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# ON BOOKS AND ARTS

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# ON BOOKS AND ARTS

BY

FREDERICK WEDMORE

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## *NOTE*

*In the pages that here follow I have gathered up such of my more or less critical contributions to various Reviews, and to one great daily paper, as I am least unwilling to preserve within the covers of a book.*

*As the proportion borne by things reprinted from the 'Standard' will seem small to those who know during how many years I have been permitted to contribute to its columns the expression of opinion on many of those arts which have been both my delight and my laborious study, let me just simply say that every line that I have written in that paper has been written with a single eye to the needs of the occasion and the moment, and the more expressly any writing is designed for a particular need and place, the less, I think, is it adapted for transplanting.*

*There has been no attempt to bring these essays, or these fragments, 'up-to-date'—to bring them to the point of view, I mean, of the time at which they chance to be republished. A suppression here, and there the alteration of a phrase—little else is attempted. They remain, frankly, 'contributions.'*

*F. W.*

*Westminster, October* 1899.

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# THE SHORT STORY

ONE of the most engaging of the wits of our day wrote lately in a weekly newspaper that it is, for the most part, only those who are not good enough actors to act successfully in Life, who are compelled to act at the Theatre. Under the influence of such an amiable paradox it is possible that we may ask ourselves, in regard to story-writing, whether the people singled out to practise it are those, chiefly, to whose personal history Romance has been denied: so that the greatest qualification even for the production of a lady's love-tale, is—that the lady shall never have experienced a love-affair. Eminent precedents might be cited in support of the contention. A great editor once comfortably declared that the ideal journalist was a writer who did not know too much about his subject. The public did not want much knowledge, he said. The literary criticism in your paper would be perfect if you handed it over to the critic of Music; and the musical criticism would want for nothing if you assigned it to an

expert in Art. And Mr. Thackeray, speaking of love-tales, said something that pointed the same way. He protested, no one should write a love-story after he was fifty. And why? Because he knew too much about it.

But it was a personal application I was going to have given to the statement with which this paper begins. If the actor we see upon the boards be only there because more capable comedians are busy on the stage of the world, I am presumably invited by the Editor of *The Nineteenth Century* to hold forth on the Short Story because I am not a popular writer. The Editor, in the gentle exercise of his humour, bids me to fill the place which should be filled by the man of countless editions. It is true that in the matter of short stories, such a writer is not easy to find; and this too at a time when, if one is correctly informed, full many a lady, not of necessity of any remarkable gifts, maintains an honourable independence by the annual production of an improper novel. Small as my personal claims might be, were they based only on my books—*Renunciations*, for example, or *Pastorals of France*—I may say my say as one who, with production obviously scanty, has for twenty years been profoundly interested in the artistic treatment of the

Short Story; who believes in the short story, not as a ready means of hitting the big public, but as a medium for the exercise of the finer art — as a medium, moreover, adapted peculiarly to that alert intelligence, on the part of the reader, which rebels sometimes at the *longueurs* of the conventional novel: the old three volumes or the new fat book. Nothing is so mysterious, for nothing is so instinctive, as the method of a writer. I cannot communicate the incommunicable. But at all events I will not express opinions aimed at the approval of the moment: convictions based on the necessity for epigram.

In the first place, then, what is, and what is *not*, a short story? Many things a short story may be. It may be an episode, like Miss Ella Hepworth Dixon's, or like Miss Bertha Thomas's; a fairy tale, like Miss Evelyn Sharp's: the presentation of a single character with the stage to himself (Mr. George Gissing); a tale of the uncanny (Mr. Rudyard Kipling); a dialogue of comedy (Mr. Pett Ridge); a panorama of selected landscape, a vision of the sordid street, a record of heroism, a remote tradition or an old belief vitalised by its bearing on our lives to-day, an analysis of an obscure calling, a glimpse at a forgotten quarter. A short story—I mean a

short imaginative work in the difficult medium of prose; for plot, or story proper, is no essential part of it, though in work like Conan Doyle's or Rudyard Kipling's it may be a very delightful part—a short story may be any one of the things that have been named, or it may be something besides; but one thing it can never be—it can never be 'a novel in a nutshell.' That is a favourite definition, but not a definition that holds. It is a definition for the kind of public that asks for a convenient inexactness, and resents the subtlety which is inseparable from precise truth. Writers and serious readers know that a good short story cannot possibly be a *précis*, a synopsis, a *scenario*, as it were, of a novel. It is a separate thing—as separate, almost, as the Sonnet is from the Epic—it involves the exercise almost of a different art.

That, perhaps, is one reason why it is generally—in spite of temporary vogue as pleasant pastime—a little underrated as an intellectual performance. That is why great novelists succeed in it so seldom—or at all events fail in it sometimes—even a novelist like Mr. Hardy, the stretch of whose canvas has never led him into carelessness of detail. Yet with *him*, even, in his short stories, the inequality is greater than befits the work of such an artist,

and greater than is to be accounted for wholly by his mood ; so that by the side of *The Three Strangers*, or, yet better, that delightful thing, *Interlopers at the Knap*, you have short tales tossed off with momentary indifference—as you can imagine Sheridan, with his braced language of comedy, stooping once to a charade. And if a *master* nods sometimes—a master like Hardy—does it not almost follow that, by the public at least, the conditions of the short story are not understood, and so, in the estimate of the criticism of the dinner-table, and by the criticism of the academic, the tale is made to suffer by its brevity? But if it is well done, it has done this amazing thing: it has become quintessence ; it has eliminated the superfluous ; and it has taken *time* to be brief. Then—amongst readers whose judgments are perfunctory—who have not thought the thing out—it is rewarded by being spoken of as an 'agreeable sketch,' 'a promising little effort,' an 'earnest of better things.' In this wise—not to talk of any other instance—one imagines the big public rewarding the completed charm of *The Author of Beltraffio* and of *A Day of Days*, though pregnant *brevity* is not often Mr. James's strength. And then Mr. James works away at the long novel, and, of course, is clever in it, because with him, *not* to be clever might require a

passiveness more than American. Very good ; but I go back from the record of all that 'Maisie' ought not to have known, to *The Author of Beltraffio* and to *A Day of Days*—'promising little efforts,' 'earnests of better things.'

Well, then, the short story is wont to be estimated, not by its quality, but by its size ; a mode of appraisement under which the passion of Schumann, with his wistful questionings—in *Warum*, say, or in *Der Dichter spricht*—would be esteemed less seriously than the amiable score of *Maritana* ! And a dry-point by Mr. Whistler, two dozen lines laid with the last refinement of charm, would be held inferior to a panorama by Philippoteau, or to the backgrounds of the contemporary theatre. One would have thought that this was obvious. But in our latest stage of civilisation it is sometimes only the obvious that requires to be pointed out.

While we are upon the subject of the hindrances to the appreciation of a particular form of imaginative work, we may remind ourselves of one drawback in regard to which the short story must make common cause with the voluminous novel : I mean the inability of the mass of readers to do justice to the seriousness of any artistic, as opposed to any moral, or political, or pretentiously regenerative fiction.

For the man in the street, for the inhabitant of Peckham Rye, for many prosperous people on the north side of the Park, perhaps even for the very cream of up-to-date persons whose duty it is to abide somewhere where Knightsbridge melts invisibly into Chelsea, Fiction is but a *délassement,* and the artists who practise it, in its higher forms, are a little apt to be estimated as contributors to public entertainment—like the Carangeot Troupe, and Alexia, at the Palace Theatre. The view is something of *this* nature—I read it so expressed only the other day: 'The tired clergyman, after a day's work; what book shall he take up? Fiction, perhaps, would seem too trivial; history, too solid.'

The serious writer of novel or short story brings no balm for the 'tired clergyman'—other than such balm as is afforded by the delight of serious Art. At high tension he has delivered himself of his performance, and if his work is to be properly enjoyed, it must be met by those only who are ready to receive it; it must be met by the alert, not the fatigued, reader; and with the short story in particular, with its omissions, with the brevity of its allusiveness, it must be met half way. Do not let us expect it to be 'solid,' like Mill, or Lightfoot, or Westcott—or even like an A B C Railway Guide. You

must condone the 'triviality' which puts its finger on the pulse of life and says 'Thou ailest *here* and *here*'—which exposes, not a political movement, like the historian of the outward fact, but the secrets of the heart, rather, and human weakness, and the courage which in strait places comes somehow to the sons of men, and the beauty and the strength of affection—and which does this by intuition as much as by science.

But to go back to considerations not common in some degree to all Fiction, but proper more absolutely to the short story. I have suggested briefly what the short story may be; we have seen briefly the one thing it *cannot* be—which is, a novel told within restricted space. Let us ask what methods it may adopt—what are some of the varieties of its form.

The short story admits of greater variety of form than does the long novel, and the number of these forms will be found to be increasing—and we must not reject conventionally (as we are terribly apt to do) the new form because we are unfamiliar with it. The forms that are open to the novel are open to the short imaginative piece, and, to boot, very many besides. Common to both, of course, is the most customary form of all—that in which the writer

narrates as from outside the drama, yet with internal knowledge of it—what is called the 'narrative form,' which includes within its compass, in a single work, narrative proper and a moderate share of dialogue. Common again to both short and long stories, evidently, is a form which, in skilled hands, and used only for those subjects to which it is most appropriate, may give strange reality to the matter presented—the form, I mean, in which the story is told in the first person, as the experience and the sentiment of one character who runs throughout the whole. The short story, though it should use this form very charily, adopts it more conveniently than does the long novel ; for the novel has many more characters than the short story, and for the impartial presentation of many characters this form is a fetter. It gives of a large group a prejudiced and partial view. It commended itself once or twice only to Dickens. *David Copperfield* is the conspicuous example. Never once, I think, did it commend itself to Balzac. It is better adapted, no doubt, to adventure than to analysis, and better to the expression of humour than to the realisation of tragedy. As far as the presentation of *character* is concerned, what it is usual for it to achieve—in hands, I mean, much smaller than those of the great Dickens—is this : a

life size, full length, generally too flattering portrait of the hero of the story—a personage who has the lime-light all to himself—on whom no inconvenient shadows are ever thrown—the hero as beheld by Sant, shall I say? rather than as beheld by Sargent—and then, a further graceful idealisation, an attractive pastel, you may call it, of the lady he most frequently admired; and, of the remainder, two or three Kit-Cat portraits, a head and shoulders here, and there a stray face.

The third and only other form that I remember as common to both novel and short story, though indeed not equally *convenient* to both, is the rare form of Letters. That again, like any other that will not bear a prolonged strain, is oftener available for short story than for big romance. The most consummate instance of its employment, in very lengthy work, is one in which with infinitely slow progression it serves above all things the purpose of minute and searching analysis—I have named the book in this line of description of it: I have named *Clarissa*. For the short story it is used very happily by Balzac—who, though not at first a master of sentences, is an instinctive master of methods—it is used by him in the *Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées*. And in a much lighter way, of bright portraiture, of neat

characterisation, it is used by an ingenious, sometimes seductive, writer of our period, Marcel Prévost, in *Lettres de Femmes.* It is possible, of course, to *mix* these different forms; but for such mixture we shall conclude, I fancy, that prolonged fiction offers the best opportunity. Such mixture has its dangers for the short story; you risk, perhaps, unity of effect. But there are short stories in which monotony is avoided, and the force of the narrative in reality emphasised, by some telling lines from a letter, whose end or whose beginning may be otherwise imparted to us.

I devote a few lines to but two or three of the forms which by common consent are for the short story only. One of them is simple dialogue. For our generation, that has had the fascination of an experiment—an experiment made perhaps with best success after all in the candid and brilliant fragments of that genuine humorist, Mr. Pett Ridge. The method in most hands has the appearance of a difficult feat. It *is* one, often—and so is walking on the slack-wire, and the back-spring in acrobatic dance. Of course a writer must enjoy grappling with difficulties. We understand that. But the more serious artist reflects, after a while, that the unnecessary difficulty is an inartistic encumbrance.

'Why,' he will ask, 'should the story-teller put on himself the fetters of the drama, to be denied the drama's opportunities?' Pure dialogue, we may be sure, is apt to be an inefficient means of telling a story; of presenting a character. There may be cited one great English Classic who has employed the method—the author of *Pericles and Aspasia*, of that little gem of conversation between Henry the Eighth and Anne Boleyn. But then, with Walter Savage Landor, austere and perfect, the character existed already, and there was no story to tell. Mere dialogue, under the conditions of the modern writer, leaves almost necessarily the problem unsolved, the work a fragment. It can scarcely be a means to an end; though it may, if we like, be a permissible little end in itself, a little social chatter, pitched in a high key, in which one has known tartness to be mistaken for wit. Thus does 'Gyp' skim airily over the deep, great sea of life. All are shallows to her vision. And as she skims you feel her lightness. I prefer the adventure of the diver, who knows what the depths *are*: who plunges, and who rescues the pearl.

Then, again, possible, though not often desirable for the short story, is the diary form—extracts from a diary, rather. Applied to work on an extensive scale, your result—since you would necessarily lack

concentrated theme—your result would be a chronicle, not a story. Applied to the shorter fiction, it must be used charily, and may then, I should suppose, be used well. But I, who used the form in 'The New Marienbad Elegy' in *English Episodes*, what right have I to say that the form, in the hands of a master, allows a subtle presentation of the character of the diarist—allows, in self-revelation, an irony, along with earnestness, a wayward and involved humour, not excluding sympathy? It is a form not easily received, not suffered gladly. It is for the industrious, who read a good thing twice, and for the enlightened, who read it three times.

I throw out these things only as hints; we may apply them where we will, as we think about stories. But something has yet to be said. Of the two forms already named as generally unfitted for the long novel, and fitted only now and then for the short story, one, it will be noticed, is all dialogue; the other, necessarily, a form in which there is no dialogue at all. And I think we find, upon reflection, the lighter work leans oftenest to the one form; the graver work leans oftenest to the other.

Indeed, from this we might go on to notice that as far as the short story is concerned, most of the finer and more lasting work, though cast in forms which

quite *permit* of the dialogue, has, as a matter of fact, but little dialogue in it. Balzac's *La Grenadière*—it is years since I read it; but has it any dialogue at all? Balzac's *L'Interdiction*—an extraordinary presentation of a quaint functionary, fossiliferous and secluded, suddenly brought into contact with people of the world, and with the utmost ability baffling their financial intrigue—this is certainly the most remarkable short story ever written about money—*L'Interdiction* has not much dialogue. In the *Atheist's Mass*, again—the short story of such a nameless pathos—the piece which, more even than *Eugénie Grandet* itself, should be everybody's introduction, and especially every woman's introduction, to the genius of Balzac: *La Messe de l'Athée* has no dialogue. Coming to our actual contemporaries in France, of whom Zola and Daudet must still, it is possible, be accounted the foremost, it is natural that the more finished and minute worker—the worker lately lamented—should be the one who has made the most of the short story. And in this order of his work—thus leaving out his larger and most brilliant canvas, *Froment Jeune et Risler Aîné*—what do we more lastingly remember than the brief and sombre narrative of *Les Deux Auberges*?—a little piece that has no story at all; but a 'situation'

depicted, and when depicted, *left*. There is an open country; leagues of Provence; a long stretching road; and, on the roadside, opposite each other, two inns. The older one is silent, melancholy; the other, noisy and prosperous. And the landlord of the older inn spends all his time in the newer; taking his pleasure there with guests who were once his own, and with a handsome landlady, who makes amends for his departed business. And in his own inn, opposite, a deserted woman sits solitary. That is all —but the art of the master!

Now this particular instance of a pregnant brevity reminds me that in descriptions of landscape the very obligations of the short story are an advantage to its art. Nature, in Fiction, requires to be seen, not in endless detail, as a botanical or geographical study, but, as in Classic Landscape Composition, a noble glimpse of it, over a man's shoulder, under a man's arm. I know, of course, that is not the popular view. Blameless novels have owed their popularity to landscape written by the ream. Coaches have been named after them; steamboats have been named after them. I am not sure that, in their honour, inaccessible heights have not been scaled and virgin forests broken in upon, so that somewhere in picturesque districts the front of a gigantic hotel

might have inscribed on it the title of a diffuse novel.

But that is not the great way. The great way, from Virgil's to Browning's, is the way of pregnant brevity. And where dialogue *is* employed in the finer short story, every line of it is bound to be significant. The short story has no room for the reply that is only *near* to being appropriate, and it deserves no pardon for the word that would not have been certainly employed. It is believed, generally, and one can well suppose that it is true, that the average dialogue of the diffuse novel is written quickly. That is in part because so little of it is really dramatic—is really at all the inevitable word. But the limited sentences in which, when the narrator must narrate no more, the persons who have been described in the short story express themselves on their restricted stage, need, if I dare assert it, to be written slowly, or, what is better, re-read a score of times, and pruned, and looked at from without, and surveyed on every side.

But, indeed, of the long story, as well as of the short, may it not be agreed that on the whole the dialogue is apt to be the least successful thing? The ordinary reader, of course, will not be dramatic enough to notice its deficiencies. In humorous

dialogue, these are seen least. Humorous dialogue has a legitimate licence. You do not ask from it exactitude; you do not nail it down to its statement. But in the dialogue of the critical moment, when the fire of a little word will kindle how great a matter, how needful then, and how rare, that the word be the true one! We do not want laxity, inappropriateness, on the one hand; nor, on the other, the tortured phraseology of a too resolute cleverness. And those of us who have a preference —derived, it may be, from the simpler generation of Dickens—for an unbending when it is a question of *little* matters, and, when it is a question of great ones, for 'a sincere large accent, nobly plain'—well! there is much of modern finessing we are hardly privileged to understand. Yet if one wants an instance, in a long novel, in which the sentence now said at a white heat is the result, inevitable, burningly true to life, of the sentence that was said just before, one condones the obscurity that has had its imitators, and pays one's tribute of admiration to the insight of *Diana of the Crossways.*

One of the difficulties of the short story, the short story shares with the acted drama, and that is the indispensableness of compression — the need that every sentence shall tell—the difference being, that in

the acted drama it must tell for the moment, it must tell till it is found out, and in the short story it must tell for at least a *modest* eternity, and something more, if that be possible—for if a 'Fortnight is eternity' upon the Stock Exchange, a literary eternity is, perhaps, forty years.

Of course the short story, like all other fiction to be read, does not share the other difficulties of the acted drama — above all, the disadvantage which drags the acted drama down—the disadvantage of appealing to, at all events of having to give sops to, at one and the same moment, gallery and stalls: an audience so incongruous that it lies outside the power of Literature to weld it really together. In the contemporary theatre, in some of the very cleverest of our acted dramas, the characters are frequently doing, not what the man of intuition, and the man who remembers life, *knows* that they would do, but that which they must do to conciliate the dress circle, to entertain the pit, to defer not too long the gentle chuckle with which the 'average sensual man' receives the assurance that it is a delusion to suppose our world contains any soul, even a woman's soul, that is higher and purer than his. To such temptations the writer of the short story is not even exposed, if he be willing to conceive of his art upon

exalted lines, to offer carefully the best of his reflection, in a form of durable and chosen grace, or, by a less conscious, perhaps, but not less fruitful, husbanding of his resources, to give us, sooner or later some first-hand study of human emotion, 'gotten,' as William Watson says, 'of the immediate soul.' But again, contrasting his fortunes with those of his brother, the dramatist, the writer of short stories must, even at the best, know himself denied the dramatist's crowning advantage—which is the thrill of actual human presence.

I have not presumed, except incidentally and by way of illustration, to sit in rapid judgment, and award impertinently blame or praise to the most or the least prominent of those who are writing short stories to-day. Even an occasional grappler with the difficulties of a task is not generally its best critic. He will criticise from the inside, now and then, and so, although you ought to have from him, now and again, at least—what I know, nevertheless, that *I* may not have given—illuminating commentary—you cannot have final judgment. Of the art of Painting, where skill of hand and sense of colour count for much more than intellect, this is especially true. It is true, more or less, of Music—in spite of exceptions as notable as Schumann and Berlioz :

almost perfect critics of the very art that they produced. It is true—though in a less degree — of creative Literature. We leave this point, to write down, before stopping, one word about *tendencies.*

Among the better writers, one tendency of the day is to devote a greater care to the art of expression—to an unbroken continuity of excellent style. The short story, much more than the long one, makes this thing possible to men who may not claim to be geniuses, but who, if we are to respect them at all, must claim to be artists. And yet, in face of the indifference of so much of our public here to anything we can call Style—in face, actually, of a strange insensibility to it — the attempt, wherever made, is a courageous one. This insensibility—how does it come about ?

It comes about, in honest truth, partly because that instrument of Art, our English tongue, in which the verse of Gray was written, and the prose of Landor and Sterne, is likewise the necessary vehicle in which, every morning of our lives, we ask for something at breakfast. If we all of us had to demand breakfast by making a rude drawing of a coffee-pot, we should understand, before long—the quickness of the French intelligence on that matter being unfortunately denied us—the man in the street would understand that

Writing, as much as Painting, is an art to be acquired, and an art in whose technical processes one is bound to take pleasure. And, perhaps, another reason is the immense diffusion nowadays of superficial education; so that the election of a book to the honours of quick popularity is decided by those, precisely, whose minds are least trained for the exercise of that suffrage. What *is* elected is too often the work which presents at a first reading everything that it presents at all. I remember Mr. Browning once saying, *àpropos* of such a matter, 'What has a cow to do with nutmegs?' He explained, it was a German proverb. Is it? Or is it German only in the way of 'Sonnets from the Portuguese'? Anyhow, things being as they are, all the more honour to those younger people who, in the face of indifference, remember that their instrument of English language is a quite unequalled instrument of Art.

Against this happy tendency, one has to set—in regard at least to some of them — tendencies less admirable. For, whilst the only kind of work that has a chance of engaging the attention of Sainte-Beuve's 'severe To-morrow' is work that is original, individual, sincere, is it not a pity, because of another's sudden success, to be unremittingly occupied with the exploitation of one particular world — to

paint for ever, say, in violent and garish hue, or in deep shades through which no light can struggle, the life of the gutter? to paint it, too, with that distorted 'realism' which witnesses upon the part of its practitioners to *one thing only*, a profound conviction of the ugly! I talk, of course, not of the short stories of the penetrating observer, but of those of the dyspeptic pessimist, whose pessimism, where it is not the *pose* of the contortionist—adopted with an eye to a sensational success of journalism, to a commercial effect—is hysteria, an imitative malady, a malady of the mind. The profession of the literary pessimist is already overcrowded; and if I name two writers who, though in different degrees, have avoided the temptation to join it—if I name one who knows familiarly the cheery as well as the more sombre side of Cockney character and life, Mr. Henry Nevinson, the author of the remarkable short stories, *Neighbours of Ours*, and then again a more accepted student of a sordid existence—Mr. George Gissing, in *Human Odds and Ends* especially—I name them but as such instances as I am privileged to know, of observant and unbiassed treatment of the subjects with which they have elected to deal.

In France, in the short story, we may easily notice, the uglier forms of 'Realism' are wearing

themselves out. 'Le soleil de France,' said Gluck to Marie Antoinette, 'le soleil de France donne du génie.' And the genius that it gives cannot long be hopeless and sombre. It leaves the obscure wood and tangled bypath; it makes for the open road: 'la route claire et droite'—the phrase belongs to M. Leygues—'la route claire et droite où marche le génie français.' Straight and clear was the road followed—nay, sometimes actually cut—by the unresting talent of Guy de Maupassant, the writer of a hundred short stories, which, for the world of his day at least, went far beyond Charles Nodier's earlier delicacy and Champfleury's wit. But, somehow, upon De Maupassant's nature and temperament the curse of pessimism lay. To deviate into cheeriness he must deal with the virtues of the *déclassées*—undoubtedly an interesting theme—he must deal with them as in the famous *Maison Tellier*, an ebullition of scarcely cynical comedy, fuller much of real humanity than De Goncourt's sordid document, *La Fille Elisa.* But that was an exception. De Maupassant was pessimist generally, because, master of an amazing talent, he refreshed himself never in any rarefied air. The vista of the Spirit was denied him. His reputation he may keep; but his school—the school in which a few even of our own imitative writers prattle the

accents of a hopeless materialism—his school, I fancy, will be crowded no more. For, with an observation keen and judicial, M. René Bazin treats to-day themes, we need not say more 'legitimate' —since much may be legitimate—but at least more acceptable. And then again, with a style of which De Maupassant, direct as was his own, must have envied even the clarity and the subtler charm, a master draughtsman of ecclesiastic and bookworm, of the neglected genius of the provincial town (some poor devil of a small professor), and of the soldier, and the shopkeeper, and the Sous-Préfet's wife—I hope I am describing M. Anatole France—looks out on the contemporary world with a vision humane and genial, sane and wide. Pessimism, it seems to me, can only be excusable in those who are still bowed down by the immense responsibility of youth. It was a great poet, who, writing of one of his peers —a man of mature life—declared of him, *not* 'he mopes picturesquely,' but 'he knows the world, firm, quiet, and gay.' To such a writer—only to such a writer—is possible a happy comedy; and possible, besides, a true and an august vision of profounder things! And *that* is the spirit to which the Short Story, at its best, will certainly return.

(*Nineteenth Century*, March 1898.)

## MY RARE BOOK

I WISH I could say it was my diligence that discovered it, and that I hunted it out of some fifth-rate bookstall of Goswell Street or of the New Road—'all this lot at 6d. apiece.' But no, it has no romantic story as far as I am concerned. Given perhaps, eighty years ago, by friend to friend, or lover to sweetheart, in days when our great-grandmothers were beautiful and our great-grandfathers devoted, it got to be neglected, it got to be sold—somebody ceased to care for it, or somebody wanted the few shillings it then would bring—somehow it tossed about the world, till a keen bookseller or keen bookbuyer rescued it, and took it to a binder of note, and then it was arrayed in seemly dress, and safer for the future. Afterwards—but not for very long, I think—it was a rich man's possession: one thing, and quite a little thing, in a great library of English classics, from Defoe and Sterne to Dickens and Tennyson. Then it came to be sold, along with

most or all of its important companions, and so I got it, in prosaic fashion. I bought it under the hammer at Sotheby's—or rather, Mr. F. S. Ellis bought it there on my behalf—on the 3rd of March, in this present year of grace. And now it takes up its position on insignificant shelves, by the side of the Rogers with the Turner illustrations; by the side of a few things—but the collector knows them not.

This is how it figures in the auctioneer's catalogue: 'Wordsworth (W.) Lyrical Ballads, with a few other Poems (including Rime of the Ancyent Marinere by Coleridge), FIRST EDITION, *green morocco extra g. e. by Riviere*, 1798.' The 'g. e.' means nothing more mysterious than 'gilt edges.' The morocco is of a rich and sunny green—the 'good' green of modern artistic speech, which rightly enough, I suppose, endows colour and line with moral qualities. I am thankful to the rich man for having saved me both money and trouble, in binding, completely to my taste, it happens, my rare book.

And few things, perhaps, deserve more careful guardianship. The *Lyrical Ballads*, as the world now knows, were a starting-point in the new English Literature, which addressed itself to study in the field

of Nature more than in academies, and which taught us the beauty and interest of common life and of everyday incident; and it is a delight to me to see the pages of these simple lyrics and pastorals as Wordsworth's own eye was content with them when Cottle, the Bristol bookseller, passed them through the press, and printed them, as well as might be, on pleasantly toned paper, bearing here and there on its water-mark the date of its making, '1795.' On the whole, it is a well-printed book; two hundred and ten pages, tastefully arranged, and of *errata* there are but five. Those were days when centralisation had not brought the best work all to London, and even concentrated it in certain quarters of London; and of what is sometimes called provincial, but of what there is better reason to define as suburban, clumsiness—for nothing is done so ill in the world as what is done in London suburbs—there is only a trace in the gross inequality of the size of the figures in the table of contents: they are taken, it appears, from different founts. But generally the book is printed with smoothness and precision, and, even apart from the high literature which it enshrines, is worthy of its good green coat, joyful of hue, pleasant of smell, and grateful of touch to the fingers that pass over it. And nothing that comes

now, even from the Chiswick Press, or from Jouaust or whoever may be the fashionable printing man to-day in Paris, can be much neater than its title-page; the mention of which brings me to a point of interest to the bibliophile.

The book has two title-pages; or, rather, like many of the books of its day, there belong two title-pages to the same edition of it—the custom having been for a second bookseller, who bought what the first bookseller was minded to get rid of, to print his own title-page. This is the course that the thing followed in the matter of *Lyrical Ballads*. The book was printed, as we shall see in detail presently, by Cottle, in Bristol, in the year 1798. Five hundred copies were printed, but they did not sell. 'As a curious literary fact,' says Cottle, in his 'Recollections,' 'I might mention that the sale of the First Edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* was so slow, and the severity of most of the reviews so great, that its progress to oblivion seemed ordained to be as rapid as it was certain.' 'I had given,' he adds, 'thirty guineas for the copyright; but the heavy sale induced me to part with the largest proportion of the impression of 500, at a loss, to Mr. Arch, a London bookseller.' Mr. Arch printed his own title-page. My copy has his title-page, '*London,*

*printed for J. & A. Arch, Gracechurch Street'* ; and so, I think, had the copy sold at Mr. Dew Smith's sale, about four years ago. The date, of course, remains the same, 1798, and all else remains the same. The British Museum copy—it was Southey's copy—has the Bristol title-page, and the Museum may possibly acquire a copy with Mr. Arch's when opportunity occurs. In the only copy of the First Edition which they have at present, the words are, '*Bristol, printed by Biggs and Cottle, for T. N. Longman, Paternoster Row, London.*' Thus the First Edition of five hundred was divided—say two hundred for Mr. Cottle, say three hundred for Mr. Arch when the Bristolian found the sale was 'slow' and 'heavy.' Where have they all gone to? It was only eighty-four years ago. But where have all the copies of the big edition of the *Christmas Carol* gone to? That was hardly forty years ago.

To recall a little the origin of the book—the circumstances under which Wordsworth and Coleridge planned and produced it. It was in the Nether Stowey and Alfoxden time, when the men were neighbours, three miles of green Somerset country dividing the home of Coleridge from the home of Wordsworth. I saw the place—that is, the neighbourhood, and Coleridge's home—a few years since,

much in that summer weather which tempted their own more prolonged wanderings, which followed them in that excursion to 'Linton and the Valley of Stones,' which was the first cause, Wordsworth says, of the issue of *Lyrical Ballads.* Plain living and high thinking they practised then, and from necessity as much as from choice. A yeoman of Somerset would hardly have lived at that time—and certainly he would not live to-day—in the cottage which was Coleridge's. Straight from the country road you step to its door: in an instant you are in the small square parlour, with large kitchen-like fire-place, with one, or, I think, two small windows, and a window-seat from which, on days of evil weather, the stay-at-home commanded the prospect of the passing rustic as he walked abroad—perhaps of the occasional traveller on his way to the village inn. But generally, fair weather or foul, the spectacle was scanty—time was marked by shifting light and changes in the colour of the sky, or by the movements of beasts at milking-time, or at hours of rest and of labour. Never, I should say, was one hour merely frittered away by either the poet who lived or the poet who visited in that humble cottage. Never a call of ceremony: an interview that bears no fruit—a social necessity, the continual plague of

cities. Never an hour that did not tell in some way, by active work, or by 'wise passiveness,' upon the mind that was to be cultivated and the character that was to be developed. Such a life, led not in actual isolation, but in narrowed and selected companionship, was perhaps about the best preparation men could make for work of the concentrated and the self-possessed power of the 'Ancient Mariner,' and of the serene profundity of the lines connected with Tintern Abbey. This was the place, and these were the conditions, for the quietude of life and thought felt as the greatest necessity of existence by Wordsworth, 'a worshipper of Nature,' 'unwearied in that service.'

In 1797 came the first thought of the book. Wordsworth's account of it may already be familiar. Prefixed in later editions to the poem of 'We are Seven,' which was printed for the first time in *Lyrical Ballads*, is a note which says: 'In reference to this poem I will here mention one of the most noticeable facts in my own poetic history, and that of Mr. Coleridge.' And then he tells the story: 'In the autumn of 1797, he, my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones near to it; and, as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray

the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*, set up by Phillips, the bookseller, and edited by Dr. Aikin. Accordingly, we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the "Ancient Mariner," founded on a dream, as Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank.' And then Wordsworth adds some details which are characteristic. 'Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention,' he says; 'but certain parts I suggested.'

Now, what were those parts? They were parts which yield to no other in importance, and which do very much to throw over the work the glamour of noble imagination, the sudden magical charm which was Wordsworth's own, and with which he was accustomed to illumine the commoner themes of his habitual choice. It was Wordsworth's suggestion that the Ancient Mariner should be represented as having killed the Albatross, and that 'the tutelary spirits of these regions'—the regions of the South Sea—'should take upon them to avenge the crime.' 'I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem.' A detail, however, he had to do with. 'I furnished

two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular—

> "And listened like a three years' child:
> The Mariner had his will."

These trifling contributions, all but one, which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded, slipped out of his mind, as they well might.'

If the contributions themselves were characteristic, so certainly is the manner of speaking of them. These men, and the men who were more or less their associates, believed much in each other. In no different spirit from Wordsworth's did Coleridge himself write, in his introduction to *Poems on Various Subjects*, these words about Charles Lamb: 'The effusions signed C. L. were written by Mr. Charles Lamb, of the India House; independently of the signature, their superior merit would have sufficiently distinguished them.' And in no different spirit did Coleridge write of Wordsworth, years afterwards, in the *Biographia Literaria*, when their ways had parted. He could explain generously then 'what Mr. Wordsworth really intended' by the theories put forward in that famous preface which was too much for Coleridge.

But to return to the book—or rather, for the moment, to Wordsworth's account of it. As the

friends endeavoured to proceed conjointly in the construction of the 'Ancient Mariner'—it was still that same evening in which the poem was conceived—their respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been, to Wordsworth's mind, 'quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog.' 'The "Ancient Mariner" grew and grew,' he adds, 'till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds; and we began to think of a volume, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium.' That 'imaginative medium' was to distinguish these poems, we have been told elsewhere, from the rhymed stories of Crabbe. Poetic realism and prosaic realism, and what a world between them!

