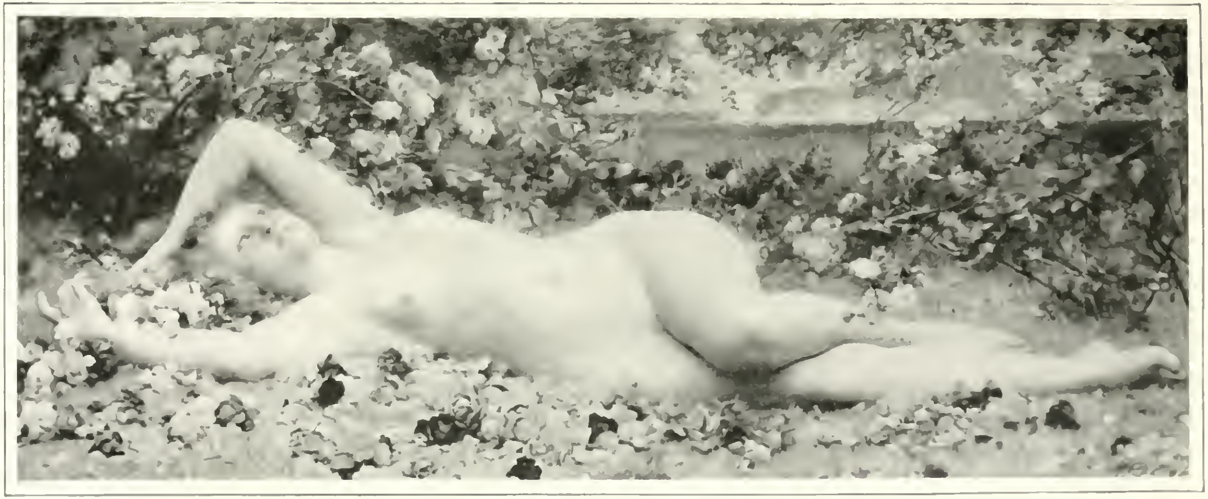


APOLLO AND DAPHNE

and it was owing to the suggestion of Mrs. Normand and her fellow-hanger, Mr. David Murray, R.A., that the picture "The Punishment of Luxury," by that extraordinary genius Giovanni Segantini, was acquired for the permanent collection of the gallery. Segantini's work was not very well known in England in those days, and the recommendation to purchase this example was somewhat of a surprise to the committee; but the actual purchase of the picture was greeted with a storm of protest by certain of the Liverpool public. As the years went by, and the reputation of the artist increased, it was recognised that Liverpool had done the right thing in securing the picture, and the acumen of its representatives in so doing became matter of congratulation.

The next year—1894—witnessed the completion of "Psyche before the Throne of Venus," and its triumphant exhibition at Burlington House. The picture in point of composition and dimensions was the most important work of Mrs. Normand's life. It was commenced in 1892 when the artist was living in Holland Park Road, and its size—ten feet by six feet four inches—precluded the possibility of its being executed in her own studio. Sir William Richmond came to the rescue and offered the loan of his studio, which was close at hand; the offer was gratefully accepted, and the early work on the canvas was done there. The glass-house of the Norwood studio was built specially to meet the requirements of the artist in the painting of this picture. It was so constructed that one end fitted in under the spreading branches of some fine trees in the garden of "Aucklands" through the foliage of which the sunlight filtered to the studio below. In this tempered light the models were posed and the direct effect obtained that was required by the artist.

The picture contains no fewer than fourteen figures, of which Venus and Psyche form the central interest. In her return to classic themes Mrs. Normand chose the prettiest of the myths for treatment. The story of Cupid and Psyche—with its beauty, pathos, and drama—is always fascinating, and has afforded "present-day interest" through all the ages. Psyche's love and distrust of Cupid; her disobedience and loss of him; her wanderings in search of him, and the treatment of her by her rival Venus, constitute the most charming theme of Greek mythology and an allegory of life for all time. For the purposes of her picture Mrs. Normand had recourse to William Morris's version of the story as recounted in his "Earthly Paradise." Psyche with many sufferings has searched in vain for her love, and has come by evil chance upon the Court of Venus. Hidden by the trees she watches the maidens of the Court at their sports when—



SUMMER.

In the possession of the Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovitch, St. Petersburg

"From her lips unwitting came a moan,
She felt strong arms about her body thrown
And, blind with fear, was haled along till she
Saw floating by her faint eyes dizzily
That vision of the pearls and roses fresh,
The golden carpet and the rosy flesh.

"Then, as in vain she strove to make some sound,
A sweet voice seemed to pierce the air around
With bitter words; her doom rang in her ears,
She felt the misery that lacketh tears.
'Come hither, damsels, and the pearl behold
That hath no price. See now the thrice-tried gold
That all men worshipped, that a god would have
To be his bride! how like a wretched slave
She cowers down, and lacketh even voice
To plead her cause! Come, damsels, and rejoice
That now once more the waiting world will move
Since she is found, the well-loved soul of Love.'"

* * * * * *

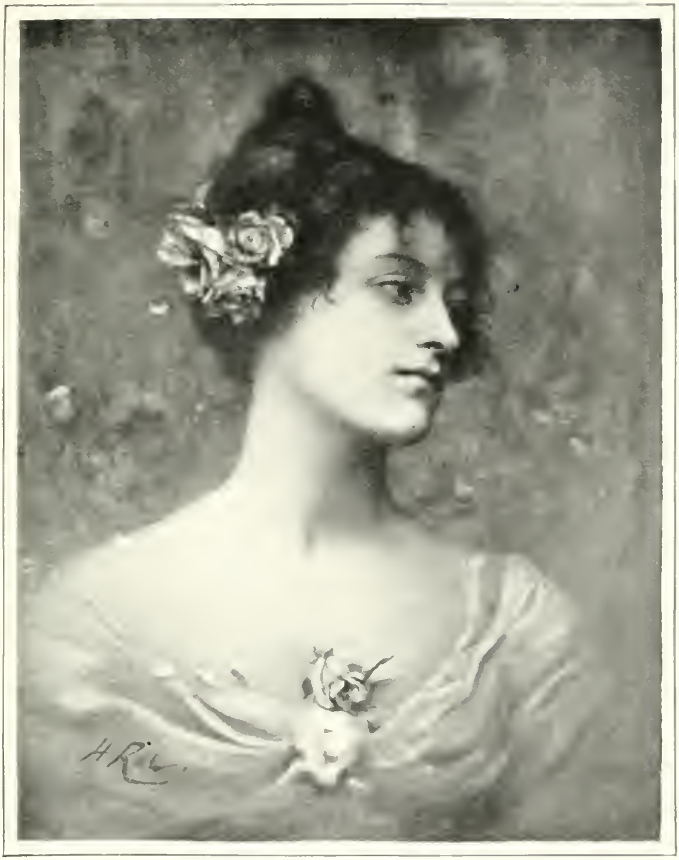
"'Oh, thou fool, I will not let thee die;
But thou shalt reap the harvest thou hast sown
And many a day thy wretched lot bemoan.
Thou art my slave, and not a day shall be
But I will find some fitting task for thee.'"

The picture was brought to town for "Show Sunday," and among the many interested callers none was more interested than Leighton. He had seen its commencement, but after its removal to Norwood did not see it again until it was presented ready for exhibition. His praises were many, but to the artist's great disappointment they were all discounted in her estimation by his final criticism "that it had a tendency to prettiness of which he could not approve."

Mr. George McCulloch, who had already practically purchased the picture, came in to see it immediately after Leighton had left, and hearing that the President had been, he asked Mrs. Normand what he had said of the picture. With the disappointment still keen within her she unthinkingly repeated the whole of Leighton's criticism. This indiscretion came to Leighton's ears, and the administration of a lecture to Mrs. Normand duly followed on the sanctity of friendly criticism between artists. For the avoidance of any misconception on the part of Mr. McCulloch, that might have arisen from his remarks upon the picture, Leighton at once wrote a letter, from which, by the courtesy of Mr. McCulloch, we are enabled to reproduce the following extract:

> "Let me seize this opportunity of saying how sincerely pleased I am to hear that you have bought Mrs. Normand's charming picture. Mrs. N. is *full* of talent, and a most enthusiastic artist—but she is given to self-depreciation (a very rare attribute)—and the purchase of so important an effort is a great and merited encouragement to her."

The picture was given a "centre" at the Academy and was one of the chief features of the exhibition. The following appreciative remarks upon it by Mr. M. H. Spielmann appeared in the *Magazine of Art:* "Miss Henrietta Rae contributes a large canvas of 'Psyche before the Throne of Venus' which is very remarkable in its conception and execution. This elaborate composition, full without being



ROSES OF YOUTH.

