

REYNOLDS

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

Illustrations by the Author

GAINSBOROUGH

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GAINSBOROUGH

AND

HIS PLACE IN ENGLISH ART

BY

SIR WALTER ARMSTRONG



APC. D
R

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL
ACADEMY * BY SIR WALTER
ARMSTRONG

WITH FIFTY-TWO PLATES

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SIR JOHN
REYNOLDS
FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL
ACADEMY & BY SIR WALTER
ARMSTRONG

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AUTHOR'S NOTE



THE aim of this book is to give a concise account of Sir Joshua's career, as recorded in his numerous biographies and in the series of his works, and to express opinions on his art and writings. If my estimate of his character is found to differ in essential points from that usually accepted, I can only say that it has been formed after a very careful weighing of the evidence. It is my conviction that from the first it has been the custom to regard Reynolds through an atmosphere of idealisation created by enthusiasm for his art. If this monograph possesses any originality, it is that I have endeavoured to paint the great artist as a consistent human being, even although the result may be to set him on a plane somewhat different from that chosen by some previous writers.

I have to express my warmest thanks to those proprietors of Sir Joshua's pictures who have given facilities for their reproduction.

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*Dear Knight of Plympton teach me how
To suffer with unclouded brow
 And smile serene as thine,
The jest uncouth and truth severe ;
Like thee to turn my deafest ear,
 And calmly drink my wine.*

*Thou say'st not only skill is gained,
But genius too may be attained
 By studious invitation ;
Thy temper mild, thy genius fine,
I'll study till I make them mine
 By constant meditation.*

DEAN BARNARD.

*Of Reynolds all good should be said, and no harm,
Though the heart is too frigid, the pencil too warm ;
Yet each fault from his converse we still must disclaim,
As his temper 'tis peaceful, and pure as his fame.
Nothing in it o'erflows, nothing ever is wanting ;
It nor chills like his kindness, nor glows like his painting,
When Johnson by strength overpowers our mind,
When Montagu dazzles, and Burke strikes us blind,
To Reynolds well pleased for relief we must run,
Rejoice in his shadow, and shrink from the sun.*

MRS. THRALE.

*Here Reynolds is laid, and, to tell you my mind,
He has not left a wiser or better behind.
His pencil was striking, resistless, and grand ;
His manners were gentle, complying, and bland ;
Still born to improve us in every part,
His pencil our faces, his manners our heart.
To coxcombs averse, yet most civilly steering ;
When they judged without skill he was still hard of hearing ;
When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff,
By flattery unspoiled. . . .*

GOLDSMITH.

CHAPTER I

1723—1752



IR JOSHUA REYNOLDS was born at Plympton Earl, in Devonshire, on the 6th of July, 1723. His father, the Rev. Samuel Reynolds, was the Master of Plympton Grammar School, an institution founded in the last years of the Commonwealth by the famous and long-lived Sergeant Maynard, who may, in one important particular, be considered a prototype of Sir Joshua himself. Samuel Reynolds was a scholar of a kind by no means rare in pre-railway days. He was educated at Oxford, where he matriculated at Exeter College in 1698. He afterwards became a scholar of Corpus, from which College he took his B.A. degree in 1702 ; while in 1705 he was elected Chaplain-fellow—*Socius perpetuus sacerdotalis*—of Balliol. He was, we are told with perhaps a slight touch of exaggeration, as guileless and ignorant of the world as a child, and so absent-minded that he was likened by his friends to Fielding's "Parson Adams." The few letters and anecdotes which have come down to us all show him in the same light, as a kindly, simple-hearted man, with very good brains nevertheless. His wife was one Theophila Potter, daughter of a parson and another Theophila, *née* Baker. The history of this latter couple

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

is somewhat of a tragedy. They married against the will of the lady's father, the Rev. Thomas Baker, who held a living at South Moulton, and had won distinction as a mathematician. Mr. Baker never forgave his daughter, and forgot her in his will ; her husband died after a few years of marriage, when, says tradition, she literally cried her eyes out, and then crept after him into the grave. The younger Theophila was almost a child when she became the wife of Samuel Reynolds. Nothing is known of her beyond a few incidental mentions in letters, which seem to indicate that she was a woman of some ability.* From Sir Joshua himself we derive scarcely any knowledge of his family. He was one of those people who do not occupy themselves much with the absent, although affectionate to those about them. We have therefore to depend for nearly all our information upon anecdotes collected by his admirers after he had become famous. From such evidence it is that we know the home at Plympton to have been happy, and the life of Sir Joshua to have begun with the placidity which marked it to the end. His father's means were not small for his day and station. He is said to have had a stipend of £120 per annum and a free house, which would go as far, perhaps, as £500 a year would now. His family, indeed, was large. Accounts differ as to the exact number of children with which his union with Theophila was blessed : Northcote says eleven ; Cotton "ten or eleven," but gives a list of eleven ; while another authority makes it twelve. But all accounts agree that the number had been reduced to six during the father's lifetime, and there is no reason to suppose that the modest ambitions with which these six began life were ever thwarted for want of means. Only three were sons ; one became a lieutenant in the navy, the second an iron-monger

* Leslie and Taylor.

PARENTAGE

in Exeter, the third stepped practically without a struggle into the front rank of the most hazardous of all professions.

According to one authority, Samuel Reynolds dabbled in astrology, and used to spend "many hours on the top of the old castle at Plympton studying the stars." He amused himself—let us say—with casting nativities, and on one occasion lit upon the startling discovery that the life of a newly-born child was menaced by a great danger in its fifth year. The child, a girl, was guarded with the greatest solicitude, and as the fateful hour approached was not even allowed to leave the house. But the stars were inexorable. When the foretold date arrived, the little girl—another Theophila—was dropped out of an upstairs window from the arms of a careless nurse, and killed. This latter part of the story is corroborated by Northcote. Whether true or not, these astrological aspersions are consistent with what we know of the painter's father. We may assert, without much diffidence, that his children spent a happy youth, with parents who exercised the kind of supervision which means leadership rather than control, and that the worst reproach they could have brought against Samuel Reynolds was for a certain slackness in stirring up their youthful ambitions.

The blame cast upon him by one at least of Sir Joshua's biographers for neglecting his son's education, does not seem to have been deserved. Reynolds had little opportunity for self-culture after his career in art had once begun. And yet he was, at least, a fair Latin scholar; he could write his own language agreeably, and with some approach to correctness; and the whole tenour of his intercourse in after years with the most brilliant men of his time, goes to show that he met them as an equal in matters of the intellect. Various stories are told by his biographers to illustrate his father's aspect towards the nascent artistic

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feeling. Under a drawing in perspective, still extant, of a wall pierced by a window, made on the back of a Latin exercise, Samuel Reynolds has written, "This is drawn by Joshua in school out of pure idleness." But it gradually dawned upon the good dominie that pure idleness was an insufficient explanation, and to a later drawing, in which, with the help of the "Jesuit's Perspective," Joshua wrestled successfully with the difficulties of the colonnade, or cloister, on which Plympton school-house was supported, he appended this note: "Now this exemplifies what the author of the 'Perspective' asserts in his preface, that, by observing the rules laid down in this book, a man may do wonders; for this *is* wonderful." His tolerance, too, of "art" is shown in the leave granted to Joshua and his sisters to draw with burnt sticks on the whitewashed passages of the house. On the whole, it is reasonable to conclude that Samuel Reynolds gave his children such an education as befitted his class and means; it is certain that he kept an open mind as to their bestowal in life, and did not fall into the common parental error of fixing on a hole before he knew the shape of the peg.

It was not until Joshua was seventeen that his father took steps to find him a profession. He was then offered his choice between art and medicine, between becoming a painter or a country apothecary. Characteristically enough, he said he would rather follow medicine than become an "ordinary" painter, but that his choice would be reversed if his feet could be set upon a path which might lead to excellence. To us the phrase "ordinary painter" seems a strange one to use. We are accustomed to think of painting in either a very humble or a very high position, as devoted either to the protection of wood and iron, or to the production of pictures which may turn out candidates for immortality. But in the days of Reynolds, and for a



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EARL OF CREWE

EDUCATION

century afterwards, there was an intermediate industry, busied with the countless demands now fulfilled by the processes depending on the camera. Even in 1740 Plymouth could, no doubt, afford such an education as one of these "ordinary painters" would require. But Joshua's ambitions would by no means be satisfied with that. He would go to London and be trained under the best master to be found, or he would be content with the status of a country leech. His ideas had been enlarged, we are told, by reading the works of Jonathan Richardson, a writer and painter whose doings with pen and brush are even now too little esteemed. A horizon which Joshua's unassisted vision could never have discovered from Plympton was opened to him by Richardson, and from the moment that the book fell into his hands his fancy was no doubt at work on the possibilities of an artist in the great world outside. His father, more impressed, probably, by the *trompe l'œil* qualities of his "perspectives" than by his kindling enthusiasm, does not seem to have been difficult to persuade. He took measures to have the boy apprenticed to the most successful portrait painter of the moment, Thomas Hudson. The choice of Hudson, when Hogarth was in his prime, requires, perhaps, a word of justification. It was mainly due, no doubt, to the mere fact that Hudson was a Devon man and introduction therefore easy, but we must not forget that Joshua had already shown a real capacity for portraiture. While still scarcely in his teens he had contrived, under great difficulties, to produce a portrait of a certain Rev. Thomas Smart, a tutor in the Edgcumbe family. It was painted on an old sail, with ship's paint, and is still in existence. Rough as it is, it has character and vitality. Probably, too, it was like the sitter, and so we need feel no surprise that its hint of a vocation was preferred to that given by the more

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“terrific subjects” which the boy used to extract from the *Book of Emblems* of Jacob Cats, brought from Holland by his great-grandmother, a Dutchwoman.

Thomas Hudson used to pay periodical visits to Bideford. In that town Samuel Reynolds had a friend, an attorney called Cutcliffe. Leslie and Taylor print a series of letters from Reynolds to Cutcliffe, from which it appears that through the latter’s good offices, Hudson and young Joshua were brought together. In the end the painter agreed to take the lad as his apprentice for four years in consideration of a premium of £120. Joshua arrived in London on the 13th October, 1740, and pending the return of Hudson from “the Bath,” took up his abode with his own uncle, the Rev. John Reynolds, who, by the way, was a fellow of Eton. The whole affair, judging by the letters printed by Leslie and Taylor, was conducted with a good feeling on the part of Cutcliffe and Hudson, and with a simplicity of gratitude on the side of Reynolds, senior, which is full of charm. In a letter dated 26th October, 1740, the latter says to Cutcliffe: “You have not only almost brought it about, but as if Providence had breathed upon what you have done, everything hitherto has jumped out in a strange, unexpected manner to a miracle. Nor can I see that if Mr. Treby* had many children, an apprenticeship under such a master would have been below some one of his sons. As if a piece of good fortune had already actually befallen my family, it seems to me I see the good effects of it already in some persons’ behaviour. This is my letter of thanks to you for what you have done (Joshua) has behaved himself mighty well in this affair, and done his duty on his part, which gives me much more concern in his behalf than I should otherwise have had, &c.” As for the

* “The great man of Plympton,” say Leslie and Taylor.

APPRENTICESHIP

premium of £120: "I have," says Samuel Reynolds in a letter to Cutcliffe at the end of 1740, "in a manner one half of the money already provided, if it please God I live so long as to the end of these four years"; the other £60 was advanced by his eldest married daughter, Mary Palmer, until Joshua himself should be able to repay it.

For nearly two years Joshua worked under Hudson. In a letter to Cutcliffe, dated 3rd August, 1742, his father writes: "As for Joshua, nobody, by his letter to me, was ever better pleased in his employment, in his master, in everything—'While I am doing this I am the happiest creature alive' is his expression. How he goes on ('tis plain he thinks he goes on very well) you'll be better able to inform me. I do not forget to whom I owe all this happiness, and I hope he will not either." Besides the ordinary services which it was usual for an apprentice to render to a master, Joshua worked, by Hudson's advice, at copying such "old masters" as he could reach. Among these were certain drawings by Guercino, which he is said to have reproduced with such skill that most of his copies afterwards passed as originals into the cabinets of collectors, and no doubt still so figure in many a modern museum.

The biographers of Reynolds have been unjust to his first master. They have spoken of his art with a contempt which it scarcely deserves, and have assumed that his teaching could have had no value for his pupil. The fact is that Hudson, in common with every English painter of the last century, except perhaps Hogarth, Gainsborough, and Sir Joshua himself, has suffered in reputation through the general ignorance of his work, and the acceptance of the slapdash generalisations about English painting which used to be indulged in by foreign critics. Another thing which has robbed him of his proper place, is the perplexity

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into which any one who tries to take him a little seriously is thrown by his promiscuous use of drapery men. Reynolds, in after years, was to depend on such *aides* as much as any English painter has ever done ; but he contrived to imbue them with his own spirit, so that, as a rule, we find no startling dislocation between their work and his own. It was otherwise with his master. According to an anecdote, to which we shall have presently to recur, Hudson was in the habit of painting a head upon a canvas, and then sending it off to the drapery man to be provided with a body and clothes. The result of such proceedings was what might have been expected. We find an extraordinary diversity, in kind as well as in quality, between one portrait and another. The National Gallery has a three-quarter length of Samuel Scott, the marine painter, which is at least as good as an early Reynolds. It is well arranged, well drawn, pleasant in colour, and quite free from hardness. On the other hand, I could point to many portraits which are cold and dry, and metallic in their texture. Of these, a three-quarter length of Lady Mountrath, in the Irish National Gallery, is a very favourable example. Again, there is a whole series of portraits by Hudson which, though hard in texture and deficient in movement, show a desire for elegance in the pose, and for such prettinesses as can be won by a judicious use of ribbons, flowers, and so on. Many of these are ascribed to Allan Ramsay, from whose authentic works they are to be easily distinguished by their more positive colour and comparative heaviness of hand. Hudson's drawings, which are not very scarce, although they usually pass under other names, seem to show that of the three classes here indicated, the third is that in which his own hand is chiefly to be recognised. Assuming that I am right in this, we may safely reject a large number of the outrageously stiff,

RUPTURE WITH HUDSON

dry, and ill-drawn portraits to which his name has been so glibly attached during the last century or so. Judging by the pictures which can be safely identified as his, on the strength of drawings, contemporary engravings, and other trustworthy evidence, Hudson was a fair draughtsman—as draughtsmen go in this country—a sound and skilful painter, and, as a rule, an inoffensive colourist. As a master, he was to Reynolds what Hayman was to Gainsborough. He brought, indeed, no inspiration to his pupil, but he started him on the right path as a technical painter, putting into his hands an instrument which he could afterwards use to realise his own more ambitious æsthetic dreams.*

After some twenty-two months *in statu pupillari*, Reynolds left his master's house, and his indentures were cancelled. Various explanations have been given of this truncation of his apprenticeship. Most, if not all, of the writers on Sir Joshua have accepted the tradition that it was a case of Titian and Tintoretto over again; and yet all the real evidence on the point goes to negative any such idea. Farington, indeed, gives a circumstantial account of the quarrel—for so he makes it—but his statement seems inconsistent with what we know of the subsequent relations of the parties. His story is that Hudson became alarmed at the rapid progress of his scholar, and determined to rid himself of one who might become a dangerous rival. One day he told him to take a canvas, on which the head had been painted, to Van Haaken, the drapery man, to be provided with a body. The evening was wet, and Joshua put off obedience until the following morning. At breakfast Hudson asked him

* Many pictures ascribed to Hudson in English country houses and elsewhere are the work of Jeremiah Davison, a pupil of Lely, who had a large practice in London and Edinburgh in the first half of the eighteenth century. Important signed pictures by him are at Dalmahoy, Midlothian, and at Drayton Park, Northamptonshire.