In April 1798 Wordsworth wrote to his friend, the Bristol bookseller: 'You will be pleased to hear that I have gone on adding very rapidly to my stock of poetry. Do come and let me read it to you under the old trees in the park.' Definite proposals, too, were to be made; and it was written to Cottle—this time, I think, by Coleridge—'We deem that the

volumes offered to you are, to a certain degree, one work in kind.' That same spring, but later on, Cottle did visit Nether Stowey, and he writes of it in his own book of interesting if sometimes illegitimate gossip: 'At this interview it was determined that the volume should be published under the title of *Lyrical Ballads*, on the terms stipulated.' Thirty guineas seems to have been Wordsworth's share. And, furthermore, it was settled that it should not contain the poem of 'Salisbury Plain,' but only an extract from it—Cottle himself, nevertheless, thought that poem the finest Wordsworth had written; that it should not contain the poem of 'Peter Bell,' but consist rather of shorter poems, and for the most part of pieces more recently written. 'I had recommended two volumes,' Cottle tells us, 'but one was fixed on, and that to be published anonymously.' All which speedily came about. Cottle further says, 'The volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* was published about midsummer, 1798.' But it was not really till some while after midsummer, for not only were the Tintern Abbey lines, which close the little volume with so august a calm, not written till the 13th of July, but it is said expressly in Wordsworth's *Life* that as late as September the 13th the book was 'printed, not published.' Some weeks before, Words-

worth and his sister took up temporary abode in Bristol, that they might be near the printer. Then, at length, in the early part of autumn, the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared, and Wordsworth and his sister, and Coleridge, left England for Germany.

To the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* is prefixed four pages of 'Advertisement,' or preface. About it two or three points are noticeable. First, it gives no hint that two poets have been engaged upon the volume: 'the author,' who speaks of himself in the third person, is responsible alike for the 'Ancient Mariner' and for 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill.' Secondly, it is written in that familiar language—just our daily speech a little chastened and braced—which Wordsworth employed at the beginning, and employed to the end. Again, it utters, thus early in Wordsworth's life, that note of warning as to mistaken notions of what Poetry demands, which the writer repeated afterwards with infinite elaboration. 'It is the honourable characteristic of Poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind'—that is, by implication, his first apology for the choice of humble theme. 'Readers of superior judgment may disapprove of the style in which many of these pieces are executed: it must be expected that many lines and phrases will

not exactly suit their taste.' Expressions may seem too familiar—may seem lacking in dignity. But, 'it is apprehended that the more conversant the reader is with our elder writers, and with those in modern times who have been most successful in painting manners and passions, the fewer complaints of this kind will he have to make.' Here is the apology for the fashion of presentation—the germ of that which was afterwards so fully developed in famous writings which borrowed here and there a neat and significant phrase from this first 'Advertisement.'

The title of the 'Ancient Mariner' begins the table of contents, and the poem runs on to the fifty-first page of the volume—nearly a quarter of all that the volume holds. But Coleridge's remaining contributions were small and few, consisting of 'The Nightingale,' and of but one other. That he made even these contributions has sometimes escaped people's notice. He had intended to do more, for he tells us in the *Biographia Literaria* that, having written the 'Ancient Mariner,' he was preparing, among other poems, 'The Dark Ladie' and the 'Christabel.' 'But Mr. Wordsworth's industry has proved much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpola-

tion of heterogeneous matter.' When the 'Ancient Mariner' came to be reprinted—under Coleridge's banner alone—some minor changes were made. Some of them were gains, but some were losses. And there was added then, what the *Lyrical Ballads* does not contain, the 'Gloss'—that wonderful telling of the story and yet departing from it—which is set forth in grave and inspired prose. 'It was an afterthought,' Wordsworth tells us, in speaking of his friend's poem.

Of Wordsworth's own share—that far greater share of his—in the poems, it is interesting to notice how the general title, *Lyrical Ballads with a few other Poems*, is required to cover the whole of it. For they are of two kinds—Wordsworth's poems in the volume—the simple stories of humble life, which may or may not be dramatic, in which the 'I' of the poet is not necessarily himself, and the poems which record unmistakably his personal feeling and experience, such as 'The Tables Turned, an Evening Scene,' the noble lines written near Tintern Abbey, and the small poem which rejoices in perhaps the longest title ever bestowed upon verse, 'Lines written at a small distance from my house, and sent by my little boy to the person to whom they are addressed.' These, and one or two others, are the contributions

to which Coleridge refers when he says that 'Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius.'

Many of Wordsworth's verses, whether of the one class or the other, in the *Lyrical Ballads*, bear reference to the circumstances of the moment and the place — are stamped with the mark of his Alfoxden sojourn. 'The Thorn' arose out of his observing on the ridge of Quantock Hill a thorn on a stormy day. He had often passed it unnoticed in calm. 'I said to myself, Cannot I by some invention do as much to make this Thorn prominently an impressive object as the storm has made it to my eyes at this moment? I began the poem accordingly, and composed it with great rapidity.' He adds that Sir George Beaumont painted a picture from it, which Wilkie thought his best. Wilkie—sagacious Scotsman!—did not commit himself too much by such praise. But Wordsworth thought the picture nobly done. The only fault of any consequence, he said, was the woman's figure—too old and decrepit 'for one likely to frequent an eminence on such a call.' 'Expostulation and Reply,' which Wordsworth learned was a favourite

among the Quakers, was composed in front of the house at Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798. 'The Tables Turned' was composed at the same time, in praise of the

> Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
> Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

And of 'The Last of the Flock,' the author says that the incident occurred in the village of Holford, close by Alfoxden.

But I think the most interesting of the records is the record of 'We are Seven.' This was composed while walking in the favourite grove. In Wordsworth's confession that he composed the last stanza first, we get at the secret of how entirely the subject had struck him from the spiritual side.

> 'But they are dead; those two are dead!
> Their spirits are in heaven!'
> 'Twas throwing words away, for still
> The little maid would have her will,
> And said, 'Nay, we are seven!'

The life of the poem lies in the instinctive thought of immortality, and in the sense of neighbourhood and close companionship between the quick and the dead. It is the same thought, the same sense, that throws its magical light on the tale of Lucy Gray,

and permits those last verses which make the whole thing wonderful, and the common story fine—

> Yet some maintain that to this day
> She is a living child ;
> That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
> Upon the lonesome wild.
> O'er rough and smooth, she trips along
> And never looks behind ;
> And sings a solitary song
> That whistles in the wind.

The poem of 'We are Seven,' expressing a conception precious to Wordsworth, yet not expressing it exactly as he would have it expressed, was, after its first publication, subjected to more changes than any composition of its length. Of course the direct address to 'dear brother Jem'—'A little child, dear brother Jem'—is removed. Wordsworth only allowed it to stand at first because he relished the joke of hitching in his friend James Tobin's name, and this gratuitous reference to a good fellow, a bad critic, and the brother of the author of 'The Honeymoon,' was promptly suppressed. 'I sing a song to them,' is substituted for a line far more effective with the context—'I sit and sing to them.' Another line, beautiful with the context—'And all the summer dry'—yields to the line 'And when the grass was dry.' But at one point 'little Jane' becomes 'sister Jane,' perhaps happily, and, 'Quick was the little maid's

reply' gives the desired sense of readiness and certainty better than the line it effaces. It is the old story of careful verbal alterations—some are for the better, some are for the worse.

More than one of the graver pastoral poems are missing, naturally enough, to my rare book. I do not find in it that pastoral of 'Michael,' which of itself is quite enough, it seems to me, to ensure to its writer a fame which shall last as long as any judges of Literature remain — any judges who, caring for style itself, care supremely for its fit association with the sentiment it is its business to express. 'Michael' is intensely realistic: in the best sense it is more realistic than anything of Crabbe's, and the verse that seems to be halting is but prosaic deliberately. The effect is sought for, and the effect is gained. The pathos is all the greater because the elevation of language is so slight and infrequent. When it occurs, it tells! That poem belongs to the next series of the poet's works—to the little collection published first, I think, in 1802, and assuming to itself the title of *Lyrical Ballads; Volume the Second.* There had before been no hint of a second, and the first is complete in itself.

I said, just now, in speaking of the 'We are Seven,' that Mr. James Tobin—'dear brother Jem'—was a

bad critic. He showed himself so in this wise. When *Lyrical Ballads* was going through the press, it was Cottle, I suppose, who gave a sight of it to dear brother Jem. He went to Wordsworth upon that, as one charged with a mission, and who would not be denied. There was one poem, brother Jem said, in the volume about to be published, which Wordsworth must cancel. 'If published, it will make you everlastingly ridiculous.' And Wordsworth begged to know which was the unfortunate piece. He answered, 'It is called, "We are Seven."' —'Nay,' said Wordsworth, 'that shall take its chance, however.' For he knew his strength. And another generation has reversed the judgment which Tobin's approved.

(*Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1882.)

# BALZAC

THROUGH the 'usual channels of information'—I mean, of course, the daily papers—many readers have become aware of the recent publication, in the *Revue de Paris*, of a series of Balzac's letters. But few have understood their importance. Their interest for the student is great, for in a revelation of their author, that is impressive and almost final, they confirm to the full the view of Balzac which those of us have taken (I took it myself in my little *Life* of him in the 'Great Writers' Series) who have perceived that by his temperament and inclination, as well as by his power, he is divided widely from those more sordid and limited realists at whose head it was erewhile the fashion to place him. Romance, it has been claimed—often by friend and foe alike—Romance was Victor Hugo's, Materialism was Balzac's. And now Balzac is found—and one has a right to be surprised, not of course at the kind, but only at the degree of the manifestation—he is

found in mature years to be in his own conduct more simply and absolutely romantic than the most visionary or most warm-hearted schoolgirl. He works himself into a genuine and indescribably enthusiastic, but always respectful, attachment to a young married woman whom he has never seen, who inquires of him about his stories, who sends him *Thomas à Kempis* (which he translates later into the *Médecin de Campagne*: 'c'est l'Evangile en action'), who writes to him confidentially for a year or two before she meets him, who later receives him as her guest in Russian Poland, and whom he marries at last, in 1850, only several years after the death of her husband.

The facts that have been mentioned latest have been known since about the time of the publication of the now familiar couple of volumes of Balzac's *Correspondence*. It is the earlier and most interesting part of the story that is new. The report had previously been current that Balzac had for the first time been made aware of Madame de Hanska's existence when he was staying at, or passing through, Neuchâtel, in September 1833. She announced, so it was said, her wish to be introduced to him on hearing that he was at the hotel; and this last autumn (such is the vanity of human

effort upon matters after all not profoundly important), I established the fact, in concert with the present proprietor of the Hôtel Belle Vue at Neuchâtel, that the old but not yet disused Hôtel du Faucon must have been the hostelry in which this memorable meeting took place. The 'Faucon,' which had been built just in the middle of the little town but a few years before the date of Balzac's visit, was then the inn at which a traveller of any importance was sure to descend—neither the 'Belle Vue' nor the 'Lac' existed at that period. Let us take courage, however—our trouble was not so useless as I had for a moment imagined it. The actual meeting-place of two friends, two 'lovers' (in Walt Whitman's sense, at all events), is in the end at least as interesting as the meeting-place of two strangers, who were to warm towards each other only in future years. They met, then, we may fairly presume, at the Faucon at Neuchâtel, but met after a correspondence by turns polite and chivalrous, intimate and ardent.

It was no unusual thing for Balzac—the historian, above all things, of men's ambitions and of women's hearts—to receive, together with the compliments, the confessions of the fair. In our own age—an age perhaps more enamoured of physical prowess and

presence than of intellectual or spiritual achievement—I have not heard that the novelist or the successful writer of the short story is in constant receipt of the confidences and eulogiums of women. These, I am informed, when bestowed liberally on the stranger, are directed, nowadays, in chief to the *jeune premier* with a rapid action and a well-made coat. But it was otherwise two generations ago; and Balzac, sometimes complaining of the embarrassment, sometimes, on the other hand, with not a little of honest pride in the circumstances that caused it, avows himself endowed with the functions of a confessor. In the two volumes of the well-known *Correspondence* I have referred to before, and in such other writings as have hitherto been accessible, it is chiefly question of a certain anonymous 'Louise,' whom he never saw, to whom he said many pretty things on writing-paper, and to whom he was once minded to dedicate one of his stories. As a rule, I believe, he left unanswered the letters of the stranger—felt, perhaps, that it was enough that they should have been received, and, if they contained anything that was noteworthy, registered, very likely, in the book of his memory for possible employment in fiction. But now it is made clear abundantly, that in the case of Evelina

de Hanska, not only was there correspondence, intimate if scarcely voluminous, before any personal meeting, but likewise that by means of it such a tie was created, such a mutual fascination formed, as could hardly with ease be broken. And yet, what if when they met in the flesh there had been—as after all there might have been—disillusionment! What if Evelina de Hanska had proved as distasteful to Monsieur de Balzac as Anne of Cleves to the experienced Henry!

He was in the best of all possible moods, however, to be impressed with Madame de Hanska, during the period of their earliest correspondence; for unquestionably he was wounded, unquestionably he was sore. Among the friendships—verging sometimes on love-affairs—which Balzac formed with women, two were at this moment in the crisis of their fate. Many years before the existence of Madame de Hanska became known to him, Balzac had been friend, trustful dependant, would-be lover, probably—it is difficult to express the relationship—of a certain Madame de Berny. She was a little older than he was, and she helped him in money troubles when he was young enough to be able to accept her assistance without shame, and she knew the world at a time when, if I may proffer the

phrase, he joined the inextinguishable simplicity of the artist to the more prosaic simplicity of the inexperienced.

At Madame de Berny's house in the Oise, Balzac had written his brief and restrained masterpiece, *Le Curé de Tours*. Her difficult virtue, and all her other qualities and characteristics, made, confessedly, much of the interest of *Le Lys dans la Vallée*. That relationship of theirs—into which, as I consider, a morbid element, an exaggerated sentimentality, did at one time to some extent enter—was only wholly broken by Madame de Berny's death. For two years at least she was the victim of a mortal illness. The illness began, and the depression caused by it in Balzac began, about 1833.

But during the year 1832, Balzac, whose feeling towards Madame de Berny—'an angel at my side'—must with long years have somewhat changed its character—during the year 1832 Balzac had passed through an experience the end of which he speaks of, long afterwards, as '*un des plus grands chagrins de ma vie.*' And that was his experience with the young Madame de Castries—the Duchesse de Castries she became, in due time, some years later—a light of Parisian Society, fully as fascinating in the quietude of Aix-les-Bains as amidst the distractions

of all the *salons* of the capital. It is not from the letters that Balzac wrote to her—not, at all events, from any that have been published—that we know or can surmise how irresistible for Balzac was her personal magnetism. It is rather from certain amongst the letters sent by him to his life-long friend, his sister's school friend, Madame Zulma Carraud of Angoulême, that we are informed of the effect of Madame de Castries' dealings with him. She was at one time a delight, then a disillusionment, and then (and, as it seems to me, ever afterwards) a painful yet attractive memory. The rupture—never a quarrel avowed to the outsider ; never indeed a rupture that was quite complete, or that was in any way explicable save under the supposition that the lady of the *belle chevelure venitienne* had a blonde's inconstancy and a Scottish caution—the rupture, such as it was, occurred in the autumn of 1832, when Balzac, who was to have gone over into Italy with the lady and her brother, parted from her at Geneva, and consoled himself (let me be permitted to hope) as best he could, by buying, at that famous dealer's on the Quai des Bergues,[1] a little of the 'Carl Théodore' (Frankenthal) porcelain that his soul

[1] Since moved to the Corratorie.

loved. The 'collector,' I am informed, is heartless—but he has his compensations.

The second of the just published letters addressed to Madame de Hanska contains sentences which are meaningless, if it is not to Madame de Castries that they refer. 'Only Heaven and I can ever understand the frightful energy with which a heart must be endowed, if, being full of tears that are repressed, it must suffice still for the labours of writing.' Again—and this time why should I translate?—the cry of a moment: '*Toutes mes passions, toutes mes croyances, sont trompées.*' And he tells his correspondent that Madame Recamier at least never sat, as was supposed, for Feodora.[1] 'I met a Feodora once, but her I shall never paint; besides, the *Peau de Chagrin* was written long before I met her.'[2] Yet again, 'I made Feodora out of two women whom I knew, but not intimately. Observation was enough for me—with a few confidences to boot.'

What Balzac seems to have been struck with, from the first, in Evelina de Hanska, was her sincerity and oneness of purpose, the truth of her devotion to his work, and a certain similarity, an immediate

[1] Feodora, the evil genius, one may say, of the *Peau de Chagrin*.

[2] If this was Madame de Castries, the intention did not always hold good, since more than touches of that charmer there are supposed to be in the *Duchesse de Langeais*.

sympathy, between his nature and hers. Much of his work, as he avows, has been done to strike the public—to provide the public with that without which it could scarcely accord him the attention he asked. But 'certainly there are books in which I have loved to be myself; and you will know well which they are, for they are those in which my heart has spoken.' When at length the two came together, at Neuchâtel in 1833—as in Vienna, and in Russian Poland itself, in later years—there was nothing, it seems, in either to diminish the interest or to break the spell. And the fascination continued. I have for my own part a little theory that the sympathy of the woman, her deep interest in his work, her participation in it (*Séraphita* and some kindred labour, whatever be its defects, would never have existed but for that influence of this mystic Northerner), gave the attachment, as far as Balzac was concerned, something of the features of an attachment of consolation. His early adoration, as I hold, his boyish passion, was for Madame de Berny. And, in maturer years, his ideal, his very dream of beauty and of charm, was Madame de Castries—Madame de Castries set, so to put it, in the best of her backgrounds: Madame de Castries at Aix-les-Bains. Never, I think, in Balzac's life

was that experience, or the force of it, equalled. But in Evelina de Hanska, whether as friend or wife, he discovered and obtained a steady rest—a rest the more assured, it may be, because she entertained for him feelings of a deeper devotion than any that were extended by that admirable and almost lifelong comrade, his friend, his sister's friend, the blameless and the wise Madame Zulma Carraud.

An idealist, anyhow, Balzac was at the beginning; an idealist he remained to the end. The '*amitiés d'épiderme*,' as he excellently called them, attracted him but little. In my short book about him, in the 'Great Writers' Series, I tried to show that what he sought for and obtained was the intimacy of the heart. Gautier knew this. And one-sided indeed must be those people — whether the word of their choice is intended for blame or for praise—who, judging either by life or work, think that Balzac is properly described as 'materialist' or 'realist,' alone or chiefly. The Real, which is not always the hideous, he was strong enough to face; yet Romance was essential to him. It is time, now, that the sentimental and *soi-disant* Romantic began to understand that in Balzac there were depths of feeling and of poetry to which they could never approach; and time also that those tiresome disciples of mere ugli-

ness in literary theme and literary treatment, who account him their yet insufficient master, were informed, roundly, that whatever the lessons he may half-incidentally have taught them, nothing of Balzac's greatness can ever fairly be claimed as supporting or justifying the narrow limitations of their sordid sect and creed.

(*The Bookman*, March 1894.)

# GEORGE ELIOT

THE accounts of George Eliot's earlier life, which are in general circulation, are in some respects imaginary. 'George Eliot'—Mary Ann Evans—was not the daughter of a poor clergyman, nor was she ever 'adopted' by a wealthy one. She was the daughter of a land surveyor in the Midland Counties, and was brought up at her father's home, her mother dying when Mary Ann Evans was still a child. Nor was she ever the 'pupil' of Mr. Herbert Spencer, nor a frequent writer in the *Westminster Review*. She made the acquaintance and the friendship of Mr. Spencer when she was a woman, and already the mistress of the abstruse subjects in which she then chiefly delighted. She was for a time joint-editor of the *Westminster* with Dr. Chapman; but her writings in that Review were neither numerous nor generally important. After a residence of some years in Coventry—where she learned profoundly the features of the 'Midlands,' which she afterwards described—

Mary Ann Evans came to London. At twenty-six years old she translated Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, and seven years later, Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*; but her efforts at creative writing were wisely delayed. Her apprenticeship to Literature and Philosophy was elaborate and laborious; her training was extensive and deep. It was not until 1858 that *Scenes of Clerical Life* betrayed the presence of a new artist in Fiction—an artist of fresh gifts, but of undeveloped art.

The narratives of the 'Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton,' of 'Janet's Repentance,' and of 'Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story'—the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, in other words—impressed certain readers, and deserved to impress them; but not even the pathos of Mrs. Barton's death would have given the writer lasting reputation had the book continued to stand alone. On re-perusal, the imperfections of its mechanism are too apparent; the novelist had not learned the art of proportion, nor the art of selection and rejection. Some little books, no bigger than the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, have been enough to secure for their authors an enduring fame. Nothing more than the *Vicar of Wakefield* could have been required to keep Goldsmith's memory green. Sterne, desiring to be immortal, was under no obligation to write

anything more, after he had written the *Sentimental Journey*. But the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, admirably fresh and spontaneous as they were, gave no such position to their author. It was not a young woman, but it was a woman young in her art, who was at work in them.

With *Adam Bede* it was otherwise. *Adam Bede*, published about the beginning of 1859, was seen at once to be more than a touching, and more than a popular, story. It was an achievement of complete art, and had the power of complete art, 'to teach a truth obliquely,' nor 'wrong the thought'—as Mr. Browning has subtly put it—'nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.' It was at bottom a work of noble teaching. In it the novelist described with fidelity, but with poetic fidelity, scenes and characters the like of which she thoroughly knew; and the world recognised both the truth and the charm of the portrayal, and if it did not take to the young Squire, it took about equally to the two most strongly contrasted heroines that ever figured in one volume—to the preaching woman, Dinah Morris, with her exalted and patient spirit, and to the giddy Hetty, who had no virtue but the virtue of fascination.

It was chiefly to provincial society, or to the humbler society of the country-side, that George

Eliot kept in her earlier works; and it was there that she was ever best. The elaborate Dutch painting of *Silas Marner* dealt sympathetically with the religious life of obscure sects; *The Mill on the Floss* portrayed the humours of the lower middle class, and gave us a delightful study of the passionate and lovable 'Maggie'; *Felix Holt* dealt with country politics, though its best interest lay in the development of three wonderful characters—the agreeable Esther, the perplexed Felix, and the Dissenting minister who, in that old-world corner of England where the scene lay, had even in our own generation the dignity and quietude of an ancient Puritan emigrating beyond seas. Immense and always tender study of actual life was evident in these novels; and yet it did not require the publication of such a *tour de force* as *Romola*, which, in 1863, followed *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*, to prove that the only novelist of quite the first rank who had arisen since Dickens and Thackeray was most powerful in work inspired by meditation and learning, rather than by observation, and that in that respect, as of course in many others, she differed absolutely from Dickens, whose strength lay in the observation of humanity, and from Thackeray, whose strength lay in the observation of 'good society.' If

some works of George Eliot's, of later date than *Romola*, remind us too often that their author, like the character in *Faust*, had *schrecklich viel gelesen* —that George Eliot was burdened with her learning —*Romola* is a conspicuous example of the 'talent that forms itself,' not exactly 'in solitude,' yet by profound and continuous meditation. Like all the greater works of its writer, it is a study of the heart. And in *Romola* the subtle wit of Italy is displayed, with curious variety of power, by a writer who had shown herself mistress, long before, of the blunter English humour.

But such a success as that of *Romola*—the success of an historical novelist for whom history is alive and is not a mere tradition, mere decorative background—is hardly to be made more than once. *Romola* may live at least as long as *Esmond*—in *Esmond* the *tour de force* is, if anything, more apparent; the machinery creaks sometimes yet more audibly in the working. In any case George Eliot did wisely to bring her imagination back to England, and to the shires 'which we the heart of England well may call,' and, having given us *Felix Holt*, to give us *Middlemarch*. *Middlemarch*, perhaps, has two faults as a work of art, but they are faults which evidence, at all events, the range of its

writer's mind. It is not properly one story, but several stories. The desire to put forth in a single colossal work—and *Middlemarch* is of the length of two three-volume novels—a picture of the whole of provincial life, touched at points, and disturbed, by the problems of our time, resulted in the creation of a book in which the many threads of narrative were often but slightly blended. *Middlemarch* is not a cabinet picture; it is a vast panorama. Again, in *Middlemarch* there was visible, for the first time in George Eliot's career, some relaxation—or worse than relaxation—of literary style. Though on the whole it is justly allowed to be a noble piece of English writing, it is in expression less lucid and felicitous than the earlier novels; and the germs of a style charged too much with scientific similes are found to be of increased growth in *Daniel Deronda.* In George Eliot's earliest fiction, though it was written in mature years, her art was not developed. In her latest, it was not concealed.

But between the two—between the *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Daniel Deronda*—there lie some half-dozen romances, prolix, indeed, and dull at times, yet in some ways almost perfect in the most serious order of literary work. And, moreover, the presence of sheer mental power, the power chiefly of

analysis and of synthesis, is almost as evident in *Daniel Deronda* as in the better fictions. The study of modern Jewish life and character in that formidable novel was of such a nature as to lead a leader of Jewish Society to pay a tribute to its knowledge and its sympathy. That study was directed, not only by insight, but by a continuous desire to do justice to the subject selected—to the minds chosen for dissection. The wide and deep interest in the fortunes of humanity, which characterised George Eliot, and which increased with her learning and her years—as her art somewhat declined—can never have been more apparent than in *Daniel Deronda*. The interest was sometimes, it is true, evidenced by way of an exalted pity; and seeing how removed that pity seemed from all that aroused it, the saying was remembered by certain critics that pity is akin to contempt. Those critics had understood George Eliot but superficially. All through her later works —and not in *Daniel Deronda* and *Middlemarch* alone —there is visible an increasing personal sense of the inevitableness of mistake, of a 'waste of force' in human life; and that gave to the labour of even this bright intellect a sadness which was scarcely bitterness at all.

George Eliot, during many years, was occasionally

busy with what is formally poetry—informally, of course, much of her best prose was poetry, and poetry of a higher order. In some of her verse—in *Jubal* and the *Spanish Gypsy*—she touched on the careers and characters of people whom she would hardly have brought into her novels, and in one or other of her poems she expressed with a fulness and intensity not found in her prose fiction that love of music and that sympathy with the aspirations of the musical artist which she shared with the great writer of *Abt Vogler*. The docile public received her poems with at least sufficient appreciation—a part of which may fairly be set down to the remembrance of those triumphs as a novelist which, for the time, she had laid aside. But her poems were, in the main, like Raphael's departure from the art of his more constant practice—like the sonnets of Michael Angelo—the evidences of an artist's aspiration towards a field of success which shall have the charm of what is new and unfamiliar. They were that, and hardly more. It is, of course, on the romances of George Eliot that her fame will rest, and on them not because of any reflection they present of the manners of our time—these, in truth, they left to other novelists—but because of the earnestness and profundity of their

dealing with problems of the age, and problems of our nature. A future generation may find, and, indeed, not a few judges, most worthy to be listened to, declare already, that much of her sad philosophy is itself a mistake as great as any which her genius discovered in the world she lived in. But if George Eliot's analysis of life betrays some deeply rooted faults, it will at least always be admitted that it was that of a grave and gifted inquirer. If the work which began with the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and ended, not auspiciously, with *Theophrastus Such*, has great deficiencies, it was wrought, at all events, by a serious artist, a free and wonderful spirit.

(*Standard*, 24th December 1880.)

## MY FEW THINGS

'My few things!' In the very title there is conveyed, I hope, some apology for writing of them. If I accept the invitation to do so, it is partly because I must needs know more of what they are —they are 'but poor few,' in Shakespeare's phrase —than any one else can know; partly again because, as I am pleasantly informed, it may be interesting to certain readers to be told, for a change, not what can be amassed—amassed and perhaps neglected—by a millionaire who gives several thousand guineas for a modern painting, but what can be got together with merely 'joyful trouble,'—with pains, and waiting, and love of the things, and only a little money —by a simple man of Letters, who happens to have been concerned, to some extent, with other arts than his own; and partly also because, connected with the few things that one has, there are associations, not few but many.

A little blue-grey drawing—an early drawing of

Varley's, which has nothing but the lasting virtues of Economy and Style—was the first artistic thing that ever belonged to me. It came to me—like a prized Morland mezzotint, many years later—from the portfolio of my great-grandfather, who was, as I am told, a friend of Turner's earliest patron, Dr. Munro. But it is prints, not drawings, that, since I began to collect a little, I have chiefly brought together.

In a collection of prints there is something less indefinite, something more systematic, than in a collection of drawings. The things, if they are good, have the advantage of being known, of being more or less recognised—not, indeed, by the large public, but at least by the people with whom, on matters of Art, it is most interesting to come into contact. Prints are classed and catalogued. Each print by a particular master has, in the collector's mind, a direct bearing on the component parts of that master's work. Again, fine drawings, although cheap in relation to the prices paid for modern paintings, are dear in comparison with many prints to which the adjective 'fine' could scarcely be denied; for, while here and there an 'Adam and Eve' of Dürer is sold under the hammer for many hundred pounds, that is the exception absolutely;

and while, at Sotheby's or Christie's, on eventful sale days, two thousand pounds may be the ransom of a Rembrandt etching, that is not only because it is fine, but because that particular etching—or that particular 'state' of it—is excessively rare. It has been chronicled; it has been read of; it has profited by the existence of the accurate catalogue of the work of the Master—it is a certified thing. But, with knowledge gradually acquired, with diligence exercised in the right place, a print extremely fine, extremely desirable, may still be bought for a few pounds. It will be much fuller of Art than any drawing which ordinary good fortune is to enable you to get for the same outlay. And I say this as one who loves drawings—as one who, notwithstanding his theories, even ventures to live with a few of them; but, if I have a preference in the matter of collecting—well, I suppose it is for prints.

About a print, every point is interesting. Apart from subject, apart too from technical treatment of the copper, there is the delightful question, How does your own impression compare with other people's? And, again, the paper. The true print-lover can talk about different papers—old French, old Dutch, old English, Japanese—as the connoisseur of clarets talks of Pontet Canets and Pichon Longuevilles.

. . . But my Solander-box is all this time unopened!

I suppose the first print that I ever bought was a 'Liber' print of Turner's. The Burlington Fine Arts Club had held a wonderfully important exhibition of them—there were Mr. J. E. Taylor's, Mr. Henry Vaughan's, Mr. Gambier Parry's finest impressions; illustrative, thoroughly, of that which Turner meant to do; of the means, to some extent, by which he did it. And having by that time discovered what I most cared for in the set, and made, no doubt, the politic compromise—learning to bring my needs within the limits of a lean purse—I got my friend, Stopford Brooke, to choose from amongst several impressions of 'Hind Head Hill,' that happened then to be at Colnaghi's (for it was soon after the great Turner Sale), the one he thought the best; and from amongst an equal number of impressions of 'Severn and Wye,' that happened to be at Mrs. Noseda's, similarly, the best. 'I chose well that day,' said Stopford Brooke, many years afterwards, noticing those prints on my wall. No such opportunities of choice, as existed then, are likely again to be afforded.

Those were the days when, if I bought at all, it was—at first at least—'for the wall' and not 'for the folio'—to use a phrase of Halsted's. Halsted

meant by it to distinguish between the buyer who, from the very nature of things, must promptly be satisfied (since you can neither multiply 'walls' nor enlarge them), and the buyer to whom the infinite was open — that infinite in which Solander-box succeeds Solander-box, folio succeeds folio, and drawer succeeds drawer. His, perhaps, is the more dangerous case; but the collector who can display on his walls all his possessions—who can stop buying when the mere purposes of furnishing are answered —is simply *not* a collector. Halsted scorned him.

The mention of this aged dealer's name brings back to me recollections. I saw Mr. Halsted in almost the latest of his days, when he was a less prominent but probably a more interesting figure, in the world of Art and Connoisseurship, than he had been in his prime. In his prime, his shop was in Bond Street; but when it was my privilege to go, a humble learner, sitting at the feet of a dealer who had known 'Mr. Turner,' and had been for at least one generation surrounded by his work, Halsted, elderly, deliberate of speech, slow and almost halting of movement, large, angular— a craft somewhat difficult to 'bring round' or to 'change the course' of, within the scanty waters of his back shop—had his abode—his mart at all

events—in Rathbone Place, by the French *blanchisseuse de fin* and a little Swiss *café*. He was half retired; and there in the back shop he would cause you to sit down, in a perfect light under the window, and would show you what you had asked for, if he had it—for, in those days, he bought nothing; he was engaged merely in selling, in the most leisurely of manners, and at prices which were never open to any suggestion of abatement, the remains of his old stock. Standing over you—a little away from you—with something of a soldierly sternness, like a sergeant in a barrack-yard, he rolled out, slowly, story after story of Mr. Turner, of Sir John Hippesley, whom he had influenced to admire the 'Liber,' by placing before his eyes a 'Severn and Wye,' at breakfast-time, and then of Mr. Turner again. You bought something, of course; but the best of it is, you never were sorry for it afterwards, for Halsted's eye was faultless: his knowledge, though he was old, was in advance of his day. I cherish as impressions which had received his *imprimatur*—if one may use the word of things he had thought worthy to buy and to sell—an 'Oakhampton Castle,' a 'Hindoo Worshippers,' and I forget for the moment what else. These two, I remember, bear the stamp of passage through the collection of the famous

Mr. Stokes—the first 'Liber' collector—and of his niece, Miss Constance Clarke.

One thing amusing about a visit to Halsted's was the occasional presence of his brother. You went to the shop perhaps once by chance, and Halsted was away. In his place was an inferior sort of person, courteous and good-natured, but humbly conscious of his own inferiority. You could do no business with him. If I remember rightly, he was not even allowed to have the keys. The fine prints were quite inaccessible. Yet this was, after all, but one of the inferior brother's manifestations. He had another phase—another facet. Chancing, one summer evening, to walk northwards, through Camden Town, I suddenly beheld the brother standing on what proved to be his own doorstep, free of heart and with no one to say him nay. He, too, had a shop, it appeared, and here it was, come upon unexpectedly: a print shop of the third order—you wondered who they were, in Camden Town or anywhere else, who bought the cheap things which alone it contained.

Only one other of the old-fashioned dealers, the dealers of another generation, did I ever see. That was the aged Mr. Tiffin, once busy in the Strand, but, when I called upon him to inspect the remains

of his possessions, living chiefly retired, slow and deaf, in the small bourgeois comfort of a villa at Canonbury. There—not to much practical purpose —I sought him out. He too was a figure of the elder world, and as such he dwells in the memory.