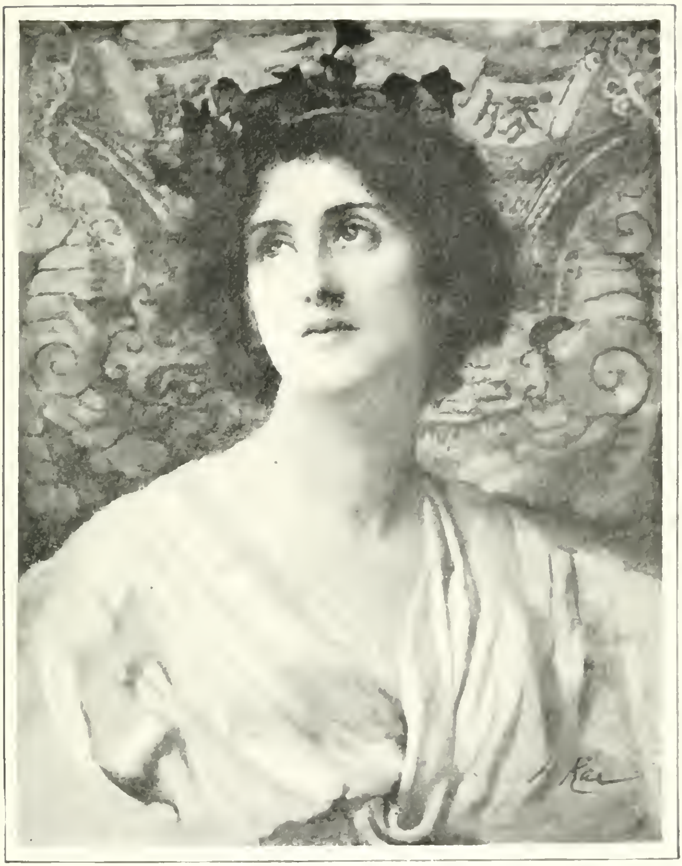
By Permission of Messrs. E. W. Savory, Ltd., Owners of the Copyright.

crowded, graceful in the drawing of its figures, dainty in its appreciation of feminine beauty, delicate in its tones and tints, is a work we hardly expected from a woman. But we instinctively feel that the painter has never quite grasped the greatness of this scene of classic mythology—the figures, with all their charm, are not inhabitants of Olympos, but denizens of an ungodly earth."

Of course, it could easily be urged in reply to the latter part of these remarks that the passions relative to these "inhabitants of Olympos" are so distinctly human that there cannot be very great error in representing their possessors in human form. Venus and Psyche were so undoubtedly feminine in character and disposition, the one in her queenly beauty and spiteful pleasantries and the other in her abject love and woe of heartbreak, that their portraiture as women seems a positive necessity for their proper representation.

The following extract from the *Daily News* may serve as a typical example of the many other references in the press to the picture :

"Mr. William Morris has made the legend the subject of a beautiful poem, and Mrs. Normand of an ambitious composition. It is a large canvas with many figures skilfully grouped, and the courage of the painter in attempting such a task has been justified by her success. She shows us the goddess seated on her classical golden throne, beautiful and unadorned, all her loveliness displayed, the draperies carelessly thrown over the seat set upon the throne of her temple. White Parian columns support its dome, and the steps of the cool marble pavement lead down to the rich growing grass of the enclosure. Her maidens are around her in groups, and no part of the picture is more successful than the treatment of these groups. The group to the left is especially happy in arrangement. Tall, graceful figures, their draperies pale blue and low-toned powdered purple, making such agreeable harmony with the full rose of the oleander blooms, assisted by a passage of orchid purple, where a piece of some over-garment rests on the marble steps; even the dove—not the white pigeon of the classic writers—finds excuse for its soft colour in the harmony of the whole scheme. The faces are beautiful, varied, and not too remote from the Greek ideal. But to the right of the throne, on the green sward, is another group of maidens, also picturesque, attendant on the goddess; they, indeed, have some employment for their lazy loveliness. Poor Psyche, straying into the midst of all this beauty, and over-powered by it, as she well may be, has fallen prostrate at the very steps of the shrine; her arms just rest on the marble ledge, as if she dared not approach nearer. Venus contemplates her with the easy indifference of a goddess, and the maidens standing by her,



HER EYES ARE HOMES OF SILENT PRAYER.

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picturesquely grouped, and not unconscious of their beauty in their clinging draperies of yellow and amber, and salmon red, have an interest in the penitent that is undisturbed by pity. In the background the turf stretches away under the shade of low growing trees; and a bronze door, dimly seen through the open, shows how Psyche gained her access to the shrine."

The picture went to Liverpool from the Academy, and after the exhibition at the Doré Gallery, to which reference will presently be made, passed into the collection of Mr. McCulloch at Queen's Gate. A large photogravure reproduction, published by Messrs. Tooth, served to make the picture still more widely known.

There was but one other work by Mrs. Normand on exhibition in 1894—the "Pandora"—which was shown at the New Gallery, and which is illustrated herewith.

CHAPTER VIII.

1895–1896.

EXHIBITION AT THE DORÉ GALLERY; "APOLLO AND DAPHNE"; "SUMMER"; VISIT TO ITALY.

IT was usual for Mr. and Mrs. Normand to spend part of each summer at Scarborough, and during one of their visits they had been introduced to Mr. George Lord Beeforth, the proprietor of the Doré Gallery in Bond Street, who had made his residence in the Yorkshire coast town. The acquaintance developed into an intimate friendship. In 1895 he commissioned Mrs. Normand to paint his portrait in his official costume as Mayor of Scarborough, and suggested to her husband the desirability of their having an exhibition of their collected works. To make the suggestion a practicable one he offered them the use of the Doré Gallery for the unexpired term of his lease on conditions that contained no risks for them, but included a share of any profits that might accrue from the undertaking. The offer was immediately accepted, and the various works collected from the owners. These included most of the important exhibited pictures of

G. L. BEEFORTH, ESQ.

both artists, numbering in all eighteen, eleven of which were by Mrs. Normand.

It was decided at first to keep the two sets of pictures distinct and separate, but when they were hung it was found that the arrangement was not at all satisfactory. Mr. Normand in several of his pictures had introduced a floor of marked geometric design, and in this preliminary hanging these all came together. Moreover, the fact that he and his wife had been in the habit of working each at one end of their studio was revealed to them forcibly in this collection of their works, for they found that each had adhered to one scheme of lighting all through the series—a scheme dictated by their particular position in the studio. The hanging was, therefore, all re-done; the works of the two artists were arranged together, and harmony and balance thereby secured.

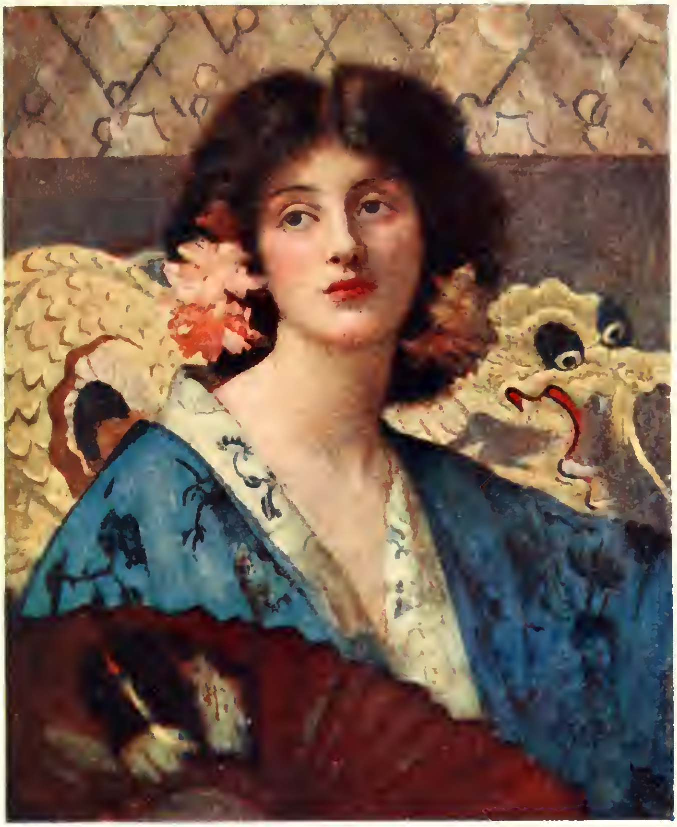
The exhibition remained open for nine months, and materially assisted to familiarise the public with Mrs. Normand's work. It afforded an opportunity of judging her work and its development in a manner which had not before been possible.