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why the canvas had not been taken ; Joshua pleaded the rain. " You have not obeyed my orders," said Hudson, " and you shall not stay in my house." Reynolds asked for delay, in order to write explanations to his father, who might otherwise misunderstand the incident. But Hudson would not listen to reason, and Joshua had to take himself off the same day to his uncle's chambers in the Temple. It seems clear that if this were the whole truth of the matter, the relations between Hudson and the Reynolds family must have become strained for a time, even if they did not remain so permanently. But nothing of the sort occurred. On the 19th of August, 1743, that is within a few days of the rupture, we find Reynolds senior writing to his friend Cutcliffe : " As to Joshua's affair, he will give you a full account of it when he waits upon you, as he designs to do, and will be glad to present you with your picture, who have been so good a benefactor to him. . . . I have not meddled with Joshua's affairs hitherto, any otherwise than by writing a letter to Joshua, which never came to hand, and which I intended as an answer both to his letter and to his master's. This resolution of mine I shall persevere in, not to meddle in it ; if I had I should have taken wrong steps. I shall only say there is no controversy I was ever let into wherein I was so little offended with either party. In the meantime, I bless God and Mr. Hudson, and you, for the extreme success that has attended Joshua hitherto." It was the same with Joshua himself. He and his master remained good friends, even in those after years when the latter might have been excused for some little chagrin and jealousy. From the very guarded letter just quoted we may, perhaps, infer that Hudson's account of the difference did not agree with the version given by his pupil, and that the elder Reynolds declined to commit himself to a



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RETURN TO DEVONSHIRE

decision between the two. Further than that we cannot see our way, and must come to the conclusion that the real cause of Joshua's premature emancipation remains unknown. Judging by results, it took place exactly at the right time. He had learnt all that Hudson had to teach, and was induced to test its value at an age when neither failure nor success could do much harm. He returned at once to Devonshire, and accepted all the orders for portraits which came in his way. His industry must have been great. In a letter dated 3rd of January, 1744, only five months after the rupture with Hudson, his father tells Cutcliffe that he has already painted twenty portraits—"among them that of the greatest man in the place, the Commissioner of the Dockyard"—and that ten more are awaiting commencement.

How long he stayed in Devonshire on this occasion we have no means of finding out; but we know that before the end of the year he was again in London. Leslie and Taylor print quotations from his father's letters, which show that early in December Joshua had already been introduced by his old master, Hudson, to "a club composed of the most famous men in their profession," a club identical, suggests Tom Taylor, with that described in Smith's "Nollekens" (vol. ii. p. 209), which met at Slaughter's Coffee House, in St. Martin's Lane. Many of the pictures dating from this first sojourn in his native place can still be traced. They are essentially Hudsonian, and go far to prove that it was not until his second visit to Plymouth that he came under the influence which was to make the first important change in his practice, and was to be the cause at once of much excellence and no little disaster to his works. To this point we must return presently. During the two years or more which Reynolds spent in London, between the autumn of 1744 and that

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of 1746, the influence of Hudson rapidly waned. The pupil and his former master were excellent friends; of that there is abundant evidence; but familiarity with a wider circle of artists, his own growing facility both of hand and mind, and a more intimate acquaintance, no doubt, with the great works of the past, gave a new freedom to his conceptions and less timidity to his brush. Pictures painted in 1745 and 1746 show that he was seeking for new forms of expression. They betray impatience with the old conventions, and leave us in no doubt that for every fresh sitter who appeared in his studio he endeavoured to invent a new formula, a new æsthetic equivalent. The originative impulse, the determination to repeat himself as little as was consistent with sincerity, by which Reynolds stands apart from all other portrait-painters of the eighteenth century, dates from these first two years of his independent activity in London, from a time when he was still under twenty-three years of age.

Towards the end of 1746, Samuel Reynolds was seized by his last illness, which ended in his death on Christmas Day. His son Joshua was summoned home to Plympton, whence, after the funeral, he moved to Plymouth Dock—now Devonport—where he set up house-keeping with his two unmarried sisters. Here he remained about three years, painting such portraits as came in his way, but on the whole taking life easily, at least for a time. Malone—who seems, however, to be here a little mixed in his chronology—says that when Reynolds recalled this period of his life, “he always spoke of it as so much time thrown away, so far as related to a knowledge of the world and of mankind, of which he ever afterwards lamented the loss.” He goes on to say that “after some little dissipation” Reynolds sat down seriously to the study and practice

GANDY OF EXETER

of his art. Leslie and Taylor also speak of the first part of this second stay in Devonshire as a period during which he neglected his easel for the only time in his life. However that may be, it was certainly at this time that he came under an influence which was to have a profound effect on his future practice.

Among the many followers of Van Dyck was a certain William Gandy.* He was a man of narrow ambitions, who was content during most of his life to work for one or two patrons, and to remain obscure to the world at large. The Duke of Ormonde was his principal employer, and in Ireland only are his works now to be found. They are dry and tame, and by no means support the assertion that his pictures were sometimes confused with those of Van Dyck. He had a son, however, of greater powers than his own, who settled in Devonshire, and came to be known as Gandy of Exeter. His productions are probably not rare, for he had a vogue in his own neighbourhood, and must have painted many portraits in a year to make a living at the prices then ruling in the provinces. Most of his works no doubt pass under other names, or as "unknown." In Exeter itself a few may be seen in the College Hall, in the Hospital, and in the Poor-house. In a general way they are broad in treatment, sombre and monotonous in colour, richer in texture than was usual at the time, and more forcible in chiaroscuro. They have affinities on the one hand with Rembrandt, on the other with Opie. All Sir Joshua's biographers declare that he was much affected by Gandy's example, and there can be no doubt that a young man with such an open mind as we know young Reynolds to have possessed, would be much attracted, not perhaps so

* Born 1619. His son, Gandy of Exeter, died about 1730. The exact date is uncertain.

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much by Gandy's actual work, as by the promise his methods held out to a bold disciple. It is certain that during the period of rather more than two years which elapsed between his father's death and his own final departure from his native county, he painted many pictures in which Hudson's dry methods and formal arrangements are abandoned for a style which suggests the study of Rembrandt. One of the best of these is his own portrait, in the National Portrait Gallery, in which he is represented at work, his hand shading his eyes as he takes a look at the model. I must leave all detailed discussion of his pictures and the development of his art to future chapters, but may here point out that Reynolds could have had little knowledge of Rembrandt at this stage in his career. The broader conception, the more forcible light and shade, and the more solid texture, which now begin to mark his work, must have been chiefly due to the example of Gandy. We are told that one of the latter's axioms was that "a picture ought to have a richness in its texture, as if the colours had been composed of cream or cheese, and the reverse of a hard and husky or dry manner." In the light of his after productions, we can imagine what an effect such a precept would have on our young painter's mind. It would seem like taking down the shutter from a window opening upon an infinite landscape, and was probably the first hint he ever received that the texture of paint could in itself be made expressive and pleasure-giving. That he was afterwards so apt to out-Gandy Gandy, and to call in all kinds of strange substances to produce the effect of "cream or cheese," is, of course, to be lamented; but for that the Exeter artist is not responsible. He at least deserves the credit of having started a great painter on the road which led to masterpieces not a few.

VOYAGE WITH KEPPEL

For some two years and a half Reynolds kept house at Plymouth Dock with his sisters, and cultivated his friendship with the Edgcumbes at Mount Edgcumbe, the Parkers at Saltram, the Eliots at Port Eliot, and other West of England families, who were as useful as they were kind to him for the rest of his life. A decisive change in his career was brought about by an acquaintanceship which began at Mount Edgcumbe. In the first months of 1749 the young sailor who was afterwards to be so famous and to lead to so much excitement in Sir Joshua's own set as Admiral Keppel, was appointed to the command in the Mediterranean, and entrusted with a mission to the corsair States on the North African Coast. At that time Keppel was little more than a boy. He had not yet completed his twenty-fourth year, and so was even junior to Reynolds. He sailed from Spithead on the 25th of April, but a day or two later was obliged to put in to Plymouth for repairs. Here he was introduced to the young painter by Lord Edgcumbe, and the two found themselves so sympathetic that the Commodore offered to take the artist with him to the South. Such an opportunity was not to be neglected. Reynolds accepted the invitation with joy, and on the 11th of May H.M.S. *Centurion* weighed anchor for Lisbon, with the two very new but already very close friends on board.

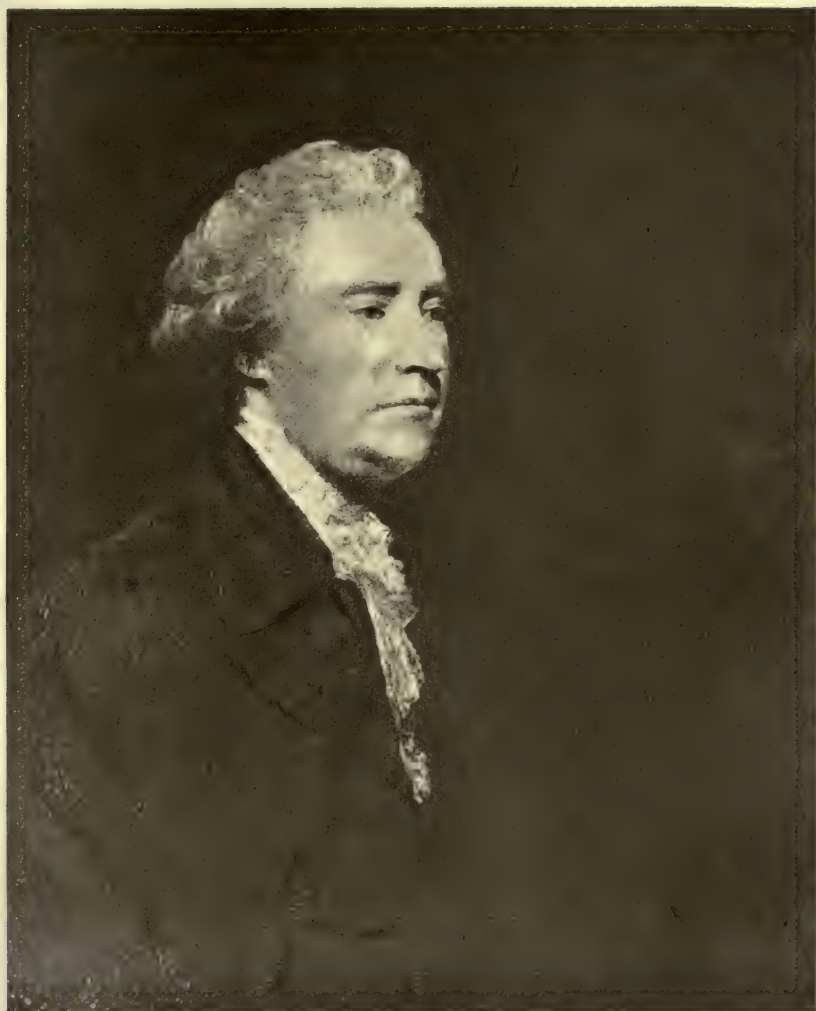
In the Mediterranean Keppel went about his business, being sometimes accompanied by Reynolds, and sometimes not. The painter stayed at Gibraltar while Keppel crossed over to Tetuan, to harry the Moorish Governor on account of his ill-treatment of the British Consul and some English prisoners; on the other hand, he went with him to Algiers, and was present at the famous interview when the Dey threatened the Commodore with the bow-string, and the Commodore replied with a menace which

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was to be fulfilled sixty years later by Pellew. Negotiating with the Dey was a very long business, and while the *palavers* were going on, Reynolds amused himself by visiting the Mediterranean Islands. In August he was at Port Mahon, as the guest of General Blakeney, the Governor, and there he painted most of the officers of the garrison. Minorca was to mark him for life, for while prowling about on horseback he met with the accident which disfigured his upper lip. His horse fell with him down some steep declivity, doing damage the traces of which are to be seen in most of the later portraits.*

During his entertainment by Keppel, Reynolds visited Lisbon and Cadiz, as well as the Moorish ports. At both of those places he was present at what he calls "Bull feasts," and seems to have had no premonition of our modern horror of such brutal sports. In Lisbon, of course, the display would be comparatively mild, and the incongruity of coupling it with the *Corpus Christi* procession would not seem great; but in Cadiz he would have to face the real Spanish article, and yet he appears to have felt no need for moralising. Perhaps he had seen bull-baiting at home. All this we know from a curious letter to Lord Edgcumbe, quoted by Leslie and Taylor, in which, among much of the formal humility then *de rigueur* from an artist to anything in the shape of a patron, we find signs of genuine gratitude to Lord Edgcumbe for the introduction

* Wm. Carpenter, keeper of the Prints in the British Museum, seems to have persuaded Leslie that Reynolds' early portrait of himself now in the National Portrait Gallery must have been painted after his Minorca accident, on account of the peculiar form of the upper lip. I think he was mistaken. The curiously *retroussé* lip seems to have been natural; in later portraits there is a decided scar. In this picture Reynolds looks too young for twenty-six, and the conception belongs to the time when he was influenced by Gandy, rather than to the years when he was surrounded by the Italian masters.



EDMUND BURKE

MRS. KAY AND MISS DRUMMOND

ROME

to Keppel, and to Keppel for his liberal and delicate hospitality. The letter is undated, but it must have been written shortly after Reynolds had left the *Centurion*. This he did in the late summer of 1749, in the first weeks of his twenty-seventh year. He landed at Leghorn and made his way straight to Rome. "I am at last in Rome," he writes to Lord Edgcumbe, "having seen many places and sights which I never thought of seeing. I have been at Lisbon, Cadiz, Gibraltar, Algiers and Mahon." This seems to show conclusively that he was not even tempted to step aside to Florence, but made his way as speedily as he could to what was then called the capital of art.