But I have wandered from the prints of the 'Liber Studiorum,' of which indeed, though one of the warmest admirers of them, I possess but a handful. Amongst them I greatly cherish one impression —the gift of a friend whose benefactions to the National collections are remarkable, and whose knowledge of Turner is profound. It is an early 'state' of the subject known as 'Inverary Pier, Loch Fyne, Morning'—one of those plates engraved from end to end by Turner's own hand. This impression was given by the Master to Lupton, the mezzotint engraver of the 'Solway Moss,' and, a generation ago, my friend had bought it from him. Another admirable student of Turner's art sent me once more than one of those etchings which, in Turner's case, are the interesting preparations for the finished 'Liber' plate. The rare 'Isis' is amongst them.

Amongst the Turner prints that I have bought, I have always been guided rather by fineness of impression than by priority of 'state.' Thus, side

by side with a First State of the 'London from Greenwich' I do not fear to place a late one of 'The Frontispiece, with the Rape of Europa.' The impression must have been printed the moment the plate had profited by Turner's retouch. As for the costly curiosities known as 'engraver's proofs'—working proofs, in fine, struck off to see how the plate was progressing—speaking broadly and roughly, I do not believe in them. They have their own interest, of course, as illustrating the means by which the effect was obtained; but, in quality, they yield to an impression taken when the effect had just been got, or, in the case of a fine Second or later State, to an impression taken when the effect, lost in the interval by wear, had just been regained.

No one who appreciates Turner can quite confine himself to the 'Liber,' though the 'Liber' is the most comprehensive expression of that infinite genius. Accordingly, in my drawers there may be found, no doubt, pieces from one or other of his engraved publications: something, it may be, from the 'Rivers of England'—amongst them the 'York' and the 'Ripon,' which are not his indeed, but his friend Girtin's.—something from the 'Southern Coast'; and, from the 'England and Wales,' that exquisite 'Yarmouth,' which, like the 'Clovelly'

and the 'Portsmouth' (both of them in the 'Southern Coast') exemplifies old William Miller's marvellous faculty of rendering the sky effects, the aerial perspective, of Turner's maturest art. One has heard of Turner's compliments to John Pye, over 'Pope's Villa,' and they were not undeserved; but how great should his recognition have been of the Scottish Quaker, simple of nature, subtle of gift, for whom no passage of Turner's brush-work was too intricate or too baffling! But let us turn to earlier Masters.

Only well-to-do people can buy, in any large numbers and in those fine impressions which alone rightly represent their subjects, the etchings of Rembrandt; but it is a wonder, and almost a shame, that so few well-to-do English people take advantage of their opportunities; for, as a result of their not doing so, or doing so at the best in so scanty a measure, a most undue proportion of the fine Rembrandts which have been the ornaments of English collections have within the last few years crossed the seas, and are now lodged—where they are justly appreciated—in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Baltimore, New York. Where, amongst us in England, are the successors of Dr. Wellesley, of Sir Abraham Hume, of Mr. Holford, of my kind,

delightful friend, Richard Fisher? We want a new race of collectors of the highest class of ancient prints; the old is dying out; the young is too modest or too timid: it is afraid to spend its money, though its money could hardly be spent more economically. Looked at even from the financial point of view—as the great auctions prove—nothing is better justified than the investment of important sums in the prints by the Masters. Rembrandt is for all Time. Every year—taking the wide world over—there is an increase in the number of people sensible enough to desire and determine to possess themselves of some representation of his work.

Nothing but small means has prevented my buying in abundance Rembrandt's incomparable landscapes, so well aware am I that Landscape Art reaches its topmost level in the best of Rembrandt's work—in his 'Cottage with Dutch Hay-Barn,' say, and in his 'Landscape with a Tower.' His Sacred Subjects, with all their virtues of 'sincerity and inwardness,' commend themselves less to us. His Portraiture, upon the other hand, combines every artistic charm with every human interest. A few examples I have—a mere handful, but good impressions they must always be; and the two which, from their subjects, are least unworthy of mention,

are, I suppose, a First State of the 'Clément de Jonghe,' the Amsterdam print-seller, which has a picturesqueness less obvious, but a character more subtle, than in the plate's later states; and an early and fortunate impression from that group of studies, executed, I am convinced, in different years, and containing as its chiefest and latest ornament an energetically sketched portrait of Rembrandt himself, in that advanced middle life of his, which gave us, perhaps, the greatest number of the fine fruits of his genius. To certain of the commentators on Rembrandt, this rare little plate—a masterly collection of *croquis*, and nothing besides—is not, I fancy, quite sufficiently known; though our admirable English amateur, Wilson—who wrote in 1836—and the latest deceased of the great French collectors and commentators, Monsieur Dutuit, of Rouen, do it conspicuous justice. My impression belonged, a generation or two ago, to the Arozarena collection. I got it, with some other things, at that fascinating shop in Paris, whose outside is so simple and so unassuming, whose inside is stuffed with treasures—the shop a door or two from the Quai Malaquais, up the dark and narrow 'Rue des Saint-Pères,' at which, from the morning to the evening hours, sits placidly at his desk 'Monsieur Jules'—Clément's

successor, once Clément's assistant — the learned 'Marchand d'Estampes de la Bibliothèque Nationale.'

Even the smallest of collectors may have a 'speciality'—and I suppose my speciality to be the comparatively humble one of Méryon and of Whistler—or, perhaps, of modern etchings generally —but (let me say it for myself as well as for others) it is at one's peril that one is specialist alone. Things are seen then out of all proportion; bias and prejudice take the place of judgment—a mere fanaticism flourishes, where there ought to be a growing critical capacity, alert and lively. On that account, in my small cabinet, a Whistler or a Méryon is liable to be confronted with an Italian of the Renaissance, a German of the day of Dürer. Zoan Andrea's 'Dance of Damsels,' after a design of Mantegna's, a Coat of Arms of Beham's, an ornament of Aldegrever's, instructively remind me of a delicacy earlier than Whistler's, and of a *burin sobre et mâle* that was wielded three hundred years before Méryon's. But while, in collecting, I venture to discountenance the exclusive devotion to a particular master, I am almost as strongly against the acquisition of isolated examples of very many men. If a man is worth representing at all, represent him at the least by a little handful of his works. Collect one or two

masters largely, and obtain of others small but characteristic groups.

I am fond of my few French prints of the Eighteenth Century. It is easy to dispose of them (a common way in England)—the works, I mean, of all that Eighteenth Century School—by calling them light, trifling, even indiscreet in certain of their revelations of a life that seldom aimed to be austere; but, in reality, the prints of the '*Dix-Huitième*' represent all phases of the thoughts and ways of French society—its deeds and its ideals—from the childhood of Louis Quinze to the Revolution; and, if you read French *contes* and comedy, memoir and criticism, these things, from Watteau to Chardin, from Chardin to Fragonard, are their true illustrations. For myself, I do but mourn that I have so few of them: not a single Moreau, for instance—not the 'Sortie de l'Opéra,' with the love-letter conveyed in the nosegay, nor 'C'est un Fils, Monsieur!' in which a well-favoured young woman bounces into the library of the fortunate collector, with the news that he is also, as it seems, a parent. The insular pre-Raphaelite speaks of the French Eighteenth Century as 'the bad period.' It is 'the bad period' to people who are too rigid to

grasp its grace. The narrowly learned, as Walter Savage Landor reminds us—'the generality of the learned,' he is even severe enough to say—'are apt to conceive that in easy movement there is a want of solidity and strength.' Now, 'easy movement,' spontaneous elegance, is the very characteristic of the Art of France, as it is of its delightful people; and not to recognise, not to enjoy that, is merely to be under the sway of pedantry, antiquarian or academic. French Eighteenth Century Art, like Dutch Art of the Seventeenth Century, like the Art of Titian and of Velasquez, reflected Life—much of the charm of Life—and unless it be that Life itself and Beauty have no interest for us, we cannot afford to pass that Art superciliously by.

Wonderfully small, however, is the amount of sympathy that I am privileged to expect from English collectors of the older type, in my enjoyment of a sometimes faulty, but an often bewitching, school. A score of French prints, some of them recording the high elegance of Watteau, the pleasant gallantry of Baudouin or Lavreince, the sober homeliness and the grave truth of Chardin (whose lessons were Wordsworthian in their way)—these various things, which I shall still venture to cherish, are wont to be 'sat upon' by the antiquary; much as a

certain little table-case of Battersea enamels, dainty and aglow with colour, like flowers on a wintry day (puce and gold and *rose du Barry*, that no time and no winter fades), is 'sat upon' by some of my friends who behold indescribable virtues in every product of Japanese design. We have all of us got our limits —I remember, though, that in France, two of the men most prominent and influential in their love for the artistic work of their own country in its famous '*Dix-Huitième*,' had been almost the first to welcome the inventions of the Japanese. These men were Philippe Burty and Edmond de Goncourt —but then it is lamentably true that they ignored Rembrandt and Dürer, as far as any practical interest in them was concerned.

The mention of the Frenchmen brings me once more face to face with two striking personalities. Burty was a critic in journalism, and an *Inspecteur des Beaux Arts* besides—an enthusiast, a connoisseur, a real *curieux*. When I knew him he had already done much in France for the popular recognition of Etching. His flat upon an outer boulevard—the Boulevard des Batignolles—told charmingly of the refinement and variety of his tastes. Some *kakemonos* and *tsubas* hung on the walls; but here there was an etching, and there an ivory. And he had a

little *coin de tapisserie*, as he smilingly said, 'like Erasmus at the Louvre'—he was thinking of the background of Holbein's picture. In his deep French bookcases, well-bound volumes were ranged, a second row behind the first, and when the glass doors were opened and a few vacant places discovered, Burty's favourite cat—the cat of the literary man, moving with quietude, treading with grace—curved about in the bookcase, sleek and smooth, harmless, careful, almost appreciative.

One Sunday afternoon, when, I remember, as the result of an accident, we had failed to see Zola, Philippe Burty drove me down to Auteuil—to the Villa Montmorency, with its wild poetic garden—to spend a couple of hours with Edmond de Goncourt and his treasures. Jules, the beloved brother, was already dead, and Edmond, surrounded by his collections, lived lonely at Auteuil, in the house arranged for both. Stately and distinguished, melancholy, and yet interested, a descendant of the old *noblesse*, with many memories in the dark brown eyes that lay under black eyebrows and silver-grey hair, Edmond de Goncourt moved about amongst his portfolios, saying a word here, and there directing a glance. The history of his life surrounded him—the treasures he and his brother had amassed and studied, before the

'*Dix-Huitième*' was fashionable, and very much as a recreation from those '*noires études de la vie contemporaine*'—the words are his own—which had given us *Germinie Lacerteux* and *Manette Salomon*. No such collection of that fascinating French '*Dix-Huitième*' as belongs to Edmond de Goncourt has ever been made. His *Maison d'un Artiste* is a book which is written for the most part about it, and in comparison with its treasures my humble score of chosen prints —chiefly, after all, by the Eighteenth Century's more serious masters—becomes absolutely insignificant. Still, they remind me, pleasantly enough, of a delightful period, a delightful people, and of an art that was masterly when it was Watteau's, more lightly gracious when it was Pater's, and, when it was Chardin's, was sedate and simple and almost austere.

Sketches in oil or water-colour by Cotman and James Ward, by Thomas Collier and Charles Green, Edwin Hayes, Alfred East, Shannon, Linton, Fulleylove, Carl Haag, Wyke Bayliss, Francis James—I need not finish the list, and it would be foreign to the present purpose to enlarge on the men—do something, one may hope, to prevent one's bowing the knee at only a single shrine. But is that indeed my danger? —I, who confess to have felt at times the force of

quite another temptation—the temptation to be busy at last in getting together things with which the pictorial Art that I love has nothing to do. A comely little piece or so of 'Blue and White'; a bit of Worcester, with the square mark; a Nantgarw plate, with its 'Billingsley rose'; a plate of Frankenthal, bought in the Corratorie at Geneva, at a shop where, two generations ago, they had sold things of that fabric to none other than Balzac (who declared, through his *Cousin Pons*, that Frankenthal would one day be as much sought after as Sèvres)—these things, I say, the thin end of the wedge, things that are nothing by themselves, remind me that, in gathering china, Man may be happy. And so a few books—the earliest obtained being the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798, *relieure Janséniste*, a green coat by Riviere, and the Rogers with the Turner illustrations, in 'original boards,' now, alas! disposed to crack—assure me of the charm that must lurk for my luckier brethren in the seriously gathering together of First Editions or of famous ones.

Let us pass to the examples of the Revival of Etching. About forty Méryons, about seventy Whistlers, are mine. The one artist has been much more prolific than the other, and thus, while, as regards Méryon, the possession of even 'forty' prints

allows the collector to be fairly well provided for, as regards Whistler, the 'seventy' represent scarcely a third part of that etcher's catalogued work. Mr. H. S. Theobald has more Whistlers than I have; so has Sir John Day; Mr. B. B. Macgeorge, of Glasgow, has, I know, more Méryons; while, of both these masters, distinctly larger collections than my own rest in the hands of Mr. Samuel P. Avery and of Mr. Howard Mansfield, of New York.

Nearly all the finer plates of Méryon—those in which, to use his own phrase, he 'engraved Paris,' with a fidelity so affectionate, yet with an imagination so tragic—were wrought between the year 1850 and the year 1854. Bracquemond was the only important figure in the group to whom the Revival of Etching is due, who was working at that time. Whistler, Seymour Haden, Jules Jacquemart, and Legros, were all of them a little later; Whistler's first dated plate—and he was quite among the earliest of these artists—being of the year 1857.

In looking through my Méryons, it interests me to find that a good many that are in my Solander-box to-day, belonged, long since, to distinguished Frenchmen who were Méryon's contemporaries. Thus, a First State of the 'Saint-Etienne-du-Mont' was given by Méryon to Bracquemond. My impressions

of the 'Abside' and the 'Stryge' belonged to Aglaüs Bouvenne, who catalogued Bonington, appreciated Méryon, and, in comparatively recent years, wrote some reminiscences of him. A 'Rue des Toiles, à Bourges' has on it Méryon's dedicatory inscription, addressed to Hillemacher the painter. A curious proof of the 'Partie de la Cité de Paris,' before the introduction of the towers, which were never really in the actual view, though Méryon chose to see them there, came from the friend of Méryon's youth, a friend who spoke over his grave — M. de Salicis. Some others of the prints have been Philippe Burty's. The final trial proof of the 'Tourelle, dite "de Marat,"' and one or two other subjects, of which I spare the reader the details, were originally bought of Méryon by M. Wasset, a man the public wots not of, but a collector full of character: the 'Cousin Pons,' I dare to call him, of my own earlier day.

Let me, in a paragraph devoted to himself alone, recall M. Wasset to my memory. An employé—*secrétaire*, it may be—at the Ministry of War, he lived, when I mounted to his flat, one winter's night (how many years ago!) in a dark, winding, narrow street, of the Rive Gauche, between the Seine and St. Sulpice—the Rue Jacob. The Cousin Pons, did I say, this gentleman resembled? But Pons was

*gourmet* as well as connoisseur—M. Wasset knew no passion but the collector's. He dined modestly—by subscription, it was understood—at the Café Procope, in the Quarter—was *abonné* for repasts taken there, in a haunt once classic, now dull and cheap. His rooms in the Rue Jacob, low and small, were stuffed full with his collections. *Bric-à-brac* he had, even more than prints. Strange beings who dredged in the River, brought him ancient jewellery, and seventeenth-century watches, that had slept their Rip Van Winkle sleep in the mud of the Seine. I see the venerable collector now, his sombre and crowded rooms lit with a single lamp, and he, passing about, spare, eager, and trembling, with bowed figure; garrulous, excited as with wine, by the mere sight and handling of his accumulated possessions. A few years afterwards — urged thereto by the greatest of Parisian printsellers, Clément, who is now no more—he had a sale, in the Rue Drouot, of his hundreds of prints, of which the Méryons, of course, formed but a small part. Other treasures—then ardently desired—he was to purchase with the proceeds. Is his heart, one wonders, with those treasures now—in the dark Paris street? Or, the hands that trembled so, fifteen years since—have they relaxed their hold, for ever, of the things that

were meat and drink, that were wife and child, to him?

Méryon, I remember, took me by storm as a great artistic personality, and, since he conquered me immediately, I have always been faithful to him. In that there is no sort of virtue; for has he not now become, thus early, almost everywhere, where prints are loved, an accepted classic? To appreciate Whistler — even at all to enjoy him — requires a longer education. There are even some things that at first one resents. A touch of charlatanry lurks, one at first supposes, in the Bond Street 'arrangement in yellow and white,' and in the *velarium* under which we were invited to gather when the master held sway in Suffolk Street. But, in time, that impression passes. Then, one accepts the man whole—takes him as he is—genius like his has a certain licence to be abnormal. And though it pleases Mr. Whistler, in sundry catalogues and joyous little books about the 'art of making enemies,' to represent from time to time that I, among a hundred others, do not appreciate him, that is only because he would have us believe he is a victim to the interesting monomania of persecution, and I, forsooth, when this is his mood, am called upon to figure as one of those who would pursue and vex him. Peace!

peace! Now that he has 'done battering at England' (I will not vouch precisely for the phrase), I am, it seems, an 'enemy' no more. So much the better!

I take it, he and Méryon are quite the greatest of the etchers this century has seen, and if so (since of great true etchers the Eighteenth Century was barren), they are the greatest since the days of Claude and Rembrandt. To no one who has studied any group of their plates for a single quarter of an hour, can it be necessary to insist upon the essential unlikeness of these two remarkable men. Unity of impression—almost a test of excellence, the one note dominant, the rest subordinated—that is found, I know, and found almost equally, in the work of both. But by what different measures has it been maintained! Whistler, in so much of his work, has shown himself the flexible, vivacious, and consummate sketcher, the artist whose choice of economical and telling 'line' is faultless and perhaps well-nigh immediate. Méryon, upon the other hand, has been remarkable for building up, with learned patience worthy of Albert Dürer, little by little, his effects; so that when the thing is done, and that sombre vision of his has become a realised performance, he has not so much made a drawing upon a plate, as erected a monument (for so it strikes one) from

base to coping-stone. Such work has at least the permanence of the very monuments it records. An *œuvre de longue haleine*—a task severe and protracted—is each one of Méryon's important coppers. Yet all the length of Méryon's labour witnesses to no relaxing hold of his first thought, and in the great complexity of ordered line there is revealed no superfluous, no insignificant stroke.

Each man is discovered in his work. In Méryon's 'Abside' say, in the 'Pont Neuf,' in the 'Saint-Etienne-du Mont,' is his brooding spirit, his patient craftsmanship, his temperament intense and profound. He was poor; he was often weary; he spent himself on his work. In Whistler's 'Garden,' in his 'Piazzetta,' in his 'Florence Leyland,' in the 'Large Pool,' in that wonderful tiny thing, 'The Fruit Shop,' there is the boyish freshness, the spirit of enjoyment, which he has known how to preserve till the present time. Whistler has never been tired, or, if he has, he and his work have parted company at that moment. Wonderful as is his gift of observation and handling, his plates are a lark's song. As you see the man before you, elastic, joyous, slim, and *débonnair*, having never known the heavy and sad wisdom of our modern youth, nor the cares of our middle age, his appearance almost

persuades you that all his exquisite craftsmanship, practised now for forty years, is but the blameless recreation of an hour snatched from life's severer tasks—the task of sipping duly, *à l'heure de l'absinthe*, one's *apéritif*, on the Boulevard; of pulling on the River, in the long June days; of condensing every rule of life into perhaps three epigrams, effective at a dinner-party. Who would not envy this possessor of a craft fantastic, airy, and immortal! Though Mr. Whistler may entertainingly insinuate that long life has been denied to his friendships, he will agree with me, I know, when I assert that it is secured to his etchings.

That my print-drawers contain but four or five etchings by Seymour Haden is at once my misfortune and my reproach. As one looks at them one conjures up visions of bygone sales at Sotheby's, when as yet Mr. Wilkinson, benign and aged, sat in the chair, to wield the ivory hammer—what opportunities neglected, of which the more diligent have availed themselves! For I cannot accept Seymour Haden's too modest estimate of the value of his own work. Labour so energetic and decisive is not destined to be prized by one generation alone, and in esteeming it comparatively lightly, his connoisseurship, accurate enough when it is con-

cerned with Claude and Rembrandt, Méryon and Whistler—all of whom, in his time, he has loved and collected—is for once at fault.

I am somewhat poor again in those etchings which are the creation of the austere genius of Legros. Popular they will never be, for Legros is almost alone among men of genius in not belonging to his own day—in receiving well-nigh no influence from the actual hour. He is a belated Old Master—but a 'master' always: never an affected copyist, who pranks 'in faded antique dress.' Had he but humoured the affectations of the time, it is quite possible that the time would at all events have talked about him, and, denied actual popularity, he might yet have been solaced by an æsthetic coterie's hysterical admiration. But that has not been for Legros. As it is, with his gravely whispered message, his general reticence, his overmastering sense of Style, his indifference to attractive truths of detail, his scorn of the merely clever, he is placed at a disadvantage. But his work remains; not only the etchings, of which Messieurs Thibaudeau and Poulet-Malassis catalogued a hundred and sixty-eight as long ago as 1877, but the grave pictures in which the peasant of the Boulognais devoutly worships, or in which the painted landscape is as the landscape

of a dream, and the vigorous oil portraits—not one of which, perhaps, reaches the nobility of his etched portrait of Watts—and the pencil drawings of the nude, several of which Legros has given to the Museum of his birthplace, Dijon, where the stray Englishman who stays to look at them finds that they are as finely severe as are the pencil drawings of Ingres. I have his one big etching, 'La Mort du Vagabond'—the scale too large to be effective generally, but, *pace* Mr. Whistler, I do not, in this case, find it 'an offence,'[1]—and amongst others, two that have, it may be, no particular rarity, but that are worthily, and I think even exceptionally, characteristic. The one is 'La Communion dans l'Eglise Saint-Médard': in line and in feeling an instance of the most dignified treatment of ecclesiastical function or religious office. And the other is 'Les Chantres Espagnols,' the singing-men, aged and decayed, eight of them, in a darkened choir—was ever a vision of narrow and of saddened lives more serious or more penetrating!

From these grave things it is sometimes a relief to turn to Jacquemart's etchings of still-life. The man

[1] 'The huge plate,' writes Mr. Whistler—on the whole truthfully—'the huge plate is an offence: its undertaking an unbecoming display of determination and ignorance, its accomplishment a triumph of unthinking earnestness and uncontrolled energy.

himself had troubles: not difficulties about money, nor, like Méryon, the knowledge that he was little appreciated—for appreciation came to him early—but lack of health during years that should have been vigorous, and a compulsory flight towards the sunshine, which yet did not appreciably lessen the distance that divided him from Death. But his work, from end to end, in its serene, deliberate accomplishment, suggests no chances and changes, no personal emotion, and even no actual experience of human life. One says at first, it might have been done at any period; then one recognises perhaps what one may call a modern feeling for the object portrayed; then one thinks of Hollar's 'Five Muffs,' and of Rembrandt's 'Shell,' and remembers that both have a freedom, a delicate skill, akin, after all, to the skill and the freedom in the etchings of Jacquemart. Of Jacquemart's two great series, the prints for his father's *Histoire de la Porcelaine* and those of the 'Gemmes et Joyaux de la Couronne,' I possess only the first, and these in book form, as they were sent me by Madame Techener, the widow of Jacquemart's publisher and friend. In a simple, russet-coloured half-binding, done afterwards by Zaehnsdorf, they stand on a shelf I go to. Elsewhere are such proofs of Jacquemart etchings as the occasional

good fortune of auction rooms—snatched in a spare half-hour—has brought to a life-long lover of engravings. There is a certain plate of sword-handles and daggers—things, some of them, that 'rend and rip'—

> 'Gash rough, slash smooth, help Hate so many ways,
> Yet ever keep a beauty that betrays
> Love still at work with the artificer, through all his quaint devising—'

as Robert Browning wrote, describing weapons that lay, as I remember, at peace at last, on his own drawing-room table. How Jacquemart etched such blades! By this print of his there is one of a seventeenth-century watch—just such a watch as I said used to be fished up from the bed of the Seine, for quaint old Monsieur Wasset—and with it the presentment of Renaissance jewel; and, perhaps, of a carved mirror, or a bit of Valenciennes porcelain.

Allow me a reflection! The cheapest way of enjoying *objets d'art* is to enjoy them in etchings; and it is often the easiest way, since you have but to sit in your chair and look; and it is often not the least true, since the etcher himself has seen with trained eye before his trained hand came to draw. Well, to enjoy *objets d'art* in that fashion, with tolerable completeness and extreme satisfaction, the

intelligent poor man has really but to get the two chief series of Jacquemarts (those that are still lacking to me, the 'Gemmes et Joyaux de la Couronne,' are, I know Seymour Haden would tell me, the bigger, broader, richer, more spontaneous of the two), and those fifty plates by different etchers, of whom Courtry, Greux, and Le Rat were among the principal, which Holloway published about a score of years since—'Works of Art in the Collections of England.' In that excellent folio, the men who have just been mentioned, and several others, followed hard on Jacquemart's heels. What a treatment of jade, in some of those plates! Mr. Addington's vase in particular—absolutely unctuous. What a treatment of *cristal de roche*! Desgoffe's painted panel at the Luxembourg is only a little finer. What a treatment of ivory!—that extraordinary Moorish casket, that was Malcolm of Poltalloch's.

But this is only copyist's etching, some people may say. 'Copyists'—No! You would not enjoy it so much, were it merely servile imitation. It is interpretation, significant and spirited, alert and vivid.

Of the original etchers of the younger school in England, Frank Short and William Strang have long seemed to me the most interesting, notwith-

standing the as yet somewhat marked limitations of theme of the one, and that possessing 'devil' of the love of ugliness which I have now almost ceased to hope may be exorcised from the other. Strang, for all the presence of that which is repulsive to many, is a man of great qualities. A Celt to the depths of him, he is wildly imaginative. He is dramatic, and his prints are dramatic, however much he may profess to be busy with line and tone. Besides, there are moments in which he confesses to being a poet. He has the instinct of tragedy. Technically, his etchings are almost always good; nor is it, to my mind, a sin in them that so many of them set you thinking. I have but a few of Mr. Strang's prints; of Frank Short's I have more, and when he can interpret a Dewint like that 'Road in Yorkshire,' and a Constable like that sketch of Mr. Vaughan's, I see no reason for not putting those mezzotints—interpretations so brilliant, translations so faithful yet so free—by the side of his work in Etching, inspired not by familiarity with the art of another, but by the presence of charming line or charming vista in Nature. Frank Short, in his original work, is a most delicate draughtsman of form in landscape. 'Evening, Bosham,' and 'Sleeping till the Flood,' sufficiently show it.

Of another good man, Mr. C. J. Watson, I have not enough to judge him at my ease; but he is a sterling etcher, distinctly gifted, and without artifice and trick. An actually imaginative vision one must not perhaps ask of him, but mental flexibility—can he but cultivate it—may enable him to go far.

'Profil de Jeune Fille,' a rare dry-point by Paul Helleu, has, it seems to me, like much of the work by that most modern of Parisian pastellists and etchers, a delightful spontaneity and force and freedom. It is an inevitable *chef-d'œuvre*—the greatest, perhaps, of a facile and exquisite master.

My gossip stops. Grant me only the grace of one more line, to avow the satisfaction with which, even after having enjoyed the companionship of at least some little work that is admittedly classic, I can look upon the prints of Mr. Charles Holroyd, a young etcher of our latest day. In them so much of what is generally, and often even rightly, seductive, is frankly abandoned, that they may keep unimpaired at least the distinction and reticence which are the very soul of Style.

(*Art Journal*, January and March 1894.)

## ANNE OLDFIELD

'MRS. OLDFIELD, the celebrated comedian,' is the title inscribed by a contemporary—who knew how the lady should be spoken of—upon the copper which Edward Fisher engraved in mezzotint from the picture by Richardson. A photogravure reproduction from this rare, desirable print—which shows the lissome grace and flexible charm of a young woman who enchanted the town, and who was the delight of Mr. Mainwaring before she was the delight of General Churchill—forms the frontispiece to the slight and gossipy and unscientific, but by no means disagreeable volume which Mr. Robins has compiled—we cannot say written—about the actress whom he dubs familiarly 'Nance.' A cheaper reproduction of another portrait of her—the original also by Richardson—is to be found upon a later page. In both portraits she is represented *in propria persona*, of which we need not complain, but which it is expedient to chronicle, inasmuch as such portraiture

throws no direct illumination upon the achievements of her art. Deprived of any such assistance as might well have been given, at all events had the compiler of the volume been dealing with a comedian of later time—with Garrick, say, whose Abel Drugger is known to us by the canvas of Zoffany; with Siddons, who not only as the 'Tragic Muse' reveals the characteristics of her power; or even with Mrs. Abington, whose performance as Miss Prue in *Love for Love* we seem to witness by dint of familiarity with Sir Joshua's picture—we are thrown back entirely, for our acquaintance with Mrs. Oldfield, upon the written records produced for our survey.

These are remarkably scanty. Of the life of the fascinating woman much remains in mystery. Of the achievements of the actress there is what is called, in stilted language, 'a consensus of opinion,' but singularly little of definite chronicle. Certain passages in the *Spectator* discuss the appropriateness of her delivery of a comic epilogue to a tragic play—for it was the fate of Mrs. Oldfield to act Tragedy sometimes, though she preferred, upon the whole, that the management should 'give such things to Porter'—and a few other contemporary allusions to her were printed in her day; but her day was before the era of very penetrating criticism, either profes-

sional or not professional: no Lamb, no Hazlitt, had the chance of making her a peg for whimsicality or pungent brilliance; and the appreciative amateur who, a generation before her, had, in the diary that the world cherishes, chronicled his sense of the delightfulness of Mrs. Knipp and of Nell Gwynne —'all unready, pretty, prettier than I thought'—was deprived by Fate of the occasion of waxing cordial over the personal grace of Mrs. Oldfield.

Accordingly, we receive from an industrious American a volume written 'round' Mrs. Oldfield, rather than actually about her. We cannot altogether blame him for it. We do blame him for once or twice slinking away, as it were, from the evidence of his own, perhaps unavoidable, ignorance, under cover of propriety and a regard for the conventionalities. Of this nature is his exceedingly slight treatment of the possible existence of a daughter of the actress; but he had already brought himself to chronicle some particulars of two sons—and this was perhaps as much as we could expect. Mrs. Oldfield was never married. Her time looked leniently upon such freedom as she took in love affairs; and the transference of her affection was neither frequent nor brutal. She was a woman of impulse and of sensibility and of magnetic charm. Men who 'dined

with Walpole' passed on without a trace of consciousness of inferiority in her companionship to the agreeable converse of Oldfield. She was as kind as she was pleasant. She relieved Savage, who rose to excellence in the verses penned by him on her demise. She was endowed with common sense, which is frequently possessed, though not invariably exercised, by people of genius. She was nice to the humblest, and she walked with Royalty on the slopes of Windsor. Brought up in a third-rate street in Westminster and in a tavern in St. James's Market, she died at her house in Grosvenor Street, in only middle age, and left a comfortable fortune to the two youths born of her connection with distinguished and superior men. Such, briefly, was the woman—mercurial, gay, and charming; bringing tears, bringing laughter, never bringing regret. Would that it were possible to write even as definitely as that of the actress and of the method of her art!

Mr. Robins, who has filled his pages with the stories of the plot of a few of her pieces and with extracts from two or three comedies in which she was presumably most brilliant, would have made his book perhaps not more generally engaging, but more instructive, had he printed from Mr. Joseph

Knight's scholarly record in the *Dictionary of National Biography* the immense list of her *rôles*. He does, of course, speak incidentally at least of the actress's range; but nothing convinces one of it quite so surely as the scanning of that record of her honourable labour. So far as one can tell, she must have been about at her best in *The Provoked Husband*; but, did she play Andromache or even Sophonisba, she got from each the maximum of its effect. Though poor originally, she was of gentle blood, and perhaps she played best, with her poetic realism, the parts of ladies of her day. Over a spell of twenty years, her art—like Ellen Terry's and Mrs. Kendal's in our own time—knew no decay. Like Aimée Desclée, she acted at the last in presence of great physical suffering. When she died the Town grieved 'sincerely'; and though, with curious English compromise, she was refused a monument, she was not forbidden to be buried in the great grey Abbey whose walls rise cliff-like over against the street in which she passed her childhood. It is a pity that her story has been told by Mr. Robins with so naïve an absence of anything approaching style. She was a theme for a writer. But the amiable book-maker and genuinely interested student of her craft and period who is responsible

for the various prolixity of this volume must be forgiven much because he has loved much. He tells us, it is true, by way of permissible yet not wholly praiseworthy padding, much more about her contemporaries in her palmy days, and in her days not palmy, than about herself. Mrs. Oldfield meanders, like a thin stream, through a meadow of Queen Anne and early Georgian gossip. We do not resent the gossip. If it is not authentic information, it is readable chatter. Would only that it were easier to disengage from the mass of it the delightful and enlivening and kindling personality of Mrs. Oldfield!

(*Literature*, 22nd October 1898.)

# SIDDONS AND RACHEL

TWO little books by Mrs. A. Kennard—contributions to the 'Eminent Women' series—give with much tact and grace of treatment all that the ordinary reader, if not quite all the special student, needs to know about the two great tragic actresses of England and of France. With regard to both, the special student may ask, perhaps, for more of theatrical criticism, for an analysis more elaborate of that which was accomplished in sight of the public, by the two famous artists. Yet, as regards Sarah Siddons—a tragedian removed from us now by the space of three generations—there may well have been difficulties. Rachel, of course, lived in a period of criticism more diffuse and systematic; Jules Janin filling, in her day, to some extent, the place since filled by Vitu and Sarcey; and, indeed, the published records of her performances, though scattered, are elaborate and abundant. Turning from the public achievement to the private character, little else

remains to be told of Mrs. Siddons; but of Rachel there might have been produced many a scandalous chronicle. Wrong from one point of view, Mrs. Kennard, in this matter, was certainly right from another. Of the 'Dichtung' and the 'Wahrheit,' which meet in the life of the artist, she has taken, in some respects, chiefly the 'Dichtung.' 'We have tried,' she says herself, in her preface, 'to extract the poetry and romance there is to be found in this life, rejecting what is base and unworthy.' Nor must it, after all, be supposed that in Rachel's life—outside her art—all was unworthy or base. Always she was a dutiful daughter; always a devoted mother; sometimes a generous, and once or twice a constant, friend. But her life was a fever. And, in her maddened demand for excitement, it ran its course rapidly.