Lord Leighton's criticism as to the "prettiness" of the "Psyche" led Mrs. Normand to a determination to do something really "strong"; the outcome of which was the "Apollo and Daphne" of the 1895 Academy —a picture which she now regards as her greatest and most dismal failure. Indeed, it is a question if she ever did regard it with any feeling of pleasure and satisfaction. Any doubts she may have had regarding it were confirmed when the picture was on "show" previous to sending-in day. Once again it was Leighton who was to administer the corrective. The first glance at the picture made him exclaim, "That won't do for Apollo! Those arms are not like Apollo's! You want a strong man's! Here, ——," turning to a friend who was with them, "you are an athlete; just show them what a strong man's arms are like." The young man at first demurred, but at length consented to adopt the pose of "Apollo," and exhibit his muscles. At Leighton's suggestion Mrs. Normand repainted the arms there and then—on "Show Sunday"—but the picture never came right. It lacked spontaneity and was too evidently "forced" to be successful.

On varnishing day Sir John Millais was quite depressed with the picture, and reproved the artist in his kindly, blunt manner.

"My dear," he said, "why did you paint that? It's a very bad picture; a *very* bad picture; a VERY bad picture. You stick to your own line; don't be influenced by others, but paint as Nature intended you to paint."

The chastisement was continued in the press, and the comments may be represented by that of the *Art Journal:* "Mrs. Normand's



AZALEAS.

By Permission of Marcus Davis, Esq.
Owner of the Picture and Copyright.

touch is nice and colour sweet; but when she comes to such a subject as 'Apollo and Daphne,' she very nearly breaks down. Her Daphne is expressionless, and her school-boy Apollo wants muscle."

Altogether, then, it must be acknowledged that in her effort to be "strong" Mrs. Normand did not do herself justice; it was not that she attempted to do something beyond her power, but that the obsession of the inordinate desire to display strength hindered her faculties; led her, to use Sir John Millais's words, off "her own line," and instead of strength there was a display of weakness which was quite foreign to her usual work.

At the New Gallery of 1895 Mrs. Normand was represented by two ideal heads, "Edie" and "Azaleas," the latter of which we are enabled to reproduce in colour, by the courtesy of its owner, Mr. Marcus Davis.

"Summer," which was shown at the Academy in the following year, was a frank study of the nude, and exhibited to the full the artist's skill in drawing and flesh painting. This fair personification of "Summer," recumbent amid a bower of roses, is without doubt one of the best examples of Mrs. Normand's power in this direction. There is a quality of colour which is seldom seen in the usual studies of the nude figure. The wide range of colour and texture of flesh-painting as interpreted by various artists may be represented at one extreme by the peculiar wax-like tint and surface affected by Leighton, and at the other by the ugly, coarse-skinned, unwholesomely fleshed representations of the ultra New English Art Club school. Between these, and nearest akin to nature, comes the work of Mrs. Normand, with its tenderness and delicacy; with its sufficient idealisation to remove the figures beyond the plane of mere studies from the living model. She imparts to them all the beauty of texture and colour that pertains to nature. The painted flesh glows under the charm of her brush as though it were palpitating with life in this picture of "Summer," while the rich setting of rose blooms emphasises its beauteous qualities.

This background of foliage and magnificent display of roses was painted in Mr. Beeforth's charming rose-garden at Scarborough—redeemed from the wildness of the usual cliff frontage, and transformed into a veritable Paradise.

"Summer" was sent with "Flowers Plucked and Cast Aside" to an Art Exhibition promoted in Russia, and was purchased by the Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovitch for his private collection.

A curious accident occurred at this Exhibition in connection with these two pictures. Owing to the indifferent knowledge of English possessed by those responsible for the catalogue,

LADY NEWTON.

the titles of the pictures were transposed, and the works were sold under their wrong names.

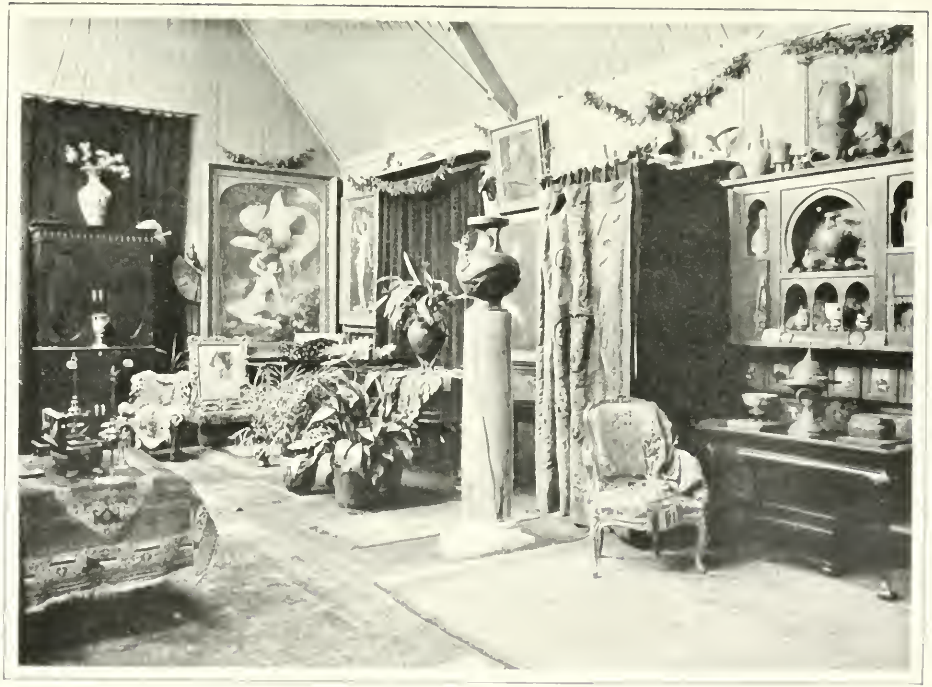
In addition to "Summer" Mrs. Normand was represented at the Royal Academy of 1896 by the portrait of Mr. Beeforth, to which reference has already been made.

But the great event of this year was one that brought to Mrs. Normand and her husband a realisation of one of the greatest hopes of their lives—an extended tour through Italy, and a personal acquaintance with the great masterpieces of Art which can alone be seen there. The opportunity was presented to them in an invitation from Mr. Beeforth to accompany him on such a tour, an opportunity, of course, that could not be allowed to pass ungrasped. Mr. Beeforth had done the round of the galleries many times, and had an intimate knowledge of their contents and the best conditions under which they were to be studied. He knew exactly where each great work was to be seen and the shortest and quickest way to get there. Under his guidance there were direct visits to objects of interest, without that loss of time endured by the ordinary visitor ignorant of the devious ways of Italian cities.

The impressions of an artist on this Mecca-pilgrimage of Art are so personal and individual that it is almost impossible for a third person to give adequate expression to them. I have therefore transcribed a summary of the journey and its influences given me by Mr. Normand, in preference to attempting to record them in my own words:

"We had, of course, like most other painters, been looking forward for years to the delights of seeing with our own eyes the masterpieces that were familiar to us through reproductions, and of which we had read much and heard more from the artists among whom the earlier part of our artistic lives had been spent. Leighton's biennial addresses at the Royal Academy had, as students, impressed us immensely, and our subsequent intimate associations with him and with Watts, Richmond, and Prinsep had led us to place enormous value on the object lessons likely to be derived from the study of the mighty works that have come down to us as records of magnificent achievement. We were, of course, familiar with the examples of the various Italian schools that are represented in our own National Gallery and in the Louvre, and we had each year diligently studied the Old Masters' Exhibitions at Burlington House, so that our minds were in a condition to receive the right impressions that an extended visit to the galleries of Italy was likely to afford.