In the middle of the eighteenth century Rome was at its apogee as a place of pilgrimage. Travellers of every kind—except, indeed, the commercial variety—made it their goal. Before reaching it they were on their way out; after leaving it they were on their way home, even when the route lay through Constantinople or "Grand Cairo." All the more ambitious artists of Europe made a point of seeing it, some for the sake of what it could teach, others, like Hudson, for the mere purpose of being able to say they had been there. As for travelling dilettante with money in their pockets, the city was full of them, and a man like Reynolds, with good introductions and a pleasant personality, could make enough friends in a winter to last him a lifetime. From what we know of his habits and character, we cannot doubt that socially he made the best possible use of his two years in the Eternal City, and that many connections of his after life there had their origin. Some curious relics of this side of his activity have come down to us in a set of what he called "caricaturas." These are groups of more or less grotesque portraits of English and other travellers, in which personal peculiarities and

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defects are exaggerated in a fashion recalling the *charges* of Leonardo da Vinci. Seven of these are still in existence, although Sir Joshua is said to have been so ashamed of them in after years that he used to offer in exchange any picture in his studio their owners chose to select. Four have been presented to the National Gallery of Ireland by the Countess of Milltown. These include the most important of the whole series, the famous burlesque on Raphael's "School of Athens." Here, on a canvas some 50 inches by 40, Reynolds has painted seventy-two portraits of his friends in Rome and one of himself, eking out the composition with a few "idea figures," as he calls them. The background is similar to that of the fresco, and the disposition of the figures follows the same model with tolerable fidelity. Technically, the picture—like the rest of the series—is better than most of his later works. It is painted solidly, and with entire simplicity, so much so that at the first glance one is tempted to cry, "That's not a Sir Joshua : it is too fresh ; its condition is too perfect." It shows, in fact, no sign of change. It is without cracks, and without darkening anywhere. It has been painted rapidly, freely, and at once. Solicitude is not always good for a picture. Here Reynolds felt none, and produced an excellent bit of painting ; that is about all, however, that can be said for it. The fun is of a very obvious kind : exaggerated noses, calves, stomachs, and so on ; reminding one not of the late lamented Pellegrini, but of certain other cartoonists who have attempted to draw his bow.*

* The persons represented in this burlesque are: Mr. Henry (of Straffan, Kildare), Mr. Leeson, junr., Lord Bruce, Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Leeson, senr. (afterwards Earl of Milltown), Mr. Barrett, Mr. Patch, Mr. Virepile, Sir William Lowther, Dr. Erwin, Mr. Bagot, the Abbé du Bois, Mr. Brettingham, Mr. Murfey, Mr. Sterling, Mr. Iremonger, Sir Matthew Featherstone, Lord Charlemont, Mr. Phelps, Sir Thomas

Reynolds painted his version of the School of Athens in 1751, nearly two years after his arrival in Rome. The use he had made of the intervening months, so far as his studies were concerned, has to be conjectured from the fragmentary memoranda in his pocket-books. One of these * contains the following entry :

“Copies of pictures I made at Rome.

“In the Villa Medici :—

“The vase of the Sacrifice of Iphigenia.

“In the Corsini Palace :—

“April 16, in the afternoon, 1750, Anno Jubilei.—Study of an old man’s head, reading, by Rubens.

“April 17 to 19.—A portrait of Philip II., King of Spain, by Titian.

“April 20.—Rembrandt’s portrait of himself.

“April 21 to 23.—St. Martino on horseback, giving the Devil, who appeared to him in the shape of a beggarman, a part of his cloak.—Captain Blackquier’s P.—An old Beggarman.—My own picture.—Jacomò’s picture.

“Began May 30, finished June 10, in the Church of Capuchins, St. Michael, by Guido.—A foot from my own.

“June 13.—The “Aurora” of Guido, a sketch.

“June 15.—Went to Tivoli.

“August 15.—Worked in the Vatican. I was let into the Capella Sistina in the morning, and remained there the whole day, a great part of which I spent in walking up and down it with great self-importance. Passing through, on my return, the rooms of Raffaele, they appeared of an inferior order.”

This entry contains all the direct evidence we have as to how Reynolds made use of the opportunities for improving his practice afforded by Rome. Taken together with the numerous critical notes which fill the Italian pocket-books, it shows that his affection, or at least his judgment, was divided, as, in fact, it remained throughout

Kennedy, and Reynolds himself. The names are taken from the pocket-book of 1751.

* Now in the possession of Mr. Reynolds Gwatkin.

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his life. His originality—by which I mean his power of thinking independently—was not robust enough to enable him to stand up against the public opinion of his day, and to declare, even to himself, that its ideals were false, and that the works in which they were embodied lacked that quality of sincerity without which art does not exist. He heard on every side the praises of the Carracci, of Guido, of Guercino, and the other facile paint-slingers of the seventeenth century, and he bowed to what seemed to him to be authority. He blamed himself when he found that their “Magdalens” and “Ecce Homos,” and “Auroras” left him cold, and made attempts which are really pathetic, to reason himself into admiration and to justify the world in its mistaken opinions. All through his Italian note-books we find repeated the curious desire to bridge an unbridgable gulf which is suggested by his passage, in the spring of 1750, from Rubens, Titian, and Rembrandt, to Guido. By this I do not mean to insinuate that a young painter can learn nothing from Guido. On the contrary, his best work has many admirable qualities from a technical standpoint; the young artist who could paint such a head, for instance, as the “Christ Crowned with Thorns,” in the National Gallery, would at least be well equipped. But it was not for these technical qualities that Reynolds studied and admired the Bolognese. He professed to see in their work an embodiment of the abstract principles of what he called the great style in art, and throughout his life he cudgelled his brain for arguments to justify the phrase.

That Reynolds *the artist* was alive from the first to the charm of the *tre-* and *quattro-centisti* is clear from the few notes devoted to them in the pocket-books. These notes are scanty indeed compared with the pages devoted to Baroccio, Salviati, Guercino, etc.; but they are significant,



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and show that it was not through a deficient sympathy that he dwelt so little upon the early men, but through excessive respect for the ideas of his time. "The old Gothic masters," he says, "as we call them, deserve the attention of the student much more than many later artists; *simplicity* and *truth* being oftener found in the old masters which preceded the great age of painting, than it ever was in that age, and certainly much less since." As a proof of the mixed nature of his admiration at this time, I cannot do better than enumerate the pictures of which Reynolds took particular note in the Grand Duke's collection at Florence, in the Palazzo Pitti. These were:—

"Charles I. and Henrietta Maria," by Van Dyck.

"Lady in White Satin," do.

"The Virgin and Bambino," "St. John Baptist," and one in armour, perhaps St. George, with a little dish in his hand, by Correggio, *in his first manner*.

"Christ with the four Evangelists," by Fra Bartolommeo.

"God the Father above, in small, holding Christ on the Cross,"

"Six Saints," large as life, beneath; Andrea del Sarto.

"Salutation," by P. Veronese.

"Cain and Abel," by Titian.

THIRD ROOM.

"Two Assumptions of the Virgin," with the Twelve Apostles below. In one of them there is a priest and a nun, besides the Apostles.

"St. Mark the Evangelist," by Bartolommeo.

SIXTH ROOM.

"Madonna della Sedula," by Raffaele.

"Holy Family," viz., Elizabeth, Virgin Mary, St. John Baptist, and another, perhaps St. Catherine, by Raffaele. (*Madonna del Baldachino*.)

"The Virgin and Child, St. John, and St. Elizabeth," by Del Sarto.

"Christ, St. Peter, and St. John in the Clouds," four saints beneath, by Annibale (*Garracci*).

"The Resurrection of a dead person by a Saint," by Guercino; a print by Bloemart.

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"Holy Family," by Rubens; a print by Bolswert.

"Salutation," by Del Sarto.

"Abraham and the Burning Bush," by Bassano.

Several others, but none considerable.

SEVENTH ROOM.

"Mars and Venus," by Rubens.

"Charity," by Guido.

"Cleopatra with the Asp," by Guido.

"The Tribute Money," by Titian.

"Conversion of St. Paul," by Titian.

"Elisha taken up to Heaven by Angels, a Bull, and a Lion," by Raffaele (*Vision of Ezekiel*).

"History of Joseph," by And. del Sarto.

"Holy Family," by P. Veronese.

Many fine Bassanos.

"The Muses dancing," by Julio Romano.

"The Tree Destinies," by M. Angelo.

"Holy Family," in small, neatly finished, by An. Carracci.

"Holy Family," by Raffaele (? *Madonna del Gran Duca*).

FOURTH ROOM.

A copy, by Baroccio, of the famous "Holy Family," by Correggio, at Parma.

"A Descent from the Cross," by Cigoli.

"St. Sebastiano," by Titian.

"Mary Magdalen," by Titian, with an immense deal of hair, but painted to the utmost perfection.

"In a part not usually shown, two large pictures by Rubens."

Such is his selection from what was, at the time, the finest collection of pictures in the world. It casts a strong light backwards on what he had been doing in Rome, and upon the line he had taken in steering between, or rather in combining, the lines of his heart and head. In attempting to fuse into one the art which is passionate and the art which substitutes machinery for passion, he set out on a task he never abandoned to the end of his life, in spite of the qualms it must often have given him.

EARLY OPINIONS

That Reynolds was naturally a first-rate critic, even to the extent of being able to anticipate the verdict of posterity, is proved by his various descriptions of his own emotions in the presence of works of art. Unhappily he failed to estimate these emotions at their true value. Instead of realising that they were better evidence in favour of the things he was looking at than the conclusions to which an imperfect reasoning process could bring him, he crushed them down, and set himself resolutely to exalt taste, skill, and obedience to arbitrary rules above the power to create. His first impulsive feelings in the Sistine Chapel and the Stanze of the Vatican, anticipated exactly what we now not only feel but confess, after another century of study and the more generous opportunities of knowledge given by modern conditions. "I was let into the Capella Sistina in the morning, and remained there the whole day, a great part of which I spent in walking up and down it with great self-importance. Passing through on my return the rooms of Raffaele, they appeared of an inferior order." This entry in one of his Italian pocket-books would now be subscribed to by the great mass of cultivated opinion; but Reynolds was perturbed by his sensations, and forty years after he had turned his back on Rome we still find him struggling laboriously to minimise a preference which was, in fact, a proof of his fine capacity for art. Vacillations of taste have always been the sceptic's opportunity. They seem to justify his denial that definite judgments are possible in artistic questions. It would be interesting to inquire how far these vacillations have been more apparent than real, and how far they have been due to causes similar to those which drove Sir Joshua, as I believe, into arguing against his own convictions. At all periods, even in the days of Pericles, the world has been troubled with the false ideals

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forced upon it by those whom nature has endowed with an abnormal capacity to make the worse seem the better cause. The *littérateurs* who could find nothing more valuable to tell us of Apelles, Parrhasius, and Zeuxis, than the futile stories about lines, and grapes, and curtains, have had a liberal progeny. I suspect that the true history of opinion on these matters is that the real instinctive appreciations of humanity are sound ; but that civilised man, distrusting instincts for which he can formulate no cause, forces himself into the acceptance of theories which seem to provide him with reasons for admiration, and relieve him of the humiliation he feels at having to confess a strong preference without being able to justify it in words. Complete knowledge, again, takes him beyond this stage, and by explaining why great art affords a pleasure nothing else can give, enables him to enjoy that pleasure without reserve. In illustration of this, I may quote a curious passage from the Palmer manuscripts, in which Reynolds allows one to see the process of crushing art under its machinery with unusual clearness: "Well-coloured pictures," he says, "are in more esteem and sell for higher prices than in reason they appear to deserve, as colouring is an excellence *acknowledged to be of a lower rank** than the qualities of correctness, grace, and greatness of character. But in this instance, as in many others, the partial view of reason is corrected by the general practice of the world ; and among other reasons which may be brought forward for this conduct is the consideration, that colouring is an excellence which cannot be transferred by prints or drawings, and but very faintly by copies."

Reynolds left Rome for Florence early in May, 1752. He travelled by easy stages, sleeping often on the way. Foligno, Assisi, Perugia, and Arezzo were among his

* My italics.



PENELOPE BOOTHBY ("THE MOB CAP")

MRS. THWAITES

FLORENCE

halting places. His note-books still bear witness to what I venture to call his pumped up preference for the shallow art of the seventeenth century. At Perugia and Arezzo he ignores Giotto, passes by Perugino with a note—"An infinite number of his pictures about Perugia"—and concentrates his praise upon Baroccio and—of all people in the world—Vasari! On his doings in Florence I need not dwell. The list of things he "starred" in the Palazzo Pitti has already been quoted; it gives a fair idea of what he thought himself obliged to feel in Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella, and the other storehouses of art. Tom Taylor, no doubt, is quite right in saying that many of the notes imply no particular admiration for the works they deal with, but were made simply as technical memoranda; for at this period of his life Sir Joshua was a conscientious self-educator. But, apart from this, his *conveyed* theory of what was to be looked at and praised if possible, lies on the surface and cannot be mistaken.

The Florentine note-book in the British Museum contains a draft of a letter which suggests that Reynolds stayed longer in Florence than he originally intended. It is, moreover, very characteristic: "I remember," he says, "whenever my father discoursed on education, it was his constant practice to give this piece of advice: 'never to be in too great a hurry to show yourself to the world; but lay in first of all as strong a foundation of learning and knowledge as possible.' This may very well be applied to my present affairs, as, by being in too great a hurry, I shall perhaps ruin all, and arrive in London without reputation, and without anybody's having heard of me; when, by staying a month longer, my fame will arrive before me, and, as I said before, nobody will dare to find fault with me, since my conduct will have had

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the approbation of the greatest living painters. Then, again, on the other hand, there are such pressing reasons for my returning home, that I stand as between two people pulling me different ways ; so I stand still and do nothing. For the moment I take a resolution to set out and in a manner take leave of my friends, they call me a *madman* for missing those advantages I have mentioned." Why he should have thought that the delay of a month in starting would enable his reputation to reach home before him it is now difficult to discover. A mere addition of four weeks to an absence of two years could hardly add much to the capital of knowledge placed to his credit at home. If he had painted many pictures in Italy, to be exhibited in England, we could understand the terms of his letter. It might then have been prudent to delay his own arrival until they had acted as *avant coureurs* and had aroused public curiosity. This probably is the real explanation of his words, although the few things he painted in Rome were of no great importance, and the publicity they could then enjoy in England was scanty enough.