How different all this matter was with Mrs. Siddons! Rachel was a Jewess, born in an inn in Switzerland, and bred in France; a Bohemian who, after twenty-four hours of enforced respectability at Windsor, '*avait besoin de s'encanailler*'—thirsted to be a cad again. Mrs. Siddons was an Englishwoman; even the Irish blood, not quite absent from her veins, was without influence on her personal life—we are far from saying it did not prompt her to be

an artist. And not only was she an Englishwoman; she was a Kemble besides, and rigid self-control was the very watchword of the Kembles, in art and life. We are told she had 'the gift of tears.' It may be. Certainly she roused in others pity and passion. But when one recognises this, one may remember, too, how the methods acceptable to one age may be ineffective in another. Mrs. Siddons's epoch was the epoch of the acceptability of Claude's and David's art. It was the age of firm contour in draughtsmanship, of composition in painting, of deportment in manners. In manhood, the age admired as ideal what Mr. Turveydrop, some time afterwards, only unwittingly burlesqued. The fire, and genius, and spontaneity of Rachel would speak to us to-day. Rachel gave to the most artificial of tragedy—to the tragedy which was 'so Greek' to its admirers, so full of Louis XIV. to ourselves—that truth which Desclée, after her, bestowed upon an incident in the Avenue du Roi de Rome—upon a passion of this morning. Should we be equally sensible to the favourite effects of Mrs. Siddons? Should we—who have passed not only through Romanticism, but into Naturalism, since her day—be impressed, genuinely or profoundly, by her Lady Macbeth, her Hermione?

As regards the outer life of the two women—Sir Joshua's 'Tragic Muse' and the Phèdre whom even Sarah Bernhardt, who has so much in common with her, has not been able to surpass—it was, as may be expected, essentially different. Mrs. Kennard owes something, but cannot owe very much, to the *Life* of Mrs. Siddons by Campbell, the inefficient friend of her later years, to whom she bequeathed her memoranda, letters, and diary. Boaden's *Life*, of which Crabb Robinson spoke as 'one of the most worthless books of biography in existence,' cannot have helped Mrs. Kennard much more; but she acknowledges handsomely her obligations to Mr. Percy Fitzgerald. About Rachel a whole literature has been written; yet much of it is hardly serviceable. At least one biography is avowedly hostile. Arsène Houssaye does not mean to be ill-natured, but will at all costs be amusing. Jules Janin—a man of words, so much more than of thoughts—is hopelessly fluent. He betrays the essential worthlessness of the mere ready writer.

On the whole, perhaps, it is the letters of Rachel that are the truest guide. Letters to her parents, to her sister, to her friends—if not to her lovers—to her master, Samson, on the conditions and the problems of her work—letters of gratitude, letters

of regret, letters making a small gift, though refusing a great loan—these things build up gradually, on a pretty sure foundation, the edifice of Rachel's character, as it is fitting that we should see it. Rachel's life was in the Present. After excitement, was to come, not rest, but *le néant.* She acted in bad health as in good, chiefly to satisfy one of the deepest needs of her nature, reckless what might follow. Mrs. Siddons, when youth and impulse had left her, dragged herself somewhat unwillingly from town to town, to repair the losses of her husband—the honest and somewhat incapable gentleman who sought a refuge for rheumatism at Bath—and she undertook yet another round of engagements in order that she might provide herself with a carriage on her retirement: 'a carriage, now become a necessity.'

As regards the society the two women cultivated and enjoyed, Mrs. Siddons liked the intellectual and 'the great world,' and visited it as its equal. But Rachel, in her loftiest social flights, was not so much an artist as a show. Exhibited to the mighty, and encouraged by them, and bound to behave herself in their presence—for the success of eccentricity had not then been established—she was really most at home with a few Bohemians, and with her kith and

kin who lived on her. Mrs. Siddons cared for the stage much more than did Fanny Kemble. She had for it a respect which was wanting, it would seem, even in Macready's feeling for it ; yet, in a measure, she acted to live, rather than lived to act. Rachel—with the capacity for unnamed odiousness, and supported in her private life by no fine example and no noble tradition—did yet, in the main, live for the practice of her art; though its practice can hardly have been furthered by her moral deterioration, and the chaos of her later days.

(*Academy*, 3rd September 1887.)

## JOSEPH JEFFERSON

JOSEPH JEFFERSON has been seen again—and with all the enthusiasm of many years ago—in *Rip Van Winkle.* The playbill which announces his appearance makes no mention of Washington Irving, but claims the play as 'written by Dion Boucicault.' It needs, however, no very profound student to detect in that tender and graceful fancy of the story, a quality not to be numbered among the useful talents of the versatile dramatist who can give us anything that lies between *London Assurance* and the *Shaughraun.* But I believe that, after all these years, the work of three hands is really to be found in the play; Mr. Jefferson himself having manipulated much of its action and business. He does not act the piece: he lives in it. And he is only to be compared with Got, in Balzac's *Mercadet.* Both performances are restrained and reserved, without the appearance of restraint and reserve. Both are quiet. There are no dramatic

outbursts, and no surprises. But in each case a character, a career—one might almost say a life itself—is put before the spectator. Greater things have undoubtedly been done upon the stage—greater things have been done on the stage of our day by Irving, and greater remain to be done by him—but nothing quite so complete has been seen: nothing giving one the sense of so easy and unlaboured a mastery. The pathos is very gentle: the humour has something of Charles Lamb in it. Jefferson has a face of the utmost good-humour; very kindly eyes, gentle ways, which win upon the children and the dumb things of his village of Falling Waters. For it is certainly his village, this Falling Waters; we cannot seriously separate the actor from the man. And he has a voice of admirable quality and compass: an enunciation of the utmost distinctness, with no perceptible mannerism, unless, indeed, the studied quietness be itself a mannerism. The voice is capable of what would be called an almost womanly tenderness, by those who have never observed that the tenderness of a man—as here to children—may be even a profounder thing.

In *Rip Van Winkle* he plays a winning character. We have all of us a weakness for the amiable ne'er-

do-well, who begins by ruining himself, and ends—much against his feeble inclination—by ruining his children and his friends. Our sympathy is wholly with him, and not with his irritated wife; and when he has drunk away his fortune, and all that he can of hers, we think that if he sits quietly under her reproaches, or makes but a gentle answer, he has atoned for everything. That is the magnetism of the lovable. And that is the kind of character that Mr. Jefferson embodies, in a manner so entirely natural that you are constantly forgetting that it is a performance. He has learned nothing by rote. He has an easy way of seeking for his words: a half-absorbed repetition of part of a phrase, as in our everyday, unchosen speech. He does not finish his sentence like an actor who has learned his lines and counted the delivery of them, and measured them to the end. The common actor winds up an address as Rossini and his school wind up a finale—'I have the honour to remain your humble and obedient servant,' Schumann said of them. But Mr. Jefferson's sentences die off sometimes, or are changed a little, by a slight thing happening in his presence, or by the swift occurrence of a fresh thought which you may read in his face. It is the perfection of naturalness—the perfection of seeming spontaneity.

And if his humour is as mild as Charles Lamb's, his pathos is as gentle as Hans Christian Andersen's. There is the delicate suggestion, for those who can seize it—the suggestion and nothing more. When Rip goes out from the home from which his wife has at last banished him—goes out pointing to the child, in answer to his wife's reproach that he has no part in this house: 'You say I have no part in this house' —the pathos is of a simple and suggested kind, comparable only to Hans Andersen's, in the *Story of a Mother.* And as there is nothing in Literature like the one, there is little on the Stage like the other.

(*Academy*, 6th November 1875.)

## ZOLA'S 'THÉRÈSE RAQUIN'

ON Saturday I went to *Thérèse Raquin* at the Royalty Theatre; and while I found the piece itself—as indeed I expected to find it—far less of a melodrama than certain of its critics had said, I discovered that the performance, though good and creditable, was not quite so noteworthy as it had been pronounced. The thing is worth seeing, though—would indeed in any case be worth seeing. It is but the second piece of M. Zola's which has found hospitality among us: nay, in a certain sense, it is the first, for *L'Assommoir* was hardly seen in its nakedness and truth, though it was seen with fulness of horror in Charles Reade's version *Drink*. The version of *Thérèse Raquin*—executed mainly, as I suppose, by Mr. De Mattos, but overlooked by Mr. George Moore—does not widely depart from the original. It is not a bad translation, though it might, with advantage, have been a little more colloquial. It suggests nowhere that it has been subjected to the process which I believe to be the

only satisfactory one, in translation, to a writer who is ambitious, as he ought to be, to write the English that we talk: the process of wholly discarding the original at a certain point—when the bare but real equivalent of that original has once been secured—of forgetting, from that moment, the existence of the original, and of setting oneself solely to say well and naturally what the translation, which is still beside one, says with awkwardness. The translation of *Thérèse Raquin* is good enough, it may be, for most people's requirements on the stage; but it is not good enough to be counted as literature. The thing—that is—has not become Mr. De Mattos's own: he has remained its somewhat mechanical interpreter.

*Thérèse Raquin* occupies a middle place in M. Zola's work. In point of date, it is early; but I mean 'a middle place' in that it displays neither the exaggerated and sterile realism of the uglier of the writer's books nor the abounding poetry of the finer of them. A problem in itself less interesting than the problem of the *Page d'Amour* is, in *Thérèse Raquin*, treated with hardly a trace of the poetic tragedy which gives the *Page d'Amour* so much of its value. *Thérèse Raquin* contains only one or two sentences—they are those in which the wicked little

*bourgeoise* expresses her desire to live for ever in the sunshine—which permit one to realise that its author is the author of the passionate idyl *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret.* But, on the other hand, in *Thérèse Raquin* we are not face to face with the superfluous and unveracious hideousness of *La Terre*; and the view of humanity is not so brutal and so gross as that which is taken in *Nana.* No; in these respects we may rank *Thérèse Raquin* rather with *L'Assommoir* itself: in both a sad and ugly and degraded world, but a glimpse of the skies. In both—as in everything, for the matter of that, that M. Zola writes—an austere moral: the assured march of evil-doing to its own punishment.

If *Thérèse Raquin* were simply the melodrama some of its opponents have pronounced it to be, the murder, which is the cause of the two lovers' remorse and collapse, would have been done, not in the interval between two acts—the first of which ends and the second of which begins with a quiet game of dominoes in a Parisian parlour—but in sight of the audience, with an abundance of water in the middle of the stage, and at the back a panorama of the Seine by Asnières or Meudon. As it is, with the material circumstances of the murder we are not for one moment invited to be concerned.

We are shown in one act the state of mind and feeling in which, to two people who were perhaps not born to be villains, such a solution as murder becomes possible; we are shown in another the state of mind and feeling which, in two such people, may presumably succeed to that deed of violence of which they have been guilty. The interest of these acts—different slightly from the interest of the later ones—is the interest of mental analysis; and, if these acts are melodrama, *The Ring and the Book* is a 'shocker.'

The intelligent, unprejudiced person who goes to see *Thérèse Raquin*, comes away with the knowledge that he has witnessed an exposition of several bitter truths—an exposition made by M. Zola with power and with singleness of aim, but here and there accompanied by a purposeless, or at the least an unsuccessful, diffuseness, which is one of the most characteristic and abiding defects of this important writer's method. This diffuseness, this fulness of detail which is not actually illustrative and explanatory, Balzac, who was Zola's master, had in a measure; but he had it far less than Zola. A profuse employment of the commonplace, in order that one may be 'natural'—this avoidance of selection and rejection, when selection and rejection are

of the very essence of Art—commends itself, as I understand, to a little school of criticism, or of dogmatism, which has now found voice among us; and that it does so is an entertaining evidence of the capacity of its professors for critical preachment.

(*Academy*, 24th October 1891.)

## 'MACBETH' AND IRVING

I QUESTION if *Macbeth* can ever, in the hands of *any* tragedian, make the same mark as *Hamlet*. *Hamlet*, as far as the opportunities for the display of the one actor are concerned, might almost have been written by an actor's playwright of our day, bent on securing prominence for the 'star.' Macbeth claims little of our sympathy. Most of us wonder more at his wife, and care more for Macduff. But it is a point in Henry Irving's art, as displayed in this play, that he brings into such high relief all that Macbeth had of noble, or of the remains of noble: reverence and awe; indignation at crimes that seemed to him baser, because they were done for pettier ends, than his own; admiration of courage in another, and of character more resolute than his; hesitation, having gone so far, to go yet further in the taking of innocent blood. Macbeth's attitude before the prayer of the grooms; his righteous satire —'your spirits shine through you'—on the hired

murderers; his invocation to his wife; his almost tender and pitying warning to Macduff—

> 'But get thee back: my soul is too much charged
> With blood of thine already'—

all these things show one or other of the qualities that are good in him. But other things, of course, showing the quite other qualities that have given *Macbeth* a name, are more conspicuous and abundant: at all events are more upon the surface; and the art is great that knows how to dwell on the sympathetic and worthy, and that in doing so does much to modify the popular conception.

It may be true, of course, that the main thought of Irving in *Macbeth* is to show the deterioration of character through one crime that brings another; but such deterioration is, after all, generally a gradual process, and there is time, while it is proceeding, to show something of the higher nature with which the character began. I think I note also, in Irving's Macbeth, an added emphasis, not only on his belief in the supernatural, but in the power of the supernatural over him. The prophecy of the weird voices is more than ever a destiny. His crimes are done under a spell. He is moved to them from without, by a something not himself, making for Evil.

And the hold that this force from without, this supernatural power, this sense of destiny, this something not himself, making for Evil, has upon him, divides Macbeth until the very end of the action of the play, from such as his own hired murderers. Not that these, indeed, are set before us, by Shakespeare, as quite voluntary cut-throats, rejoicing in their profession; but as men rendered desperate: the one

> 'Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
> Have so incensed, that I am reckless what
> I do to spite the world':

the other, less revengeful, yet more weary,

> 'So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,
> That I would set my life on any chance,
> To mend it or be rid on 't.

Of course no commonly intelligent actor could fail to indicate—for the play itself indicates it a hundred times—how much Macbeth is separated from these, originally; but it does need some such a deep understanding of the character as seems to be Irving's, to indicate, as time goes on, the gradual sinking to that level of theirs—the fact that the distance that divided the one from the others at the time that the one would ponder regretfully that he 'could not say "Amen"' when the grooms 'said "God bless us,"'

had shrunk to well-nigh nothing by the time when Macbeth's first greeting to an arriving messenger must needs, in his desperation, be no milder than—

> 'The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon'—

words which recall the purposeless and exaggerated angers of impending frenzy—and when his final and bloody resolution—

> 'Yet I will try the last,'

is spoken to his foe with a savage hopelessness akin to the murderers' own. And it is at least a suggestive and worthy, if not at every point a complete; stage performance that can display the half-repenting pathos of the first, and the savagery of the last, and the passages from crime to crime by which the transition is accomplished.

(*Academy*, 23rd December 1876.)

## 'THE DUCHESS OF MALFI'

THE Independent Theatre has pleased a few, and, it is to be feared, displeased many, by its production of Mr. Poel's version of *The Duchess of Malfi.* But it is the ill-advised whom on one account or another it has now vexed; it is the wisest whom it has at last done something to satisfy. I said 'at last.' That was ungrateful. For, once, at least, before, the Independent Theatre—eschewing mere eccentricity and the 'experimental' drama (a pretty word, very, for the dull or the unseemly)—once before was it occupied with work of genius and high literary art, or with work at all events by a writer whose genius, here and there, is not to be gainsaid. Did it not give us, for a change, what is at all events the lucid realism of M. Zola?

And now, after a *régime* more or less of the experimental and unnecessary, we have again a great man's work. The Independent Theatre has once more realised that to be revolutionary is not

to be sufficing. We have had a taste of Webster—Webster, it is true, with the lime-light turned on at the appropriate moment; Webster with a skirt-dance; Webster with a measure of scenic effect, dexterously shocking, or dexterously entertaining, as the case may be, to the modern taste. But still a classic—a giant in conception and writing—a strong tower in comparison with a puny earth-work. Excellently has Mr. Swinburne said of him, 'There is no poet morally nobler than Webster.' Fearlessly has Mr. Gosse asserted that *The Duchess of Malfi* is 'a masterpiece excelled only by *King Lear*.' And, if I take down my volumes of Lamb's *Specimens*, I find that, in a little footnote, Elia becomes most eloquent and most descriptive when he descants upon this play. 'To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear . . . this only a Webster can do.' And again, contrasting inferior writers with this potent if imperfect master, 'They know not how a soul is capable of being moved; their terrors want dignity; their affrightments are without decorum.'

But Webster, with all his qualities, had faults that were of his time, along indeed with faults, or deficiencies, that were his own. Among the latter

I would note some absence of clearness in exposition. The relation of character to character, the how and wherefore of the minor events — these things are not invariably made plain: Webster himself, perhaps, could hardly have passed creditably through a searching examination in them. And among the faults, or accidents, if you will, of his time, were — one need hardly say it, but that it affects his acceptability upon the modern stage—the permitted coarseness, the absence of reticence on matters we are not accustomed to amplify and define; and, in mechanical arrangement, the frequent shifting from scene to scene within the compass of a single act—a point in which no English dramatist, as far as my remembrance carries me, went wholly right, until the trick had been learned from the French masters of construction of our own time.

Mr. Poel, in a version reverent and tasteful by the absence of additions, has dealt with the deficiencies of Webster's epoch with judgment and tenderness. As far as it is possible to be so, the piece is now what on the playbill it is asserted to be — 're-arranged for the modern stage.' And if the modern stage should turn out, after these initial performances of the new version, not quite willing to have

it, that will be not so much on account of the irrepressible horrors—the modern stage has no deep-seated aversion to *them*—as on account of the limited measure of interest which that stage displays in the achievements of Writing, in the noble dealing with almost baffling themes, in the vigour and affluence of literary imagination and style. The similes of Webster—pregnant, and less far-fetched than much of the imagery of his contemporaries—are rather lost upon a public and upon players who account inflation to be poetry and familiarity to be wit. 'Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young,' is one among a hundred lines, for instance, in which a writer of stately simplicity—born writer, rather than playwright—requires to be heard by those to whom the suggestive is sufficient: requires, in a word, to be met half-way along his road. Then, again, though there are hints of lightness, there is no touch of actual comedy. And when the tortures so characteristic of the Italian temperament—a temperament never more inventive than when spurred on by the motive of cruelty—when these are tried upon the long-suffering Duchess—when crazy folk yell in an adjoining chamber, and a hand that seems to her dead and cold is proffered to her where she expected a live one—an audi-

ence without imagination, without historical knowledge, versed only in the commonplace and the cockney, titters, it may be, or becomes indifferent.

Much of Mr. Poel's best work went into the training of an intelligent company. His rehearsing ensured a certain smoothness and expressiveness of general movement. Mr. Bassett Roe bore himself with dignity and ease as the Cardinal, through whose influence—for such appears to be Mr. Poel's reading of the situation—the forces of the Church in its bad period, the terrors of the Inquisition, are brought to bear upon the ill-fated Duchess. Mr. Murray Carson, as Daniel de Bosola, filled a great part well. Miss Mary Rorke, with a dignified presence, a rich voice completely at her service, and an unusual sense of the simplicity of pathos, was, as the Duchess, an interesting and satisfactory figure. And Miss Hall Caine filled out to completeness, by her intelligence and sunny, sympathetic style, the small part of Cariola. Some people thought the 'Dance of Death,' as Mr. Arthur Dillon —a learned, helpful student of the time—had cleverly devised it, was too horrible: it had to me the fascination at once of the beautiful and the *macabre*. Horrors there were in the performance, and in the

piece, of necessity; but the Independent Theatre—sometimes too little in touch with the main-stream of English life and thought—may well permit itself to give a piece in which Literature is burdened with horrors. Has it not more than once indulged its supporters with things in which horrors are un-burdened with Literature?

(*Academy*, 29th October 1892.)

# REMBRANDT

It is a bold thing to say, but yet I think it is a true one,—and the saying is welcome to surprise the academic and conventional — that if the painted work of Rembrandt did not exist at all, and if his drawings were unknown, the three hundred etchings that he wrought during some forty years of labour would assert for him, amongst all capable judges, a claim to that place, precisely, which he is now admitted to occupy. It is not that in saying this I would underrate for a moment the skill of the pure colourist, the dexterity of the juggler who plays with subtle hue, the master of the material which is applied to prepared canvas ; but that if one asks oneself, ' What are the qualities, really, which in any Art lead us to assign to the practitioner of it his particular and permanent station ?' one finds shortly that one's answer has to be the following, or something like it : 'The qualities are an alert freshness and comprehensiveness of spirit, an individual vision of the world, and the knowledge how

best to wield the instrument by which that vision is expressed.'

In the case of a writer, language is the instrument, and Sterne's or Molière's perception and sensitiveness are made evident in words. In the case of a pictorial artist, paint may be the instrument, or water-colour, or the humble but expressive pencil —or the instrument may be that which was Rembrandt's more than any other's : it may be the needle of the etcher.

I hope that, in my enumeration of the qualities of intellect and craftsmanship that make for excellence in creative Literature and in pictorial Design, I have cut the ground from under the feet of those who advocate the work of craftsmen merely—those who consider that in *technique* lies the end as well as the beginning of success. Even to the most casual of the students of the Arts—to the most superficial observer of the means whereby the several performers may produce their effects, in story, drawing, print—it can scarcely be necessary to say that a command of *technique* must be demanded by the severe and accurate judge. But the genius of a man of the first order—a Goethe, Coleridge, Balzac, Rembrandt, Turner — is, as it seems to me, misunderstood altogether, if the flexi-

bility and freshness of spirit and the originality of vision are not remembered and praised when we praise too the excellent command of technical means. And in the case of Rembrandt, the character and charm of whose three hundred etchings are the theme of my discourse, the first thing to take account of is that we have to deal not only with a conjurer of the brush and a magician of the needle, but with a deep soul. An *âme d'élite*—that is the true phrase for it: a being not above human faults, but above average human excellence; a reveller in pageantry, who yet had a tender eye for the large lines of simple landscape; an artist who, with masculine perception of the import of material things, was alive, constantly and keenly, also to the concerns of the spirit; a judge of character, who understood and who dissected all that he portrayed; a man of feeling, who rendered to the full the pathos of age, of suffering, and of Death—who somehow rendered also, as in the wistful portrait of the Prince of Orange, the incommunicable pathos of Youth.

Over all Rembrandt's work, from the beginning to the end of it, as much on canvas as in drawing, as much in drawing as in etching, there reigns an absolute sincerity. It was himself that he expressed.

Warped by no prejudice, modified by no fashion, his art, during the generation and a half in which he did his joyful labour—in the midst of personal triumph, in the midst, too, of personal disaster—recorded his own unaffected perception of the outward world and his own profound vision of the souls and the experiences of men. To study his work, therefore, is, if we have the wit, to have the opportunity to glean from it that which it is open to us to glean always from the greatest Classics—the richer harvest of a familiarity not alone with technical achievement, but with the great, deep way of apprehending Life and the world.

From youth to age, with art delightful and supreme, Rembrandt expressed himself in Etching. One of his first prints—the subject known to many by Wilson's title of it, 'Head of a Woman lightly etched'—is the earliest of his known portraits of his mother; and that shows already mastery of character and mastery of line, as the lady, with the pardonable vanity of the handsome, the pardonable self-appreciation of one who was scarcely less a woman of the world because she was *bourgeoise* by station, smiles her sagacious, kindly, genial smile, and lives with Whistler's 'Portrait of his Mother,' with Holbein's 'Erasmus,' with Latour's pastels that

glow sober yet vivid on the walls of the Museum of Saint-Quentin. It is a sketch, and consummate. His very last print—so it is generally accepted—is that 'Woman with the Arrow' which, unless the place be given to the print often called '*Négresse couchée*,' is the most tolerable of his nudities. It is not faultless in draughtsmanship; or, if it is faultless in draughtsmanship, then how deficient was the model in perfection of form! But, in a fine impression—and in Etching, if the impression be not fine, the work does not exist—how alive is the figure! The flesh, how supple! The pose—the grace of the faulty. The light, how glowing, and the shade, how velvety! You forgive—it may be rather that you scarcely notice—the inexplicable mixture of realism with the classic. The side of a bed, the young thing sitting on it: Degas might have conceived the figure thus. But it is not pure realism, for she holds an arrow—suggests some light allegory, as much, save for her imperfections, as some nudity of Titian's or Tintoret's—just that touch of the Classic, that one remove from the actual, Rembrandt's tribute to an art inspired by higher thought, by fancy more elegant, than any that it was the privilege, generally, of the art of Amsterdam to show.

Between that early etching, the first of his mother's

portraits, and this final one, his last record of the body, to which he has imparted a slimmer charm than the charm that belonged unquestionably to Hendrickje Stoffels, the young and sympathetic companion of his later years—recorded, opulent and somewhat sensuous, in the great Edinburgh picture, —the range of Rembrandt, in about three hundred prints, is almost inconceivably great. Several of his plates, and these not really the least attractive, are, like the rare sheet of studies, with the portrait of Rembrandt himself (No. 82 in the catalogue of Mr. Middleton-Wake), so to put it, thumb-nail sketches as he passed upon his way and was struck and interested by this or that countenance, this or that gesture. Many deal with Sacred Subjects, and invariably with a directness, a homeliness, one might say almost, that is his alone. It would have been impossible so to have conceived the incidents of Bible Story if Rembrandt had not so profoundly believed in them. The conventional and perfunctory are altogether banished. And though, for reasons that the present place would not perhaps be quite the fittest for dwelling on, the Sacred Subjects of this great Dutch master do not attract or charm as the portraits and the landscapes do, there is yet in them a world of material for serious study: in them

invention and imagination enrich a treatment fortified already by closeness of observation. His mind is stored; his spirit is devout. In the 'Death of the Virgin' he takes advantage of tradition—gives us therefore not only St. Joseph moved at his loss, St. Luke with hand on wrist as feeling the pulse of the dying, but (as Mr. Middleton-Wake reminds us) a company of Apostles, brought miraculously, legend says, from distant missions; and, above, are angels and cherubim. A religious composition better known to the public, is the 'Christ healing the Sick,' or, as it is called often, 'The Hundred-Guilder Print.' It got that latter name because, during that portion of his life in which Rembrandt was popular, the then substantial sum of a hundred guilders was wont to be obtained for it, when, out of Rembrandt's studio, an impression of it was sold. Its intense reality and homely pathos—the qualities in it which have influenced, so greatly, later and now living etchers, like Legros and William Strang—gave it immediate value. And since those days a fine impression has always had its price, though it should be said here that the difference in money value, established more particularly in our own generation, between a fine impression of the most rare 'First State' of this plate and the less rare but

often as desirable 'Second,' is a fantastic difference, dependent only upon relative difficulty of acquisition. Thank goodness, even now a twenty-pound note will buy sometimes a most desirable Rembrandt etching. A couple of hundred guineas is required to buy a fine impression of the Second State of the 'Hundred Guilder'; and of a First State, could it come into the market, there is every reason for knowing that two thousand pounds would be about the ransom.

In various branches of his practice, Rembrandt's fame is about equally dependent on picture, drawing, and original print; but I take leave to ask the reader to impress upon his mind that in one branch, the branch of Landscape, that is not so at all. Lord Lansdowne's 'Mill,' a famous landscape at Cassel, and a few other landscapes scattered about collections private and public, could not, however undeniable their art and however complete their charm, secure for Rembrandt that exalted place amongst the makers of Landscape which the drawings give, and which is given yet more by the etchings. It may be asked, naturally enough, 'Why were Rembrandt's painted landscapes so few—his mastery being so great?' The answer is, that like our own Gainsborough's, a century later, they were painted,

most of them, for his own personal delight. The painted landscape of Rembrandt could not have been warmly appreciated by a generation that made difficult the life of Hobbema, and that extended welcome less to Wynants and De Koninck than to the Dutchmen who had become Italianised in theme and treatment. How, then, about the drawings and the etchings? Well, the truth is, with these it mattered little. The drawings were generally masterly brief studies. In the case of the etchings even, hours, not weeks, for the most part—a day and not a month—had been bestowed on the performance. For Rembrandt, with at least some other sources of income, it was enough to have had the delight of execution; and then, here and there a friend—the Burgomaster Six perhaps, or Uytenbogaert, the Receiver-General to the States of Holland—would want an impression or so. There was the little sketch 'Six's Bridge'—a decisive, plain-sailing, by no means particularly picturesque record of the wooden way whose name is associated with Rembrandt's lifelong friend. There is the 'Goldweigher's Field'—his estate, rather: the estate of Uytenbogaert, lying a few miles from Amsterdam; its pavilion and ornamental water, the surrounding lands, the modest, heathy uplands, the trees and

towers, a bird's-eye view, a very panorama of slightly undulating plain that stretches to the Zuyder Zee. Of Rembrandt's etched landscapes—which are rare generally—this is one of the rarer, one of the more important. Art like that does not captivate at just the first glance at it; but, with knowledge, comes a deep appreciation of the vision and the chronicle.

Two other landscapes I should wish to name as at least the equals of this one, and both of them, it may be, are easier to receive, easier for the little-trained eye to enjoy promptly. One is the 'Large Landscape with a Cottage and Dutch Hay-barn'; the other is the 'Landscape with a Ruined Tower.' The first is a record of sunshine; the second, of the more dramatic weather that threatens storm. The first is the more intricate. Little in keeping with the fashions of our moment, in the art of landscape, is it to present within the limits of a single composition a view so varied and so elaborately wrought. But Rembrandt, even more than Turner, could achieve without any loss of unity of impression the presentation or suggestion of every fact of the scene; and the piece remains 'modern,' though a Classic. The 'Landscape with a Ruined Tower'—broad, decisive, concentrated—is, in a sense, an anticipation of the method of Constable: the interest

lying less in formal elegance of line or placid light than in the strong realisation of the forces of Nature—a vivid broad illumination and an ominous shadow, and the expression of these exalting somehow the features of an everyday land, as emotion transfigures a face. The 'tower,' the close observer may inform me—thinking of the title—is not 'ruined'; for here is its domed roof. Yes, but the domed roof is in the First State only, and that is so rare that it is doubtful if it had ever been examined by the cataloguer who bestowed upon the etching the name by which it is still known.

Although the etched Landscape of Rembrandt, in its singular union of simplicity and learning, in the close, uncustomary alliance of Style with personal impression, stands well-nigh alone, and suffices as the basis of a reputation as great as Titian's, Claude's, or Poussin's — and one which now, with only slight and temporary declension, has endured for two hundred years—we have yet to give consideration to his triumph in that branch of Art with which, in the mind of the average educated person, he is more generally identified—I mean Portraiture: which means to some the taking of superficial likeness, and to some the revelation of character.

For this reason and that, every industrious and thoughtful, as well as every careless, student of pictorial Art, has his own favourites in Portraiture: there is our pride in Reynolds, our joy in Gainsborough, our wonder at the magic of Velasquez, our steady confidence in truth when Holbein is the draughtsman, our grave and brooding satisfaction over the august portraiture of the Venetians. But Rembrandt unites men's suffrages—carries with him even those who admire most warmly this painter's unswerving veracity and that one's fluent grace. And as one thinks what was the human material which furnished elements for the creations of Rembrandt—the old men and the women and the youths of Amsterdam—one thinks all the more, how exalted was the vision, and yet how firmly with his feet on earth stood the man to whom it was vouchsafed! Over and over again, the needle, as the brush, of Rembrandt, has been occupied with a face which had no beauty—at all events no formal beauty—that we should desire him. He has given it interest and dignity—dignity without a touch of the artificial or pretentious; the dignity of the individual soul in its best hours. He did this more or less at all times, but he did it more markedly in his later time than in his earlier; for, wonderful as was the com-

pleteness of Rembrandt's art within its self-set limits in even his earliest time, he had, in common with most of the greatest of creative and critical intellects, that gift of long development, of steady progression. Rembrandt was no juvenile prodigy. As time passed, as experience gathered, as misfortunes saddened—at all events in certain lonely hours—the spirit of a man of whom upon the whole indeed it may be said, he

> 'rose distinct
> Above slave-sorrows, to his chariot linked,'

Rembrandt's command of the instruments of his employment became only more complete, if also his method was more summary. More and more sonorous were the notes he uttered, and the *vox humana* stop, which is absent in colder craftsmen, sounded with increased frequency and more assured appeal.

Of course in Portraiture, though he succeeds always, he succeeds best when his themes are the best. With the exception of 'Clément de Jonghe,' with the exception of 'Lutma,' with the exception perhaps of 'Jan Six'—etched by him many years before he wrought the noble painted portrait which is owned still by a descendant of its sitter (Mr. Six van Hillegom of Amsterdam)—Rembrandt is

most profoundly interesting, most penetrating, most sympathetic, when it is this or that member of his own family who serves as his model. Once or twice at least he portrayed the features of his son; several times those of his mother, whom in the 'Mère de Rembrandt au voile noir' he records in an hour of austere and guarded meditation, as in the 'Head of a Woman lightly etched' he records her in the relaxation of social ease. Many times, in drawing, print, and picture, he portrayed his wife, Saskia—in moods that seemed to vary with his own: now perched upon his knee, in the Dresden canvas of almost aggressive buoyancy and self-satisfaction; now demure and pretty, in a Berlin drawing; now radiant and almost stately in the 'Great Jewish Bride,' so it is said—though I find least witness of her here—now the healthy, blameless animal of Mrs. Joseph's golden canvas; now the sick, worn woman, with vitality gone, eye dimmed, life surely ebbing, of the lovely and pathetic little etching which Sir Seymour Haden was, I think, the first to christen 'The Dying Saskia.'