"We knew theoretically the influences exercised by the various masters that formed the style of those who succeeded them. We knew of the beginnings of Raffaello under the domination of Perugino, but in the Vatican we saw with our own eyes how, commencing at



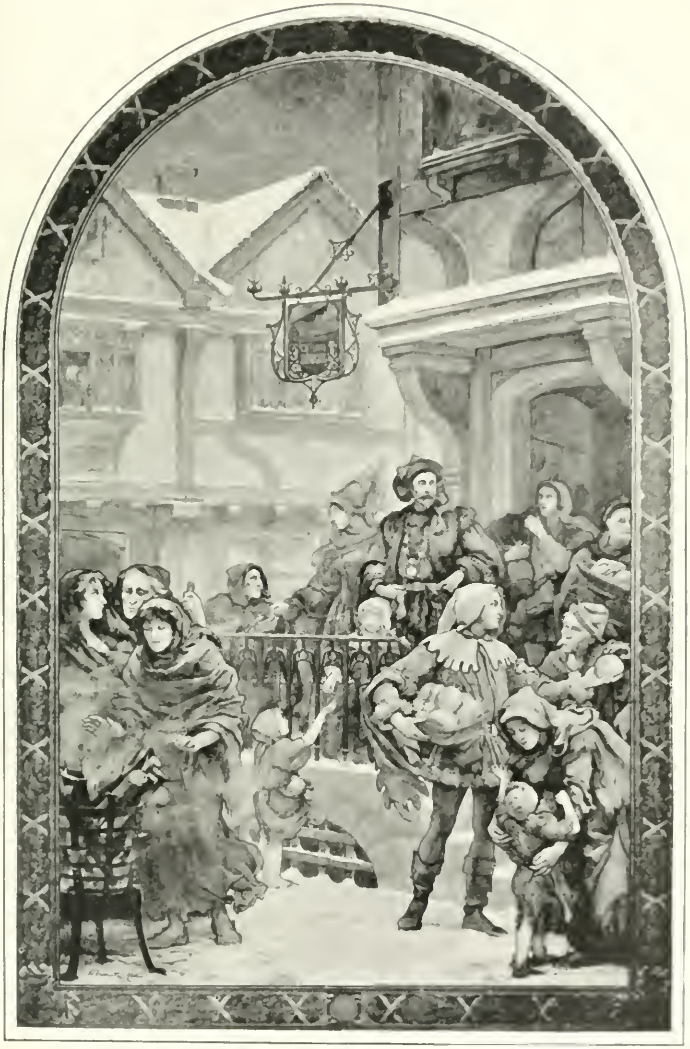
THE STUDIO AT NORWOOD.

the top of the 'Disputa' fresco, the angels of Perugino still intruded themselves, and how, lower down in the design, Raffaello's individuality gradually asserted itself and eventually became the expression of a spontaneous impulse that evolved the marvellous powers which have dominated so triumphantly through all the succeeding ages.

"We had, as I have observed, been well prepared in all the traditions that are necessary to a just appreciation of these titanic works, and yet the impressions far surpassed in intensity everything of which we had imagined ourselves capable of experiencing. We arrived in Rome at midnight, and drove round to look at some of its antiquities by moonlight. Our old friend, who was acting as our pilot, had evidently arranged that our introduction to this shrine of all that is beautiful should not lack the mystery likely to impress the receptive artistic temperament. On the following morning we were further attuned to the enjoyment of our quest by an early visit to St. Peter's, hours before the arrival of the crowd of ordinary tourists.

"These preliminary rites having been observed, as artists we then immediately devoted our attention to the Vatican Galleries, and among all the splendid things that there met our eyes none impressed us more than the Raffaello frescoes and the Sistine decorations—indeed, we were not more impressed by anything we saw subsequently, either in Rome or elsewhere, not even excepting the Botticellis in Florence, nor the Titians. Michael Angelo's ceiling alone came near to ruining us. We felt that nothing less than a six-feet photograph of the whole, and large, detailed prints of the individual panels and figure (printed in permanent brown carbon to last for all time), could possibly satisfy our craving to study at leisure the magnificent design and drawing of this most wonderful of all works of the master. I had to satisfy this craving, in a measure, at the expense of my purse, but our friend wisely pointed out that nothing short of the purse of Fortunatus could possibly carry us through Italy if we determined to bring away expensive records of each masterpiece by which we were impressed; moreover, did we do so, special galleries would have to be built for the records if we wished properly to enjoy them.

"Our visit to Rome was rendered additionally enjoyable by a chance meeting with Sir Charles Holroyd, who, like ourselves, had gone to Italy—but for a much longer time—to study the Old Masters. When we met him he had brought the matter to so exact a science that he gave us a list of the notable pictures, with the precise time marked against each, at which it could best be seen. Thus, he told us to make our first acquaintance with Titian's 'Sacred and Profane Love,' in the Borghese Palace, at 1.30 precisely on a sunny



THE CHARITIES OF SIR RICHARD WHITTINGTON.

From the Wall Painting in the Royal Exchange.

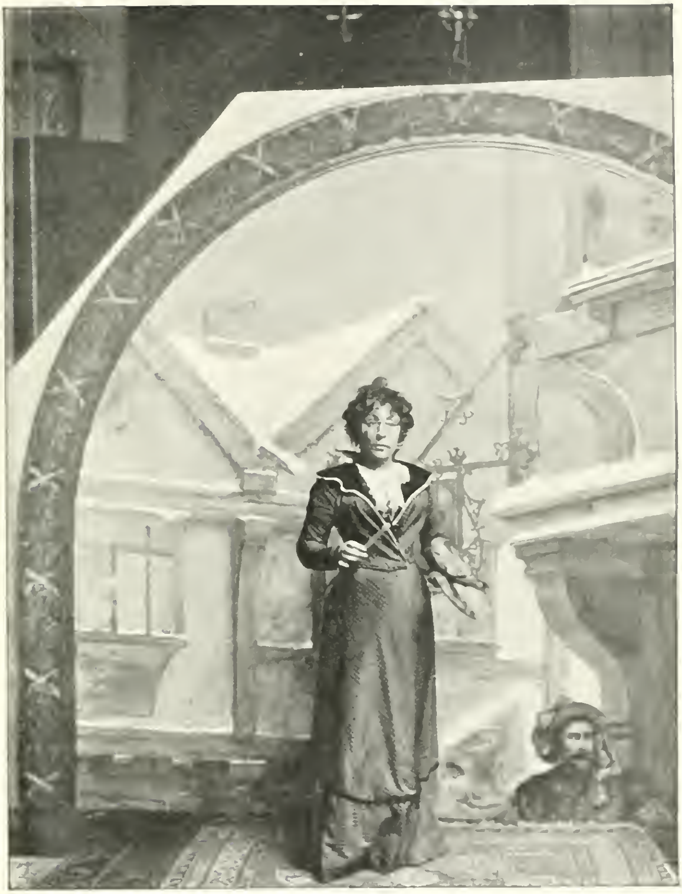
By Permission of Messrs. S. Hildesheimer & Co., Owners of the Copyright, and Publishers of the Colour-reproduction of the Picture.

morning. Guided by a ground plan we were to walk through the preceding rooms without paying attention to any paintings they contained; to walk straight to the end of the gallery and, when we reached the end, to turn sharp round and face the picture, which would then burst upon us in all its glory, illuminated by a sun reflection from the floor. We were bound to admit that this preliminary trouble fully repaid us. The canvas, always brilliant, fairly glowed, and seemed to illuminate its surroundings.

"Our friendship with Sir Charles—then plain Mr.—Holroyd was one of long standing, and dated back to the time when we were working in the Academy Schools, and he himself was a successful student at 'the Slade.' Moreover, his people hailed from Yorkshire, and were known to Mr. Beeforth, so that our party assimilated, greatly to our profit, as I have already shown in one instance.

"Thus it came to pass that we never presented our many letters of introduction to the various houses in Rome where artists are ever welcome. Our time was so fully occupied in 'ganging our own gait' by day, that the evenings found us ready for rest. Besides, our discussions of the various items of the day's programme, which were natural, and to us inevitable, would, perhaps, have wearied anyone less interested than ourselves.

"Among all the masterpieces of the Italian school to be found in Rome, it struck us that an alien, Velasquez to wit, easily holds his own in one notable portrait enshrined in a special room of the Doria Palace. Indeed, it seems to us that his 'Pope Innocent X.' looms large above any portraits that we saw in that wonderful panorama of a journey that even now registers itself in our minds as a delight such as will never for us be equalled. It was a glimpse of the wonderland of which we had dreamed, but which we had not imagined half as entrancing as it proved to be. We spent weeks in Florence familiarising ourselves with the great works of Botticelli, the awe-inspiring masterpieces of Cellini, and the charming productions of Donatello and the Della Robbias. In Venice, Milan, Bologna and Naples, we followed, in innumerable examples, the progress of the grand procession of workers whose names are writ immortal on the roll of Fame. Titian, Guido, Mantegna, Fabriano, and the holy men who worked their souls' desires into their creations, the monks Angelico and Bartolommeo, Filippo Lippi, Mino da Fiesole, Ghirlandaio, and countless others, all members of the glorious host born on that classic soil, and whose names had been to us but as sounds. Here their lives were laid bare before us in their works; lives full of earnest endeavour towards the highest achievement in art; men who, in their simple requirements, shame us ephemeral and pigmy



MRS. NORMAND PAINTING THE
ROYAL EXCHANGE PANEL.