Some very interesting passages are to be found in the Florentine note-book :

"In the piazza of the Annunziata, admirable fountains by John of Bologna ; fifty heads—fins instead of whiskers. He had much the same genius as Michael Angelo."

"At a sculptor's shop, which was formerly the studio of John of Bologna, is a gess of one of the slaves belonging to the pedestal at Leghorn, and models for two of the figures belonging to the fountains in the Boboli Gardens ; admirable."

"A soldier with a naked dead body in his arms, antique (in feeling), and finely grouped, which the ancients seldom observed. John of Bologna has been superior to the whole world, ancient and modern, in that respect at least, as well in statues as in basso-relievos."

"In the chapel of San Lorenzo : The four recumbent figures by Michael Angelo, with a great duke likewise by him. When I am here, I think M. Angelo superior to the whole world for greatness of taste.

PORTRAITS IN ITALY

When I look on the figures of the fountains in the Boboli, of which I have seen the models, I think John of Bologna greater than M. A., and I believe it would be a difficult thing to determine who was the greatest sculptor. The same doubt in regard to the Vatican and the Capella Sistina."

"In the Carmine: A chapel of the Brancacci, painted by Masaccio. Raphael has taken his Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise from hence. The heads, according to the ancient custom, are portraits, and have a wonderful character of nature."

"We must arrive at what is unknown by what is known. Whoever seeks a shorter method only deceives himself, and whilst he flatters himself that he is in possession of the art, is embracing a cloud, and produces only monsters and chimeras."

"In Raffaele there is nothing of the affectation of painting, neither dark nor light—no indications of affected contrasts—no affected masses of light and shadow. He is the medium. Annibal Caracci too wild: ditto Michael Angelo: Domenichino too tame: Guido too effeminate."

"Hone says I look like the Altar of the Jesuits lighted up."

"Gentlemen and Brethren—Hone and Reynolds greeting."

These last two entries show that during his stay in Florence, Reynolds was on very intimate terms with a man who was afterwards to become his malignant and most unchivalrous enemy. The phrase, "Gentlemen and Brethren—Hone and Reynolds greeting," may have been noted down as a happy thought for the commencement of some joint invitation from the pair. One hopes, in view of Hone's later behaviour, that it was never used. Reynolds may have painted Hone's portrait in Florence, but no such picture can now be traced. That Joseph Wilton, the sculptor, sat to him, we know. The picture is now in the possession of Mr. Wilton Chambers, and is one of the best of the early works. Wilton was a well-known personage, and when Reynolds wrote the letter I have quoted, he may possibly have been counting on the effect of the portrait in exciting interest about himself when it was seen

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in London. That the friendship with Wilton was kept up in after years is proved by the canvas in the National Portrait Gallery, on which John Francis Rigaud, R.A., has combined the portraits of Wilton, Reynolds, and Chambers.

Reynolds left Florence on July 4, 1752, after a stay of two months. He travelled to Venice by way of Bologna, Modena, Parma, Mantua, and Ferrara—Castelfranco he left unvisited. On this journey the things by which he was chiefly attracted were, naturally enough, the Correggios at Parma. Between the master of the "San Girolamo" and himself there was an affinity stronger, perhaps, than we can trace between any other two painters so far apart in time, place, and surroundings. It is true that the example took time to produce its effect. It was not until a good many years after his return to England that the palette of Reynolds blossomed into those child portraits and other playful creations over which the spirit of Correggio seems to hover. In his note-book we find :

"The Duomo (Parma): The 'Cupola,' by Correggio, and angels in stone colour;" "The 'Holy Family with St. Jerome.' It gave me as great a pleasure as I ever received from looking on any picture. The airs of the heads, expression, and colouring, are in the utmost perfection. 'Tis very highly finished: no giallo in the flesh. The shadows seem to be added afterwards with a thin colour made of oil and lead. Outline to the face, especially the Virgin's, the lips, etc., not seen. The red mixed with the white of the face imperceptibly—all broad."

Another reference to Correggio in the Palmer manuscripts :

"The greatly celebrated picture of the 'Holy Family' by Correggio, at Parma, was offered to Lord Orford for £3000. . . . I, who have seen the picture, am far from thinking the price unreasonable."

At Mantua and Ferrara, Reynolds made no notes. He never alludes to Padua in his pocket-book, but as there is

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a night unaccounted for between his departure from Ferrara and his arrival in Venice, he probably slept there. In Venice he arrived on July 24, and there he stayed three weeks.

In spite of what he says in his pocket-books, in his Discourses, in his notes to Fresnoy, and elsewhere, we may safely call Venice the Mecca of his pilgrimage. It was there that he made acquaintance with the men who were to stir his real æsthetic sympathies to their depths, and to suggest the ideals after which he strove for the rest of his life. The notes he took in Venice are particularly copious. They are printed in full both by Leslie and Taylor and by Cotton, to whom I may refer those who wish to study them in detail. It may be well, however, to print once more an interesting passage in which he describes the method he took to avail himself of Venetian principles :

“When I observed an extraordinary effect of light and shade in any picture, I took a leaf out of my pocket-book, and darkened every part of it in the same gradation of light and shade as the picture, leaving the white paper untouched to represent the light, and this without any attention to the subject, or to the drawing of the figures. A few trials of this kind will be sufficient to give their conduct in the management of their lights. After a few experiments, I found the paper (? papers) blotted nearly alike. Their general practice appeared to be to allow not above a quarter of the picture for the light, including in this portion both the principal and the secondary lights ; another quarter to be kept as dark as possible ; and the remaining half kept in mezzotint or half shadow. Rubens seems to have admitted rather more light than a quarter, and Rembrandt much less, scarcely an eighth ; by this conduct Rembrandt’s light is extremely brilliant, but it costs too much ; the rest of the picture is sacrificed to this one object. That light will certainly appear the brightest which is surrounded with the greatest quantity of shade, supposing equal skill in the artist.

“By this means you may likewise remark the various forms and shapes of those lights, as well as the objects on which they are flung ; whether a figure, or the sky, or a white napkin, animals, or utensils, often introduced for this purpose only. It may be observed likewise what portion is strongly relieved and what portion is united with its ground ; for it is

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necessary that some part (though a small one is sufficient) should be sharp and cutting against its ground, whether it be light on a dark, or dark on a light ground, in order to give firmness and distinctness to the work ; if, on the other hand, it is relieved on every side, it will appear as if inlaid on its ground.

“Such a blotted paper, held at a distance from the eye, will strike the spectator as something excellent for the disposition of light and shadow, though it does not distinguish whether it is a history, a portrait, a landscape, dead game, or anything else ; for the same principles extend to every branch of the art.”

Here, perhaps, Reynolds was going more deeply into the matter than he thought. Had his “blotted papers” been blotted accurately in the colours as well as tones and masses of the originals, he would have simply been extracting from Titian, Paolo, and the rest, all that makes their pictures so great as works of art, leaving the scientific and historical elements behind.

In his Venetian notes generally he repeats the line of conduct he followed in Rome and Florence. He concentrates his attention upon those painters who were highest in the world’s esteem at the moment. He only once alludes to Giovanni Bellini, as the author of “a picture of much merit” in Sta. Maria Maggiore. He ignores him at the Frari, in S. Zaccaria, in S. Giobbe. Giorgione he mentions but once ; Carpaccio, of course, he ignores. The list of those he selects for honour is so short that I may as well give it in full. His favourite seems to have been Paolo Veronese ; after him come Titian, Tintoretto, and —Salviati ! Bassano, Palma Vecchio, and Paris Bordone come next. Luca Giordano, Pietro della Vecchia, Varotari, and Guido bring up the rear with one mention each. The following note on Tintoretto’s “Marriage of Cana” is a fair example of his more elaborate memoranda :

“One sees by this picture the great use Tintoretto made of his paste-board houses and wax figures for the distribution of his masses. This



LADY MARY O'BRIEN

VENICE

picture has the most natural light and shadow that can be imagined. All the light comes from the several windows over the table. The woman who stands and leans forward to have a glass of liquor is of great service; she covers part of the table-cloth, so that there is not too much white in the picture, and by means of her strong shadows she throws back the table, and makes the perspective more agreeable. But that her figure might not appear like a dark inlaid figure on a light ground, her face is light, her hair masses with the ground, and the light of her handkerchief is whiter than the table-cloth. The shadows blue ultr. strong. Shadows of the table-cloth blueish; all the other colours of the draperies are like those of a washed drawing. One sees, indeed, a little lake drapery here and there, and one strong yellow, he that receives the light. This picture has nothing of mistiness: the floor is light and oily grey; the table-cloth in comparison is blue, and the figures are relieved from it strongly by being dark; but of no colour scarce. The figure of the woman who pours out liquor, though her shadows are very dark, her lights, particularly on the knee, are lighter than the ground. All the women at the table make one mass of light."

The chief use of such a memorandum must have been to fix the impression received from the picture. It embodies no particular principle on which Reynolds could afterwards rely, although it might, no doubt, have come in useful as a justification for the patterns to which he was led by his own idiosyncrasy. He had, as we can see already, an almost pathetic respect for authority. A little later we come upon what looks more like a general rule:

"A figure, or figures, on a light ground; the upper part should be as light, if not lighter, than the ground, the lower part dark; having lights here and there. The ground [properly] dark—when the second mass of light is too great, interpose some dark figure to divide it in two."

Although, I fancy, it would not be difficult to match every Venetian picture which obeys this rule with one that does nothing of the kind, Reynolds himself kept it in memory, and we shall find many pictures in which he carries it out literally enough.

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On August 16, 1752, Reynolds left Venice and turned his face towards England. Northcote tells a story which seems to show that he had felt his absence more than we should have expected, and that his return was due as much to home sickness as to the necessity of beginning seriously to put money in his pocket. It seems that, being at the Venetian Opera House with some other Englishmen, a ballad was sung which had been popular when he was last in London, and that it affected the whole party to tears. The painter ordered his horses and set out, travelling by Padua, Brescia, Bergamo, Milan, and Turin. Between Turin and the Mt. Cenis he encountered his old master, Hudson, who was rushing to Rome, "merely to say he had been there." From the Mt. Cenis, he reached Paris by way of Lyons. There he parted company for a time with his companion and *protégé*, Giuseppe Marchi, the young Italian, picked up in Rome, who was afterwards to become famous as a scraper of mezzotints. Finding that he had arrived at his last six louis, Reynolds gave two of them to Marchi, telling him to reach Paris as best he could, while he himself went on by diligence. Marchi walked the whole way, rejoining his master when the latter had been eight days in the capital. Reynolds stayed a month in Paris, although, apparently, he found nothing in the French School of the time to satisfy his artistic appetite. "The French," he says, "cannot boast of above one painter of a truly just and correct taste, free of any mixture of affectation or bombast." It would have been pleasant to believe that in these words Reynolds was alluding to Chardin, who, in this very year, 1752, had received a pension from the French king. But of opinion Reynolds was no pioneer, and his next words, "and he was always proud to own from what models he had formed his style—to wit, Raffaele and the Antique," show that some one

HIS RETURN HOME

very different from the delightful and most unaffected painter of still life—and of the life which comes nearest to “still”—was in his mind. No doubt, Tom Taylor was right in supposing the allusion was to Eustache le Sueur.

Hudson, who must have seen Italy in a month, joined his former apprentice in Paris. The pair travelled together to London, where they arrived on the 16th of October, 1752.

CHAPTER II

1752—1768



REYNOLDS was away from England three years and five months, of which two years and eight months were spent in Rome. In my first chapter I have professed, like others who have dealt with the painter's career, to describe what he did during that considerable absence. But, in truth, there are gaps. His doings with his brush during his *wanderjähre* would easily go into a few months; while such study as we may infer from the contents of his note-books could not have made any very exhaustive calls on his time or energies. On the other hand, we get a few significant hints at jollification of one kind and another. I fancy that if we knew the whole truth about his Roman days, we should find that a good many were passed in Goldsmith's fashion rather than in Johnson's, and that, like other young men, he there had that look into life at its fullest, without which few of us can settle down into the serenity with which Reynolds watched the passage of his last forty years. During his absence, he seems to have written very few letters; scarcely any have come down to us. Beyond his pocket-books and the few pictures painted abroad, the only evidence as to how he lived is contained in the character of his friends and a few anecdotes which

PLYMOUTH AGAIN

have coasted round the gulf of oblivion. All these point in one direction, and justify the suspicion that plenty of cakes and ale were mixed up with his study of the "great style" in art. The pictures he painted, few as they are, would enable him to live beside the young Englishmen of family and their bear-leaders, with whom much of his time was passed. In this connection, a well-known dictum of Hudson's has some significance. The first portrait Reynolds painted after his return to London was the "Giuseppe Marchi," in a turban, which belongs to the Royal Academy. On seeing it Hudson exclaimed, "Reynolds, you don't paint as well as you did before you went to Italy," an opinion which has usually been put down to jealousy. And yet it had not a little justification. A comparison between the Marchi and the portrait of the painter himself in which he shades his eyes with his hand, will show that, although the former is more brilliant in colour, and must have been much more brilliant when it was new, the latter is better conceived, more soundly painted, and, in short, a more completely successful creation. Even now, with all our gratitude to Sir Joshua for the splendid pages he has added to the history of English art, we cannot entirely refuse to allow that Hudson was right, and that, in fact, Reynolds did *paint* better before he subjected himself to the temptations of Italy than he did immediately afterwards.

Northcote tells us that when Reynolds returned to London, "he found his health in such an indifferent state as to judge it prudent to pay a visit to his native air." He went down to Plymouth, where he stayed three months. There he painted, we are told, but two portraits: one of a young lady, the other of his physician, Dr. John Mudge, the son of that Zachariah Mudge who had been one of his first friends and encouragers. This

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portrait is still in the possession of the Mudge family. It is now little more than a monochrome, and shows that Reynolds began his experimental methods very soon indeed after Venice had dazzled his eyes. To the biographer, the chief importance of this sojourn in Plymouth has to do with Sir Joshua's domestic relations rather than with his art. When he left England, in 1749, his youngest surviving sister, Frances, was only nineteen, so that his acquaintance with her, as a woman of formed character, dates from some years later. Attracted no doubt by the amiability which was afterwards to make her such a favourite with Johnson and others who were not affected by her domestic peculiarities, Reynolds invited her to share the home he was about to set up in London. The painter himself seems at first to have thought of settling in Plymouth, at least for a time. But Leslie tells us—he does not say on what authority—that Lord Edgcumbe strongly urged him to establish himself without delay in the capital. However this may be, he returned to London early in 1753, and took rooms in St. Martin's Lane, which was then the headquarters of art. The house, No. 104, had, no doubt, a regular studio, for it had been previously occupied by Hogarth's father-in-law, Sir James Thornhill, by Van Nost, the sculptor, and by Francis Hayman, the master of Gainsborough. "Just behind the house," says Smith, "upon the site of the present Meeting House for Friends* . . . stood the first studio of Roubiliac. There, among other works, he executed the famous statue of Handel for Vauxhall Gardens." The entry which led to it was then known as St. Peter's Court. When Roubiliac left, his studio was taken for the famous drawing academy, to which Hogarth made over the casts and properties he had inherited from

* This still stands where it did when Smith wrote.