But oftener than he depicted any member of his family—and oftener much than he thought fit to give expression to the cordial youthful face and ample contours of Hendrickje Stoffels, the agreeable

consolation of his age—he had recourse to his own countenance. In the great series of what the Germans call 'self-portraits' we may trace the changes in his air from spirited youth to burdened years. To-day he is comely, clean, and fit. To-morrow, after a night of revelry, it may be—for from few human experiences did Rembrandt, any more than Goethe, stand aside—he is haggard and 'to pieces.' Then he is proud in cap and feather; he buckles on his sword. Or, aged a little, he paints himself in loose gown, palette in hand, it may be, and mahl-stick at his side. Then, heavy and stooping, baggy below the eyes, with mouth tender yet saddened, trouble has come upon him from all the ends of the earth. He totters, scarcely yet irresolute, but weighed down certainly by years and sorrows; his wife long gone; his fame obscured; his means narrow; and, save for the sustaining power of his art, and one hopes, at least, for the consolation of one deep affection, anxiety in all his hours. We will not leave him like this—though like this we find him in Lord Iveagh's immortal picture, and in one or two representations of kindred character in Vienna and at St. Petersburg. We will leave him happy in his drawing. It is an etching of scarcely surpassable interest, existing in many 'States'—a print to be

avoided in the later, which are flat and expressionless; to be cherished in all the earlier, of which the first is rarest and most vigorous. See its slashing directness. With blow to left and blow to right, so to say it, on the copper, he hacks his way triumphantly and speedily to his goal. He is the master of all methods. Here, as in so much besides, he has been broad and rapid. In the 'Burgomaster Six'—which has something of the quality of a mezzotint—how tender and how slow! In the 'Clément de Jonghe'—the printseller of Amsterdam—how large yet subtle! He is the master of many an instrument. We can apply to him the phrase, and the implied eulogy, of Robert Browning—he 'blows through brass,' but he can 'breathe through silver.'

(*Pall Mall Magazine*, December 1898.)

# DUTCH SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DRAWINGS

THE drawings, the studies, of the Italian Schools, and of all Schools besides, have these sources of interest, always admitted—they reveal to us, as studies must, the personal thought of the master in his theme, and they may often be identified as preparations for some long recognised picture with whose history we are henceforth to be the better acquainted. But some among the drawings of the Dutch School, though coming late indeed in the procession of the world's Art, are still the earliest to possess for us that different and self-contained interest which belongs to work done for its proper sake, itself realising the intention with which it was begun, and so, in the first form in which it comes down to us, at once final and complete.

The School of Holland—that northern School to which at last, in the great Seventeenth Century, supremacy in Art had moved—was perhaps the first to adequately feel the value of those immediate

impressions which the Italians and the early Flemish had recognised chiefly to control, to alter, to enlarge. And in the many methods of their Art, the masters of Holland sought to perpetuate for the beholders of their work the impressions which to themselves who recorded them had perhaps been as fleeting as vivid. Sketches in oil, sketches in water-colour, sketches in chalk, in bistre, and with the reed pen, and sketches with the etching needle—these all, in the hands of the great Dutchmen, were not merely studies for themselves, but possessions for their public, just as expressive and interesting as work more prolonged and elaborate. Therefore the amount of finish which each of such finished sketches received was not the important matter: with the greatest artists the amount was often but small: they knew that the important matter was the sufficiency of finish—its capacity for conveying to one mind the impression received by another.

And it is characteristic of Dutch Art, and especially of Dutch Landscape Art, that it had no period of painful and tentative labour, like that during which the art of earlier schools had had to struggle slowly towards freedom of expression. Profiting no doubt by the experience of the Past, and the recent Past especially of Bruges and of Leyden, it gained almost

at once the power of finish always expressive, always economical, yet often very swift and summary. The work of its earliest masters—Roghman say, and Van Goyen—has neither pettiness of manipulation when it is most delicate, nor uncertainty when it is most rapid. The signs of an art mature and masculine—economy of means, decision of hand—are promptly upon it. Roghman, it appears, made few pictures, but many drawings. There are five-and-twenty in the Museum of Rotterdam alone. His drawings must have been acceptable to the public of his day, and they show that a public then existed capable of the intelligent interpretation of the work of an artist who left much to be interpreted. Van Goyen, if he did not make many drawings, painted many pictures with at least as marked an economy of means as he has used in the few drawings we know. His science of large design and the expressive completeness of his gradations of tone, enabled him—often in picture and drawing alike—to dispense with the easier attraction of various colour, so that even a modern master of colour, Théodore Rousseau, was wont to hold him up as a model to his own pupils.

Van Goyen travelled, and Roghman travelled, but their art, like that of Rembrandt—their younger and greater contemporary, who remained at home—con-

tinued to be not an imported art, but an art of the soil; and it was only at a later period that the experience of travel, and the contact with an art very different from their own, were to bring to the Dutchmen a new method with a false ideal. There was first the true Dutch time, rich and fertile—a time in which Van Goyen painted, with a seeming monotony always delicately varied, the long river banks, the low-lying towns, and the great high skies of Holland; in which Cuyp fixed interest on the common aspects of the afternoon fields, steaming in moist sunshine; in which Adrian van Ostade passed from the vulgarities of the alehouse to the skilfully rendered charm of the cottage door and the bench in the sunlight; in which Jan Steen perfected himself in as keen and comprehensive a knowledge of the world of men as Art has ever displayed; and in which Rembrandt contentedly imaged Dutch life and landscape, always with nearly equal vigour, nearly equal artistic precision, though at one time in a style that formed the style of Gerard Dow and at another in one that was inherited by Philip de Koningh or by Nicholas Maas.

There were various local centres for these various workers and their works. Leyden itself was a centre —the birthplace of Rembrandt, the birthplace of

Van Goyen. The Hague became a centre, and Van Goyen removed to it; Amsterdam a centre, and Rembrandt was a leader there. But Haarlem was the favourite, and probably because of the privileges that belonged to the Guild of St. Luke—St. Luke, the painters' patron saint—which was established in that town. The Guild of St. Luke at Haarlem has left us valuable records—not indeed the raciest, but certainly among the most trustworthy we can hope to have access to—upon Dutch Art, which has wanted always, and wants to-day, a trustworthy general historian. Laurens Van der Winne (as the Dutch writer, M. van der Willigen, tells us, in his *Artistes d'Harlem*), towards the end of the seventeenth century, made a list of one hundred and seventy-four men who in his time were all reputed as good painters, and whom he had personally known. His son, in 1702, after the father's death, noted that of these only sixteen were then living; and the grandson, possessing himself of manuscript books and account-books of the period, was able to enlarge the list of early members of the Guild, and to add to our knowledge of its laws. 'No one without the pale of the Society could sell or introduce his pictures. Many painters thus found themselves obliged to join the brotherhood in order to enjoy its advantages. Every

year two sales were announced by the officer of the Society; each member could bring to the sale whatever he desired to sell.' 'Many painters were attracted to the town,' for lesser or longer periods; but, though many painters contributed to the Guild, 'it appears,' writes the Haarlem citizen, 'that they did not all live here.' Notwithstanding the advantages of the Guild, the profession of painting was not lucrative for the many. Even the busiest and most prolific artists, like Wouvermans, were debtors sometimes to men who befriended them. Others were so indigent that they must needs be excused their payment of the yearly moneys to the brotherhood. In 1661, Frans Hals, the greatest of the Haarlem masters, found himself in this circumstance. Haarlem, since his death, has happily delighted to honour him.

The art of Holland, like the national life, saw many vicissitudes during that eventful Seventeenth Century; and the second half of the century brought changes of taste and fashion, which cast for a while into the shade even such supreme art as the art of Rembrandt. Leaders of social opinion were not proof against the attractions of the work of Both and Berghem, which sacrificed so much that it might gain, as it did gain, the outland charm of southern

colour and southern light; and the friend of Rembrandt, Jan Six, as one of many, showed himself in the later years of the century a convert to that newer and brilliant but bastard art. By the time that Cuyp and Wynants had died old and Adrian Van de Velde had died young—when the seventeenth century was entering its fourth quarter—there remained among the home-bred landscape painters hardly one to hold his own against the newer fashion. Hobbema, it is true, worked on, with great and patient fidelity, but he worked unregarded and died poor.

And in other branches of Art, after this time, the school declined. William Van de Velde and Backhuysen—the two great painters of the sea and the fleet—had had a worthy precursor in Renier Zeeman, but they had no worthy successors. The best painters of gentle life and of the life of the tavern were falling away. In the comparatively humble but yet delightful field of 'still life,' only, could the early years of the Eighteenth Century surpass the achievements of fifty years before. The admired painter of flowers, Jan Van Huysum—whose drawings are seen in large numbers at the British Museum, and whose work is known, perhaps, at its best and boldest in his drawings—then arose. He

was one of a whole family of flower and fruit painters; and not the only one who gave some excuse for the ecstasy of a French novelist who was also a connoisseur. Balzac declared of him that his work would hardly be paid for if it were covered with diamonds. But Michael, his kinsman, was perhaps almost as worthy of that praise. To their work succeeded, far on in the Eighteenth Century, the vulgar mimicry of Van Os, with the colours of the chromo-lithograph. And as to Landscape Art—that, free once more from Italian influence, was indeed natural and Dutch again in its aim, with Van Stry especially; but in its practice it insisted rather upon the importance of detail than upon the value of effect. Jacob Cats carried to its last length the trivial elaboration which had become the fashion of his day. The virtue had gone out of Dutch Art, and Dutch Art faded imperceptibly into modern painting.

It was one of the characteristics of the great men of the Renaissance, that they tried many arts and were masters of many. It was one of the characteristics of the Seventeenth Century Dutchmen, that they tried many branches of Art, and were masters of all that they tried. Supreme in technicalities of painting and in technicalities of etching, they

were the first to use with any large effect the medium of water-colour, and their use of that, in a manner not tentative and occasional, like Dürer's, but often familiar and accomplished as our own (of our great last generation), is shown by many drawings. Coloured sketches assigned to Rembrandt, doubtless on good foundation, are in the collections of the British Museum and of M. J. De Vos, a veteran collector at Amsterdam; and on our Burlington Club walls—not to speak of the wonderful pen drawings, so decisive at once and free—is a sketch of a city gate, from the collection of Seymour Haden, a sketch in which line counts for little, and the effect is sought and gained by tender gradations of tinting in monochrome. Probably of the same period are the two drawings in which Philip De Koningh, who in landscape came nearest to Rembrandt, has used his orange-browns with subtle variation, to portray his wonted effects of infinite distance.

Colour, or it may be a wash of sepia, used by Rembrandt and by De Koningh chiefly to suggest distance or tone, is used by Berghem more often to suggest the pleasantness and warmth of sunlight, which were so precious to him, and were the charm of his art. His artificial but agreeable landscape of

ordered valley and well-disposed mountain and happy peasant of the opera, is represented notably by one of the many splendid drawings belonging to Malcolm of Poltalloch—a delicately coloured design, airy and sunny almost as De Koningh's best paintings, and to be noticed, not only for the extreme rarity of such work in water-colour at that time and by that master, but also for its foretaste of the subtlety with which our own great art of water-colour learned, so many generations afterwards, to reach atmospheric effects.

But it was in the painting of interiors that the resources of the art of water-colour were used most fully by the Dutchmen, and they were used only most fully in the old age of Berghem, and after the death of Rembrandt, when Adrian van Ostade, himself now old, had come from Haarlem to Amsterdam, and they were used best by that master of ignoble conception and often repulsive work. The special virtues of Ostade—accomplished management of light and shade, and faultless composition of mean subjects—an instinct, that is, for the spacing out, the perfectly balanced filling, the never crowding, of his given area of paper or canvas—have long ago been acknowledged; and his sense of beauty in colour and beauty in grouping, and

beauty indeed sometimes in line, in inanimate things, has gone far to atone for that vulgar indifference to charm of figure and face, common indeed to many of the Dutchmen, but Ostade's to an exceptional degree. Drawings of Mr. Malcolm's and Mr. Cook's show him, once for all, the consummate practitioner of a branch of art, the precedence in which—the invention of which, almost—our own country has liked to claim. Rich and mellow, tender and luminous, beyond all that has thus far been acknowledged, was the best work of Ostade in his old age, in the English art of water-colour. Dusart followed him in elaboration of work, but not at all in felicitous adaptation of the means to the end.

There are naturally certain masters rightly famed for their work in oil painting, who are seen at a disadvantage in drawings, whether by pen or chalk or washes of colour. It is not all who gave to their smaller designs, with whatever purpose of immediate sale, completion so brilliant and expressive as that which we see, for instance, in a little red chalk drawing of Wouvermans—a group of figures, horses and dogs—a sharply finished work, exquisite in its possession of every quality for which the master may be praised. Again, some men dependent on

glow of colour or gradations of tone beyond the art of limited material, or at least beyond their command of it—Cuyp, for instance—might be judged hardly by drawings. The pleasantness of Cuyp is not in his drawings.

And then there are the great masters of one generation, who have not been great masters at all in another: their excellence, seen late, escaped the appreciation of their contemporaries or of their immediate successors. Fashions in art change, and Van der Helst, exalted by Sir Joshua above Rembrandt, drops later to his proper place. Each age, we may be sure, has something right in its criticism: the great Sir Joshua himself, who thought that 'Bruges afforded but scanty entertainment to a painter,'—Bruges, with its masterpieces of the sacred art of Memling—had the keenness to see the style and the beauty under the orgies of Jan Steen. But to this inevitable variation and inconstancy of taste is due, alas! much permanent loss—things that were treasures once being now not to be guarded, or things of no account until now, being treasures for to-day. And the loss is felt most surely in the case of drawings—so short a period of neglect being enough to destroy them. It may be that certain artists unrepresented in collections, or

represented inadequately, drew very little. All did not multiply studies with the fertility of William Van de Velde ; but all must have drawn, and the work of some is missing to us. The flying sheets of long unvalued artists, on which Hobbema pencilled the forms of many trees, with a patient precision which in modern art only Crome has equalled—on which Wynants drew his narrow path, wandering over the sandhills or by the side of the farm—on which Jan Steen caught the rare girl's prettiness and the last subtleties of vivacious gesture—on which De Hooch or Metsu drew tenderly faces of grave quietude, absorbed in daily and common occupation—these flying sheets, one fears, were dust and refuse two hundred years ago.

(*Introduction to Burlington Club Catalogue*, April 1878.)

# VELASQUEZ AT THE NEW GALLERY

A COLLECTION of Spanish Art at the New Gallery contains such representation as it has been possible to acquire of Murillo, Ribera, and Zurbaran — and even of the artists of our own century: Goya, Madrazo, Fortuny — but nothing that vies for a moment in attractiveness and vitality with the work of Velasquez. Unfortunately, it does not include two of the most important of those canvases of Velasquez which have a resting-place in England—Mr. Bankes's priceless 'document' (for it is that and something besides), the first study, we mean, at Kingston Lacy, for the great Madrid picture of 'Las Meninas,' and the yet more important, because the even more exceptional and more perfected picture, the astonishing 'Venus,' whose home for many years has been at a small country house upon the borders of two counties in the North. The sketch—the oil sketch, for Velasquez never made preparatory drawings—the

sketch of 'Las Meninas' would have recalled appropriately the composition, and conveyed something of the character of a mature masterpiece whose actual presence can never be looked for here; and the recumbent 'Venus' would have shown an almost austere artist winning for once an easy triumph in the treatment of a luxurious theme, more properly, or more habitually, Titian's. But, as it is, the representation of Velasquez, in Regent Street, affords ground for study. We could wish, for our own part, that decorative, even symmetrical, arrangement had been discarded, and that the master's works, as far as they are here, had been seen close together, with no distracting juxtaposition of paintings of a secondary rank. To have ranged the Velasquez canvases in order of date would have been at least to have facilitated reference and to have assisted observation.

Nothing, perhaps, is earlier, among the canvases of Velasquez now shown, than the large, somewhat straggling picture—with perfect composition yet to learn—of a 'Peasant Boy Feeding Fowls.' It comes from Ireland, and is lent by Lady Gregory. It does not, in every particular, want breadth of treatment: it is broader in treatment, indeed, than some things which may presumably have been painted not very

long after it. The vigour of perception, the realistic outlook upon life, the point of view, in fact, is hardly less characteristic than in work avowedly mature ; yet, to pass on from it to painting of the first Madrid, rather than of the Seville, period, is to move into the presence of a much greater accomplishment. Before taking another step, however, it may be well to glance at one picture like it in subject, and, it is scarcely too much to say, even richer in handling—a picture not Velasquez's at all, yet a link in the chain of his history, for it is the work of his first master, whose harsh temper drove the youth from his painting-room—Herrera el Viejo : it is a broad and finely treated representation of a bird upon the wing—'A Partridge.' This is one among the many interesting loans of Sir Clare Ford, whose opportunities of study have been exceptional, and whose devotion to Velasquez himself is indeed hereditary.

The Duke of Wellington is the owner of what seems to be the first picture by Velasquez of whose history there is authentic record. We saw it at the Royal Academy, one winter, in bygone years. It is called the 'Water-Carrier,' or 'El Corno, Aquador de Sevilla,' and it represents, with a force and luminousness already extraordinary, a man in tattered brown doublet, bearing in one hand the large

earthen jar, and, with the other, tendering a glass of water to a boy standing beside a table. It is recorded in the inventory of Buen Retiro, all but two hundred years ago. Since then its fortunes have been various. The picture figured amongst the *impedimenta* of Joseph Bonaparte in his flight from Madrid, but at the rout of Vittoria it was captured from his carriage, and Ferdinand VII. afterwards gave it to the Great Duke. Sir Charles Robinson contributes an illustration of the story of Jael and Sisera, painted, possibly, about 1623—a composition in which, it is said, there is to be discerned a portrait of the Conde Duque Olivarez (who at that period summoned Velasquez to Madrid), and a posthumous portrait of the Duke of Alva ; and it is suggested that there may be in this canvas an allegorical reference to the assassination of William the Silent. Two figures are in armour. At Madrid, we believe, there are three suits of armour of the Duke of Alva's—there are ten of Charles the Fifth's. A typical group of the earlier work of the master may be said almost to end with the presentment of the veteran 'Spanish Beggar,' belonging to Sir Francis Cook, and, as it would seem, somewhat unnecessarily questioned by such an industrious authority as Justi, who considers that it is the work

of a Fleming. Not even the most audacious of assailants has ventured to throw doubt upon the portrait of 'Quevedo'—a head and shoulders, black and deep brown-grey—the poet wearing conspicuously those thick and dark-rimmed glasses which, by reason of too assiduous study, he is reported never for a moment after middle life to have been able to dispense with.

With Mr. Huth's portrait of Philip the Fourth, a full-length, life-size figure, and with the portrait of Don Balthasar, the eldest son of a monarch who would appear to have spent an appreciable portion of his lifetime in the painting-room of Velasquez, the artist reaches the hill-top—a summit, fortunately, from which, even to the end of his days, he was not destined to descend. The 'Don Balthasar' is the possession of the Duke of Westminster. It shows the child in a costume enriched with gold and silver, mounted upon a prancing pony, in the courtyard of the palace; and finely painted as the face is, the picture, as a whole, illustrates the justice of Mr. R. M. Stevenson's contention that in the outdoor full-length portraits, in which *ensemble*, and atmosphere, realised background even, a sense of the presence of the actual world, must needs count for so much, there is not to be looked for that searching

and intimate treatment of the visage which Velasquez reserved in the main for works which were studies of the head alone.

And if the Duke of Westminster's 'Don Balthasar' (not to speak of the Queen's well-known and splendid representation of the boy) illustrates this — a subordination of the personal portrayal to the general effect—so the very perfection of the study of individuality is evidenced in one or two of the portraits of Philip's second wife, Mariana of Austria, and in that unsurpassable achievement, the Duke of Wellington's half-length, or head and shoulders, of Innocent the Tenth. It is probable that in more than one of the portraits of Mariana—those in which she is depicted at full-length—much of the painting of her raiment is due to the hand of some pupil of the master's. But by Velasquez wholly, as we should surmise, is Sir Francis Cook's bust of the little lady, and this is the earliest of her portraits here, and is succeeded by Mr. Cuthbert Quilter's three-quarters length, and by Sir Clare Ford's extraordinarily fresh and vigorous and thorough rendering of the girl in much the same manner. Greatest of all, perhaps, for colour, character, and—there is no other word for it—'modernness,' or actuality, is the 'Innocent the Tenth.'

It belongs to the Duke of Wellington. Seven years ago we paid it, at the Old Masters, our tribute of homage. It is one of several treatments of the same dignitary, wrought by Velasquez after that voyage to Italy in which the artist had Spinola for companion. But it is one of the most genuine and one of the most intact; and perhaps it is but by an error of phrase that it is described as a 'repetition' of the picture at the Hermitage. In it, at all events, the finest qualities of masculine portraiture are combined and displayed. It is said that the key to human expression is most of all at the corners of the mouth. Charged with the love of life, the love of its good things, and the love of domination, is this mouth of Innocent's. But is his eye less revealing?—wary, here, and shrewd; watchful, yet full of fire. What a study of character, and what a triumph of brush-work! A noble 'Philip the Fourth,' harmonious in silver and rose-red, from the Dulwich Gallery, sets forth, certainly not better than this does, the greatness of Velasquez' mission, nor has it quite as fully as this the pre-eminent decisiveness which is so much of his charm.

(*Standard*, 30th December 1895.)

# FRENCH EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PAINTING

THERE is plenty of variety in the Exhibition which the Academy proffers to the Londoner this winter; and that was desirable—we may almost say, necessary—for the Old Masters proper—such of them as are shown—have not nearly the attractiveness and importance that have been customary. This, under the circumstances, is scarcely to be wondered at, for while of the Venetian painting there is but the most doubtful or the scantiest trace, the great Dutch and Flemish Masters of the Seventeenth Century are altogether unrepresented. Rembrandt and Rubens, Hobbema and Snyders, De Hooch and Nicholas Maas, are as if they were not. The Second Room, in which they are wont to be gathered together, makes not a sign of them; and the Third or Great Gallery contains a not quite happy or well-balanced representation of the masters of the larger canvas, although we note already one

exceptional Claude, one faultless Vandyke, and one superb Velasquez. Even the First Room, which is exclusively English, is not so attractive as it has sometimes been; though here and there a late Turner or an early Cotman, a Hogarth 'conversation piece,' vivacious and sterling, or a William Dobson portrait, honest at least and capable, asserts unmistakably the hand of a master. Much of the interest is concentrated upon the newer occupants of the Second Room. Most of them are clever, but many hopelessly incompatible.

This Second Room is given over to the French of two periods. But what have the French of the Eighteenth Century in common with the French of the Nineteenth? They have not even a tradition—they have only a name. In England, as you pass from Richard Wilson to Turner, from Hogarth to the elder Leslie, from Reynolds and Romney, even to Etty and James Ward, the break of continuity is never complete; the elders were in a certain sense the ancestors of the younger men. But in France the incomparable grace of Watteau found no reflection of itself in the powerful brutality of Delacroix. Imagine Corot as the successor of Boucher — or Millet's vision of the peasantry succeeding to the suave dream of Prud'hon. Yet it is with these

juxtapositions of the essentially incompatible—with this momentary joining together of those whom Heaven (or, indeed, the peculiarity of their different genius) has put asunder—that we are face to face at Burlington House. Yet, even as it is, there may be a certain interest in the comparison; and if it is made fairly, the result will be an enhanced appreciation of those great masters of the Eighteenth Century, who were French in spirit as well as in name. Briefly and slightly we will speak of these, and these almost alone.

As the authorities of the National Gallery have never yet been so fortunate as to possess a Watteau, it is well for the nation that we have, at Dulwich, one beautiful and unexceptionable example of his art, and it is well too that that picture is now at Burlington House. This is the canvas known as a 'Ball under a Colonnade'—the scene an arcade overlooking a garden; a lady and gentleman dancing a minuet in the foreground, and, to right and to left of them, groups of gay, happy people, disposed with Watteau's naturalness and Watteau's consummate skill. The condition of the picture is faultless, but this—with the great master of Valenciennes—is scarcely rare. Watteau's method was not a method of experiment; his technique was as

sound as his spirit was vivacious. What is more remarkable—what would be remarkable anywhere—is the perfection of accomplished workmanship, the carrying out to the end, with all the vividness of a sketch, of a conception definite and elaborate from the beginning. The colouring comes as an inheritance from the Venetian—as Watteau's adaptation of the palette of the supreme decorators. There are many canvases by the master spirit of the French Eighteenth Century larger of touch than this one; there are few more happily intricate or truer to the graceful side of life, in a world finely imagined as well as finely seen.

Next to this admirable picture, which only the Louvre, or Edinburgh, or, it may be, Potsdam, can surpass, hangs a beautiful and interesting work, avowedly by the pupil with whom Watteau was once angered, but with whom in his declining days he was generously reconciled, calling him to him, and imparting to him, as a final gift, what he could of the secrets of his art. To Mr. Alfred de Rothschild belongs 'The Pleasure Barge,' a work in which the foreground figures are on a larger scale than in the Watteau, and in which the handling is neat and obviously careful, even while it is broad. If Pater himself had been the inventor of the *genre*,

or even, perhaps, if he had practised it in any fashion recognisably his own, this piece of delicate and painter-like work—which, as it is, no one with any true appreciation of the graceful can possibly dispraise—would have had a higher rank. As it is, we recognise the dexterous handiwork, the pupil's strangely complete reception of his master's spirit; but feel, at the same moment, that Pater is an echo rather than a voice—that his talent glowed only at the fire that Watteau lit.

Lord Rosebery is the possessor of a portrait of Robespierre, by Jean Baptiste Greuze. It is a direct, good portrait; very sound, and only perhaps a little flattering; the 'sea-greenness' of the revolutionary, having, it may be, been apparent but to the imagination of Carlyle. A second Greuze, highly and daintily finished, and so appropriately small in scale, is the 'À Vous' of Mr. Clementi Smith, an interior, with three friendly figures, and the glass genially passing. Thus, though in both cases Greuze is represented creditably, in neither is he represented by the kind of picture which in our own day is associated with his name—in neither is there the too seductive or too adroitly planned presentation of womanhood with its lines refined to the slenderness of the child, or the child with, too early upon her, and too con-

sciously and evidently, the contours of the woman. Fragonard's 'Letter,' belonging to Lady Wallace, is an engraved picture, small and of undoubted quality—the 'Lettre d'Amour,' it should be called, properly—that is indeed its name in the print—for the impulsiveness of the scribe, the earnestness of her glance, the fire of her action, are due to no urgency of everyday business, but to the ecstasy of love. Small as the thing is, in its touch and spirit we recognise the southern temperament of sunshine and storm, and remember that Provence was the land of Fragonard's birth, and that of its half-Italian landscape he has been till now one of the most sympathetic of depictors. From the same gallery—from Lady Wallace's—we might conceivably have had the loan of a more important Fragonard, 'L'Escarpolette.' To Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild belongs the life-size portrait of Madame de Pompadour, seen somewhat from below, lounging upon a sofa, and dressed in the colours whose particular combination Boucher so much affected—sky blue and rose. The picture has little restfulness, and not too much of character—the mistress rather than the dilettante, was it, perhaps, at the moment, the courtier's business to paint. It is in a high key, yet not precisely garish; a clever *tour de force*, agreeable, gay.

Two interesting, since somewhat unusual, examples of Prud'hon come from Hertford House; one of them, a little nude boy inadequately described as 'Le Zéphyr,' a work in which a master of tender sentiment, and graceful, even if somewhat monotonous, design, betrays some debt to Correggio; the other the singular allegory of 'The Triumph of Bonaparte'—Napoleon surrounded by female figures and by Cupids in a triumphal car—a picture in which Prud'hon shows something, indeed, of himself, and much of his obligation to the Greeks. It is a work more characteristic than the first, and less ambitious than the second; but it is in his simple designs most of all that we can discern best the real Prud'hon, with just a touch of a Classicism never austere, and a world of tenderness never actually effeminate.

In the 'Odalisque,' a sketch of an Oriental nudity, we see for once that which is rather surprising in work of Ingres's—a picture, that is, in which, at the stage now reached, the colour is better than the design, if it is not better than the draughtsmanship. The curved line of the right arm repeats, surely, only awkwardly the curve of the wide-hipped figure; and in the left arm, and in the modelling of some portions of the trunk, there is little indication of the 'correctness of form' which, to borrow Gautier's

phrase, was, at least with Ingres, 'virtue.' We are glad, of course, to see any canvas of Ingres's at Burlington House, because it is a sight vouchsafed but seldom, and again, because Ingres is a master in whose labours there is, alike in France and England, some right revival of interest. But it would have been well had it been possible to represent him, not semi-romantic and luxurious, limp in line, impoverished of colour, but rather, as in 'The Apotheosis of Homer,' august of conception, or, as in 'The Source,' refined and exquisite of form.

(*Standard*, 4th January 1896.)

# CHARDIN

JEAN BAPTISTE SIMÉON CHARDIN—a man of the *bourgeoisie*, as original as Hogarth—was born on the 2nd November 1699. It was in Paris, in the quarter of St. Sulpice, in the trading quarter where shopkeepers and skilled artisans wait on the wants of the neighbouring Faubourg St. Germain. He was of humble, decent parentage, as befitted the place; and he had for godmother, when he was christened, one Anne Bourgine, wife of Jacques Riche, who declared herself unable to sign her name in attestation of the event. Chardin's father was a cabinet-maker; a dexterous craftsman, with a speciality which, along with such honour as it afforded, he passed on to one of his sons. He made, as Chardin's best biographer has told us, 'ces billards monumentaux dont une planche de Bonnart nous a gardé le dessin,' and he made them for the King. But though he worked successfully and well, the burden of a family weighed on his fortunes, and his thought about his children was chiefly that they might find

means of support. Chardin was given little education, and he was to have followed his father's trade, but he showed, in his quite early youth, enough of promise as a painter for it to be held reasonable that he should enter M. Cazes' painting-room. Cazes was not at this time an unknown artist, but Chardin learned almost nothing from him. The inventor of a *genre*, Chardin must needs be his own best teacher. Time and his own individuality alone could allow him his sturdy facility of touch. Only in working for himself could he acquire the schemes of colour, the tones, the delicate justice of expression, for which we admire him to-day. And if he was already independent of a master in the selection of his method, still more his own was his choice of the world which he observed to record.

That world, of which Chardin has given us so veracious yet so poetic a chronicle, was indeed the world of his daily life. His art concerned itself with the familiar pursuits of the lower middle class, homely because it was bound to be frugal, but refined because it was French. The grosser manners which reflected accurately—as manner is wont to do—the duller thoughts of our English lower middle class of a hundred years since, would never have afforded to an artist who desired inspiration from

that class alone, such an opportunity as was offered to Chardin by the lower *bourgeoisie* of France. The ruder civilisation of the London of that period provoked from English art no such exquisite transcript. And had it come, it could hardly have been welcomed, for in the two countries the taste of the day was different—the one was finer than the other. A similarity in coarseness, in imaginative Literature—the unquestioned grossness of Rétif de la Bretonne, placed by the side of the grossness of Smollett—may seem to deny it. But pictorial art makes the contrast evident. In France it was possible not only for Chardin to exist, but for him to be valued.

In a life that was eighty years long—a life mainly calm, and filled with peaceful work—Chardin was of course able to accomplish much, and to labour with variety; but whatever may have been his great successes in other departments of Art than that of *genre* painting, it is by his mastery and originality in that that he may be expected most to interest us. It was to that that he chiefly devoted the middle years of his career. Other successes established his fame; other successes came happily to its support, long afterwards, when he was failing. We do not note, indeed, in Chardin, rapid transitions, sudden transformations—the one occupa-

tion was apt to overlap the other — but until we are to look into his course in great detail it may be accepted as roughly true that it was first still-life that engrossed him, then scenes of the domestic interior, and then, in the late days, portraiture. Of the two first, he was a painter in oil. For the third he employed pastel.

That, putting it briefly, was the course of his work. What was the course of his life apart from work?—the course, I mean, of that second life of the artist in painting or literature which is separate from his production, yet must affect it so much? How about the people who were nearest to him?—those whose society gave him his pleasure or withheld it? Chardin was twice married. While he was still engaged in the struggles of his youth, before his position was assured, he met a young girl, Marguerite Saintar, at some modest merry-making, where his parents had planned that he should find her. Whether or not he knew of their aims, his own wishes seemed to have been at one with theirs. He liked Marguerite Saintar, who liked him in return. The attachment appears indeed to have been so mutual that in their loves there was no place for the proverb of the 'one who kisses' and 'the other who holds out the cheek.'

In 1728, Chardin being twenty-nine, he was received into the Academy, and by 1731 he was permitted to marry the young woman to whom he was devoted. She was still but twenty-two, but in the few years that they had waited, their positions had a good deal changed. Chardin had won a reputation to which already a certain modest money value was attached, and the girl had lost her small fortune. The painter's father was now opposed to the marriage, but his objections were overcome. The couple were wedded for but four years. Their only child, a son, remained to Chardin, when his wife died, after a time of union troubled as to outward matters, and which, in the wife's declining health, it must have needed either satisfied love or a happy temperament to make even fairly bright. Chardin's was a temperament of calm —the shrewd smiling face, painted by himself when he was seventy years old, shows him yet elastic and vivacious.

At forty-five—it was nine years after the close of the first domestic episode—Chardin married a second time. Still in the parish of St. Sulpice, to which from his youth he had been constant, he wedded a youngish widow, Françoise Marguerite Pouget. Later, he was to paint, in her agreeable

features, a 'rêve de femme et la philosophie de ses quarante ans.' She bore him company during the rest of his life, from the days of his eminence to the days when fame forsook him. On the whole he was fortunate. He worked so slowly and deliberately that it would not have been easy for his painting to have made him rich, but he had no unsatisfied ambitions, and he enjoyed his art and his home and his assured friendships. No utterly disabling blow fell on him till he had entered upon his later years. Then his son died, who had been in a measure his pupil and follower. The remembrance of this, and his own gathering age, and the neglect of his art, affected him in the end, and he was a martyr to the disease which caused Bishop Butler, who himself suffered from it, to say that the keenest physical pleasure in life was the cessation of pain. In the last days dropsy followed upon stone. On the 6th of December 1779, Doyen wrote to a familiar friend of Chardin's, M. Desfriches —'Madame Chardin begs me to inform you of her situation, which is very pitiable.' The last sacrament had been given to the aged painter. 'M. Chardin a reçu le bon Dieu.' 'He is in a state of exhaustion which causes the greatest anxiety.' Later in the day he died.