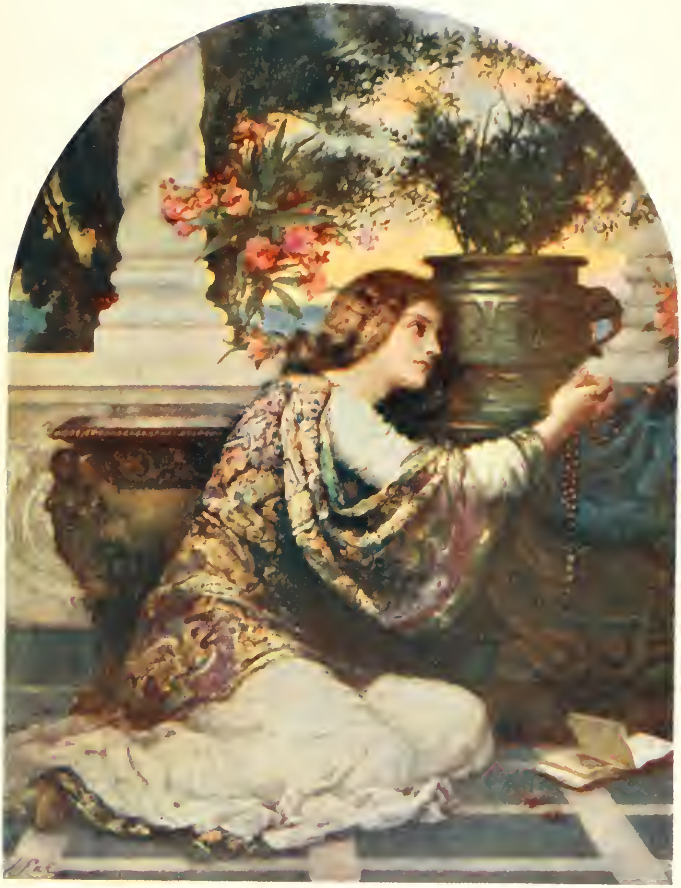
From a Photo by George Newnes, Ltd.

(The canvas, mounted on runners. could be raised from, or lowered into a pit sunk below the floor of the studio.)

craftsmen of to-day; giants whose triumphs will be handed down to generations yet unborn.

" Imagine us among this wealth of wonders; the masterpieces of Greek sculpture and the marvellous creations of Michael Angelo's chisel and mallet. Imagine us face to face with the original Greek works, of which we had as students made our laborious studies in the schools; at every turn we met these old friends, but all refined in outline and proportion—living marble instead of lifeless plaster! To understand this immeasurable difference let a comparison be made between a photograph of Michael Angelo's 'Pièta' of St. Peter's Chapel with the cast in the Crystal Palace or South Kensington Museum, and even as the flat print renders but a suggestion of the grandeur of the cast, so in its turn the cast is but a shadow of the original. Imagine all this presented to two impressionable and enthusiastic artists, and some idea can be formed of the revelation it was to my wife and myself.

" Every artist worthy of the name is, of course, capable of the same emotions, but our lines had fallen among a group of men whose life's work had been based upon these classic masterpieces, and as we stood before the various canvases and statues, we conjured up our friends and mentors as living entities, and imagined what they had said of each work when first confronted with it. When, later on in the Uffizi, we met our friends Leighton, Watts, Poynter, and Millais face to face, limned by their own hands, honoured guests among the modern masters, we felt almost capable of continuing our discussions with them, and longed to bring disputed points to their notice. This satisfaction, however, we had to reserve until our return, when we did not fail to let off some of our exuberant enthusiasm to sympathetic ears."



ISABELLA.

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CHAPTER IX.

1897–1905.

"ISABELLA"; "DIANA AND CALLISTO"; "THE CHARITIES OF SIR RICHARD WHITTINGTON" (ROYAL EXCHANGE WALL PAINTING) "THE MARQUESS OF DUFFERIN"; "SIRENS"; "SONGS OF THE MORNING."

ON the return from Italy the first picture to be taken in hand was "Isabella," based on Keats's rendering of Boccaccio's story of Isabella and her pot of basil. With Miss Muriel Newton as her model, Mrs. Normand painted an "Isabella" of surpassing beauty. Her hands are clasped round the pot which enshrines the ghastly remains of her murdered lover, and her head leans against it in an attitude expressive of the heartbreaking sorrow under which she is suffering. It is, in fact, a most successful realisation of the subject as imagined and described by Keats:

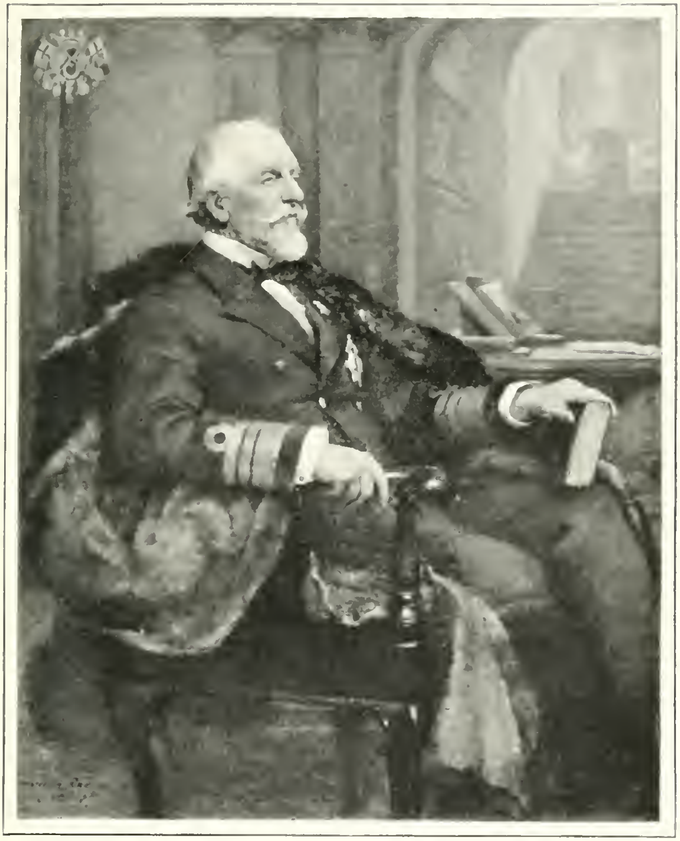
"And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
  And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
  And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze;
She had no knowledge when the day was done.

And the new morn she saw not: but in peace
Hung over her sweet Basil ever more,
And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

And so she ever fed it with these tears,
Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
Of Basil-tufts in Florence; for it drew
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
From the fast mouldering head there shut from view:
So that the jewel, safely casketed,
Came forth, and in perfumed leaflets spread."

The picture was hung in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1897, and formed the artist's only contribution to the public exhibitions of that year. She was, however, occupied on a portrait of Mrs. Beeforth (which passed direct into Mr. Beeforth's possession) and in a heavy round of duties connected with the presidentship of the Women's Art Section of the Victorian Exhibition, which she had accepted on the invitation of Mr. Imre Kiralfy.

Messrs. Tooth and Sons, who had published a large photogravure reproduction of "Pysche before the Throne of Venus," now approached Mrs. Normand with a commission to paint a companion picture to that subject: the commission was accepted, and "Diana and Callisto," which appeared at the Academy in 1899, was the outcome. The work demanded the artist's undivided attention during 1898, and in that year, for the first time since 1881,



THE MARQUESS OF DUFFERIN AND AVA.

Painted for the Belfast Yacht Club.

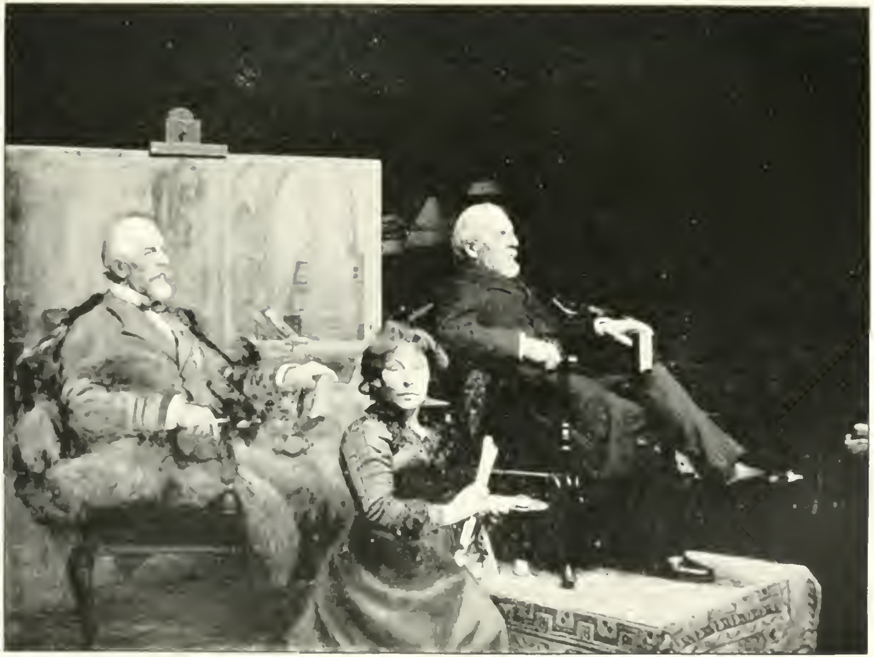
she was unrepresented at the Academy, and, indeed, at all the galleries.