HIS PUPILS

Thornhill. The establishment of this academy marked the first definite stage in the process which was to end in the birth of the great institution which has dominated British art for nearly a century and a half. In spite of his proximity, Reynolds does not seem to have helped in the work of the school. He was a member and paid his quota, but we do not hear of him in connection with the first steps of any of the young painters who there received their education. All his life he was to be a bad master. Northcote, half a century later, was to be able to say that of all Sir Joshua's pupils—and many, of sorts, passed through his studio—he, Northcote, was the only one who had ever done anything. "Reynolds," he says, "certainly was very deficient in making scholars; for although he had a great many under him who lived in his house for years, yet their names we never hear of, and he gave himself not the least trouble about them or their fate. It was his opinion that a genius could not be depressed nor any instruction make a painter of a dunce. So he left them to chance and their own endeavours. . . . Most of his scholars could never get a decent livelihood, but lived in poverty and died in debt, miserable to themselves and a disgrace to the art. I alone escaped this severe fate."* Such indifference was thoroughly characteristic. Sir Joshua's nature, easy-going, imperturbable, eminently clubbable as it was, was essentially self-contained. He enjoyed the company of his friends and loved to have men of social talent about his table, but he was incapable of the busy-ness over details and preparations in general which marks the man who is really altruistic and solicitous for the well-being of those with whom he comes in contact. Reynolds would give a pupil the run of his house, would let him copy what he liked and learn as much

* Northcote: "Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds."

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as he could from his fellow scholars ; he would even condescend, now and then, to require his assistance in a drapery or accessory ; but to lay down his own preoccupations and to put himself in the place of a young man wishing to penetrate the secrets of art, was entirely outside his scheme of life. We need, therefore, feel no surprise that he took no practical share in the various educational experiments which preceded and accompanied the foundation of the Royal Academy.

When Reynolds appeared in London, sluggishness of invention was the great defect of English painters. Many painted well enough, and would have turned out pictures capable of exciting a permanent interest if they had but spurred their brains, and had realised that only a man with supreme æsthetic gifts can afford to depend solely on his methods of expression. Each painter had a few patterns, which he repeated with as little misgiving as a *lion comique* feels over a popular song. Reynolds thus describes them : “ They have got a set of postures which they apply to all persons indiscriminately ; the consequence of which is that all their pictures look like so many sign-post paintings ; and if they have a history or family to paint, the first thing they do is to look over their commonplace book, containing sketches which they have stolen from various pictures ; then they search their prints over, and pilfer one figure from one print and another from a second ; but never take the trouble to think for themselves.” No doubt the less able among them actually did the things Reynolds here describes, but the want of mental initiative among the more gifted was the natural result of the general slackness of the times. A man like Richardson, who thought and wrote so well, and did occasionally produce such an excellent piece of art as the portrait of Anne Oldfield engraved by Edward Fisher, must have painted so dully on the whole

HIS VARIETY

through the want of such external stimulant as only emulation and a certain measure of appreciation can give. No man was ever more stereotyped than Gainsborough in what I may call his hack work. To the ordinary sitter, who came for his portrait as he now goes to some fashionable photographer, he gave no thought at all. He planted his head in the middle of a 30 × 25 canvas, whisked on his coat, stuck his hat under his left arm, swept about him an oval band of umber and black, and held out his hand for his fee. But within Gainsborough a supreme artist lay in wait, so that when a beautiful woman or a man with a stimulating personality appeared on the threshold of his painting room, they had the same effect on his imagination as the bellows on a blacksmith's fire. When Reynolds came to London, however, Gainsborough was still obscure among the Suffolk lanes, and the only English painter who was feeding art with thought was Hogarth. Many others were painting soundly indeed, and with considerable knowledge of their craft, but stolidly and without making the slightest effort to show that they were thinking as they sat at their easels. Reynolds was the first English painter to keep his fancy alert and to provide every picture which issued from his studio with a little soul, often, of course, humble enough, of its own. "Damn him," said Gainsborough, "how various he is!" and when I come to deal at length with his art I shall try to show that in this matter of variety, of never flagging invention and contrivance, Reynolds was unique among the painters of the eighteenth century.

Reynolds was not long content with rooms in St. Martin's Lane. Before many years had passed, he moved a hundred yards to the north, or rather north-west, to the house near the corner of Great Newport Street which is now occupied by Mr. Rutley, the picture cleaner. There

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the brother and sister first embarked on house-keeping for themselves, and there Reynolds felt himself sufficiently secure to raise his prices to the highest level of the day. These were : for a head, twelve, for a half-length twenty-four, and for a full-length forty-eight, guineas. Not many years afterwards the tariff rose to fifteen, thirty, and sixty guineas respectively. Allowing for the diminution in the value of money, and for other matters which have to be taken into account—such as the different ideas then prevailing as to how far it was reasonable to draw upon pupils, drapery men, &c., for assistance—the earning power of a fashionable portrait painter did not differ materially from what it is now. Reynolds was never left in any doubt as to his success from the commercial standpoint. He was no sooner established in St. Martin's Lane, than sitters flocked to his door. Probably the first were sent by the various influential friends he had made in Rome and in his native district. Among the portraits he finished during the four or five years which elapsed before he removed to Newport Street, we already find the names of a large number of the leaders of English Society. In 1755, less than two years after his arrival in London, we learn from his pocket-book—the first of the series—that he had no fewer than 120 different sitters. In 1757, the total, including one dog for whom an appointment is entered, had risen to 184. I have taken the trouble to count the actual sittings booked ; they amount to 677, an amazing number for a young artist of whom no one had ever heard five years before. “The year 1758,” say Leslie and Taylor, “according to Northcote, was the very busiest time of Reynolds's whole life, and the pocket-book completely confirms him. It contains the startling number of 150 sitters.” So it does ; but we have seen that what the joint authors call a startling total represents, in fact, a falling off



LADY CAROLINE PRICE

SIR JULIUS WERNHER, BART.

HIS EARLY SUCCESS

of more than thirty from the previous year. The painter's fifth year in London was his record from this point of view. No wonder he raised his prices, and arranged to produce less and earn more. The truth is, that in the eighteenth century the demand for good portraits was far in excess of the supply. Every man who could turn out a good likeness and give his clients the looks of gentlefolks was sure of a living, while to those who could add a touch of art, sitters flocked in crowds. Hogarth was not popular as a face painter, but then Hogarth, with all his genius, could neither catch nor create the air of breeding. He had none of the gift with which Nature had endowed Reynolds, Romney, and, with a still more lavish generosity, Gainsborough, of clothing men and women in a distinction they had never enjoyed on canvas since the death of Van Dyck.

The much abused eighteenth century made curiously few mistakes in art. Its excellent architects were allowed to cover town and country with charming houses, and dignified, if not very churchy, churches. Its painters of ability won fame, at least, if not always fortune, the one serious exception being Richard Wilson, whose character fought hard against his success. Barry, no doubt was neglected, but he deserved neglect. Not only was his character detestable; his genius, like that of poor Haydon, was nine parts ambition to one of ability. Sculptors? Well, you require goods to make a market, and yet the one English imaginative sculptor was not so entirely ignored as it is the fashion to make out, while men like Wilton, Bacon, and Nollekens received exactly the patronage they deserved. England, no doubt, is an inartistic nation. Our continental friends tell us so, and we accept their verdict with a humility which is almost pathetic. And yet from the days of Holbein to our own, we have recognised

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genius when we saw it with a readiness to which no other country can show a parallel. No clever foreigner has left our shores with empty pockets. No great artist of our own has been left to eat out his heart in starvation. Some, no doubt, have sounded the depths of distress, but not for want of employment. Constable was an innovator, speaking a new language, and yet he was accepted from the first by his fellow artists, and by a large enough section of the public to make his position secure. To find a parallel in our artistic history to the sufferings of Jean François Millet, we have to turn to men like Haydon, who clamoured for a recognition he had never earned, or to a spendthrift like Morland, who died in a spunging house under a hail of cheques. That commercial England misunderstood art, and long failed to realise how much her own prosperity depended on the satisfaction of the æsthetic instinct, is of course true. But those are the ways, not of the Anglo-Saxon race, but of commerce. In speaking of Sir Joshua's start in life, I called the profession of painting the most hazardous of all. I ought to have qualified the assertion, for the risk lies not so much in failure of opportunity—as it does, for instance, in the law—as in the impossibility of foretelling the outcome of the most apparently promising bent towards art. Facility has little or nothing to do with creative power, and yet it is on the evidence of facility, or at any rate of mechanical aptitude, that the decision has to be made whether the boy or girl shall take up art or not. The risk incurred by Reynolds was that of turning out a Hazlitt. There was no danger of his meeting with the fate of Millet.

The promptness of our painter's success with the upper ranks of English Society was partly due, no doubt, to the good offices of his friend, Lord Edgcumbe. "He," we are told by Mason, "persuaded many of the first nobility

HIS FULL LENGTH OF KEPPEL

to sit to him for their pictures ; and he (? Reynolds) applied to such of them as had the strongest features, and whose likeness therefore it was the easiest to hit." Lord Edgcumbe's recommendation, however, could not have helped his *protégé* much had the latter failed to justify it by achievement. Happily, an opportunity came pat upon the moment, of which he made the most. His friend Keppel commissioned a full-length portrait, and Reynolds so carried out the order that the picture became a landmark in the history of European art.

Modern painting was born in England towards the middle of the eighteenth century, and in its inauguration this "Keppel" by Reynolds must divide honours with the moralities of Hogarth. The tradition which had persisted, with a few notable exceptions, from the days of Van Eyck to those of Nattier, Van Loo, Largillière, and such Englishmen as Knapton, had suddenly to give way to a new theory as to how a sitter should be treated. It may seem fantastic to bracket Van Eyck with a painter like Nattier, but a little consideration will show that in a sense they belonged to the same faction, that is to say, that if Van Eyck had lived in Paris in 1750, he would have conceived a portrait much in the same way as Nattier, and so, *mutatis mutandis*, with the Frenchman. The conscious desire of both was to *reproduce* their sitter, choosing a moment when he or she was thinking of nothing in particular, and surrounding him with his familiar properties carefully marshalled into a design. No doubt there were times when a more complex idea intruded. Van Eyck, for instance, meant to tell a story when he conceived the Arnolfini group in the National Gallery. Titian's "Charles V. at Mühlberg," is, in a sense, a dramatic picture. That is to say, it represents the Emperor doing something on a

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famous occasion. "La petite Pelisse," of Rubens, is dramatic in another way, and similar instances could be found in the work of Velazquez, Van Dyck, and one or two of Titian's contemporaries in Venice. But between all these and the idea of Reynolds there is a notable distinction. The English painter did not merely set his hero among significant surroundings. He took his keynote from him, portraying him when some characteristic power or passion was actually at work, and so endeavoured to give the spectator the deepest possible glance into both the possibilities of his character and the facts of his career. The painter's various biographers knew what they were doing when they laid such stress on the portrait of Keppel. It was not Sir Joshua's first attempt at dramatic presentment; witness his own early portrait of himself, painting; but it was the first to attract any wide notice and to awaken the narrow public of the time to the dawning of a new era on English art. We must allow that in some ways it is not among the painter's unqualified successes. It must always have been tight in execution and curiously uninteresting in colour, while it has darkened greatly with time. As a design,* however, it seems to me inferior only to such superbly happy conceptions as the "Lady Crosbie" and the "Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, with her baby." It completely achieved the object with which, in some degree at least, it was painted. It turned all eyes upon Reynolds, and powerfully helped the insistence of Lord Edgcumbe in directing the stream of patrons into St. Martin's Lane.

Some two years before the first meeting between

* Leslie declares that, as a fact, the attitude was taken from a statue, and that he himself had seen the sketch on which it was founded. As he does not name the original, it is difficult to check his statement, but there is nothing improbable about it.



HIS ORIGINALITY

Reynolds and Keppel, the latter had been posted to the command of H.M.S. *Maidstone*, a fifty-gun ship, which he had had the ill luck to lose on the coast of France. He had run her ashore while pursuing a large French vessel and trusting to the chase for the depth of water. The *Maidstone* broke up, but Keppel, by dint of well-directed energy, saved most of his crew. He was court-martialled, of course, but acquitted with honour. Reynolds took his motive from this occurrence. He painted Keppel afoot on the stormy coast, moving energetically and giving the orders which minimised the disaster. The action of his figure is excellent, from the æsthetic as well as the dramatic standpoint, and Keppel's history gives it the *à propos* such conceptions too often lack.

Reynolds was a bold, though legitimate, borrower. He did not pilfer; he simply followed the example of all his great predecessors, in making use of the fittest idea which occurred to him, whether it was suggested by some previous user or whether it sprang unaided out of his own brain, like Pallas from the head of Zeus. The real and only touchstone of lawful plagiarism is the power to assimilate, and perhaps the finest instance of triumphant emergence from such a test is the use Raphael made of Filippino's "St. Paul." Filippino's apostle is addressing a single individual, so that attitude, voice, and gesture had all to be more or less restrained; Raphael's "St. Paul" is holding the attention of a crowd, so that increased energy was everywhere required. This Raphael gives with extraordinary felicity, combining it with deference to the originator in such minor points as the fall of his draperies. In short, Raphael lifts Filippino's figure to the occasion, and thereby sanctifies his theft. Reynolds, in his borrowings, was at a disadvantage from which Raphael was free. In the nature of things his plagiarisms were from artists

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as great as himself. But even so, he contrives to justify what he does. His most audacious proceeding of the sort was, perhaps, his requisition of Michelangelo's "Joel" to be the matrix of his own "Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse." And yet, before the latter, we feel no call to pretend that its success was due to any one but Reynolds.