The placid and agreeable cheerfulness of Chardin's temperament affords some key to the things which his art chose, and the things which it left aside. Contentment with the daily round, and with the common lot, alone could have allowed him to confine the subject of his work within the limits of a narrow experience. He painted what he saw, and he saw the *bourgeoisie*, nor was he anxious to extend the field of his vision. He is the artist of 'Le Bénédicité,' of 'La Mère Laborieuse,' of 'L'Économe,' of 'La Bonne Éducation'—that is, he is the painter of decent middle-class life, in its struggle with narrow means, and in its happiness, which is that of the family and of tranquil and ordered labour. Even the pursuits of his youth, when he painted still-life, and the pursuits of his age, when he was drawing portraits, accorded with that chronicle of the Parisian *bourgeoisie* which was the work of his mid-career; for the portraits were yet of everyday folk, and the still-life, the fruits, the china, the copper vessels, the silk-lined workboxes in whose familiar textures, colours, tones, his brushes revelled so adroitly, were the natural accessories and accompaniments of an existence led always within the limits of the home. Thus regarded—and this is the fair way of looking at his course—there is really no sudden change of

route to be discovered in his artistic progress. His was the record of the things he saw; but in his youth he did not feel himself strong enough to portray, in what he saw, that which was one day to interest him most—Humanity.

He began very humbly. It was in 1728, when he was but twenty-nine, that his picture of 'The Skate' attracted some notice; and other objects of still-life were grouped with it at the Exposition de la Jeunesse, in the Place Dauphine, when M. Largillière—not a bad judge, one would have thought—inspected his things, and, not knowing that they were Chardin's, protested that they must be the work of some very excellent Dutchman, and that Chardin would be wise if he copied them. Soon after that, as we have seen, he was accepted at the Academy, and from that time forward he exhibited at the Louvre. An exhibitor for forty years, he was for twenty years a hanger. That was a capacity in which he was sure to make enemies; but at least he was never blamed for bestowing unmerited prominence upon his own labours.

Chardin won, and he would have deserved to retain, a reputation by his still-life pictures alone, for the truth is, none of the older Dutchmen had conceived of common matter so nobly; and, sentiment apart, none had brought to its representation

a touch quite so large, a palette quite so rich. To Chardin belongs at once a reality without meanness, and an arrangement without pretension or artifice. The very gathering of his groups of household things has a significance; it is characteristic; it reveals in him that sense of human interest with which his forerunners were scarcely occupied, and which we, in these later days, have missed equally in men as different as Blaise Desgoffe and William Hunt. Into Chardin's pictures nothing is put thoughtlessly; and, possessed as he was of a perception uniquely keen to note the varied individuality of matter and its artistic interest, he yet had little of mere pride in his ability to paint so well the object and the substance of his choice. The simple materials gathered on his kitchen-slab have their place there of right, and tell the story of modest and frugal provision—from the little red jar of rough but highly glazed pottery, to the eggs and the saucepan. In one picture there will be exactly the material for the humblest meal, and the things that are required to prepare it—that and no more—a transcript from his own limited home in the early days, when he was an ill-rewarded painter and the husband of an ailing young woman whose fortune was gone. In another, and it is most likely of a later time, there are the

fruits for the dessert of the well-to-do, and with them is the silver and the gold, and the sugar-bowl of now famous Dresden.

But though Chardin does justice to a luxury of colour, as in the 'Goblet d'Argent,' and in the picture — both are in the Salle Lacaze — of the brown wooden jewel-box whose pale-blue soft silk lining catches so discreet and delicate a light, the charm of the very simple never escapes him. A tumbler of water and three tiny onions, and there is a subject for Chardin. And in all the still-life of his earlier and of his middle years there is an unfailing vigour of draughtsmanship, a quiet truth of chiaroscuro, an effect of unforced picturesqueness; and with easy decisiveness he executes intricate schemes of colour. His hues, above all, are blended and fused; the influence of colour upon the colour that is near it he is found to have studied to perfection. He is a master of the elaborate interchange of reflections between the silver cup and the glazed copper-hued pottery, on which its light chances to play. And now the reflected light is cold and clear, and now it is vague and warm. To see these things as Chardin saw them, is really to see them for the first time. He opens to us, in a measure that is entirely his own, the charm of the world of matter.

No engraving—hardly even the soft lights and the opulent shadows of mezzotint — could render the character of this still-life of Chardin's. No etching, short of Jacquemart's, could do justice to work in itself so subtle, yet apparently so bold. But the manly and refined line-engraving of the French engravers of the middle of the Eighteenth Century was happily able to translate, with singular excellence, the work of Chardin's middle age, a work in which the rendering of matter counted indeed for something, yet in which character, sentiment, story counted also for much.

It was in 1734, and still at the Place Dauphine, that Chardin showed that which seems to have been the first of his *genre* pictures—a picture of a woman sealing a letter. From that time onwards, to about the beginning of his last decade, the painter's work consisted chiefly of the record of the daily life of the civilised *bourgeoisie*, on whom Fortune never smiled too lavishly, but from whom she rarely turned with a quite empty hand. The value of the *bourgeois* virtues, of reticent affection, of subdued love, of calm persistency in uneventful and continually recurring labour, Chardin himself must have felt. Unlike too many of his Dutch brethren, he saw life, and dealt with it, where life was not gross.

His children have an unconscious innocence along with their reflectiveness; his boys are all ingenuous; his young women bring the delightfulness of grace to the diligent doing of household work in kitchen or parlour; and his seniors, in gaining experience, have not lost sweetness.

And with the interest of pleasantness you have in Chardin's case the assurance of the interest of truth. Hogarth was as true, but he was less pleasant; Morland was as pleasant, but he was less true. Hogarth painted an individual; Morland generalised or idealised the individual, and was contented with a type. Chardin's figures do not cease to be typical of the race, while they retain the delicate accuracy of personal studies, and betray an untiring reference not to a few models only, but to all the nature he lived amongst. Always without exaggeration, always with directness and a deep simplicity, the self-effacing art of Chardin accomplished its task, writing for us in picture after picture, or print after print, the history of the quietest of refined lives that the Eighteenth Century knew; arresting for us the delicate gesture, in itself so slight, yet so completely revealing; and tracing, on honest and sensitive faces, every expression that rises above broad comedy, or falls short of high passion.

Unaccustomed though it was to the sincere portrayal of homely things, Chardin's own generation became quickly appreciative of the finest phase of his art, and from 1738 to 1757 (as M. Emmanuel Bocher has so laboriously and carefully recorded in a volume which is the inevitable supplement to the De Goncourts' literary study) the best engravers of the time—Laurent Cars, Lépicié, Surugue, Le Bas, and others besides — were busy in the translation of Chardin's work. Such accomplished draughtsmen with the burin could not fail, of course, to express his obvious subject, and to retain in the black and white of their copperplates the sentiment of the canvas. But they did more than this—their flexible skill allowed them to retain often Chardin's manner and method; so that the very men who had rendered best, or as well as the best, the trembling light of Watteau and his immense and airy distance, with all its delicate gradations and infinite planes, are found to be the complete interpreters of Chardin's peculiar breadth and simplicity, and of that deliberate firmness which is opposed the most to Watteau's masterly indecision. The low prices at which the prints were issued made the prints saleable, and popularised Chardin's art among the educated middle class. Often but a couple of francs were

charged for an engraving worth, if it is in fine condition, three or four guineas to-day.

Contemporary criticism, and especially the criticism of Diderot, was favourable to Chardin, and may have assisted his fame. There were years in which 'the father of modern criticism,' occupied as much with intellectual charm and moral teaching as with technical perfection, fairly raved over the painter whose work was the eulogium of the *tiers état*. Lafont de St. Yonne, in 1746, places him very high in the ranks 'des peintres compositeurs et originaux.' In 1753, the Abbé le Blanc writes of him—'Il prend la nature sur le fait.' And a few years later it is Diderot who says: 'It is always nature and truth. M. Chardin is a man of mind. He understands the theory of his art.' Again, 'M. Chardin is not a painter of history, but he is a great man.' Then there dawns upon the critical mind some sense that the painter is repeating himself. From the old mint he reissues, with but slight modification, the old coins. Still-life apart, he can give us no new subjects; and the familiar ends by being undervalued, and the excellent is held cheaply. At last, from Diderot, in 1767, there comes the undisguised lamentation, 'M. Chardin s'en va!'

Fortunately, however, though popularity passed

from him, the old man was able to interest himself in a fresh department of work. He had painted a few portraits at an earlier time, but now his attention was attracted to portraiture in pastel—that was the medium in which an artist as masculine as himself, and as penetrating, had obtained an admitted triumph; and why should Chardin fail where Quentin Latour had brilliantly succeeded? Nor did he fail altogether. He was able to draw back upon himself, in the last years, a little of the old attention. And the pastel portraits, if they had the '*fragilité*,' had also the '*éclat*,' which a well-known verse attributes to the then fashionable method. And in subjects which were portraits only, the flesh tints were no longer, by any possibility, effaced by the stronger reality which somehow Chardin had been wont to bestow upon the accessories in his pictures.

Pleasant to him and well merited as must have been that slight return of appreciation which came to Chardin in his eighth decade, it is not by the labour of that time that we are now likely to class him. With the galvanised revival of a classical ideal, his name, after his death, fell into dishonour. Some of his worthiest pictures tumbled, neglected, about the quays of Paris. Only within the last

quarter of a century has there been evident the sign of an intention to do justice to his work; and for us his principal distinction is, as I have said already, that he is not only foremost, but was for years alone, in the perception of the dignity and beauty of humble matter, and of the charm which Art may discover in the daily incidents of the least eventful life.

(*The Art Journal*, 1885.)

## MOREAU

One of the prettiest chapters of the volume in which French artists of the Eighteenth Century have recorded with grace and freedom the lighter manners of their age, is that certainly which was written by Moreau le Jeune. He employed, with extreme diligence, half a life in writing it. Born in March 1741, he died in November 1814. The son of a Parisian wigmaker, of the parish of St. Sulpice—which was also Chardin's—he, with his brother, Moreau l'Aîné, a painter not greatly known, was drawn early into the circle of the producers of Art. He was a pupil of Louis de Lorrain, a now forgotten painter, whom he followed, at seventeen years old, to St. Petersburg. Coming back to Paris, he was in the workroom of Le Bas, the engraver, and there he learned the secret of the burin's expression. He engraved with delicate skill. It was but slowly, however, that in his own designs he showed himself an accomplished draughtsman; for though his daughter,

Madame Carle Vernet—who wrote an account of him—lets us understand that he was born drawing, there is much of his early work that is obviously laboured. Suddenly, the De Goncourts tell us—those critics who, with M. Maherault, the industrious collector, have studied him the best—suddenly his power of draughtsmanship declared itself—the individuality of his vision and method. It was in a drawing commissioned by Le Bas, who sought to engrave it, the 'Plaine des Sablons'—a review by Louis XV. In it he was revealed as the successful draughtsman of festivals, the historian of lively ceremonies. And such success was rewarded. For, with commendable promptitude, in 1770—the year after the drawing was executed—he was appointed 'Dessinateur des Menus-plaisirs,' and five years later, when Cochin retired, 'Dessinateur du Cabinet du Roi.' Thus, while still a young man, Moreau's position was assured, and he was left free to use much of his time in works on which it was possible to bestow a more exquisite grace than any which could be fitly employed upon labours in which official portraiture counted for much. Moreau was free to invent for himself, and free to illustrate the best literary inventions of a literary age. His career was before him, and the day not distant when he would produce

'L'Histoire des Mœurs' and the illustrations to the 'Nouvelle Héloïse.'

I have indicated now, by a brief line or two, the direction in which Moreau le Jeune must chiefly be studied, and the places in which he may be seen if men would see him at his prime. Perhaps it may be a matter of taste, and a matter of taste only, whether one prefers him in his more spontaneous or in his more official work. The draughtsman is the same in either labour, though the inspiration is different. For me his greatest achievement is 'L'Histoire des Mœurs,' or, in another phrase, 'Le Monument du Costume,' which must be spoken of in detail later on. For many, and above all, for the lovers of curiosities, the seekers in byways of history, his celebrity hangs chiefly on his performance of the various 'Sacres'; his records of the public functions, his 'Fêtes at Versailles for the Marriage of the Dauphin and of Marie Antoinette'; his 'Crowning of Voltaire'—at the Théâtre Français—in 1788; his 'Fêtes at the Hôtel de Ville,' on the birth of a new Dauphin to Louis XVI. Among these we may look perhaps principally at the 'Crowning of Voltaire,' for it has the virtues of them all. The drawing was engraved by Gaucher, who has preserved in the print the lively touch

of the original. But what, one asks, was the occasion of the ceremony, what the cause of the 'crowning'? At the Théâtre Français, Voltaire's *Irène* had been performed for sixteen nights. In those days of limited audiences that was a brilliant success. The bust of the poet is placed then in the middle of the stage, to be adorned and declaimed before. Madame Vestris—another, of course, than the Vestris known to Englishmen—reads aloud, and with emphasis, the lines of which the Marquis de Saint-Maur has hurriedly been delivered. Other performers, in more or less classic garb, cluster about her with garlands in their hands, ready to bestow them on the bust. In a box, high up on one side of the theatre, sits the demi-god, with two fair friends—one of whom is his niece, Madame Denis, and the other that Marquise de Villette to whom the print that represents the occasion is dedicated. The playhouse is full. The clapping of hands is lusty and enthusiastic. People rise in their boxes. Men stare upwards from the pit. Fine ladies crane their necks to catch a glimpse of the hero with the thin angular face, with its tell-tale lines of wit and mockery and observation.

Moreau must have seen the sight himself, and borne away the vivid recollection of it. Never was

*l'actualité*—the thing that passes, the thing that may be insignificant to-day, but is to be History to-morrow—never was *l'actualité* designed with a more fitting mixture of grace and precision. But in the more important work next to be spoken of, there was greater room for invention. Therein was Moreau, in the true sense, dramatist as well as draughtsman, for even if the outline of the subject was suggested to him by the speculator who undertook the publication, it was Moreau alone who gave veracity and character to the head and gesture of each person in the play.

The 'Suite d'Estampes pour servir à l'histoire des Mœurs et du Costume dans le Dix-huitième Siècle' began to be published in 1775 by Prault, of Paris, though it has been of late suggested that it was really conceived and undertaken by a German of the name of Eberts. The notion was to give a series of plates in which the most correct and fashionable manners, and the dress of the moment, and the furniture in vogue, should be together portrayed. The artist first pitched upon to recall them was, strangely enough, a foreigner. Freudeberg, a Bernese settled in Paris, a draughtsman of grace and charm undoubtedly, but of a closely bounded talent, had found favour with the public, and it was

he who was chosen to make—and he did make—the first dozen drawings. The best engravers of the day were forthwith to engrave them. But by the time the first series was finished—and two odd pieces, I believe, not generally taken account of as belonging to the set—Freudeberg became home-sick and resolved to depart, and the business of continuing the work, which in the view of its promoter was to be a practical guide to fashion, was assigned to Moreau. Moreau did the second series, and then the third. The second dealt with the fortunes of a lady; the third with those of a *grand seigneur*, who was likewise something of a *petit-maître*. And for each there was a text, bald, it may be, but in a measure appropriate. It was anonymous, and chiefly descriptive. A little later, in a new issue, it was sought to associate the work with popular literature, and Restif de la Bretonne—a free-spoken 'realist,' whom, after long neglect, it is now, not altogether without cause, the fashion to enjoy—was invited to write his commentary, and his commentary took the form of quite a new interpretation. 'Restif,' says M. Anatole de Montaiglon, 'au lieu de respecter le sentiment des trois suites, a isolé chaque motif et chaque planche.' Restif, that is, has invented for each plate some fresh little story.

In life, the mind associates with a given and chosen landscape the more magnetic and memorable of the figures that people it. These alone bestow on it the reality of its human interest, and the others may be ignored. And so, among the masses of description and criticism of the arts of design, the writings which we really associate with the works they endeavour to vivify are those generally which have a charm of their own—the charm of the literary touch. Restif de la Bretonne's stories, with all their faults, have just that charm. There is that in them which permits their author to take possession of the theme, so that the theme belongs no longer at all to whatever dullard chanced to be the first to treat it.

Two designs which I never see without wanting them are the most vivacious of Moreau's series. They are the 'Sortie de l'Opéra' and 'C'est un fils, Monsieur!' Others, even among the most admirable, are more limited in their aim. The 'Grande Toilette,' for instance, as its name implies, is occupied more particularly with raiment. It is a very summary of fashion. It is the great lord, or the consummate *petit-maître*, displayed to us when dressing is completed. The edifice, it seems, has just been crowned. 'Monseigneur,' vividly writes

Restif de la Bretonne, 'Monseigneur is dressed; for some minutes already he has been standing; his cordon bleu is assumed; they have just given him his purse, and he has his bouquet.' Yes, the edifice has been crowned: Monseigneur is ready; for—and the touch is untranslatable—they have *achevé de le chausser*. You see the neat shoes, the garter, the closely drawn stocking, the whole paraphernalia of the leg he was proud of. '*Achevé de le chausser*'—it is all in the phrase. And now he is free, no doubt, to enjoy the idleness of the morning, to do a service to a comedian, and, after an author has had audience of him, to accept the dedication of a book.

'La Petite Loge' is just as characteristic. What one sees is the inside of an opera-box, of which the tenants are a couple of bachelors of fashion. A dance is over, on the stage, and a girl who has taken part in it has been brought into the box, to be encouraged—to be touched under the chin. And here is an epitome of Restif's story. A Prince, struck with the beauty of a ragged little child in the street, determined that she should be educated—pensioned her and her mother. Soon, however, busied with the greatest business of his class and day—'occupied with intrigue,' the story-teller tells us—he forgot his

little protégée. She had her money regularly—all that she was promised—but he was too busy to think of her. Then, one night, at the Opera, smitten with the charm of a new dancer, he inquired who the dancer was, and ordered her to be brought to him. As soon as she was in the box, 'Il lui passa sous le menton une main un peu libre'; but then it was disclosed to him that she was the child he had been struck with. Coulon, the famous dancing-master, had by this time taught her to some purpose. As for her future, her mother—an ancestress, I take it, of Halévy's 'Madame Cardinal' —had already a register of one hundred and twenty pages, filled with the propositions of the Court and the town. 'Sa mère se reservait le droit de les comparer,'—for nothing, it seems, even by a Madame Cardinal, should be done in a hurry. Well, among the girl's many lovers there was one who was unselfish. What did he want but to marry her! The Prince—not minded now to be outdone in chivalry —generously urged that he should be accepted, and Isabelle was glad to consent. But the King ordered the lover's arrest, and the young people were separated. The girl lived prudently, in London and in Paris. She and her art were admired; but she died of a sudden illness. 'Her young lover was in

absolute despair, and the Prince, her protector, wept for her.'

In the 'Sortie de l'Opéra' we see the elegant and famous crowd that surged out of the theatre after a performance long looked forward to. 'Gluck's new Operas—it is essential to see them,' said a writer who knew what it was that a fashionable woman could not afford to neglect. The 'all Paris' of the day was there; and at the end, when the crowd was in the lobbies, and the *aboyeur* was calling the carriages, and the flower-girl was a messenger of intrigue—that was the moment that gave birth to plans for dainty suppers eaten away from home, the time when 'abbés without a family learned the secret of how they might belong to all.' What a bustle of flirtation! What a passing about of love-letters! The elegance of the scene must make amends, as best it can, for its light-hearted naughtiness.

'C'est un fils, Monsieur!' has no such forgiveness to ask of us. It is the blithest picture that we need to be shown of the home joys of the refined. A young husband, who is known already as 'le Président,' and who is a student and a fortunate collector of Art as well as a man of the world, rises from his study chair with outstretched hands and

radiant face, as the newly born baby is carried in to him in triumph, followed by a procession of household retainers, and preceded by the lively Miss Rozette, the President's foster-sister. Nothing is more expressive than the joyous pantomime of this privileged young woman, and the answering gestures of the newly made father; and delightful is the sentiment of the piece. In England, popular Art has sometimes made the joys of domesticity a little dull; but here the respectable is actually gay, and nothing but sunshine lies upon the path of duty.

Of the many writers whom Moreau avowedly illustrated, as distinguished from those who furnished a text for his designs, Rousseau was the one in whom he most believed, and for Rousseau much of his best work was executed. His designs for the *Nouvelle Héloïse* were among the last of the important drawings wrought by him before he made that journey into Italy which his daughter speaks of as having 'opened his eyes,' but which, to whatever it may have 'opened' them, certainly closed them to the aspects of that France it was his truest mission to portray. The types of Julie and Saint-Preux are types which Moreau understood — he understood their impulse and their sentiment; and

how many faults he would have forgiven them for their grace! To illustrate Rousseau was of course to have the opportunity—and in Moreau's case it was also to profit by it—of representing both a deeper and a more immediate sensitiveness than most of that which claimed interpretation in the sometimes callous figures of the 'Monument du Costume.' Moreau was grateful for so fortunate an occasion, and he thoroughly responded to it. His Julie is 'un type de Greuze honnête,' with her 'bouche entr'ouverte,' her 'regard profond,' her 'gorge couverte en fille modeste, et non pas en dévote,' her 'petite figure de blonde, mouvante et sensible.' Moreau read Rousseau again and again: he genuinely cared for him, and when Rousseau died, the death-scene was not suffered to pass unrecorded, and of the grave in the Ile des Peupliers, by Geneva, he made a little etching.

Presently, however, Moreau was to be led away from the very sentiment of the scenes he had understood the best. His individuality was lessened, his flexibility arrested by the journey to Italy, undertaken with Dumont, the architect, in 1786. And his association with David—'le peintre de Marat assassiné et le membre de la Convention'—operated to make more certain his style's divorce from all

the natural grace and flowing sentiment and homely unheroic dignity with which it had lived so fruitfully for more than twenty years. The illustrator of Rousseau was already less happy as the illustrator of Voltaire; and in 1791 Moreau was received into the Academy; the drawing which procured him the distinction being that of 'Tullie faisant passer son char sur le corps de son père.' Wille, the engraver, writes, in his published journal, how he went to the Academical Assembly when Moreau was received. 'There was an Academician to receive: it was Monsieur Moreau, draughtsman and engraver. He had begged me to be his sponsor, and I presented him to the Assembly with a great deal of pleasure.' But Moreau's entrance into the Academy was the signal for his exit from the regions of his native art. The bibliophile may seek with avidity for the editions of Renouard, which years afterwards Moreau illustrated. But his verve had deserted him; his talent was gone; his originality had yielded up the ghost. And somehow, too, in his last years, and in his old age, poverty overtook him. In February 1814, he wrote to M. Renouard that he was penniless—'Je n'ai pas le sou.' Friends he had, though; and one of the first acts of Louis XVIII. was to reappoint him to the old office—'draughtsman to the King.'

He held the place for but a short time; for on the 30th November, in the same year, Moreau died. With his later style both he and his daughter, and the group, too, by whom they were surrounded, were content—no one assailed it then or looked back regretfully to the earlier—but it is by the work of the first half of his career as an artist that Moreau finally takes rank as one of the most precise and flexible of draughtsmen, and as the closest possible observer of the gay, great world that he portrayed.

(*The Art Journal*, 1885.)

# GAINSBOROUGH AT THE GROSVENOR GALLERY

'If ever this nation should produce genius sufficient to acquire for us the honourable distinction of an English School, the name of Gainsborough will be transmitted to posterity, in the history of the art, among the very first of that rising name.' So wrote, in his Fourteenth Discourse, Sir Joshua Reynolds—a lover of pomp and ceremony even in the art of Literature—doing therein 'untimely justice' to the merits of his contemporary, whom he survived. Since then the English School, whose separate existence this accomplished admirer of the Roman and the Bolognese did but doubtfully and modestly look forward to, has become an accomplished fact, and all but a hundred years after his death, 'the talents of the late Mr. Gainsborough' are honoured at the Grosvenor Gallery. In the two large rooms and in the vestibule there are to-day exhibited about a couple of hundred pieces from his brush ; the great Sir

Joshua Exhibition of last winter is felt to be successfully rivalled; and an opportunity is given to the student to perceive the range, the flexibility, the spontaneity of Gainsborough's art.

Gainsborough, like any other distinct individuality in Art or Letters, is best understood when he is taken simply on his merits, without reference to other personalities who happened to be of his time. To institute a perpetual comparison between him and Sir Joshua is to make the sterile blunder that is made when Dickens is pitted against Thackeray, the epic of *Copperfield* against the satire of *Vanity Fair*. In each case it was only accident that brought the men into juxtaposition; and as regards Gainsborough, it is rather with Velasquez or Vandyke, or with some French Eighteenth Century Master of familiar grace, that we should compare him. These were his kindred, with these he had something in common, as the Romans, the Bolognese, and sometimes the Venetians, were the kindred of Sir Joshua. And yet, to a certain extent, comparison between Gainsborough and Sir Joshua is even now unavoidable. Living at the same period and in the same great town, painting the same people, and—save for the briefer apparition of Romney—dividing between them, though dividing unequally, the applause of

polite Society, that choice which the men of their time had to make of one of them, has still to a certain extent to be made by us. Often, of course, we are liberated from the necessity of any such narrow alternative; but when we look at the portraits, by the two artists, of Johnson, Garrick, Mrs. Siddons, the characteristics of each—what each lacked and what each brought to the accomplishment of his task—cannot but suggest themselves. And it will then be apparent that Reynolds painted with a more obvious learning, Gainsborough with a more spontaneous grace; Reynolds often with a more determined adherence to the particular character, Gainsborough with a keener enjoyment of the suggestions that character afforded for translating a sometimes uncouth nature into an exquisite art. Take, for instance, the two portraits of Mrs. Siddons: the learning and tradition of the Schools, the disposition towards a dignity that may be well-nigh pompous, are in Sir Joshua's 'Tragic Muse'; the spontaneous grace, the disposition towards simplicity are in the Mrs. Siddons of Gainsborough. Further, again, to compare the portraits of Dr. Johnson by Sir Joshua with that one by Gainsborough at the Grosvenor Gallery, is to see that here is an instance in which the fidelity—the unflattering fidelity—is on Reynolds'

side, and the idealisation on Gainsborough's. Yet it is hardly needful to declare of so great a man as Gainsborough that he never idealised merely that he might flatter. He idealised because his vision of the world was bound to be poetic. He was a poet above all things. The ideal was his atmosphere. But Sir Joshua, with all his accomplishments, lived with the prose of the world, and, as a rule, was but in vain ambitious to reach to its poetry.

The poetic character of Gainsborough's mind and work is, then, the first thing to be realised, if we are to understand his pictures. For otherwise we shall be offended at exaggerations and astonished at suppressions, both of which are the result of a method he adopted in obedience to his temperament, which combined, of course, a gentle and genuine love of Nature with a consuming thirst to see that Nature was never deprived of the assistance of Art. Gainsborough has been written of as the earliest Master of Naturalism—save, indeed, Hogarth—in the English School. Nor is the description untrue; in the sense that he sought his inspiration from Nature, instead of from academies, and that his landscape had more than a suggestion of Suffolk or of Somerset. Yet Morland carried Naturalism much further than Gainsborough, and Constable much further than

Morland. Gainsborough was never a mere copyist of Nature. From the first he composed and arranged, but his artifices were seldom very apparent, and his control over actual form—his artistic modification of it—was gentle and tempered, and this is most of all made evident by the display of his Landscape. With the permanent exhibition at the National Gallery and the annually recurring winter shows at Burlington House, no one of course has any need to be ignorant of the fact that one of the most fascinating of the painters of portraits was also a landscape painter. But the display at the Grosvenor Gallery will bring home to people a truth some may have overlooked, because at the Grosvenor Gallery Gainsborough's range in landscape work is seen to have been extensive. No single early painting there, indeed, can claim to be quite the equal of the 'Great Cornard' picture in Trafalgar Square, but the paintings are so many, and the subjects so varied, that the impression they produce must be great. In the East Room, the smaller room, are some of the most interesting of these landscapes. There—to begin with only a minor example—is the 'Landscape with Figures against a Tree': one of the very few dated pictures. It is of the year 1775, or just about the time that the painter left Bath for London. It

is interesting as seeming to belong to an earlier period, as carrying on to a time when most of his work had changed character, the features of his more youthful work. It is a bit of every day English scenery, accepted for what it is, with a tolerance of the commonplace rare with him, indeed in any day, but, as one would have thought, quite impossible to his later life. Here, too, is one of his few failures to attain what was really beautiful, 'A Landscape with Cows,' lent by the trustees of the Duke of Newcastle —an artificial scene of blue distance and of hot and 'unconvincing' foreground. 'A View in Shropshire' is in character not less classical, not less suggestive of Claude, but it is far more successful. The foreground is of wooded country, brown and gold; behind it, a richly illuminated champaign ends abruptly in a conical hill, which is the Wrekin beheld in the light of a selected hour. The Catalogue of the Exhibition—full of industriously compiled detail and of quaint anecdote, carefully burrowed for in half-forgotten places—might, perhaps, have chronicled the fact that the great picture we are speaking of is repeated, feature by feature, in another. But this other happens to be hung so high that its merits we can hardly estimate. Its pedigree, however, is unimpeachable. The little 'Landscape with Horses

Ploughing' recalls, in the disposition of its objects, Turner's 'Windmill and Lock,' and Turner, who was never above taking suggestions — who took them from every one—may possibly have seen it. Lord Bateman's 'Boys and Fighting Dogs,' though by no means among the most attractive things, is at least memorable. It shares with several other pictures the business of proving that as a draughtsman of animals—certainly as a draughtsman of dogs—Gainsborough had few rivals; and it is one of the rare instances of Gainsborough's painting what is properly called a subject picture—a picture in which the portrayal of an incident has been the first care. Furthermore, the boys here—like that uncouth child, 'Jack Hill, in a Cottage'—are, at all events, perfectly natural examples of everyday folk. Generally his cottage urchins, though they have rustic grace and rustic wildness, though they roll on the greensward and dabble in the brook, are not profound studies of a real peasantry; and, though Leslie indeed said of the 'Girl with a Pitcher' that nothing more beautiful had ever been painted, we may remember that this lavish appreciation by a brother artist who was invariably generous was bestowed at a time when the graver aspects of the peasant's life had, as far as pictorial art is concerned, been mirrored

only in the art of Turner. The student of to-day, the student of Millet, can hardly single out for truthfulness, though he can always single out for grace, the rustics of Gainsborough. Into the realities of peasant life, Gainsborough scarcely even essayed to have any deep entrance.

The large 'View at the Mouth of the Thames' is one of the most realistic, one of the least poetic, of Gainsborough's pictures. It is an instance of how well this curiously flexible genius could at need perform that which somebody else could still perform much better. And if it had not to be remembered that Collins and Turner came after Gainsborough, instead of before him, we should say the same about the Duke of Westminster's 'Coast Scene.' Here a sea that has only enough of movement to give it vivacity and sparkle, runs up to a narrow breadth of beach, behind which a cliff rises. Three figures are on the beach—a group of country or of fisher folk; a man kneeling by a basket hands up a fish, to be inspected by two girls, who bend towards him. The inspiration of an ancient master and some concession to ancient traditions are discernible in the umber and golden shores of another piece. It is in the 'River Scene with Cattle' that Gainsborough is more characteristic; it is there that he delights us in full

measure with that which is his own. The scene is at a ferry somewhere in the Eastern Counties, where the stream is wide, the land large and flat, the sky ample, the horizon infinite. At the edge of a miniature cliff, stands a group of cattle. Below them are figures in shadow, and from the water, to the right, rise high into the sky the tall and narrow sails of two fishing-smacks drawn up together. Here the scene is an everyday place, but Gainsborough has known how to choose the hour; his selection of objects has been justified by a fortunate grouping; he has secured a rhythm of line second only to that which lies at the service of a subtle draughtsman of the figure or a great Ornamentist; and the hues of silvery blue and golden grey with which his picture is flooded, are those that gather only on the palette of a born colourist. When this picture has been adequately seen, and its calm radiance appreciated, the student has little need to go further to find what Gainsborough was as a poetical recorder of earth and sky, and what as a pure painter. But for variety's sake, and for the sake of noting how much Gainsborough saw for himself, and how much he was influenced, too, by the ways in which predecessors as different from each other as Hobbema and Cuyp had seen the world and presented it, it is well to

look carefully at some of the smaller landscapes in the other and larger room. There are, perhaps, especially the 'Small Landscape,' with luminous white clouds, remote in a lofty sky; the 'Forest Scene,' and the unfinished sketch, in which Gainsborough has given to a little group of gypsies and their beasts a greater dignity than a Fleming could have bestowed on a Flight into Egypt. There are, of course, larger works not claiming less attention; and one and all, by their deficiencies as well as by their merits, show that the greatness or the general attractiveness of Gainsborough as a landscape painter is due not much to his naturalism—which was naturalism only in his own day, and is seen to have been almost idealism in ours. His greatness as a landscape painter consists much more in his continual endowment of Nature with the grace and magic of Style.

In Portraiture, the only failing that can be laid to Gainsborough's charge—and it may at times be a serious one—is that he was apt to be less impressed by individuality of character than by the occasion which his subject presented for the painter's triumph in brush-work. Facile observer as he was, and wonderful draughtsman, it was not often that he

braced himself to such an effort of stern realism as was made in the portrait of 'Judge Skinner.' This light of the law, sitting robed—with the keen, sagacious face perfectly dominant over all the splendour of attire—was painted (on the canvas of which we are now speaking) for Christ Church, Oxford, of which in 1742 he had been a student; but the Grosvenor Gallery contains another, though a less admirable, presentment of the same person. This, though inferior, comes likewise from an unimpeachable quarter—it is lent by the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn. Of portraits of William Pitt, there are several by Gainsborough; but his best representation of all, of the young man who governed England, is that which comes, like the second portrait of Skinner, from Lincoln's Inn. The natural charm of the model here accorded with that which was the frequent preoccupation of Gainsborough's art, and sincere must have been the painter's pleasure in dealing with a face which—like the face of Dickens in his youth, two generations later—expressed sweetness with firmness, and placidity with boundlessness of resource. The portrait of 'David Garrick' is less satisfactory as an effort of craftsmanship. The shrewd little lady who succeeded the great and genial Peg

Woffington in Garrick's love, declared that it was the 'best portrait ever painted of her Davy,' so we will not attempt to dispute the excellence of the likeness; but the thought that inspired the composition was comparatively trivial and commonplace. In a park-like scene, the background somewhat suggestive of Garrick's favourite retreat at Hampton, the actor whose attentions were wont to be divided between the Tragic and the Comic Muse—as Sir Joshua has expressed so suggestively in his happy allegory—stands by a pedestal on which is placed the bust of Shakespeare, and Garrick has his arm round the bust, and almost familiarly caresses it. More valuable would have been a picture in which the head of the actor had been more dominant than the *dégagé* gesture. The head of Garrick, however, if the story goes truly, was always a puzzle to Gainsborough. Of Garrick and of Foote—mobile comedians, baffling beyond all men—he is said to have exclaimed, when he essayed to paint them, 'Rot them for a couple of rogues, they have everybody's faces but their own.'