"Diana and Callisto" is a canvas as important in size as the "Psyche," with seventeen figures. Diana and her maidens have been bathing in a stream which runs through a shady glade in a classic landscape. In front of the majestic figure of the goddess kneels the nymph Callisto, cowering under the scathing denunciations of the irate Diana. The subject afforded Mrs. Normand another excellent opportunity for the display of her power in flesh painting, for the attendants of Diana are all in the act of robing after the bath, and are all more or less nude. Some of these figures are most beautiful in pose, and all are painted in the artist's best manner. But it is the pathetic figure of Callisto that absorbs the attention; with arms across her breast she clutches the drapery which one of Diana's amazons is trying to remove; it is one of Mrs. Normand's happiest efforts. But, in spite of these beauties of detail, the picture, as a whole, was not altogether successful, and the failure of its first reproduction in photogravure completed the artist's disappointment. The anti-nude crank was again on the war path over this work, and among other effusions received by the artist was the following typical example of the impudent letters sent to painters by these self-constituted keepers of public morals :

"Madam, I trust that you will not think me presumptuous beyond pardon in addressing you in relation to your picture 'Diana and Callisto,' now on exhibition in the Royal Academy. Doubtless from the *artistical* (*sic*) point of view it ranks very high amongst the productions of the day. But from an *ethical* point of view it is also doubtless dangerous to many. So far as a large proportion of men are concerned, the presentation of beautiful women so scantily draped cannot but appeal to passions that are already of volcanic force in their nature. . . . . Then as regards the models themselves. For women to sit to women in this way is probably not so deteriorating to their moral sense. But, as you know, it habituates them to sit thus also to men—and herein must be found a trespass upon feminine modesty on the one hand and also on masculine chivalry on the other.

"It will be a great day when artists so gifted as yourself set your faces against public or private presentation of such pictures and all that is associated with their painting. And I am sure an appeal to your own kindly heart to aid those who here and elsewhere are labouring under great disadvantages to become their brothers' and sisters' 'keepers' will not be thrown aside as wholly irrational and vain."

Such curious communications are common to all artists who choose to paint such subjects,



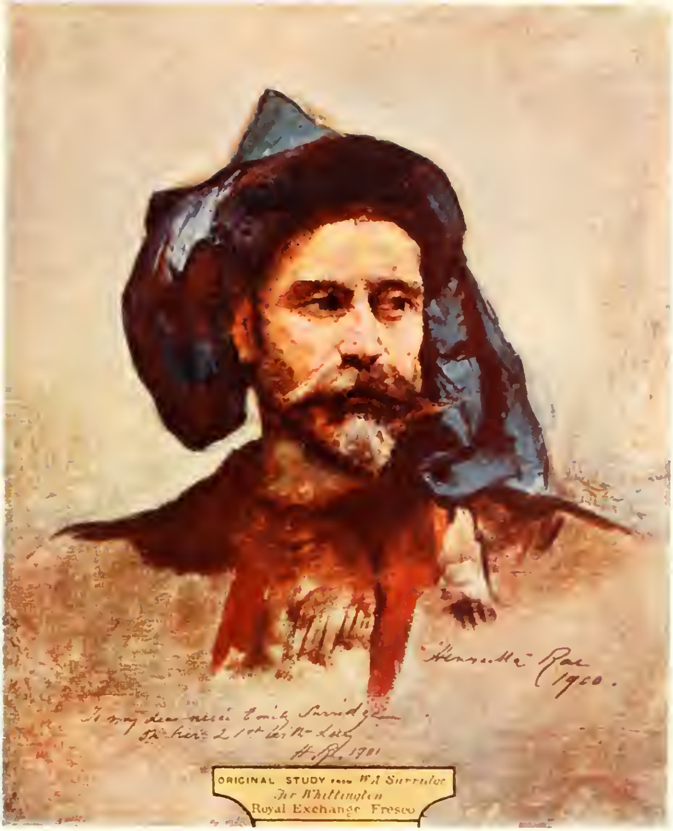
MRS. NORMAND PAINTING THE PORTRAIT
OF THE MARQUESS OF DUFFERIN.

and it is fortunate that the writers of them form so small a proportion of the public. It is somewhat appalling to think what might result were the bulk of people overweighted, in like manner, with prurient and sensual thoughts.

At the New Gallery of 1899 was "Day-Dreams," a study which passed into the collection of Mr. Beeforth, and to this year, too, belongs the portrait of Mr. H. K. Newton, son of Sir Alfred Newton, the then Lord Mayor of London. A portrait of Lady Newton, which appeared at the Academy in the following year, must be esteemed one of the most successful portraits of a woman painted by Mrs. Normand. At the New Gallery of 1900 there were two studies of heads, entitled "Roses of Youth" and "Her Eyes are Homes of Silent Prayer" (which were commissioned for publication by Messrs. Savory, of Bristol), and a portrait of Dr. W. H. Cummings, F.S.A.

But the most important work to be accredited to this year was the completion of the large wall-painting for the Royal Exchange, "The Charities of Sir Richard Whittington." This work had been in hand for some time, and had involved an immense amount of labour and thought. The space to be covered measured eighteen feet by twelve feet, and the composition included no fewer than fourteen life-sized figures. Mr. Normand had also received a commission for one of these decorations—"King John Granting Magna Charta"—and the difficulty connected with the handling of two works on this scale in one studio was solved by him in a manner peculiarly ingenious. Two pits were sunk—one at each end of the studio—equal in depth to the height of the canvases. In these the canvases, mounted on frames, could be raised or lowered at the will of the artists, as they worked at the level of the studio floor. The advantages of such a device were obvious, and it is doubtful if any other of the series of pictures at the Royal Exchange was produced under such easy conditions. There was no folding of the canvas, so that the whole composition could be seen, and due proportions maintained, throughout.

But in spite of this labour-saving device, the strain upon Mrs. Normand in the production of this work was very great, especially in view of the fact that it had to be completed by a specified date. Many careful studies had to be made of each separate figure, in charcoal and colour; and again of the groups. The reproduction in colour of the study for the head of Whittington—for which Mr. Surridge, the artist's brother-in-law, sat as model—will serve as a suggestion of the amount of work put into each of these preliminary studies; they are almost as elaborately dealt with as the finished picture. The


Henrietta Rae
1900.
To my dear niece Emily Surridge
on her 21st birthday
H. R. 1901
ORIGINAL STUDY FROM W. A. Surridge
for Whittington
Royal Exchange Fresco

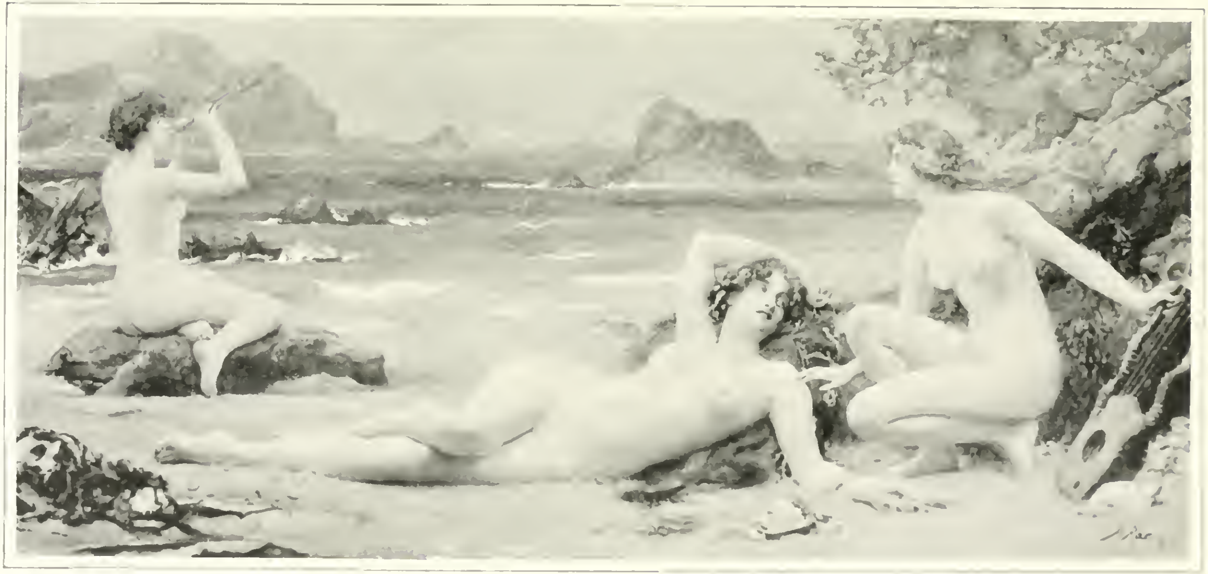
STUDY FOR THE HEAD OF WHITTINGTON.

summer was one of unremitting toil; oftentimes work was commenced at six o'clock in the morning and continued throughout the day until the light failed at dusk. But the task was duly accomplished, and when the panel was placed in position it bore favourable comparison with those already there.