It is of no use attempting, in such a volume as this, to follow Reynolds through every step of his career. Neither, happily, is it necessary, for Sir Joshua, unlike Gainsborough, has had his Boswell, and all the known facts of his life are set out with charming discursiveness in the volumes of Leslie and Taylor. I may therefore be permitted to adopt a more sketchy method, and to confine myself to the broad masses as it were of the picture, dealing rather with results than causes, and being satisfied if, when all is done, I can leave a true impression of his personality, of his fortune in this world, and of the place he occupies in the history of art. So far, I have detailed his proceedings with some minuteness. He was in the making, and the process had to be shown. It was complete, in one sense, within a year of his final migration to London. After that he grew enormously as an artist, but his place in London life was determined at a stroke. He stepped at once into the part of the most conspicuous painter of his day; he was accepted, socially, by the wits, the men of fashion, and last but very far from least, by the beauties and great ladies. He can never have known an hour of anxiety about ways and means. Responsible only for one unmarried sister, he found his studio besieged by clients as soon as it was ready to receive them, and he had every reason to suppose that his capacity would be equal to all the demands the world could make upon it. The painter who can at once realise his conceptions as an artist and win by their help the means to satisfy

PORTRAIT OF LORD HOLDERNESS

the rest of his ambitions, leads the ideal life. It is impossible to imagine a happier lot beneath the stars than his. The one reflection to interfere with his felicity is the knowledge that some day death will come to end it. Northcote told one of the visitors—I forget which—who frequented his studio for the sake of his conversation, that he could imagine no more desirable a heaven than to be forgotten by Providence at his easel, and to exist for ever in his little painting room, working on those enormous canvases which offered such an amusing contrast with his own bulk and the size of his studio. Is there any other human pursuit of which its professors can honestly say as much ?

Soon after the "Keppel" was finished, Reynolds began a portrait of two young men, Lords Huntingdon and Stormont, on one canvas. They had just returned from the Grand Tour, and were making some little stir in Society.* The present whereabouts of this portrait seems to be unknown ; at any rate, I have failed to trace it, and Graves and Cronin have succeeded no better. It was a success in its day, and led to the painting of one which has a certain accidental importance in the long series of Sir Joshua's works. In Mason's *Anecdotes of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, published by Cotton, the poet tells us that upon seeing the picture of Lords Huntingdon and Stormont, Lord Holderness † was induced to sit for his portrait, and

* "There are new young lords, fresh and fresh ; two of them are much in vogue, Lord Huntingdon and Lord Stormont. I supped with them the other night at Lady Caroline Petersham's. The latter is most cried up, but he is the more reserved, seems shy and to have sense, but I should not think extreme ; yet it is not fair to judge a silent man at first. The other is very lively and agreeable."—Horace Walpole : letter to Montagu, December 6, 1753.

† Robert d'Arcy, 4th and last Earl of Holderness.

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that he (Mason) himself was present at every sitting. This gave him an opportunity of learning the painter's method at the time, which he thus describes :

“On his light-coloured canvas he had already laid a ground of white, where he meant to place the head, and which was still wet. He had nothing upon his palette but flake white, lake, and black; and without making any previous sketch or outline, he began with much celerity to scumble these pigments together, till he had produced, in less than an hour, a likeness sufficiently intelligible, yet withal, as might be expected, cold and pallid to the last degree. At the second sitting he added, I believe, to the other colours a little Naples yellow; but I do not remember that he used any vermilion, neither then or at the third trial; but it is to be noted that his Lordship had a countenance much heightened by scorbutic eruption. Lake alone might produce the carnation required. . . . His drapery was crimson velvet, copied from a coat he then wore, and apparently not only painted but glazed with lake, which has stood to this hour perfectly well, though the face, which, as well as the whole picture, was highly varnished before he sent it home, *very soon faded*, and soon after the forehead particularly cracked, almost to peeling off, which it would have done long since had not his pupil Doughty repaired it. I have described this portrait so particularly on account of my believing that he continued this mode of painting for many years.”

Here we see the result of Gandy's theory about cream or cheese. Reynolds prepared a bed as it were for his sitter's head, knowing how difficult it would be to give the desired impasto as he went along. If he had allowed his flake white to become hard before painting upon it, the subsequent work might have stood well enough. He would then have anticipated the contrivance relied on for an appearance of solidity by so many of the younger painters of to-day. As it was, the bed of white absorbed the glazing colours, and left a head which must have contrasted in a comically startling way with the scorbutic complexion of the original. Judging from results, Mason was quite right in saying that Reynolds persevered with this method for many years. Down to about 1770, we

LIOTARD

can trace portraits which have been built up in glazing colours on these thick slabs of preparation. In some instances they have faded into bluish-white ghosts, in others they have simply paled, while in a great many cases the lost carnations have been replaced with the brush or finger-tip of the restorer. It is very unusual to find a head painted in this fashion which has retained convincingly its original look. After 1770, or thereabouts, frightened, I suppose, by the accumulating evidence that his system was dangerous, he painted more solidly, practically confining his experiments to vehicles, a change which transferred the point of danger from the colour of his pictures to their tangible substance. Speaking roughly, Sir Joshua's early pictures darken, the works of his middle period fade, those of his late maturity crack. The productions of his first youth and of his old age stand best of all.

The first rivalry to excite the peculiar, quiet jealousy of Reynolds was that of the pastellist Liotard, who visited London about 1753. Liotard was a curious instance of the man of talent masquerading as a charlatan, a combination which is not so rare as one might think. He was no genius, but he understood his business, and his works, whether in oil, pastel, water-colour or enamel, show none of the slightness and pretence which mark the impostor. The hackneyed "Chocolatière" of the Dresden Gallery is an excellent piece of technique. Liotard, however, was not content to base on his merits alone his claim to the loaves and fishes of England and other countries into which his wanderings took him. He dressed himself like a Turk, and wore a beard to his waist, albeit a citizen of the least oriental of nations. It might be argued that this proceeding was an evidence of modesty, and that Liotard made a guy of himself because he thought his powers insufficient

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to attract notice without some such aid ! However that might be, he provoked Reynolds into one of his rare but significant displays of temper. "The only merit," he said, "in Liotard's pictures is neatness, which, as a general rule, is the characteristic of a low genius, or, rather, no genius at all. His pictures are just what ladies do when they paint for amusement ; nor is there any person, how poor soever their talents may be, but in a very few years, by dint of practice, may possess themselves of every qualification in the art which this great man has got." Liotard produced many chalk portraits during the two years he spent in England, and yet his works are not often met with.* I have alluded to him here chiefly because the animus shown by Reynolds in the pronouncement just quoted seems to me characteristic, and not the sporadic outbreak it is called by most of the painter's biographers. When Reynolds found a competitor ranging up alongside, his behaviour was never genial. He did not often give himself away so completely as when he allowed his distaste for Liotard to get the better of his prudence, but in all his dealings with those who could in any sense be considered his rivals, we find a certain reserve and inability to expand combined with an obvious effort to be just. Reynolds had a good deal in common with an Englishman even more famous than himself ; I mean the great Duke of Wellington. In both men, a cool heart and a slightly jealous temperament were kept more or less in order by brains which perceived the right path and did their best to follow it.

The most momentous of all the friendships formed by Reynolds began soon after his migration to Newport

* The best I know are a pair at Lord Roden's, at Tullymore Park, county Down.



LAVINIA, COUNTESS SPENCER

EARL SPENCER, K.G.

FIRST MEETING WITH JOHNSON

Street. I mean, of course, his friendship with Johnson. Boswell's account of their first meeting has been quoted so often that one feels a little diffident at printing it once more, but to paraphrase Boswell is a sin, so here it is:—

“When Johnson lived in Castle Street, Cavendish Square, he used often to visit two ladies who lived opposite to Reynolds, Miss Cotterells, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. Reynolds used also to visit there, and thus they met. Mr. Reynolds . . . had, from the first reading of his *Life of Savage*, conceived a very high admiration of Johnson's powers of writing. His conversation no less delighted him, and he cultivated his acquaintance with the laudable zeal of one who was ambitious of general improvement. Sir Joshua, indeed, was lucky enough, at their very first meeting, to make a remark which was so much above the commonplace style of conversation, that Johnson at once perceived that Reynolds had the habit of thinking for himself. The ladies were regretting the death of a friend, to whom they owed great obligations, upon which Reynolds observed: ‘You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from the burden of gratitude.’

“They were shocked a little at this alleviating suggestion as too selfish, but Johnson defended it in his clear and forcible manner, and was much pleased with the mind, the fair view of human nature, which it exhibited, like some of the *Reflections* of Rochefoucault. The consequence was that he went home with Reynolds, and supped with him.”

If my view of Sir Joshua's character be correct, this famous observation sprang from something more intimate than a “fair view of human nature.” Like all unnecessary passions, gratitude is rare, and from what we know of Reynolds he would be at once the last man to feel it and the first to mentally deplore his own insensibility. So to him the death of a benefactor would mean release from the burden of affecting a virtue he did not possess. His remark to the Cotterells probably sprang to his lips because it was true, and was allowed to go beyond them for the sake of its epigrammatic flavour. The story which follows it in Boswell has a different but still unamiable touch,

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and seems to hint that the Cotterells' drawing-room had a bad effect on the two great men :—

“ Sir Joshua told me a pleasant characteristic anecdote of Johnson about the time of their first acquaintance. When they were one evening together at Miss Cotterells', the then Duchess of Argyll and another lady of high rank came in. Johnson, thinking that the Miss Cotterells were too much engrossed by them, and that he and his friend were neglected as low company, of whom they were somewhat ashamed, grew angry, and resolved to shock their supposed pride by making their great visitors imagine they were low indeed. He addressed himself in a loud tone to Mr. Reynolds, saying: ‘How much do you think you and I could get in a week if we were to work as hard as we could?’—as if they had been common mechanics.”

The friendship between the two men soon became an intimacy. In character each was in a sense the complement of the other, while in matters intellectual Johnson supplied the trenchancy, the power to “finish the ball”—to take a figure from tennis—which was wanting in Reynolds. The intellect of the latter was of the class which perceives arguments and can set out with some lucidity the pros and cons of any question, but finds itself benumbed, as it were, when a definite conclusion, a decision as to whether the ayes or the noes have it, has to be come to. To such a mind the cock-sureness of Johnson would be at once a relief and an amusement. To continue the tennis metaphor, while Reynolds was elaborately returning the ball, unable to settle the matter one way or another, his antagonist Johnson would step in with a smashing volley into the grille and make an end. This reading of the two characters may seem to be inconsistent with some of the facts, but I think the contradiction is more apparent than real. Johnson used to consult Reynolds, and perhaps defer to his opinion in certain matters of taste, but when the question to be decided was on which side of an argu-

WILKES

ment lay the decisive consideration, it was Johnson's hawk-eye that pounced upon it.

Johnson was living in Gough Square when Reynolds made his acquaintance. The intercourse between them was kept up chiefly by the Doctor's visits to Newport Street, where he very soon took Frances Reynolds—a being "very near to purity itself," as he called her—to his heart. Johnson's hours were so irregular and his notions of the duration of a call so generous, that Reynolds would sometimes leave him to be entertained by his sister while he went about his own business. On one occasion he penetrated to the Doctor's lair in Fleet Street, in company with Roubiliac, the sculptor, who wanted to *décrocher* an epitaph. The pair were well received, but when the sculptor began to hold forth in his flowery French style: "Come, come, Sir," broke in Johnson, "let us have no more of this bombastic rhodomontade, but let me know in simple language the name, character, and quality of the person whose epitaph you intend to have me write." The "gentle, complying, and bland" Reynolds was himself to suffer a good many assaults from the Johnsonian club, but he had the knack of an effective counter, with—shall I say?—his own umbrella.

Among other friendships which began at about the same time as that with Johnson, were those with Garrick and Burke. Goldsmith was a later acquisition, the introduction taking place, probably, in 1762. John Wilkes and his two brothers were older friends, dating back apparently to the days when Reynolds was in Hudson's studio. The painter's intimacy with the demagogue has perturbed some of his biographers, who have found it inconsistent with his general character. I must confess that I can see nothing strange about it. The reader who has persevered with me thus far will see that, in my view, Sir Joshua was

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a man without deep-seated prejudices of any kind. He took people as he found them, and was ready to extract such enjoyment as he could out of any one who did not threaten his position or trouble his serenity. He was essentially a spectator. The strifes of existence amused him as shows; it was outside his scheme of life to jump into the arena and lay about him with his own fists. A righteous indignation was not among his emotions. It would never occur to him to shut his door in the face of the editor of the *North Briton*, or even of the author of the *Essay on Woman*. He would enjoy his society much in the same way as he enjoyed that of the Nelly O'Briens, the Kitty Fishers, and the Polly Kennedys. Such a temperament has its advantages. It cuts both ways, and frees its owner from temptation to evil as well as to active benevolence. Johnson called Reynolds the most invulnerable man he knew, "the man with whom, if you should quarrel, you would find the most difficulty how to abuse." The famous lines in Goldsmith's "Retaliation" are little more than an amplification of this idea, and with everything else told us by the painter's contemporaries, they build up a personality which was sure to delight in such a companion as Wilkes.

Other friends of these early years in London included the members of the Edgcumbe, Keppel, and Eliot families and their connections, as well as a larger number of his brother artists than we afterwards find among the painter's intimates. The friendship with Hudson was kept up, and engagements are entered in the pocket-books with Jack Astley, Frank Hayman, Joseph Wilton, Francis Cotes, and Allan Ramsay. The favourite among all these was Ramsay, whose agreeable manners and balanced intellect seem to have appealed very strongly to Reynolds. As an artist, Ramsay was spoilt by pure want of self-confidence. He has left



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ALLAN RAMSAY

things which were scarcely excelled in the eighteenth century for grace of conception and delicacy of execution, such, for instance, as the portrait of his wife in the Edinburgh Gallery. Unfortunately, when a happy design occurred to him, he was afraid to make the most of it, and left it too often in a state of tantalising incompleteness. Perhaps this deficiency helped him with Reynolds : certain it is that when Ramsay was appointed painter to the King on the accession of George III., Reynolds showed no symptom of disappointment or jealousy.

The year 1764 was in many ways the most important in the painter's life before the foundation of the Royal Academy. The list of sitters, though by no means the longest, is perhaps the most remarkable to be found in the pocket-books. It shows how thoroughly Reynolds carried out his policy, or rather, perhaps, obeyed his impulse, to stand outside the political and social conflicts of his day. I cannot do better than quote Tom Taylor's sketch of how the twelve months passed in the painter's studio.