Generally, it may be noted, the full-lengths of men—sometimes, also, the full-lengths of women—are less attractive than the half-lengths and the busts, though whatever could be done by any artist

to overcome the difficulty of making the full-length interesting, could be done by Gainsborough, since he was a master of draperies, and skilled, as a pupil of Gravelot's should have been, in the secrets of dignified and gracious carriage. But, to remain for the moment with the men's portraits, one's admiration of the elegance and harmony of Tenducci's portrait must be in excess of any feeling that can rightly be prompted by the 'Garrick.' This, again, is the portrait of an artist—Gainsborough's sympathies were with artists—and Tenducci is said to have 'warbled so divinely.' And then, to take an instance from the women's portraits, and to single out a full-length figure, in which the face is modelled with exceptional exactness, and is one, too, of peculiar refinement, take the portrait of Lady Sheffield, with her aquiline nose and her almond-shaped eyes—even here the importance of the countenance is a little effaced by the brilliant light on the showy drapery of the skirt. No one could assert that, for real charm, that picture—masterly as it is in its own kind—is equal to any one of half a dozen busts or half-lengths in the same Gallery. But, on the other hand, the 'Sir Bate Dudley,' 'skilled in the nice conduct of a clouded cane,' is an instance of Gainsborough's occasional triumph, even with the full-length male

figure; and the 'Mrs. Graham,' at Edinburgh, is one of the most fascinating full-length portraits of a woman that has been painted since the days of the Venetians. Furthermore, three more quite masterly full-length male portraits are in the Grosvenor Gallery itself: they are first, those that are lent by the Queen, the portrait of Colonel St. Leger, the portrait of 'Fischer' the musician, and last, the familiar 'Blue Boy,' a work directed possibly at the theories of Sir Joshua and inspired by the practice of Van Dyck.

As one looks over the subjects of Gainsborough's portraits, one understands in part how it was that, comparing them with Sir Joshua's, or perhaps even with Romney's, so few of them were engraved. Romney was, above all things, seductive: he saw Lady Hamilton—or when not Lady Hamilton, then some one who was almost equally pretty—in everything, and the public liked what he saw. Sir Joshua was a courtier, careful to be on the best of terms with the great world. Gainsborough courted nobody, and the world talked much less about him. Though, after the lapse of years, he succeeded in getting a hundred guineas for a full-length picture, and moved, without imprudence, from the cottage at Ipswich, rented at six pounds, first to the Circus

at Bath, and then to the west wing of Schomberg House, Pall Mall, he was never really in his own time Sir Joshua's rival in the public favour. And much of his best work in Portraiture—over and above that work in landscape which confessedly engaged his choice—was devoted to the record of people of the artistic rather than the fashionable world; people of professions the members of which were not in those days motioned to the velvet of the social sward.

We have already spoken of more than one instance —and 'Giardini,' the fiddler, is another—of such a natural selection which governs Gainsborough's art. It is as characteristic of him in portraiture as it is of Watteau in *genre* pieces and gallant pastorals. But there is a little canvas, the portrait of an unknown Mrs. Carr, which holds its own either against portraits of people from the artistic world or people from Georgian 'Society.' It is curiously natural and refined in expression, exquisitely suggestive of elegant carriage, though so small a portion of the figure is seen, and as a piece of flesh-painting, it is unsurpassed by any of the more famous examples of Gainsborough's skill. Who was 'Mrs. Carr'? And had Gainsborough, we may wonder, some further interest in her than that which is aroused in

any qualified observer of Humanity by the vision of such agreeable beauty? For Gainsborough, as a rule, painted best the models he knew the most. Executing every touch with his own hand, and doing his most picturesque with every model because he was so essentially artistic, he yet must have undertaken many a portrait of fashionable persons or of enriched *bourgeois*, into the dull recesses of whose character he did not care to penetrate. Where he knew and liked, he painted with delight. He was so profoundly impressionable: what he enjoyed stirred him: if somebody played the fiddle particularly well, tears of rapture stood on Gainsborough's cheek.

His wife, who was in her youth a rose and brown coloured beauty, and whose countenance was long afterwards lustrous enough under the becoming grey of her powdered hair, Gainsborough painted several times, and always with distinction and conspicuous artistry. His handling of the subject is best in the portrait numbered 175—a worthy companion to his own sensitive and high-bred countenance (No. 185). And his portraits of his daughters—his only children—are at the least satisfying. One is a group—the two together; another is a half-length of Mrs. Fischer; another, again, a half-length of the brighter personality who remained 'Miss Gainsborough.'

There is some likeness between the two young women, in the general contour of the head and in the fulness of the under-lip. 'Miss Gainsborough,' with her clear brown eyes, delicate eyebrows, compact and intelligent forehead, is the greater beauty; but to Mrs. Fischer there belongs a winning expression of pathetic reverie. Both are felt to be the true daughters of their father: the one by her possession of the gaiety and fire of temper which characterised Gainsborough in his happiest times; the other by her obvious inheritance of what proved more than her share of Gainsborough's keen perception of the sadness of so much of human fortune. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was almost wholly intellectual and 'practical,' who lived on the outside of things, had nothing of Gainsborough's sense of profundity and pathos. And, in so far as he had nothing of this, he was, in the essentials of character, the less of an artist. For Goethe said—and when he said it he was uttering one of the deepest of his truths—'To be artistic is to be serious.'

(*The Standard*, 1st and 6th January 1885.)

# COTMAN

IT remained for the Norwich Art Circle to hold, for the first time, an exhibition of the drawings of an artist who was nothing less than a great master in water-colour, but whose place in the ranks of Art was for many a year, by the general public, not so much contested as ignored. Cotman was born a few years after Turner. Possessed of a sensibility as keen, but of less tremendous vitality, he died a few years before him. Turner was amongst Cotman's friends; not a 'chum,' perhaps, but an advocate, strenuous and judicious—and strenuous and judicious advocacy may claim to be called friendship. Had it not been for Turner, it is unlikely that the less-known artist would have received that post at King's College which afforded him comfort, though not affluence, in the last years of his life. Like Dewint, Cotman taught drawing. But in London his connection was less influential than that of Dewint, whose usual fee of a guinea an hour was no doubt never reached by the

draughtsman from Norwich. The appointment of drawing-master at King's College was therefore very serviceable: the more so that Cotman's original work, though it was produced with the enthusiasm and the untiring enjoyment, and the sweat of the brow besides, which in any art are the real artist's equivalents or substitutes for mechanical diligence —Cotman's original work, I say (like a little of Mozart's best music), was produced 'for himself and two friends.' Even the connoisseur, as a rule, held back. The public? But can you for an instant expect the public to understand work which, frankly, makes no bid for its sympathies, which is never furnished 'according to sample,' which is bound to be itself and wholly fresh, and is content to be excellent? An intelligent criticism might perhaps have drummed into the big public, not the real sense, but at all events some tacit acceptance, of Cotman's peculiar merit. But where was the intelligent criticism of 1820 and 1830? There was little critical writing then—at all events in the papers—that was either an influence or an art.

John Sell Cotman was born at Norwich on the 16th of May 1782. His father was a well-to-do haberdasher, established at that time in Cockey Lane, but afterwards, when able to retire from

business, living in a villa at Thorpe, with a garden that looked on the river. Cotman himself drew the garden—and idealised it—in the last year of his life. His father survived him; dying very old—at eighty-four. Cotman died at sixty.

Whatever troubles there had been on the subject of Cotman's trade or profession, they were got over by the simple process of his going his own way, and of his father's forgiving him. The boy was educated at the grammar school, and at sixteen years old, after much discussion about his future—after the interposition of Opie, with the not very measured remark that the boy 'had far better black shoes than be an artist'—young Cotman chose the less desirable of these unhappy alternatives, and, that he might be an artist, journeyed to London. A young man at that period, and especially a young man who was wishing to be a landscape painter, had little opportunity of artistic training, unless indeed it might be that best kind of training which consists in familiarity with people of mind, and with the works of art that bygone genius has produced, and with those natural scenes which, like the voice or the face of your friend, stimulate and enrich and endow with a new experience. Cotman in these things was happy. He was trained by the world, and by

those lessons in noble by-past Art which he was so well fitted to receive. His own true taste, and the faculty of real development—which some of us call, like Wordsworth, 'a leading from above: a something given'—made him independent of academic influence; and in his case no one undertook the academic task, and made the too-confident promise to turn into fine gold what is brass at the beginning, and must be brass to the end. Cotman was fine gold. He was, that is to say, an artist born, not manufactured.

At the hospitable house of Dr. Munro, in the Adelphi Terrace, the young man fell into association with a group of painters, most of whom were his seniors. At eighteen years old he exhibited six drawings at the Royal Academy, and while he was still extremely young, he presided over a little society—a sketching club, one may call it—of which Varley and Dr. Munro were members. At very moderate prices his drawings seem to have found a sale, and he began to make excursions into remote parts of the country—into Yorkshire and Lincolnshire—besides visiting his family at Norwich. It was either at Norwich or Yarmouth, in the first years of the century, that he made the acquaintance of Dawson Turner, the antiquary. That acquaintance

became a friendship, and, to use the phrase of Charles Lamb in regard to such matters, 'a friendship that answered.' Dawson Turner was at once, and for many a year afterwards, a help to Cotman. And as a serious student—not only a rich dilettante—he knew that he gained as much as Cotman from their association. 'We value him greatly,' Dawson Turner wrote to Cotman's father, very long after their first introduction, and when it was wanted to arouse the father to an understanding of Cotman's position, and of his depressed state.

In November 1805 we find Cotman established in Charlotte Street, Portland Place, writing to Dawson Turner that he had been in Yorkshire and Durham all the autumn, 'making many close copies of the fickle Dame Nature—copies,' writes Cotman, not very elegantly, 'consequently valuable on that account.' A hope of settling in Norwich—of working, and founding a drawing-class there—was now growing upon him, and in 1806 it was accomplished. A young bachelor of four-and-twenty—personally a little extravagant, but taking his art very seriously—he possessed himself of an excellent house in Luckett's Court, Wymer Street. I saw the house this summer. A dignified house, with gables of the Seventeenth Century, and much of the interior

woodwork seemingly of the early Eighteenth. For six years Cotman lived there. There, was wrought almost all the best of his earlier art: Mr. J. J. Colman's 'St. Luke's Chapel'; Mr. Reeve's 'Twickenham' (from a yet earlier sketch); the same collector's 'Mousehold Heath'; my own ewe lamb, 'Bishopgate Bridge'; and a mass of work besides—much of which, unquestionably, has been mislaid, neglected, ruined, forgotten.

The exhibition held at Norwich—to which I began by referring—gave us an excellent opportunity of really studying this rarer and earlier art. I am not thinking of the insignificant fact that there was to be seen there a puerile yet rather clever performance which dates from Cotman's twelfth year; but to the assemblage of work of the early time when he was really an artist—from 1800, say, to 1812. What was the character of his labour then? With whom did he sympathise? Whom did he at all resemble? The influence of Turner and of Girtin is to be detected in some of the work of this period—in the noble architectural work, especially—and it is not in the slightest degree unlikely that, in his turn, Cotman exercised some influence over Turner; at a much later time I mean, when everyday sobriety sufficed for neither of them, and when Cotman, surely quite

as much as Turner, led the way to revelries of colour. Between Cotman and Girtin there could be no such reciprocity of influence, for Girtin died, an accomplished master of water-colour, though less than thirty years old, in 1802, and Cotman was then but twenty.

Mr. Colman's large and solid and sober drawing of 'Durham' (it has these qualities, and yet is, somehow, without charm) reminds me of an early Girtin; while a Girtin of the finer sort, just as simple, just as straightforward, yet with something of the later magic of the hand, is recalled by Mr. Reeve's 'Bridge over the Greta.' A quiet realism; a sense of the picturesque, entertained but yet subdued; a composition, ordered, yet not seemingly artificial; a breadth that was never thereafter for a moment departed from—these are, perhaps, the characteristics of the mature and noble drawings of the earlier period, such as 'St. Luke's Chapel,' 'Bishopgate Bridge,' and 'Mousehold Heath.' Wherever there is opportunity for it—as, in my 'Bishopgate Bridge,' in the yew-tree to the left and the slope of the bank to the river—there comes in Cotman's sense of grace, his appreciation of style and of dignity, his avoidance of mere topography; but it is in Mr. Reeve's 'Twickenham'—thanks to the occasion of

which the scene itself is lavish—that that sense of grace dominates, and the stately trees throw their shadows over the lawn by the water.

In 1812, Cotman removed to South Town, Yarmouth; Dawson Turner being, presumably, at the bottom of the change. The painter's association with the interesting antiquary became more and more intimate. Purely architectural, or, as one might say, monumental, draughtsmanship was at this time a good deal occupying him. He was issuing at the moment the first part of the *Antiquities of Norfolk.* In the year 1817, he paid, on the advice of Dawson Turner, a first visit to Normandy. He went there again in 1819 and 1820; and, two years after the third visit, his *Architectural Antiquities of Normandy* saw the light. It was not until 1838 that he produced the book which best represents the characteristics of his style—the book in which, fettered by no established task, his sense of elegance, his genius for composition in line and in light and shade, had free play—I mean, of course, his *Liber Studiorum*: soft ground-etchings of unquestioned force and charm. But at Yarmouth he had much to engage him. His range of subjects increased. There it was that he acquired the close knowledge of coast 'effects' and of marine architecture which

made him, in addition to all his other capacities, so excellent a painter of the shore and sea.

It was in 1823, I think, that Cotman left Yarmouth : a married man in early middle age, with five young children. He did it to establish himself again at Norwich, hoping perhaps to sell his pictures better there, and expecting again to add to his group of pupils—he still went regularly and frequently to those who learnt of him at Yarmouth. This time it was only a house opposite the Bishop's Palace—the address, 'St. Martin's at Palace'—that sufficed for Cotman's needs, or Cotman's ambitions. But before long, though he made no change, his mind suffered tortures from the costliness of his new abode, and the unremunerative character of the adventure. He went to the Dawson Turners in utter gloom, and then it was that his excellent friend wrote to him and to his father letters full of tact, wisdom, and feeling, pointing out to the well-to-do father that Cotman must really be relieved, and pointing out, to the now depressed and now exalted genius of a son, that his position, could he but face it, and retrench a little, was not by any means so bad. The existence of the letters on this subject allows us entrance into the intimacy of these housekeeping troubles, and of the troubles

of mind that threatened to be more serious. But we do not get the end of the story. We can only suppose that Cotman's father, who was really on good terms with him, afforded reasonable help, and that though the house was not moved from with promptitude, the expenses inside it were curtailed. Cotman rubbed on, somehow, and in 1834 he received the appointment which I spoke of at the beginning — that post of drawing-master at King's College, London, which he was to retain till his death.

Preparing to quit Norwich, and wishing to put money in his purse before doing so, he had a sale by auction of many of his effects. These included nearly twenty of his paintings in oil, and five guineas was the highest price realised for any one of them. He sold, likewise, some copies of his printed book: the demand proving by no means 'active' — they were indeed rather 'quiet' than 'lively' or 'firm'—but of the drawings he wisely kept back all that were still in his possession: they were destined to be serviceable in his King's College lessons.

After a brief sojourn in Gerrard Street, Soho—a mere preparatory time—Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, was the spot fixed upon by Cotman for his

London home. But he went down to Norwich still, now and then, in the autumn. His son, 'J. J.,' already gifted, and afterwards eccentric, was settled there. Cotman wrote letters to him, in many moods, now bright and fanciful, now depressed and forlorn. He was fond of the Thames before the Thames was popular—witness Mr. Reeve's early 'Twickenham,' and Mr. Pyke Thompson's later 'Twickenham,' the 'Golden Twickenham' of the Turner house at Penarth—and in one of those letters to the son 'J. J.,' there is 'the log' that records the adventures of Mr. Cotman's 'voyage' with others of the ship's company to Windsor, where they were 'not victualled from hence'—from London, that is to say—and so might be expected to put in at Datchet. Then later, the brightness was all gone, and illness was upon him. 'It was my duty, it was my wish, and I threatened to paint for your sake when you were here, but I could not ; I was ill in body, and spiritless.'

Again, still later, 'I am not quite well, but better. I am painting.'[1] And then he could paint no more. He died, in Hunter Street, in July 1842, and was

[1] These letters, some of which belong to Mr. Reeve, and others to the British Museum, have been quoted from more amply in my *Studies in English Art.*

buried on the 30th of that month, in what is now the dull suburban cemetery behind St. John's Wood Chapel, within sound of the cheers from 'Lord's' and the screech of the Metropolitan Railway.

The beginning of the later period of Cotman's art dates rather from the days of his visits to Normandy than from those of his removal to King's College. I used to think that it was a good deal by the composition—by the theme chosen and by the disposition of its different elements—that we could best affix some approximate date to the undated work of this delightful master. And, unquestionably, composition counts; and the tendency as time advanced was towards a greater elegance in this matter—a more elaborate art, a franker departure from that Nature which suffers, in Boucher's word, the grass to be 'too green,' which 'lacks,' in Lancret's answer, 'harmony and seductiveness.' But, with a pretty familiar knowledge, now, of at least a couple of hundred of Cotman's sketches and designs—the most accomplished of his work, with its wise and learned or inspired omissions, is sometimes disparaged as a 'sketch' —I am inclined to extend the period during which Cotman's art was wont to be wrought into studied

fineness of line, and I would appeal, perhaps, chiefly to colour to settle the question as to the date of this or that drawing, coming from the hand of one who was a poet at the beginning and a poet at the end. Undoubtedly, in the best—in the very best—of Cotman's later work (in Mr. Pyke Thompson's 'Blue Afternoon,' for instance, and Mr. Bulwer's 'Blasting St. Vincent's Rock'), there is a greater freedom of poetic expression than was reached in the earlier work; an even keener sensibility, an added love of luxury of hue and of forms that have grandeur sometimes in their restraint, or elegance in their abandonment. Certain black-and-white studies done in the last autumn of Cotman's life—one October and November, when the country around Norwich lay under flood, and Cotman, visiting his native city, went out to depict no definite landscape, but 'the wold afloat'—display that faculty of seizing the spirit of a thing more than its body, which Youth, in any art, can hardly claim—which comes to men, it may be, with the refinement and chastening of the years. But the germs of all this faculty were there from the first. Cotman was indebted for them to no institution, and to no outward training. The Heavens had so willed it that his delightful labour—so sterling, so

sober, so poetic—should evade popularity. He was granted his sensibilities that it should be impossible to vulgarise him. Through good report and evil report he was an artist only. And so he accomplished his work.

(*Magazine of Art*, December 1888.)

## H. G. HINE

STRANGELY little notice, considering the artistic importance of the subject, has been taken of the death of H. G. Hine, the eminent artist in water-colours, vice-president of the Royal Institute, who died a fortnight ago, aged eighty-three years. The explanation, I fear, of the scanty comment his death has evoked, is to be sought in the fact that the mass of that public which concerns itself with Art at all, is occupied chiefly with such art as exhibits an easy piquancy of treatment or an obvious interest of subject. Hine's did neither; yet the best-equipped critics have long done justice to the steady perfection with which he dealt with those themes of serene weather upon 'the billows of the Downs,' which — superlatively though they were executed by him—he, with a hankering sometimes after other compositions and other effects, declined to consider his speciality. Yet a speciality, of course, they were: those visions of turquoise or of opal sky, and of grey gold or of embrowned

gold turf, with the long, restful sweeps and subtle curves, the luminous shadows, the points of light, with the shepherd and his flock on the ascending hillside, with the ancient thorn-tree bent by the winds of many an autumn.

Singularly unlike the work of strange refinement and unsurpassed subtlety which it was his wont to produce, was Hine himself, with his sturdy and sailorlike personality. Yet the character of the man was, in truth, not less admirable than the artistic finesse of his work. He found his true path somewhat late in life. His genius came to him almost as tardily, but then, perhaps, almost as powerfully, as did David Cox's. He was long past fifty when—with a charm of composition not less certain than Copley Fielding's, and with the genius of a far finer and fuller colourist—he began to do justice to the Sussex Downs, amid whose generally unconsidered scenery it had been his excellent fortune to be born.

(*Academy*, 30th March 1895.)

# THOMAS COLLIER

ENGLISH landscape art—the practice of which he had adorned by five-and-twenty years of noble work—sustains a profound loss in the death of Thomas Collier. He was born in the year 1840, at Glossop, on the Derbyshire border. He early addressed himself to the career of a landscape painter; and it is true, no doubt, that his method was founded upon that of David Cox, nor is it possible that he could have set up for himself a better model of delicacy of observation, and of decisive and economical handwork. And the medium of Collier was—like that of David Cox—almost exclusively water-colour. His oil paintings were few, and, like Cox's, they were executed chiefly in his later time. But, with him, the later time was still only middle age. Collier died when he was fifty-one: David Cox at seventy-six. Had David Cox left us at the age of Collier, he would hardly have been remembered to-day, and could have been an example to no one. Collier passed through no such prolonged period of preparation for mastery. He was already a master in his early manhood. His work cannot well be divided into periods: freedom of manner, largeness

of vision and touch, belonged to him almost from the first. To the quite superficial observer of his drawings, it appeared that he painted only two or three subjects, and these on the same grey day. But to the real student of his work, the richness and variety of his resource is revealed. He observed and recorded differences of weather and light which escape all casual and all untrained notice; and if he was among the simplest and most vigorous, he was also among the most poetic recorders of English countryside and homestead—of farm, and coast, and moor. His work, exhibited in France, obtained for him the decoration of a chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and here in England he was one of the most distinguished members of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours. But it is doubtful whether the opportunities afforded to the large public for seeing his work were frequent enough to secure him that degree of actual popularity which was his due; and it is at all events certain that when the cabinet of sketches which he showed occasionally to his friends shall come to be known more widely, Collier will be accorded, without cavil or questioning, a lasting place among the Masters.

(*Academy*, 23rd May 1891.)

# LORD LEIGHTON

By the death of Lord Leighton, the Royal Academy loses a great President and England a many-sided artist, who was certainly not far removed from being a great painter. It was more, perhaps, by the combination of so many various qualities of character and talent than by the firm possession of one especial vein of genius, that 'our dear President, our admirable Leighton'—to use the words most fittingly applied to him by Sir John Millais—had come, of recent years at least, to be distinguished and known. The painter's and designer's art, evidenced in his youth, about forty years ago, by the 'Procession of Cimabue,' had not only never fallen into disuse, but had never come to occupy, in his mind, a secondary or comparatively unregarded place. But, along with the well-maintained devotion to the craft to which he had first vowed his affections a full generation ago, there had sprung up, partly of necessity and partly by reason of Lord Leighton's exceptional temperament, many interests, exclusive of

merely official duties, which occupied time and thought—so much so that if he had not added to the tastes of an artist the habits and qualifications of a great man of affairs, it would have been impossible for him to have successfully crowded into his life all the pursuits that engrossed it. It is easy for the 'admirable Crichton,' in these modern times, to degenerate into the Mr. Brook of *Middlemarch*—the not unamiable dilettante who was pretty certain to have once 'taken up' everything, and was pretty certain also to have dropped it. But Lord Leighton, great as was the diversity of his interests, was absolutely systematic and thoroughgoing; and, outside his especial art (in which his place, whatever may have been his deficiencies, was peculiar and unquestioned), he not only practised but excelled.

Leighton was linguist, student, antiquary, man of fashion, administrator, even philanthropist. His oratory was an accomplishment; albeit, in its addiction to ingenious ornament, his style was not quite of our period. His tact in dealing with men and with affairs was almost faultless. His opinions were decided, and he never concealed them; yet, in uttering them, he hardly ever gave offence—never, indeed, to the reasonable. When all these things are remembered, and when there is added to them

the recollection of a presence elegant and stately, and of a manner which, though it could well keep intruders at a distance, had singular and winning charm for the many whom it was intended to please, it will be fully realised what a difficult and heavy honour awaits Lord Leighton's successor in his great function—that of President of the Royal Academy, and official representative of English Art. The Academy contains several painters of genius; several amiable and distinguished men of the world; but as those who can look back the furthest declare that no past President of whom they had any knowledge ever equalled Lord Leighton, it may well be doubted whether a future President is likely to equal him.

So much by way of rough indication of the character of the man, and of the public man. A further explanation of his individuality must, of course, be discovered in his Art; and even a cursory survey of it—and of the creations which were the events of his life—will disclose something of his strength, and something, too, of his weakness. The son of a physician whose life was extended to a most ripe old age, and grandson of Sir James Leighton, also a doctor—long resident at the Court of St. Petersburg—Frederic Leighton was born at Scar-

borough, on the 3rd December 1830. A Yorkshireman in fact—like William Etty, and another remarkable artist of a later generation, Thomas Collier—no one could have been less of a Yorkshireman in character than was the late President. To what is understood or conjectured to have been a Jewish strain in his blood are possibly to be attributed his profoundly artistic inclinations, which were manifested very early, and which, as the public knows, dominated the whole of his career. It is recorded that young Leighton received drawing lessons in Rome as long ago as the year 1842; and not two years afterwards he entered as a student at the Academy of Berlin. With Rome, perhaps, began that long series of *Wanderjahre* which made him so cosmopolitan an artist and so many-sided a man. He had some general education at Frankfort; then, after a removal to Florence, where the American sculptor, Hiram Powers, was consulted with a view to an opinion on his ability, and prophesied that the boy 'could become as eminent as he pleased,' young Leighton's father withdrew his long-standing objections to the adoption of painting as a profession; and the new decision was followed by a sojourn in Brussels and a longer stay in Paris. In Paris the youth attended a life-school, and copied

at the Louvre. Next we hear of him at Vienna, where he was a pupil of Steinle, himself a pupil of Overbeck. Of Overbeck's religious unction, Leighton had never a perceptible share. Something he no doubt owed to the leaders of the German Renaissance of Painting; but amongst these, more, it may be, to Cornelius than Overbeck. After his sojourn in Vienna, he was back again in Rome—these early and most prolonged wanderings are worthy of chronicle, because they had so much to do with the formation of the characteristics of the artist—and it was from Rome that he sent to the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1855 a picture which made no bid for immediately popular effect, which was nothing, moreover, of a 'pot-boiler,' and which made no concession to ordinary *bourgeois* liking. It was the canvas in which is depicted, with something of reticence and grace, and with a very learned draughtsmanship, the procession which passed through the streets of Florence, on its way to Santa Maria Novella, when Cimabue's picture of the Madonna was carried in the midst, and honour and peculiar recognition—in which a whole city joined—were bestowed upon its painter. Elegant as the picture was, it did not lack favour; a certain relative warmth, a certain romantic spirit, the presentation

of the ideal, it may be, in more homely form, pleased a generation familiar with Dyce, Maclise, and Cope; and the picture, as it happened, had an immediate success.

Paris was Leighton's next halting-place, and now, an artist rising above the horizon, he was no longer likely to seek direct instruction from any one of the painters who were there at work; but he was associated with, and was to some extent influenced by, men like Ary Scheffer (whose 'Augustine and Monica' was long appreciated in England) and Robert Fleury. He contributed almost without intermission, for the next eight or nine years, to the Royal Academy, and it was in 1864, when he was represented by an 'Orpheus and Eurydice,' that he was elected to the Associateship—becoming in 1869 a full member. The year of his election to the Associateship was likewise the year of the exhibition of his charming and seductive invention, 'Golden Hours.' To the painter of mediæval or Renaissance history, and of themes avowedly classic, there was vouchsafed the expression of the romantic and the unquestionably poetic, and it is, no doubt, to the certain element of poetry that is in Lord Leighton's work—far more, at all events, than to its austerer qualities of design, which never had any

popularity at all, and which, even amongst painters, have gone terribly out of fashion—that is to be attributed part of the great favour which his art has enjoyed. In 1869 was shown 'Electra at the Tomb of Agamemnon,' and in 1876 the second great processional, 'The Daphnephoria.' Two years later the 'Arts of War'—not the least dignified and decorative of modern frescoes—was finished for South Kensington, where was already its companion, 'The Industrial Arts of Peace,' completed in 1873; another mural painting, that of 'The Wise and Foolish Virgins,' having, at an earlier date, been placed in the chancel of a fortunate parish church in Hampshire. The year of the completion of 'The Arts of War' was that of Lord Leighton's election to the Presidency of the Academy, which he obtained, it will be remembered, in direct succession to Sir Francis Grant, with whose courtly qualities, and with whose large and manly sympathies, he combined a width of artistic outlook, a refinement of artistic expression, which had scarcely perhaps belonged to any President of the Academy since the days of its first leader, Sir Joshua Reynolds.

President, and knighted in consequence of that distinction in 1878, Leighton was given a baronetcy in

1886. In the interval he had not only proved beyond dispute his fitness for the responsibilities of the official position which he filled, but—to mention only some of the most memorable of many works—had completed his own portrait for the Uffizi, had wrought the really grave and impressive canvas of Elisha raising the son of the Shunamite widow, and had, in his peculiar fashion, effected an alliance between luxury in colour and sculpturesque arrangement of 'line' in the great 'Cymon and Iphigenia.' In actual Sculpture, too—sharing the ambition of the men of the Renaissance for a triumph in various mediums—he had produced 'The Sluggard.' It was extraordinarily clever, but perhaps its qualities were less truly sculptural than was some of his design executed in the older and more familiar material. Yet, if this particular work did not possess to the full all the great qualities that might have been expected in it, the order of Lord Leighton's talent was one, nevertheless, which empowered him to succeed thoroughly in Sculpture, sooner or later; for, in Sculpture, while there was room for the generally unimpeded play of his own skill in design, there might have been a relief found from the exercise of his art in a path in which success to him was more uncertain and capricious—the path of colour.

It is too early, of course, to attempt to settle definitely the place of Leighton in English Art; but it is certain that his influence, whether as President or painter, tended to the extension of its vistas. An upholder of the Classic—never, with all his range, much in love with Realism—he was yet nothing whatever of a partisan, and—it may be mentioned as a characteristic detail of him in his daily ways—he was accustomed from time to time to purchase clever little drawings (sometimes the very last one would have thought he would care for) by artists who esteemed him as a President, but who regarded him very lightly as a practitioner of their own craft. Lord Leighton was perfectly aware that several circumstances limited—especially of late years—the appreciation of his work. He was not altogether insensible of its real defects—at all events, of peculiarities which were defects upon occasion. He knew that his 'brush-work' was not absolutely 'modern.' He must have allowed that, now and again, when it was by no means one of his aims to seek it, the texture of his flesh was porcelain-like, and thus mainly conventional. He was, confessedly, not greatly occupied with 'values' of colour, with the relation of part to part. He was at one — perhaps more than they knew it — with

many of our newest artists in demanding a decorative quality; only the decorative quality of his choice was not always—was, indeed very seldom—that of theirs. A successful pattern of colour they could understand the virtue of. The Japanese, or Mr. Whistler, had taught it them. But a successful pattern of line, they were less capable of appreciating. They, for example, or some of them, execrated Bouguereau, and resented in some degree the hospitality prominently offered to that distinguished Frenchman on the walls of the Academy. Lord Leighton, on the other hand, was, very possibly, not fully alive to Bouguereau's vices or failings—to his mere smoothness, softness, not infrequent vapidness of human expression. But he valued justly Bouguereau's possession of the best Academic graces, of faultless composition and subtle draughtsmanship. For these things—these best Academic graces—he himself strove. These, too, he generally, though not always, attained.

In regard to this particular matter, there were times when Leighton knew himself to be a *vox clamantis in deserto*. But he had his mission. It is an immense tribute to him to recognise that any one caring, as he undoubtedly cared, to be acceptable amongst his fellows—amongst the

younger men, even, who were some day to succeed him—should yet have been so true to his particular message. But Lord Leighton had an admirable courage as well as a great patience and an untiring diligence. And there were times, fortunately, when it was brought home to him beyond cavil, that some educated appreciation existed of his own especial artistic qualities, as well as of those human virtues which made him, in many ways, so estimable a man, and so fitting a leader of men.

(*Standard*, 27th January 1896.)

## SIR JOHN MILLAIS

For the second time within a few months the Royal Academy has lost its chief, while English Painting is deprived of its most popular representative, and contemporary English Art of one who was long its most vigorous and most varied personality. Born at Southampton in 1829, the 'son of John William Millais, Esquire, by Mary, daughter of Richard Evemy, Esquire'—as the official biographies relate—Millais was really the descendant of a Jersey family of long standing; but in character, personal and professional, he was typically English. It is partly by reason of the fact that, as a man and as an artist, Millais summed up some, perhaps, of the defects, many certainly of the great qualities, of our English race, that his popularity amongst all personal associates, and amongst the spectators of his decisive, strenuous, and eager work, was won so early, and has been so firmly held.

The man himself, during forty years or there-

abouts of active adult life—the artist during forty years of scarcely relaxed endeavour—has been in thought, in conduct, in taste, and in production, pre-eminently healthy. Millais, in the generation and a half of his active life—for he began young—had seen fashions good and bad, foolish and reasonable, rise and pass away ; but, save by the influences of his quite early days, the days of the Pre-Raphaelites, he has been practically unaffected. He has developed in the direction proper to himself. As time has passed, he and his sympathies have broadened and modified, and if we miss in much of the later work the intense and concentrated poetry of the earlier, that later work has qualities of its own that do something to compensate. The man himself, too —sportsman, man of the world, excellent comrade, hearty and sincere good fellow—has been essentially greater in his more recent than in his earlier times ; for the temptations of a success, brilliant and uninterrupted, did him, as a man at least, little harm. Simple and generous he was—by all the records of his fellows—when he was at 'Mr. Sass's Academy' fifty years ago. Simple and generous—generous especially in thought and judgment as well as in action—he remained, when in the late winter of the present year he was appointed to the visible head-

ship of the profession to which he had given so much of the energy of his life.