When the Gresham Committee announced their intention of filling these ambulatory walls of the Exchange with decorations, Lord Leighton immediately offered to provide the first of the series, and his "Phœnicians Bartering with Ancient Britons" was duly designed and painted. The method adopted by Leighton has been more or less closely followed by the other artists concerned. The strong flax canvas was prepared with a medium composed of Sierra Leone copal, wax, and oil of spike, which was similar to the "Spirit Fresco" mediums invented by T. Gambier Parry for use in connection with pictures painted direct on a specially prepared plaster wall. When the canvas was finished it was attached to the wall by a process which was frequently used in France, but had never before been attempted in England. Leighton designed a border which it was decided should be repeated on each panel, so that his initial picture of the series served, in more than one respect, as a model to other artists who should be engaged on the work.

There were twenty-four panels to be filled, and each was to be dealt with by a separate artist. Many of the pictures are the gifts of private citizens, and others have been provided by the City Guilds. The "Whittington" was presented by Mr. Abe Bayley, whose wife "sat" for the study of Dame Whittington. The whole forms a scheme of decoration that is unique and intensely interesting. The appearance of the building has been transformed; the aforetime dull, grey walls now glow with colour, and make this court of the Exchange an æsthetic oasis amid the arid commercialism of the City.

Another interesting commission followed hard upon the completion of the Whittington; this came from the Belfast Yacht Club for a portrait of its commodore, the Marquess of Dufferin. The matter had to be taken up immediately, and, in reply to the request for sittings, Lord Dufferin wrote that he would be in London three days after his letter, and, if convenient to the artist, he would like the work commenced at once. As he could not well be asked to travel to Norwood for the purpose, hurried arrangements had to be made to secure a studio in London. In their difficulty Mr. Normand wrote to their old friend, Mr. G. F. Watts, to ask if he could let them have the temporary use of his studio at Little Holland House. Watts was then living at Guildford, and gave a ready acquiescence when he heard the purpose that prompted the request.



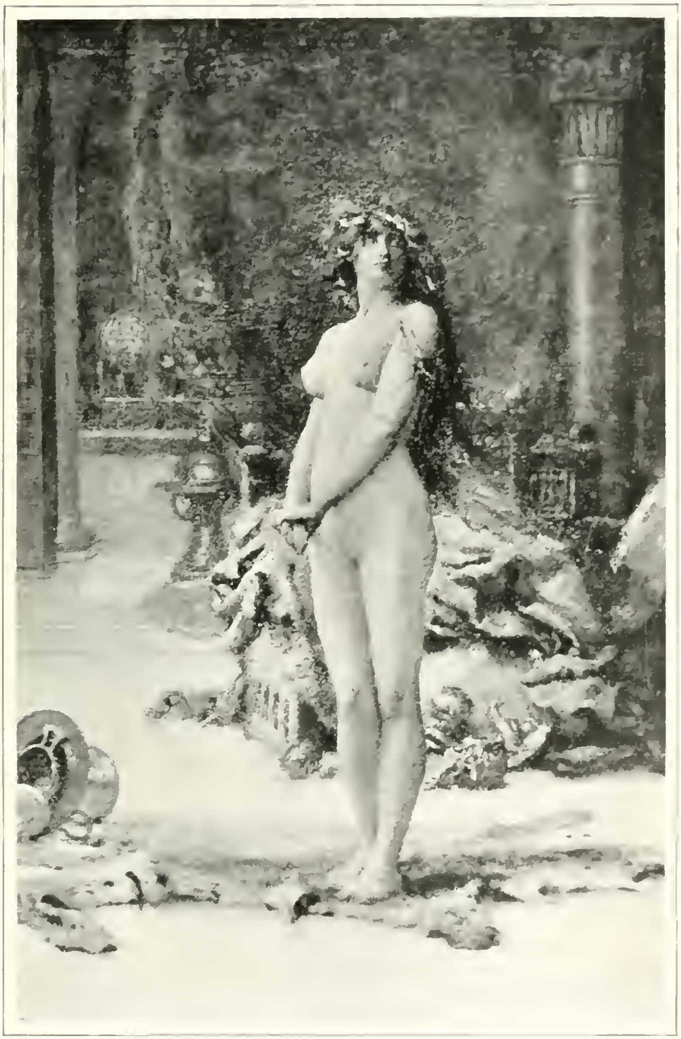
SIRENS.

In the possession of Mrs. J. R. Cardeza, Philadelphia, U.S.A

The Belfast Yacht Club had communicated to Lord Dufferin the name of the artist to whom they had given the commission, a name with which he proved to be unacquainted after his long absence from England. He therefore went to Messrs. Graves to enquire as to her credentials and capabilities, and the report he received from them at once settled any doubts that existed in his mind. When the request for an appointment came from the artist it was, as we have seen, promptly answered by Lord Dufferin, and in due course he made his appearance at Little Holland House. He at once expressed his conviction that he knew the place, and it was explained to whom it belonged and how it had been lent for the purpose of the portrait. "Oh, yes," he said, "Watts painted a portrait of me years ago." As a matter of fact it was thirty years previously, and the impression then received of the quiet studio had been retained through all the stress of his busy diplomatic life. He sat in the same chair that he occupied when Watts painted his portrait, and proved a splendid "sitter." Himself an enthusiastic artist, he was keenly sensible of what was required of him, and did his utmost to assist Mrs. Normand to secure the best possible result. At the end of the first sitting the anxiety on each side was equally great. Mrs. Normand nervously awaited her sitter's remark as he stepped from the throne and caught the first glimpse of the work—that crucial moment which every portrait-painter knows so well. But the anxiety was of short duration, for she saw from the expression on his face that all was well, and when he exclaimed with pleasure, "Why, you have got it like in the first half-hour," she knew that the portrait was going to be a successful one.

After half a dozen sittings in London Lord Dufferin was compelled to leave town, and he invited Mrs. Normand to complete the work at Clandeboye, his Irish home. The pilgrimage was accordingly made, and the billiard-room was for the time being transformed into a studio. Here on an improvised "throne" he sat and talked whilst Mrs. Normand painted; talked of his many and curious experiences in all parts of the world; of India and Canada, of adventure and incidents in statecraft in which he had played a part. It was a delightful experience to the artist and her husband, and called forth the best of her talent to the work she had in hand. The visit extended over three weeks, and afforded splendid opportunities to Mrs. Normand to study her subject—opportunities which occur all too rarely in a portrait-painter's experience.

Among Lord Dufferin's choicest treasures was his "Helen's Tower" library, which is a collection of books that is probably unique. The "Tower" was erected as a memorial to



LOOT.

In the possession of H. K. Newton, Esq.

his mother, and in it are placed autograph copies of books by all the best known authors of his time, each exquisitely bound by Zaehnsdorf. Celebrated artists were asked by Lord Dufferin to select their favourite book and in it to place a sketch—and these, too, were bound up, and with the literary souvenirs form a collection of great interest. Mrs. Normand's contribution was a copy of Morris's "Earthly Paradise," with a sketch of Venus from "Psyche before the Throne of Venus."