"It was the year of the great Wilkes agitation, and of the famous debate on the legality of general warrants . . . when the House sat, on successive nights, eleven hours, seventeen hours, thirteen hours; when 'votes were brought down in flannels and blankets, till the floor of the House looked like the Pool of Bethesda'; when the 'patriotesses' of the anti-Bute party and the great ladies of the Court faction sat out those protracted fights night after night till the March daylight peeped in at the windows; or, when they came in such shoals that admission to the pigeon-holes was denied them, established themselves in one of the Speaker's rooms, dined, and stayed there till twelve, 'playing loo while their dear country was at stake.' We find the leaders of these Amazonian cohorts, both on the Opposition and the Court side, among Reynolds' sitters for this year or the year immediately preceding—the Duchess of Richmond, Lady Sandes, Lady Rockingham, and Mrs. Fitzroy on the side of the Opposition; Lady Mary Coke and Lady Pembroke on that of the Court. The case is the same with the leading men of the time. The Leicester Fields painting-room was neutral ground, where as yet all parties might meet. If Reynolds had planned his list of sitters for 1764

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to illustrate the catholicity of his own popularity, he could hardly have chosen them better. To his painting-room comes the Minister who granted the general warrant, and the Chief Justice who received the freedom of the City as a tribute of grateful respect for his judgment declaring general warrants illegal, unconstitutional, and altogether void; George Grenville, Lord Bute's Chancellor of the Exchequer, crosses Sir W. Baker, the stout alderman and member for Plympton, who . . . 'drove the Chancellor of the Exchequer from his entrenchments'; witty and versatile Charles Townshend brings his last *bon-mot* on the stout heiress, Miss Draycott, who has just left the painting chair; Lord Granby, gallant, frank, and fearless, half-ashamed of serving with an administration which takes away their regiments from his best friends for a vote, may break his griefs to the Keppels, promoted to General and Admiral since their exploits at the Havannah, notwithstanding their sturdiness in Opposition; Shelburne, still holding office, but chafing against the collar, may here take counsel about the policy of resigning with Lord Holland, cynical, but always good-tempered; young Charles James Fox, just entered at Oxford, can find time to sit to Reynolds between play and politics, which already divide the empire of his vigorous and versatile mind with art and letters. Here, too, classes and callings cross each other as oddly as opinions. The Archbishops of York and Canterbury take the chair just vacated by Kitty Fisher and Nelly O'Brien; and Mrs. Abington makes her saucy curtsey to the painter as the august Chief Justice bows himself in."

It is a strange medley, and bears irrefutable witness to that detachment of conduct which seems to me the chief characteristic of Reynolds.

The year 1764 provides another landmark in the painter's career. It saw the foundation of the Literary Club. The idea of the now famous society first occurred, if we may believe Malone,* to Lord Charlemont, but the first effective step was taken by Reynolds, who suggested the scheme to Johnson, and took his counsel as to how it should be carried out. The members were originally limited to twelve, but as a matter of fact it started operations with a membership of nine. The nine were Reynolds, Johnson, Burke, Dr. Nugent (Burke's father-in-law), Bennet Lang-

* See Prior's *Life of Malone*, p. 88.

THE LITERARY CLUB

ton, Topham Beauclerc, Goldsmith, Chamier, and the spoil-sport Hawkins, whose position in the Reynolds set has always remained somewhat of a mystery. The object of Reynolds, we are told, was simply to provide an arena in which Johnson could swing his club without restraint and his friends could enjoy and provoke his vigour.

Between 1764 and 1768 the chief events in the painter's life were a severe illness from which he suffered in the summer of 1764; the arrival in London in 1765 of Angelica Kauffmann, who was to have such a curious effect upon his fame in some quarters; and a visit to Paris and the north-east of France between the beginning of September and the end of October, 1768. It was during this absence abroad that the project for a Royal Academy was finally brought to a head by some of his colleagues of the Incorporated Society.

The mystery—if indeed there were any mystery beyond that invented by the lady herself—of Angelica Kauffmann's relations with Reynolds, has never been satisfactorily cleared up. English writers have assumed that there was nothing between them beyond a flirtation in which the lady was the more active agent, while not a few foreign authors, especially those of German nationality, have asserted in so many words that Reynolds behaved very ill indeed to Angelica. Now that nearly a century and a half have elapsed, it is unlikely that any new evidence on the point will come to light, so that we have to make up our minds on the whole affair by a mere weighing of probabilities. The painter was a wary man, with a just mind and no passions to speak of. On the other hand, the known facts of Angelica's career are enough to prove that she was impulsive, credulous, and over sanguine, while her reputation was that of a flirt. Given two such characters,

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what more probable than that the woman should conceive and nourish hopes which the man never thought of suggesting, to say nothing of fulfilling? All the real evidence points to this as a fair statement of what took place between them. We need not be very hard upon Angelica if her vanity afterwards led her to justify her own proceedings somewhat at the expense of her friend's reputation.*

* For the best case which can be made for the lady, see Miss Gerard's *Angelica Kauffmann*.

CHAPTER III

1768—1769



THE chief external event in the life of Reynolds was the foundation of the Royal Academy.

This came about in the same way as other epoch-making changes. The idea did not spring up, formed and complete, in any single brain or at any particular moment. It was reached by many stepping stones of failure. For some thirty years before 1769, a succession of attempts had been made to concoct an institution which might do for England what their Academy of Painting and Sculpture had long been doing for our neighbours across the Channel. The first symptom, indeed, of a movement towards co-operation in art had declared itself more than a century before. In 1662 John Evelyn published a scheme for an Academy which curiously foreshadowed the actual constitution of the body now presided over by Sir Edward Poynter. Evelyn proposed* that a building should be provided in which students should have much the same opportunities for learning their business as they now have at Burlington House ; that a keeper and professors should be appointed ; that medals and travelling scholarships should be given ; and that Fellows should be elected. His

* In his *Sculptura*.

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suggestions had, however, no immediate consequence, and the next approach to an Academy was a private venture. Walpole tells us that Vertue, the engraver, studied in 1711 in a school established by Sir Godfrey Kneller. This is believed to have been the immediate forerunner of the better-known one for which Sir James Thornhill was responsible. Thornhill had started a scheme for setting up an Academy on a sum of about £3000, to be voted by Parliament. Upon this, however, the Treasury put its veto, and Thornhill had to be content with opening a drawing school in his own house. He then lived in James Street, Covent Garden, at the back of the Theatre. The venture was a great success, so much so that, when Thornhill died, the artists combined to carry on the work. Hogarth assisted, after some hesitation, by making over his father-in-law's casts and other properties to the new body. This school, which had its first home in Arundel Street, off the Strand, and its second in St. Peter's Court, St. Martin's Lane, was the germ out of which both the Incorporated Society of Artists, and afterwards the Royal Academy, were to grow.* Passing over the abortive attempt made in conjunction with the Dilettanti Society, we come to an event which cleared away the real stumbling block to the foundation of an Academy. In 1760, the first exhibition of current art, in the sense in which we now use the word, was held, and proved a great success. It showed that the public was ready to pay its money to see modern English pictures, and solved once and for all the question as to how funds were to be provided. The exhibition was open only from the 21st of April to the 8th of May.

* This *résumé* differs in one or two particulars from that given by Hogarth in the paper published by Ireland (Supplementary vol. to *Hogarth Illustrated*), but, on comparing authorities and dates, I venture to think it has the best evidence behind it.



HON. ANN BINGHAM
EARL SPENCER, K.G.

COMING OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY

The passport for admission was a sixpenny catalogue, of which no fewer than 6582 were sold. After paying expenses, the artists bought £100 three per cent. consols out of the profits. After this, everything was comparatively plain-sailing. Instead of hanging back, the artists were now eager to rush on, and the following year saw two competing Societies in the field. The one drawback, apparently, to the exhibition at the Society of Arts had been overcrowding. The room had often been inconveniently full, and some of those who had filled it had not been of a desirable class. To prevent this in future, a certain number of the exhibitors proposed that the price of the catalogue should be a shilling, and that nobody should be admitted without one. This proposal found no favour with the Society of Arts. The Council insisted on the show being free to all comers, and found a considerable amount of support among the artists themselves. The majority, however, refused to give way: the experiment of 1760 had shown that there "was money in" the exhibiting of modern pictures: and so they hardened their hearts, christened themselves the SOCIETY OF ARTISTS OF GREAT BRITAIN, took the great room of an auctioneer in Spring Gardens, and there held an exhibition on their own lines during May, 1761. The catalogue had two plates by Hogarth, and one by Wale and Grignon. It was so attractive that over 13,000 copies were sold, bringing more than £650 into the artists' coffers. Meanwhile, the more timid men, the men who had agreed with the Society of Arts, had christened themselves the FREE SOCIETY OF ARTISTS, and had begun a series of exhibitions, which lasted, with gradually declining prosperity, down to 1778.

Returning to the seceders—for so, *pace* William Sandby, were the members of the Society of Artists—we find them

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in 1762, the second year of their existence, charging one shilling for admission and giving the catalogue *gratis*. This catalogue had a preface, or apology, by Dr. Johnson, explaining the objects of the exhibition, and confessing the purposes to which any surplus would be put.* The profits, after paying expenses, were £524 8s. 1d. Two years later these had risen to £762 13s., and ambition had come with success. The King was petitioned for a charter, and on the 26th of January, 1765, the Society became the INCORPORATED SOCIETY OF ARTISTS OF GREAT BRITAIN. It then consisted of 211 members, one of whom, of course, was Reynolds.

So far no measures had been taken to bring instruction in art within the scope of the Society, but a move in that direction was made in 1767. In May it was resolved by a majority of the Fellows, "That it be referred to the directors to consider of a proper form for instituting a public academy, and to lay the same before the quarterly meeting in September next." A few days later, in June, it was, however, resolved, "That the resolution that the directors should proceed to consider of a form for instituting a public academy be repealed, his Majesty having been graciously pleased to declare his royal intention of taking the Academy under his protection." It is now, I fear, impossible to find out exactly what had happened in the interval between these two resolutions; but there appears to be little doubt that the intrigue—for so it must be called, in spite of its good objects and its remarkable success—which ended eighteen months later in the founda-

* Reprinted by Sandby (*History of the Royal Academy of Arts*, Vol. I, p. 37). Johnson was a curious sponsor for a picture exhibition; Johnson, who, in 1761, wrote to Baretti: "The exhibition has filled the heads of the artists and lovers of art. Surely life, if it be not long, is tedious, since we are forced to call in the aid of so many trifles to rid us of our time—of that time which can never return."

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tion of the Royal Academy, had already begun. The constitution of the Incorporated Society was faulty in several ways, but the particular defect which led to the catastrophe of 1768 was that the whole of its more than two hundred members had an equal share in its government. The more distinguished members, whose interest it was that the Society should prosper as a society, were at the mercy of their unsuccessful colleagues, whose aims were naturally more selfish. In 1768 the latter had captured the Society; they had turned out the original directors and installed themselves in their vacant places, with the result that, with few exceptions, all the men upon whose abilities the success of the exhibitions depended, resigned their membership and set themselves quietly to found a body which should profit by the mistakes of its forerunners.

In the absence of direct evidence it is difficult, if not impossible, to exactly apportion the credit which belongs to those who took the first steps towards the supersession of the Incorporated Society by a new institution. Weighing all the probabilities, however, I think it may be hazarded that the real founder of the Academy, the one man without whose co-operation the attempt would have failed, was William Chambers. After the secession had taken place, four men formed themselves into a committee to concert measures to put matters on a better footing. They prepared a scheme which not only avoided the dangers previous experience had brought to light, but was such that the immediate protection of the King could be sought with propriety. Chambers was a successful architect, which means that he was an energetic man of business as well as a very considerable artist. He had taught the principles of architecture to the King before his accession, and had afterwards been appointed architect to his Majesty. In short, three advantages were combined in

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his person, the will to approach the King, the power to do so, and the ability to make the best use of the opportunity. The other members of the quartette were West, a *persona grata* at Court, but not a man of ambition or much initiative ; Cotes, a good portrait painter and a sensible man ; and Moser, a trustworthy hack. I do not think that we need doubt that Chambers was the backbone of the committee and the moving spirit of the whole enterprise up to the hour when Reynolds was voted into the presidential chair. The only difficulty in the way of this theory is the one suggested by the question : Why, then, did not Chambers make himself the first P.R.A., if his share in the enterprise had been so great ? That, as we shall see presently, is capable of a very simple explanation.

To return to the committee of four. On the 28th of November, 1768, a petition, or memorial, was presented to the King. It was signed by twenty-two of his Majesty's "most dutiful subjects and servants,"* but its responsible framers were the members of the committee, and its actual author, no doubt, Chambers himself. The language used supports this view, and the last paragraph, a paragraph which calmly informs the King that he will be expected to make good any money deficiency out of his own purse, could only have been introduced with the Royal sanction, a sanction that Chambers was in a better position to obtain than any of his colleagues. The other paragraphs explain (1) that his Majesty's "most faithful

* These were, in the order of their signatures, Benjamin West, Francesco Zuccarelli, Nathaniel Dance, Richard Wilson, George Michael Moser, Samuel Wale, G. B. Cipriani, Jeremiah Meyer, Angelica Kauffmann, Charles Catton, Francesco Bartolozzi, Richard Yeo, Mary Moser, Agostino Carlini, Francis Cotes, William Chambers, Edward Penny, Joseph Wilton, George Barret, Francis Milner Newton, Paul Sandby, and Francis Hayman. The name of Joshua Reynolds is conspicuous by its absence.

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subjects, Painters, Sculptors, and Architects of this Metropolis, being desirous of establishing a Society for promoting the Arts of Design," are aware that their scheme depends for success on his Majesty's "gracious assistance, patronage, and protection"; (2) that the main objects are two, the establishment of a well regulated Academy of Design and the holding of an Annual Exhibition; and (3) that, in the petitioners' belief, no long time would elapse before the profits of the Exhibition would pay for the schools and leave something over for charity.

The memorial was received most graciously. The King intimated that he looked upon the protection of the arts as a duty to the Nation, and told the petitioners that they might count upon his assistance. At the same time he asked for more information, and this Chambers was deputed to give.* It is evident that at this point there was some little hitch. The King's approval seems to have been provisional. He was not going to bless the new Academy without being quite sure that all the men of real importance had rallied to it. Chambers and his committee made out a list of some thirty names, inserting that of Reynolds among the rest. The King fixed a day for the submission of the list for his approval, but Reynolds had been included without his own consent, and was unwilling to commit himself. Northcote, who should be a good authority on the point, for, no doubt, he but repeats what Sir Joshua had told him, says that after Edward Penny had made a fruitless attempt to bring Reynolds into the scheme, West called on the painter "on the same evening on which the whole party had a meeting, about thirty in number, at Mr. Wilton's house, expecting the result of

* Report from the Council of the Royal Academy to the General Assembly, 1860.

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Mr. West's negotiation, as the King had appointed the following morning to receive their plan, with the nomination of their officers. Mr. West remained upwards of two hours endeavouring to persuade Reynolds; and at last prevailed so far that he ordered his coach, and went with Mr. West to meet the party; and immediately on his entering the room they with one voice hailed him as 'President.' He seemed very much affected by the compliment, and returned them his thanks for the high mark of their approbation, but declined the honour till such time as he had consulted with his friends, Dr. Johnson and Mr. Edmund Burke, and it was not until a fortnight after that Reynolds gave his consent."