Sir John Millais was only nine years old when he gained his first medal at the Society of Arts—Mozart himself scarcely came before the public in more tender years, as an executant upon the limited keyboard of his day—and when he was seventeen, 'Jack' Millais was already an exhibitor at the Academy. He was only twenty when his 'Isabella,' from the poem of Keats, disclosed a new talent, almost a new order of talent; at the least, a personality that had to be reckoned with—an influence that had to be either accepted or fought against. Yet more marked by an artistic individuality which was, in part, a return to older conceptions and views than those of his day, were the 'Carpenter's Shop,' 'Mariana in the Moated Grange,' the 'Huguenot,' and 'Ophelia.' These, or most of them, are typical Pre-Raphaelite pictures—the offspring of the tacit rebellion of a whole group of men, only one of whom, Mr. Holman Hunt, remains to give effect in his later life to the principles enunciated in youth. Dante Gabriel Rossetti—Pre-Raphaelite to the end, though of course with certain modifications—was another of those men; but years have passed since he went from us. The group was completed by others never

as celebrated, nor, as the world judges, so successful. They painted their pictures; they made their illustrations; they wrote as well as drew, in the quaint publication called *The Germ*, which the lapse of time and the fad of the collector have since made rare and valuable. Truth, rather than convention, was the aim of their practice; but they were not peculiar in that,—all youth, if it is earnest at all, is earnest for truth, or earnest rather for that particular side of truth which happens just then to have been revealed, and of which it exaggerates the value. Much has been written about the Pre-Raphaelite 'movement' and its supreme importance—as if it were a great religious Reformation and a French Revolution rolled into one. In History it is destined to be remembered because it was a phase through which two or three men of genius passed—a something, moreover, that for the moment welded them together. It will not be recollected, because at a later time mere imitative weaklings, by the dozen, made feeble fight under what they professed to be its banner.

The interest, then, for sensible people, in Millais's early pictures, lies, not in the fact that they were Pre-Raphaelite, but in the fact that they showed, many of them, an intensity of vision, a profundity of

poetic feeling, which is the property of gifted and of eager youth. The passionate, constant devotion—the devotion of a minute which lasts, you feel, for a lifetime ; the 'moment eternal,' as the great poet puts it—of the Puritan Maiden and of the Cavalier she helps, is the interest of the 'Concealed Royalist.' The burning love-affair of the 'Huguenot' is the interest of a canvas on which, before the days when the æsthete had invented 'intensity' of attitude, Millais had determined that his lovers should be intense, instead of sentimental. Millais was in those years occupied very much with the presentation, never of strictly sensuous enjoyment (Rossetti's field, rather than his), but of violent emotion, and uncontrolled, almost uncontrollable, impulse. His people felt keenly, but with the elevation of poetic natures, or of a poetic mood. And Millais painted them when their blood ran high. He chose the incident that seemed to him the most dramatic in all their story. He painted them on the crest of the wave—at the moment of crisis.

This, however, like the more naïve Pre-Raphaelitism of a yet earlier time, was but a phase—remarkable now chiefly because it has been so absolutely outlived ; nay, because so much of the view of life taken subsequently by its author has, dominating

it, a spirit so opposed to this one. But the transition was not rapid: the 'Autumn Leaves' of 1856, and the 'Vale of Rest' of 1860, have, at least, the poetic quality to the full, though with no violence of emotion. Rather, they are suggestive and reticent; weird and extraordinarily expressive: in the one there is depicted the wistfulness of childhood, in the other the melancholy resignation of a nun to whom 'rest' means brooding on a Past more eventful and more poignant than the occupation of her present day.

Notwithstanding his later technical development, nothing that Sir John Millais has painted will be remembered more definitely and firmly than these; and it is noteworthy that they are among the first pictures in which he relied in great measure upon landscape to express or suggest the sentiment which it was the picture's business to convey. 'Spring Flowers' of 1860 was in a lighter and gayer vein, if it is, as we believe, the picture known originally as 'Apple Blossom'—girls lounging in an orchard under the loaded and whitened boughs. 'My First Sermon,' in 1863, was more purely popular than anything we have named. It dealt with childhood almost in the spirit of Édouard Frère, but with its author's singular realism of execution. 'Vanessa,'

in 1869, marked Millais as occupied increasingly with technical problems—with the attainment of an almost novel boldness of effect. It is, like so many pieces of his middle and later middle time, brilliant in colour and brush-work. No one now thinks, we suppose, of claiming it as dramatic—that is, of connecting it especially with the character of the lady who came off second-best in the affections of Swift.

Very soon after the exhibition of 'Vanessa,' Millais, who had already sought impressiveness in landscape background, turned to pure landscape as a theme sufficient for the exercise of his art. He gave us then 'Chill October,' the October of the north and of the lowlands, with the wind passing over water, and the reeds and scanty foliage bent aside by its breath. The picture excited interest. It was visibly forcible. The conception of the scene, too, was unusual and, of course, unconventional; but in some later landscape work, Millais may have been at once nearer to Nature and nearer to the attainment of a perfected art. 'New Laid Eggs,' in 1873, with naïveté of expression and dexterity of handling, but with a rusticity not very convincing, was a 'taking' picture of happy, healthy, self-confident girlhood. Its importance, in the volume of its author's work, was quite eclipsed the following year by the 'North-

West Passage,' a canvas full of interest almost romantic, yet most direct in its record of character —the main figure being, indeed, a portrait of that Trevelyan who is associated in most men's minds with the career of Shelley. He it was who in Sir John Millais's picture posed as the sturdy sailor whose imagination engages him in a remote and unknown voyage. When, many years after it had been painted, the 'North-West Passage' was seen again in the Millais Exhibition, at the Fine Art Society's or at the Grosvenor Gallery, it was felt that at the moment of its execution the painter had reached the summit of his real artistic greatness, the masculine and potent hand here best executing that which had been prompted by a mind at its most vigorous. 'A Jersey Lily,' in 1878, was a tribute to the then girlish beauty of Mrs. Langtry, who at about the same period was recorded by Mr. Watts with exquisite simplicity. Again, just as in his diploma picture it had pleased Millais to invoke the name of Velasquez, and to perform a feat such as that to which Velasquez was most wont to address himself, so, in another canvas, in one sense more important—that of the three Miss Armstrongs playing whist with a dummy — it pleased him to follow visibly in the steps of Sir

Joshua Reynolds—recalling his composition; the portrait group of the three Ladies Waldegrave being the one with which he on this occasion made it his business to vie. In 1879 Sir John was able to exhibit one of the masterpieces of portraiture—that record or idealisation of Mr. Gladstone of which the nobility and charm were instantly recognised—a canvas which of itself would be sufficient to prove that the faculty of poetic vision never finally deserted an artist who had seemed of late to concentrate his energy rather on dexterous execution than on the expression of profound feeling or elevated mood. The 'Mr. Bright,' which pretty closely followed the 'Gladstone,' was comparatively unsuccessful. And the illness of the sitter and the consequent incompleteness of his presentation on Millais's canvas, made yet more disappointing the portrait of Lord Beaconsfield which hung upon the walls of the Academy in 1881. Next year, however, came the 'Cardinal Newman,' to atone for all that had been amiss — again a poetic vision, a worthy rising to the exigencies of a great theme, a performance at once decisive and tender, energetic, yet exquisitely suave.

(*Standard*, 14th August 1896.)

## BURNE-JONES

UNEXPECTEDLY and suddenly, from an attack of *angina pectoris*, following upon the pest of influenza, Sir Edward Burne-Jones died yesterday morning. He was sixty-five years old, and he looked worn for his age—a man of delicate appearance, and certainly of great sensitiveness; yet, as it had seemed already, of much staying power,—a 'creaking gate,' as his friends thought, not so very regretfully, since destined, in all probability, to 'hang long.' But now his work and life have been arrested; the laborious days which he had lived for forty years of manhood are for ever over, and the wan face of the untiring craftsman, which bent eagerly over his task, and brightened with quick sensibility in the relaxation of the social hour, is for ever still. 'Finis' is written to the volume of achievement of one of the greater practitioners in what we may call the second generation of the English Pre-Raphaelites.

Of the first Pre-Raphaelites—of those of the first

generation—more than one changed his ways, his work, his whole conception of Art, obviously, as time went on, and the most illustrious of them all—Millais—was far enough removed from a Pre-Raphaelite in the end. But of that distinguished and untiring practitioner of the second generation, whose hold, of late years at least, upon the English and to some extent upon the French public has become phenomenal, though it will not be constant, it is certainly to be noted that although there was, at different times, an unequal capacity, there was at no time visible change in the direction of his tastes or in the method of his work. Of the human figure Burne-Jones was not at the first an excellent, and was never, at any time, an absolutely faultless draughtsman. Yet the poetry of his figure-drawing, the almost feminine tenderness with which he followed the lines of dainty human movement, the dreamy grace that was in the place of strength, the elegant diffuseness, so to say, which was characteristic of his style—never even by accident tense and terse—these things are noticeable in his earlier water-colours and in the very latest of his performances in this year's New Gallery. It was as a water-colour painter that he first began to be known. A pupil of Rossetti, as far as he was a pupil of any one, Burne-

Jones was from the beginning romantic, and he was affluent in colour.

But what, it may be asked, are the especial characteristics of Sir Edward Burne-Jones's art, as it has been revealed not only in the designs for painted glass, mosaic, tapestry, in numberless pages decorated with beautiful ornament—such as the Morris translation of Virgil, and later, the great Chaucer—but likewise in the series of large pictures, the adequate display of which was, so to say, one of the *raisons d'être* of the old Grosvenor Gallery? He had indeed extraordinary individuality. He was amenable to influence, for all that; and the influence he felt the most—that of his true fellows—was exercised by the Italians of the earlier Renaissance: a period scarcely primitive, scarcely accomplished. Those early Italians, though engaging, were not really great draughtsmen of the human figure—not great draughtsmen in the sense of the Greek sculptors, or Michael Angelo, or Raphael, or Ingres, or Leighton, or Bouguereau. Sir Edward Burne-Jones, lacking the peculiar education which fitted the temperament and brought out the qualities of the men we have named last of all, not unnaturally sympathised with those in whom intention counted sometimes for more than execution. But it must not be thought that

because the ever-inventive artist did not possess the Academic qualities, he was not, therefore, in certain respects, very remarkable in draughtsmanship. He drew with the ease of conversation; and, though never a master of accurate gesture—seldom dramatic in the representation of the particular hour or scene—he was a master of quaint and simple, and sometimes of elaborate, grace; and for the untiring record of the particular type of maidenhood, seen best perhaps in the 'Golden Staircase,' or in 'Venus's Looking-Glass,' he stands alone. We name those pictures rather than, for instance, the 'Days of Creation,' or any of his various 'Seasons,' because in them he is at his happiest—his girls, though in the work of the suave decorator they are never essentially various, can be radiant as well as doleful. His men have plenty of wistfulness, but they have rarely energy, strength, decision. They are even, in a measure, sexless. And of childhood, Burne-Jones has never been an inspired, or even, it would seem, a particularly interested chronicler.

Of course, it must be remembered that Burne-Jones is judged unjustly when judged by the rules of even the least narrow realism. He painted, not the world of our own day, or of any day—least of all the Kensington in which he lived, and slept, and

had his studio—but a world he had imagined and created; a world his conception of which was fed, no doubt, by the earlier and graver of mid-Italian art. Imagination, now stimulated by legend, now supported by classic lore, and now the product of the brooding of an isolated mind—that is really the genesis, the *raison d'être,* the Alpha and the Omega of his art. Burne-Jones had, at his best, and especially in his middle period—the days of the 'Chant d'Amour,' with its fitly welcomed splendours of crimson and blue and golden brown—a wonderful gift of colour; and, even where the draughtsmanship of the human figure left something to be wished for, he was a marvellous, a loving, and a patient draughtsman of flower and of herb. The backgrounds of some of his inventions, in landscape and the architecture of towns, were of strange and mystic quaintness. Sometimes, in these, he recalled almost the spirit, the mystery, almost the charm, of the backgrounds of the prints by Albert Dürer. The great Dürer!—well, that is saying much. But we have left to the last what was perhaps Burne-Jones's most essential characteristic, certainly his greatest accomplishment. We mean his gift of composition of line, his power of precisely and perfectly filling, and never overcrowding, the space it was his business

to occupy. His composition of light and shade was less remarkable. He was a master of agreeable outline, of flowing and spontaneous tracery. But if it is not his imagination which is to keep his memory green, in the minds of the students of Art—and we doubt whether, with all his very individual merits, it really is—then it is that in which, in all our generation, and perhaps in all our English School, he may be accounted to have most possessed—the humbler faculty of patterning, of weaving faultless webs of subtle line over the surface, large or small, which was devoted to the exposition of whatever chanced to be his theme.

(*Standard*, 18th June 1898.)

# BOSBOOM AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

THE English *cognoscenti* of the modern type have now for some time recognised that in Dutch Art there is more than one great period that has to be reckoned with—that the great Seventeenth Century does not exhaust the achievements of this people. It may not be quite true to say of Dutch painting, as of French sculpture, that the traditions have been invariably preserved, and that there has been little break in the school; for the last century in Holland was a barren one—just as barren there as in France and England it was brilliant. The revival has been for later generations, and of those who did most to accomplish it some are yet living, in an old age not so very advanced, and others are lately dead. A history of this revival would be a great and worthy subject: it may yet, one hopes, be undertaken by some one writer qualified to treat it. Such a writer could not possibly be a person who had

lived wholly within its influence. He would have to bring with him something better and wiser than the ungoverned admirations of the modern studio. A knowledge of the Past must be his. Meanwhile, we receive, and experience a certain satisfaction in receiving, even that fragmentary contribution to the subject which is made in the volume called *Dutch Painters of the Nineteenth Century*. Max Rooses—the keeper of the Musée Plantin-Moretus at Antwerp—furnishes a general introduction, which is readable and fairly comprehensive, if not particularly critical. And many writers, whose collaboration is of necessity destructive of unity of idea, but whose individual opportunities of personal knowledge give the book something it might yet have lacked had it been written by one serious and capable critic, contribute biographical notes, authentic and amiable. The painters have been caressed, not analysed. That is exactly what the least instructed and least studious portion of the public is supposed to like, in the 'text' of its big Christmas picture-books—which, of course, is why that text is written so seldom by the serious professional writers who, if they chose to do it at all, could do it best.

Only a dozen painters are represented in Mr. Max Rooses' volume, and the selection of this dozen

is extremely arbitrary, or would be if it were not, as we understand, the intention of the publishers to follow up the present with at least one other volume. Two women figure amongst the twelve. Miss Jacoba van der Sande Backhuysen, the aged flower-painter, who died three years ago, and then was seventy-one, deserved probably to be included. She is included. Some of her work is of freedom and vigour, if some also tends to be precise and impersonal. You cannot find in every generation or in every land a Fantin-Latour or a Francis James; and the flowers of Jacoba van der Sande Backhuysen are generally welcome. But the introduction of Henriette Ronner, a popular and quite delightful lady, with the narrow speciality of painting cats, was surely scarcely merited. As for the men, the choice is hardly less arbitrary. Israels, of course, is in his place, with his grey record of the homely and the sad; and, though Alma-Tadema is a naturalised Englishman, it is not surprising that the Dutch should be reluctant to forget what at least was his origin. But if Alma-Tadema is to be included, why is Van Haanen—a Dutchman still, probably, and the truest and subtlest of all living painters of Venetian life and character—why is Van Haanen to be left out? We receive gladly what is given us

of Bisschop, Weissenbruch, and Gabriel. But the omission of such gifted Dutchmen as Mauve and Mesdag and Artz and Mathieu Maris—even in a first volume—is memorable. Further, the omission of the great name of Jacob Maris—certainly one of the most potent of all contemporary masters—would be fatal to any pretensions that the volume might make to completeness, or, if the phrase may be accorded us, to even a temporary finality. But if it becomes the duty of any qualified observer to note important omissions, compelling further instalments of the history, it must be satisfactory to him to chronicle such inclusions as those we have already cited as welcome and reasonable, and it is nothing less than a pleasure to find, not only contained, but placed in the forefront of the volume, the name and work of Johannes Bosboom. To Bosboom, and his right of place there, we will devote our remaining comments, and partly because the large English public is still strangely deficient in the appreciation of his work.

Johannes Bosboom was born at the Hague in 1817. He died in 1891, aged seventy-four, and in the artistic world of Holland he had by that time long enjoyed complete and cordial recognition; to painters and to the best critics—above all, perhaps,

to that rich painter, M. Mesdag, collector as well as artist—belong the majority of the best of his works. The art of Bosboom is displayed to some extent in oil pictures, but more finely, on the whole, in the great series of his water-colours. He is a painter essentially of the succession of Rembrandt—a master of the arrangement of light and shade—holding his own honourably in the presentation of landscape, but known chiefly, and known on the whole most to his advantage, as a painter of church interiors. His earlier work is in method drier and smaller than his later. The maturity of his genius finds him as broad as Cotman or Dewint. He has the restfulness and dignity of these men when they are at their best. He has not Cotman's gift of colour, and in those very church interiors to which Cotman would have given a colourist's charm—as his kindred work in the possession of Mr. James Reeve and the late Mr. J. J. Colman assures us—Bosboom's pre-occupation is with tone, and with sense of space; though, of course, in his colour he is never inharmonious. Each is great in his own way, and the one is almost as profoundly poetic as the other, though Bosboom, if anything, excels Cotman in the restful picturesqueness of his vision. With him, invariably, as in the great artist we have mentioned by the side of him,

the detail is nothing but a part of the whole. It is never aggressive; it is never importunate; it is even for the most part effaced. Bosboom, dealing with church interiors, is not, like Sir Wyke Bayliss, a painter of great scenes as well as of great architecture. For him the pageant has no attraction, and in the painting of a ceremonial or a service, such as the 'Taking the Sacrament in Utrecht Cathedral,' he is not really at his best. He is best when his church is quiet, and all its spaciousness 'tells.' See, for instance, the admirable 'Church at Trier'—immense, velvety, solemn—and, likewise, the not less masterly water-colour, the 'St. Joris Church at Amersfoort.' An architectural draughtsman, in the technical or narrow sense, he is never, from beginning to end—a fact that is partly due to the broader and more poetic bent of his genius, and partly, too, no doubt, to his observation having been chiefly exercised and his imagination chiefly stirred by interiors quaint rather than elegant, massive and large rather than exquisite in detail, picturesque rather than perfect. The book of Mr. Max Rooses' editing, will, in England, have not been without its service, if it, or even our own comments on it, should secure wider attention to the work of a master as eminently human and sympathetic as he is austere and sterling.

But, for the fuller comprehension of Bosboom here, in England, there should be gathered together in a single place a fair array of his work; and we commend to the enlightened *dilettanti* of the Burlington Fine Arts Club this appropriate and honourable enterprise.

(*Literature*, 3rd December 1898.)

# HENNER

THE first thing to remember of the painter Henner is that he is above all a poet. Has he then created stories or narrated them pathetically? Has he made it the business of painting to do literary work? He has done nothing of the kind. Even where he has used classical mythology and Biblical tradition as the excuse for his canvases, the derived subject seems to have taken hold of him but lightly; he has been dramatic to the extent to which—well, shall I say?—to the extent to which a reciter in a drawing-room is permissibly dramatic—gracefully indicating action and character, never violently insisting on them. Henner's poetry—his gift of creating, of idealising, in restrained and refined ways—is never shown by the usurpation of another's functions. It is shown in part by his choice of beautiful, artistic themes; by the exceptional fulness of his appreciation of lovely form and hue; by the combinations of faultless and harmonious colour which occur upon his

canvases; by the associations these somehow evoke; by the high pleasure they bestow. To define it much further is impossible. I feel myself, in describing his art, to be ineffective and faltering; but the analyst does not exist who could account completely for his charm.

Henner, it will be allowed by those who are most qualified to notice, is a great painter of the Nude. The Nude, according as you treat it, can rise to poetic heights and address itself to the refined, or can sink to more than prosaic depths. There is the high and there is the low, and there are many levels for the painter to stay at and live upon between them; and to the real artistic instinct, to the real fineness of taste, in looking at the Nude, there is permitted that immediate ease of judgment and decision by which the work is classed at once, and its motive appraised. When the true judges appraise the Nude of Monsieur Henner, the decision is a happy one. He is refinement to the finger-tips—as refined as Burne-Jones, yet not sexless. Painters whom only the Puritanic could accuse of vulgarity—Benner, say, in France, with his 'Dormeuse' of Amiens; Ingres, a generation ago, with his 'Source' and her '*âme végétale*'; Etty, say, in England, with his daylight flesh-colour, which the sunshine suffers to be neither

creamy nor grey, but rose and opal—they, and how many others, may be named with praise. But Monsieur Henner's work has somehow, in this matter, a reticence and a distinction—a part of his Alsatian Poetry—which one is apt to think unique. And it is worthy of notice—it throws a little light on the undramatic, the simply painter-like method of Henner's work—that the undraped figure is there, not seldom, as a necessary note of colour, and nothing besides: a note of ivory, telling, in some picture of evening, against that olive green of the embrowned woodland which rises, massed and darkening, against the last turquoise of the sky.

Yes, it is a purely painter-like quality, the poetry of colours in that more than blameless juxtaposition which is a rare achievement of Art—the poetry of gleaming form, of discreet light, of restful and mysterious shadow—that Henner will live by. The story he illustrates gains nothing in dramatic interest by his treatment of it. His business, even when he paints an 'Hérodiade,' is to solace and charm rather than to excite; and the refinement and suavity of his vision may accomplish for us of the Nineteenth Century what David's music did for the troubled soul of King Saul. Like Puvis de Chavannes—in work more grandly decorative, in

conception vast and suave—he administers to men the refreshment of a pure and high beauty. In such a subject as his 'Prayer,' it is his function but to vary things delicately: to escape the commonplace, nothing more. But, as regards his figure painting, in the refinement of his models we are never suffered to lose sight of what is familiar, homely, intimate, personal. Nature has been suggested with reticence, but nature has been constantly referred to. Of his landscape, the materials are simple and few; breadth and simplicity are of the very essence of his treatment. His selection is arbitrary; a certain noble conventionality reigns in his canvases. Give him a tranquil sky, a pool, a square stone fountain, a nymph, a solemn cypress, a tangle of woodland—what more! Petty imitation, fussy realisation of a hundred objects, he will hold to be valueless. But his work must have Unity: it must have Style.

An artist with these preoccupations is not, one may say with safety, likely to be a very popular portrait painter. Yet Henner has painted a fair share of portraits. And no 'hard and fast' line can divide such portraiture as he produces from his ideal work. When the touches on his canvas are no longer dictated by what is obviously imagination, it is not likely that a striking realism succeeds to the

control, that *modernité* speaks from every corner of the picture, that the poet has become the fashionable portrait painter. Reticence is still remembered. Henner can perceive character, but it must be conveyed without emphasis. With the palette set as of old, and the schemes of colour such as the ideal work has already accustomed us to, Henner must pursue his task. Perhaps it is the pallor of a thoughtful face of middle age, to be framed in black hair, with an olive background. Perhaps, as in the 'Créole,' it is the old Venetian tresses that are to fall richly on the bust that is shining marble, that is gleaming ivory. A likeness, no doubt; but before all things, a picture.

(*Magazine of Art*, *May* 1888.)

# FRANCIS JAMES

I LEAVE to a biographer in the Future the task of recording Mr. Francis James's birthplace and of settling the number of his years; of saying, too, where he chiefly lived and chiefly practised. I am concerned with his drawings, and not with the man, except in so far as his drawings must reveal him; and the real man, and not the outside facts about him, a man's work does always to some extent reveal. In the case of Francis James, his work is his water-colours. I know no oil painting by him. I remember no pencil studies. I know no etchings by him, no lithographs by him. And, moreover, modern man though he is, he seems to be able to express himself without the assistance of silver point—the interesting and difficult medium, the employment of which threatens to become a label of the cultivated. His own work in water-colour is as direct, immediate, uncorrectable as that; but colour is of the very essence

of it. Whatever he tackles, whatever he elects to let alone, Francis James is essentially a colourist.

One thing about his life and circumstances I shall here—taking breath in a parenthesis—venture to record. As a youth he was never compelled to prepare for a profession. Being a country gentleman who gradually became an artist, Mr. Francis James had a little comfortable means, one may suppose. Is he to be cursed, then, on that account, with the name of amateur? Certainly not. No more than Méryon, who was brought up in the French Navy; no more than W. W. May, the charming marine artist, in early life a sailor, and in late life Keeper of the Painted Hall at Greenwich; no more than Robert Goff, who was in the Coldstream Guards; or Seymour Haden, President of his own Academy, and once such a successful surgeon that he might have been President of the College of Surgeons to boot. In art of any kind—in Painting, Writing, Modelling—the spirit in which a man does his work, and not the means that he possesses, or the family that he belongs to, constitutes him professional or amateur. Is his art his chief interest? If so, whatever may be his status upon other grounds, professional artist, serious professional artist, he is, with his books or his

pictures. To the serious artist a little money is of endless usefulness, even if it be only a very scanty portion—three hundred a year and an umbrella—for that scanty portion, which has caused the fool to eat the bread of idleness, has caused the wise man to work with a will. It has gone some little way towards securing him that deepest boon for the artistic nature, *la liberté du travail.*

I suppose it was his exquisite enjoyment of flowers, as he had lived amongst them, at all seasons of the year, in their natural place, that gave the first impulse to Francis James to render flowers in Art. Then, as to method in Water-colour painting, there came the influence of Dewint, and then the influence of some, at least, of modern French practice, and then the influence of his neighbour, down in Sussex — that sensitive Impressionist, H. B. Brabazon, with his mature thought upon the matter, and his delightful practice, his 'blobs' upon the drawing-paper—'blobs' which are so very few, and are so admirably right. James has become, of late years at all events, less purely an Impressionist than Brabazon. In his work, whatever be its theme, there is always more of positive and yet refined draughtsmanship. But the influence of Brabazon is there all the same; or, at least, is there from the

first. An immense sensitiveness as to colour, a refinement of colour which does not preclude boldness, the cultivation of an alertness as to the most delicate gradations of colour—these things characterise Francis James. They are of assistance to him, even of incalculable assistance to him, in all the things that he depicts, in all the visions he realises. But I think they are of most use to him of all when it is flowers he is looking at; composing with grace, painting with ineffable charm.

And, so far as I understand, flowers were the subject with which he chose to begin.

It would, however, be now thoroughly unfair to Francis James to consider him only as a flower painter. Outside flowers altogether, there is a class of effect which he has made his own, and which is his by reason of his habitual command of colour—fearless, original, and gay. I am talking of the church interiors, beheld in keen, clear light; and interesting less it may be by their architecture—as to which, while John Fulleylove, and Albert Goodwin, and Wyke Bayliss, speak, who is there that shall speak with equal authority to-day?—interesting less by their architecture than by their hues and their illuminations, and their accidents and accessories; the ornaments about the altar, the wreath of flowers

that encircle the figure of a saint, the bit of heraldic glass that recalls Nuremberg, the sacred piece hoisted above the altar; the banner, it may be, or perhaps only the pink cushion of the altar rail, or the little green curtain that gives privacy to the box of the confessional. At Rothenburg, as well as Nuremberg itself, Mr. James went in for very serious draughtsman's study of statues in their niches, of the traceried wall, of plate upon the altar, of this and that little detail, of which the treatment remained broad while it became finished. At Nuremberg—to name two, that for excellent reasons I remember—admirable is the broad and luminous picturesqueness of his interiors of the Kaiser Kapelle and St. Sebald. At Rothenburg, as far as simple architecture is concerned, what a variety lay before him! And yet from all its richness and variety he turned now and then, to paint the humble window of the little *bourgeois* or little tradesman's house; the window-sill with its few pots of green-leaved and blossoming flowers, seen, some of them, against the brown-red shutter; fragile fuchsia, and healthy geranium.

But whether Francis James is occupied with flower painting, or with church interiors of Germany or the Eastern Riviera, or with landscape pieces, or with

studies of the village shop, it is always the same spirit of broad interpretation that dominates his work. Its business is to recall an impression—artistic always, whether beautiful or quaint—it is not generally its business to be imitative, strictly imitative, of actual object or scene. Quite an infinity of detail is pleasantly suggested by a drawing of the grocer's shop at Bewdley—the Post Office of the country town—and just as much by 'Shop Front, Bewdley,' which shows us the deep bow-window of Mr. Bryan, the bookseller; a background before which some quiet figure out of Jane Austen might conceivably have passed. But the detail is not obtruded. If you peer closely into the paper, it is not dryly made out. In a sense, '*il n'y a rien.*' Stand away a little, and then again, '*il y a tout.*'

But, of course, Mr. James's preoccupation with a quaint little world of the provinces, whose combinations of colour, as he here shows us them, are curious rather than lovely—that preoccupation of his is occasional rather than constant; and we shall never therefore take his measure by an inspection of work like this. Some quaint line it possesses, and to the interest of quaint as well as of lovely combinations of line, Francis James is quite alive. But it is where the combinations of line may be lovely—

where they may have their highest quality herein—and yet more where with beautiful lines there must (to do justice to the theme) be associated beautiful colour; it is here that Mr. James is most characteristic. 'Autumn, Asolo,' shows this to some extent; and so do other landscapes in which the world to which he has addressed himself, whether of Lombard or Venetian plateau, or of Alpine height, is dealt with with intrepidity. But it is to churches and flowers—or sometimes to the interiors of drawing-rooms or bedrooms lived in by tasteful people, and full therefore of objects that should gratify the eye in their happy, well-arranged union—it is to churches and flowers in the main, and most of all flowers, that we must come back, to find Francis James quite at his most exquisite, quite at his most characteristic.

Perhaps it is hardly possible nowadays to paint flowers without submitting to some extent to the influence of the Japanese. From them, whatever else you learn, you learn freedom of treatment and a conception based upon essentials. The limitations of Japanese Art it does not happen just now to be the fashion to recognise; though every one who is really educated—every one who understands the Classics of Art, the immense achievements of Europe from Holbein to Turner—must know of these limita-

tions, and must feel them. That does not prevent the perception of the value of those things which Japanese art (among the arts of other peoples indeed) has had some capacity for teaching us. And when Francis James makes his pink and white roses trail over the paper, with tints so pale and delicate, I think sometimes of the Japanese. I think of them much less when he sets a whole posy—a whole group, at least—in a tumbler, and has his massive colour, his rich, great colour, his fearless juxtapositions. And then, perhaps, with the Japanese influence not lost altogether, but still mainly subdued—not displayed at all, and scarcely even insinuated—do I rejoice in Francis James at his best.

Among painters, water-colour painters, Francis James is the poet of flowers, as Van Huysum, it may be—two hundred years ago—was their prose chronicler. The public knows Van Huysum best by his work in oils. The rare amateur of noble prints knows him best by Earlom's two splendid translations of him into the medium of mezzotint. But the not less rare connoisseur of the fine drawings of a past period, knows him by water-colour sketches, such as those possessed by the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum.

And as there are moments, moods, opportunities, when men apparently far apart get nearer together, so, just now and again by Van Huysum's practice in water-colour—by his pure sketching in that medium —the gulf that separates him from Francis James, is, not bridged indeed, but narrowed. The moment Van Huysum passes beyond the pure sketch, the perhaps even rapid study, something that is of the nature of the artificial, of intentional and obvious intricacy, begins to assert itself. Now, with the delightful artist of the day whose eulogium I am slowly making, that is never the case.

Francis James's fondness for flowers is, in some sense, akin to a woman's instinctive fondness for everybody's children. He has joy in their mere life. And it is their life that he paints. And he paints them in their own atmosphere—the sunlight heightening so the key of their colour, or a little rain perhaps has fallen and their life is refreshed. Had the rain fallen when Van Huysum painted them, the drop would have glistened on the petal; the perfection of the imitation of it is what we might have been asked, first of all, to see and admire. But it is not their accidental condition that Francis James imitates. It is their splendid vigour or exquisite freshness — see, for instance, this noble

primula with its deep glowing, slightly mauveish reds and its enriched green leaves; in its condition, a very bridegroom coming out of his chamber.

Amongst flowers, Francis James, I find, is universal in his loves. He does not swear fidelity to the rose—or he does not swear the particular fidelity which is only exclusiveness. In every garden, every green-house, every season of the year, he has (to use the sailor simile) 'a wife in every port.' He is as various in his appreciations of the beloved and the admirable as is a young man by Mr. Thomas Hardy. Primula, tulip, rose, pelargonium, and then the hundred orchids—having thanked one of them for its beauty, and profited by it, he turns with happy expectation to another. Nor does disappointment await him.

One little confidence—made to me long ago, I recollect—I propose, before I finish this article, ruthlessly to break. James destroys many drawings. He strangles the ill-begotten. He pronounces, with severity, judgment upon his creations. He assists the fittest to survive. Three or four years back he was wrestling manfully with the treatment of the orchid. No one, I think, had really treated the orchid before then. Since then, in oils, Mr. William Gale, in a group of works too little known, has

treated it with unequal, of course, yet often with remarkable, skill. But when Francis James had drawn, at Sanders' nursery—during several months' sojourn at St. Albans, to that end—orchids of every kind, great was the massacre of the innocents. We were permitted afterwards to see the successes; the failures had been done away with.

This is characteristic, and that is why I record it. People who observe flowers, and do not only buy them, will not be astonished that when this happened most—this severe review and condemnation—it was orchids, orchids only, that were in question. And this for several reasons. Some are beautiful, but some are ugly, almost morbid indeed—things for the delectation of Des Esseintes, the too neurotic hero of M. Huysman's *À Rebours*; scarcely for healthy folk, whom mere strangeness may not fascinate. And then again, the extreme intricacy of the forms of some of them, tells in two ways against their employment as subjects for a painter. It is not only—it is not so much—that their intricacy adds to the difficulty of correctness; it is rather that it adds to the difficulty of their comprehension by the spectator of the draughtsman's drawing. The public knows the rose and the geranium—it knows, besides, two score of flowers of English garden and hedge-

row. But the intricacy of the orchid is as yet an unfamiliar intricacy, and it is infinitely various; and therefore, though the painting of the orchid in Francis James's water-colours was an experiment interesting and courageous, and within reasonable limits successful, that work was but one phase—far from the most important—of a career and of a talent full already of individuality, distinction, charm.

(*Studio*, January 1898.)

THE END

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