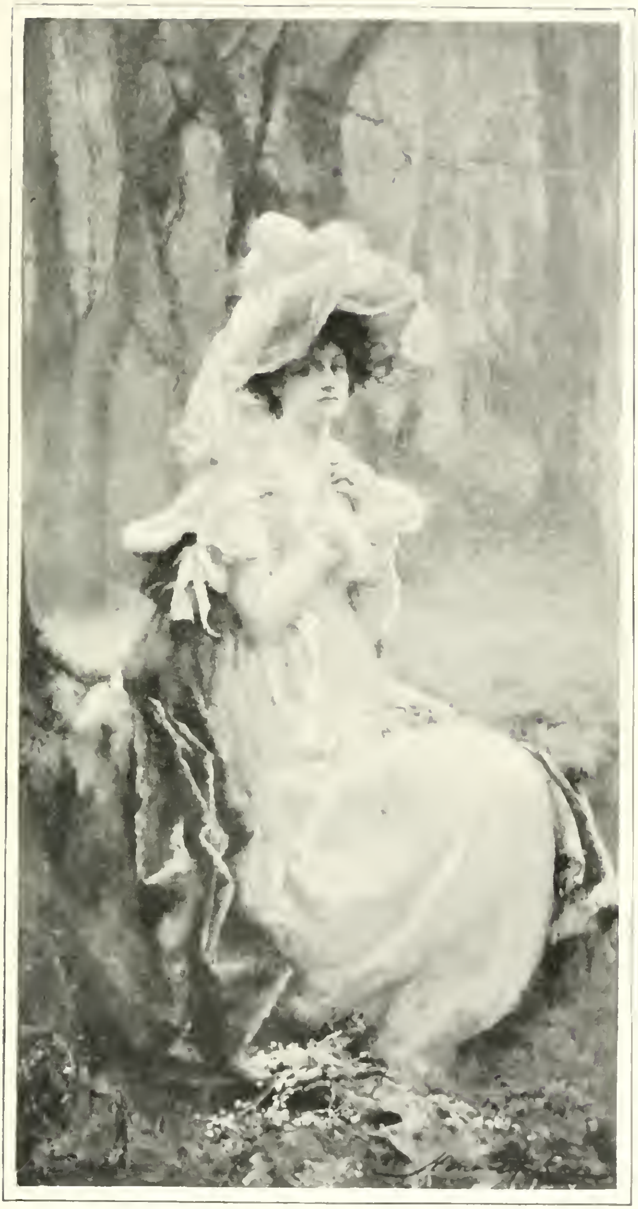
On its completion the portrait was pronounced by all to be a great success. Lord and Lady Dufferin were both enthusiastic over it, and declared it to be the best that had ever been painted, and Mrs. Normand thereupon painted a replica for presentation to Lady Dufferin. Further sittings were given for this second portrait, which, although based upon the first, is really an original work rather than a replica. This was completed in the October preceding Lord Dufferin's death in February, 1902.

The first portrait was sent to the Royal Academy of 1900, and added greatly to the artist's reputation as a portraitist; there can be no question that it is the strongest work in this direction achieved by Mrs. Normand. The quiet dignity of the portrait as a whole is perfectly attuned to the character of the kindly *grand seigneur* whom it represented: the strong, intellectual head is so painted that while the strictest accuracy of likeness is observed, there is sufficient ideality to suggest the nobility of character and gentleness of heart possessed by this great man.

Portraiture, indeed, became Mrs. Normand's chief work at this time; at the New Gallery of 1901 there were portraits of Miss Beeforth and Mr. and Mrs. John Brown.

During the first six months of 1902 Mrs. Normand was incapacitated by a serious and well-nigh fatal illness that rendered any great exertion inadvisable for the remaining part of the year. This period was entirely devoted to the execution of a commission from Mr. Athol Thorne for two decorative panels for his house in Park Street, with the subjects of "Venus" and "Diana." The former is virtually the central figure of "Psyche before the Throne of Venus." In place of the classic architecture of the first picture there is a background of oleander foliage and bloom, and in the distance a glimpse of blue sea. The other panel shows Diana seated on the bank of a stream in a shady forest glade. By the courtesy of Mr. Thorne we are enabled to reproduce the "Venus" in colour, so that some suggestion of the delicacy of the original may be recorded.

"Sirens," which secured a place of honour at the Academy of 1903, a "centre" on the line, was the outcome of a suggestion made to the artist by Lord Dufferin. The painting



IN LISTENING MOOD.

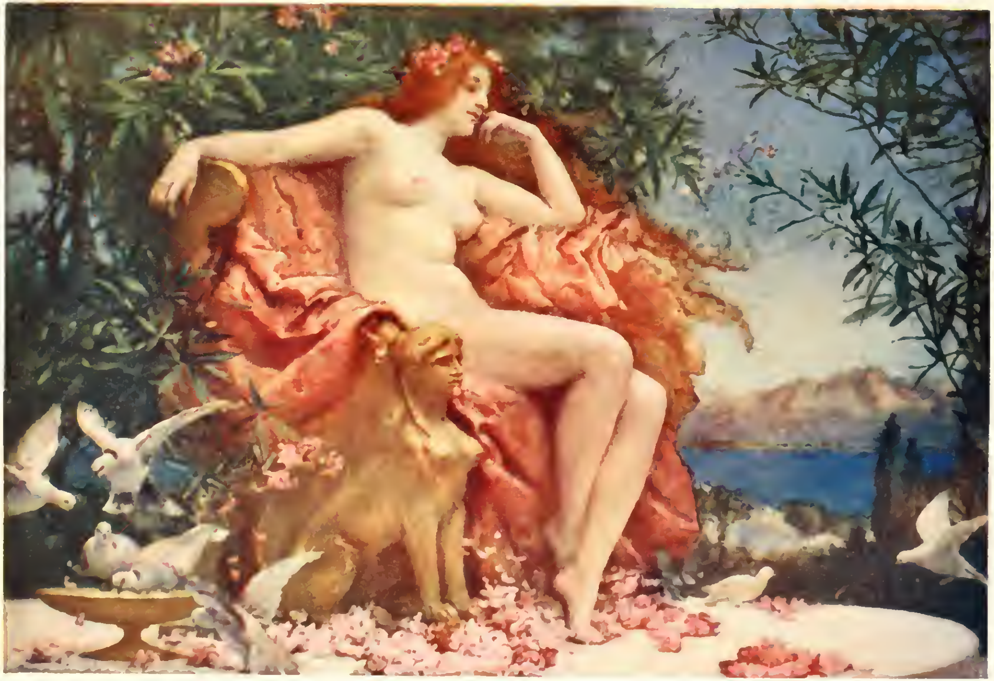
was thus referred to in the *Magazine of Art*: "The large, gracefully composed canvas of 'Sirens,' modelled with unusual care, presents a colour-surface of broken tones which constitute a great advance upon the artist's previous achievements." If reference is made to the illustrations of this picture and "Summer," it will be seen that the pose of the figure in the latter picture has been practically adapted to that of the central "Siren." The background of rock and sea was painted at Dinard. The picture was sent to the Exhibition at St. Louis in 1904, and was there purchased by Mrs. J. R. Cardeza, of Philadelphia. There was also in the Academy Exhibition of 1903 a portrait of Lady Winifred Renshaw and Her Son, the completion of which had been interrupted by the artist's illness.

At the New Gallery of 1903 Mrs. Normand had a portrait of Dr. MacNaughten Jones—a gift to the physician by whose skill she had been restored to health. To 1903, too, belongs a portrait of Professor Byers, painted for Queen's College, Belfast, which necessitated a visit to Belfast to secure the necessary sittings. An amusing incident occurred in connection with the work. Owing to pressure of duties the Professor was unable to give much time to the artist, and after the head had been painted it was arranged that Mr. Normand, who had accompanied his wife, should "sit" for the coat. He thereupon donned the professorial garment, and during the sitting, in a moment of abstraction, slipped into its pocket the pipe which he had been smoking. The sitting over, the pipe was forgotten, and the coat returned to the Professor. The next scene is the operating theatre of the hospital, at which the Professor is to demonstrate before the students. He is most particular as to absolute care being taken in operations: has impressed the students with the necessity of perfect attention to matters of cleanliness, and has the reputation of being a non-smoker. Imagine his chagrin, and the students' delight, when from his pocket fell a much used, highly perfumed pipe. Explanation was, of course, impossible and futile; the evidence was too strong—in a double sense—to be explained away.

"Loot," of which a reproduction is given, was painted in this year for Mr. H. K. Newton. The picture was never exhibited, as Mrs. Normand intended to repeat the design on a larger scale.

"Songs of the Morning" of the Academy of 1904 was a return to the lighter manner of "Flowers Plucked and Cast Aside," a dainty figure in a charmingly painted landscape; a theme that was again adapted for the New Gallery picture of 1905, "In Listening Mood."

Here, then, we perforce close the record of Mrs. Normand's work—a record which tells



VENUS ENTHRONED.

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of a strenuous life, of continuous, untiring effort to attain in practice the level of a lofty ideal of artistic excellence—a record which has yet to be completed. There are, we hope, still many years of active work before her; her aims and ideals are still to be fully attained; her capacity for work and force of energy are as strong and enduring as ever. The experience gained from her successes and failures is a valuable asset at this stage of her career, and it is not too much to forecast that the former will be excelled, and the latter forgotten, in the work which is yet to be produced. Among the women artists of our time Mrs. Normand has gained a foremost position by sheer force of merit. As we have seen from the story of her career, there were no favouring circumstances, no kindly influences exercised on her behalf; all has been gained by enduring effort and indefatigable industry. Failures have been accepted as incentives to renewed endeavour, and successes as inducements to yet higher achievement. Beauty is the quest of her Art, and joyousness its dominant note—and that, perhaps, is the all in all of Art.

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