Tom Taylor calls this account inconsistent both with the Academy records and the entries in the pocket-book for 1768, while Leslie prefers the story told by West to his biographer, Galt, to that of Northcote. And yet in every important particular the differences may be easily reconciled. West says that upon the failure of Penny and Moser to induce Reynolds to join the conspirators at Wilton's, he himself went immediately to Leicester Fields. He found that Kirby—the President of the Incorporated Society—had told Reynolds that no such design as the founding of a Royal Academy was in contemplation, and that Reynolds shrank from attending a caucus which had no sanction for its proceedings but its own. To this West replied, "As you have been told by Mr. Kirby that there is no intention of the kind and by me that there is, that even the rules are framed and the officers condescended on, yourself to be President, I must insist on your going with me to the meeting, when you will be satisfied which of us deserves to be credited in this business." In the end Reynolds yielded, and on his arrival at the meeting was received as Northcote describes.



VISCOUNT ALTHORP

EARL SPENCER, K.G.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY FOUNDED

The pocket-book entry, which is supposed to be inconsistent with Northcote's story, is "Mr. Wilton's at 6," under date 9th December, 1768. It seems to be quite as inconsistent with the story told by West. When a man still requires some hours of persuasion before he will consent to accept an invitation, he does not enter it among his engagements in that fashion. It is easy to reconcile all discrepancies by referring the entry in question to an adjourned meeting, and by supposing that both Northcote and West condensed two meetings into one, the former pushing the events of the first occasion into the second, the latter doing the reverse. In any case the whole scheme was finally put into writing on the 9th, and on the 10th of December, 1768, it was signed by the King.

It seems to me clear that the strong man who had his way in the whole business was William Chambers. He knew his own mind, and possessed the rare virtue of knowing when to efface himself. Reynolds was the one artist of commanding ability who was sitting on the rail, and waiting to see whether victory would lie with the Incorporated Society or with the new Academy. It was necessary to hold out an enticing bait to bring him down on the right side, and I cannot help thinking that while West was exercising his powers of persuasion in Leicester Fields, Chambers was organising the shout of "Mr. President" with which Wilton and his guests received the hoped-for recruit.

The "Instrument," the famous document which forms the constitution of the Royal Academy, and gives it a legal right to existence, was signed on the 10th of December, 1768. Four days afterwards, twenty-eight of the thirty-four Academicians nominated by the King, signed a declaration of obedience and fidelity to the new institution, and formally elected its officers. Reynolds became Presi-

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dent, while the other posts seem to have been given to those Academicians to whom the salaries attached would be of moment. Moser became Keeper ; Newton, Secretary ; Penny, Professor of Painting ; Wale, Professor of Perspective ; and Thomas Sandby, Professor of Architecture. The Professorship of Anatomy, with its stipend of thirty pounds a year, fell to the distinguished Scot, Dr. William Hunter. It was not until everything was settled and concluded, and the scheme put beyond the risk of miscarriage, that the King's intention to found an Academy of his own was allowed to leak out. The story of how the members of the luckless Incorporated Society learnt that their flank had been turned and their position rendered untenable is well known, and has contributed more than anything else to the notion—not ill-founded, I must confess—that the birth of the Royal Academy was the result of intrigue. The tale has been often told, but as it rounds off my narrative, I may once more quote it from Galt.*

“While his Majesty and the Queen, at Windsor Castle, were looking at West's picture of ‘Regulus,’ just then finished, the arrival of Mr. Kirby, the New President of the Incorporated Society, was announced. The King, having consulted with his consort in German, admitted him, and introduced him to West, to whose person he was a stranger. He looked at the picture, praised it warmly, and congratulated the artist. Then, turning to the King, said, ‘Your Majesty never mentioned anything of this work to me. Who made the frame ? It is not made by one of your Majesty's workmen ; it ought to have been made by the Royal carver and gilder.’ To this the King calmly replied, ‘Kirby, whenever you are able to paint me such a picture as this, your friend shall make the frame.’ ‘I hope, Mr. West,’ said Kirby, ‘that you intend to exhibit this picture ?’ ‘It is painted for the palace,’ said West, ‘and its exhibition must depend upon his Majesty's pleasure.’ ‘Assuredly,’ said the King, ‘I shall be very happy to let the work be shown to the public.’ ‘Then, Mr. West,’ said Kirby, ‘you will send

* *Life of West.*

THE ROYAL ACADEMY FOUNDED

it to my exhibition ?' 'No,' interrupted the King, 'it must go to *my* exhibition—to *that of the Royal Academy.*' . . . The President of the Associated Artists bowed with much humility, and retired."

The interest taken by George III. in the founding of the Royal Academy is a little difficult to understand. His family had never previously shown any particular fondness for art or its professors, while he himself, in after years, was by no means to fulfil the promise held out by these doings of his youth. He was, no doubt, a generous patron to West, while he allowed Gainsborough, Reynolds, and Allan Ramsay to portray the Royal port and features. Otherwise he was no patron of the arts, and we are tempted to believe that his actions in the last weeks of 1768 must have been to some extent dictated by personal motives, which lost their force as time went on.*

The original constitution of the Royal Academy showed significant traces of the way in which its foundation had come about. The number of Academicians was probably fixed by analogy with the French and other foreign bodies of a similar kind ; but the fact that a membership of forty would include all the seceders from the Society, and just leave room for desirable recruits, no doubt had its weight. It is idle to pretend that Chambers and his allies

* The Members of the Incorporated Society did not shrink from insinuating that there was a personal and private motive. The first home of the Academy was in some rooms in Pall Mall, which afterwards became the original "Christie's." Dalton, the King's Librarian, had bought the lease, and started as a dealer in prints. The speculation, says the Society's pamphlet, "hung heavy on his hands," and he looked about for other shoulders on which to shift the responsibility. The scheme of Chambers and his colleagues gave him the chance he required, and he used all his influence with the King in their support. In all this there may be some element of truth, but the motive is scarcely equal to bearing the weight put upon it by the Society.

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were founding a parallel institution to the Society. They meant to supersede it. They saw the time was ripe for a real Academy, which should focus the national interest in art, and rear the artists of the future with the funds so obtained. Experience had shown them the stumbling blocks in the way of such an adventure, and these they avoided with consummate skill. The provisions that no Academician could belong to any other society of artists in London, and that no work previously exhibited publicly in the capital could be admitted to the Royal Academy exhibition, secured to them a practical monopoly. During its one hundred and thirty years of existence the Royal Academy has had to resist many assaults, many of them delivered by men who, when the chance came, were glad enough to put A.R.A. and R.A. after their names. It has too often invited attack by narrowness of view, and by a failure to justify the claim, so often made by painters, that only artists can understand art. It has even, in certain matters which need not be specially mentioned, shown a singular conception of trusts placed upon it and formally accepted. And yet, as a whole, it has fulfilled the intentions of its authors with a completeness to which few such institutions can show a parallel. It was founded to hold exhibitions, to give a free education to art students, and to relieve poverty among artists. These things it has done, and, on the whole, done very well. Commercially, its success has been astonishing, while from the artistic standpoint it has only failed so far as everything fails which depends on the common action of many individuals. It would be difficult to name an institution, either in this country or in any other, which has more completely carried out the aim of its foundation, and that with so few changes in its original constitution. Chambers and his colleagues,



HON. LAVINIA BINGHAM, AFTERWARDS COUNTESS SPENCER
EARL SPENCER, K.G.

THE FIRST P.R.A.

in short, deserve all the credit we can give them for tact, courage and foresight.

Reynolds' share in the scheme was thoroughly characteristic. He took no part in the underground work which had to be done before the superstructure was attempted. That he knew something of what was going on, we may infer from his conversation with Kirby and from the fact that West was able to bring him to Wilton's house to meet the rest of the "cave." But otherwise he gave no sign, and reserved complete liberty of action until the bribe of the Presidency was actually pressed into his palm and his fingers closed upon it. I do not say this in the least by way of blame, but merely to support my reading of his character, and to show how free he was from those eager enthusiasms which are supposed to go with the artistic gift. His instinct was never to put his foot so far out that he could not readily draw it back ; I fear I must add that it was also against his principles to take responsibilities on himself which he could leave successfully to others. He filled the office of President to perfection ; whether he could have done equally well as an ordinary R.A., liable to take his turn as "hangman," visitor in the schools, etc., I take leave to doubt.

To his initiative, however, the Academy owes some of its most valuable customs. Soon after the Instrument was signed, he suggested the addition of a few distinguished men as honorary members. The King gave his approval ; and the Cambridge Professor of Greek, Dr. Francklin, was elected Chaplain ; Dr. Johnson, Professor of Ancient Literature ; Dr. Goldsmith, Professor of Ancient History ; and the King's Librarian, Richard Dalton, Antiquary. The annual dinner was another of his ideas. He proposed that the members should dine together in the exhibition

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rooms after the pictures were hung, inviting a few friends to share their hospitality. At first the invitations were sent out by Reynolds himself ; but as the function became popular and invitations eagerly sought after, he made over his privilege to the Council. At the same time he urged that private wishes in the matter should be laid aside, and the guests selected in such a way that the prestige and welfare of the Academy might be increased. A law was passed restricting the invitations to "persons high in rank or official situation, to those distinguished for talent, and to patrons of art." The result was that in a very short time the Academy Council found itself in the remarkable position of being obliged to weigh carefully the respective claims of Ambassadors, Ministers, and men of light and leading generally, to admission to its table. More than a hundred and thirty years have passed since the first dinner was eaten in Dalton's warehouse in Pall Mall ; and whatever may be said in its disparagement as a meal or as an oratorical display, no one can deny that the Academy Banquet gives an opportunity for the most remarkable gathering of rank and genius now to be seen in Great Britain.

Leslie and Taylor say that from the time the Academy was established Reynolds "took the most active part in its organisation and guidance, both in the Council *and in the schools.*" For the statement I have put in italics I can find no authority. Such altruism would have been outside the painter's habits, and, indeed, would have profited the students but little. We have seen that Reynolds was a bad teacher, or, rather, was no teacher at all. His own scanty work in black and white is enough to show that, as a visitor, he would have been of no use whatever to a student struggling with the difficulties of black chalk and "the life." I prefer to believe that the President confined

LAST STRUGGLES OF THE "SOCIETY"

himself to that part of his duties in which his wariness, sound judgment, and good business capacity were of value. For the exercise of these gifts he had plenty of opportunities. The Incorporated Society did not take its defeat lying down. It brought various charges against the new Academy, and made vigorous efforts to divert some of the King's patronage towards itself. The most serious accusation was practically one of sharp practice against the Academy's officers. Kirby and his colleagues accused Moser of having tricked the Society out of the collection of casts belonging to the St. Martin's Lane School, which included those inherited by Hogarth from Sir James Thornhill. However brought about, this was a shrewd stroke of policy, for it secured the Apostolic succession, if the phrase may be allowed, to the Royal Academy, and held it up as the legitimate heir to the private institution in which so many English artists had been trained. The members of the Society also accused the "Junto," as they called the Academicians, of "intriguing, caballing, and deception; and went through the form of expelling them from their body after they had left it."* They took a room over the Cider Cellar, in Maiden Lane, and set up an academy of their own. They also petitioned the King for his protection and patronage, receiving in answer the assurance that the Royal favour should be extended to both bodies alike, and that the King would visit both their exhibitions. Of course it was all in vain. The "cave" included all the men of real ability, and it worked under a sounder constitution. As it thrived, its rival lost prestige and prosperity, until, but a few years after that fatal

* Leslie and Taylor; see also *The Conduct of the Royal Academicians while Members of the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain, viz., from the year 1760 to their expulsion in the year 1769, with some part of their transactions since.* 12mo. London, 1771. (British Museum.)

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10th of December, it finally gave up the ghost. Meanwhile, however, its endeavours to blame the Academy for all its misfortunes must have provided Reynolds with many opportunities for the exercise of his statesmanship. Many of the Council meetings recorded in the pocket-book for 1769 were given to the making of dispositions for meeting the Society's attacks, and the schools were left to the supervision of the Keeper and the visitors.*

The first important acts of the new Academy were directed to accentuating its connection with the old drawing school in St. Martin's Lane. At a meeting of the Council on 30th January, 1769, it was resolved that the subscribers to the latter body should be admitted, without subscription or test, to the current season, which was thus declared to be a continuation of the session begun in St. Martin's Lane in the previous autumn. New students were required to pass a test, as before. Preparations were begun at the same time for the exhibition; this, it was resolved, should be opened on the 26th of April and closed on the 27th of May. It was also determined that the annual course of lectures should begin in October; and, in short, measures were taken generally for the starting of the whole of that academic machinery which has been working steadily ever since.

Before this, however, the Academicians had performed a graceful duty, which is of more immediate interest to the biographer of Reynolds. At a general meeting held on the 17th of January they had passed an unanimous vote of thanks to their President for a proceeding of his own by which the new enterprise had obtained a valuable publicity.

* The first list of visitors was as follows:—Carlini, Catton, Cipriani, Dance, Hayman, Toms, West, Wilson, and Zuccarelli. It is notable that, with the exception of Meyer, the enameller, and Bartolozzi, the engraver, this list includes all the male Academicians of foreign birth.

HIS FIRST DISCOURSE

On the 2nd of January Reynolds had delivered the first of his now famous Discourses, and had inaugurated a custom which has since reached the force of law. In a future chapter it will be necessary to consider the Discourses at some length, for not only have they had great influence on opinion, they also contain the best evidence we possess both as to the mental capacity of Reynolds and the state of art criticism at the time he wrote. Here it is enough to say that the initial Discourse was introductory and apologetic ; it sets out the views of those who had founded the Academy, and attempts to justify their action. The Discourse bears marks of haste. The Academy had only been three weeks in existence when it was delivered. To a practised writer, who has been in the habit of feeling his way back from phenomena to principles, and putting his conclusions into lucid words, twenty-three days would, of course, be more than enough for the composition of such an address. But Reynolds was in a different position. He had enjoyed little training as a writer ; he was embarking on a subject to which comparatively slight attention had been given in England ; he himself was an experiment, and must have felt on his trial ; and, lastly, among the friends who would listen critically to what he had to say were the best writers of his age. Add to all this the other demands on his time, and we need feel no surprise that none of the leading thoughts in his first address are prosecuted to their conclusion, and that, as a whole, it lacks a sound logical substructure.

The real sanctions for the founding of the Royal Academy were two : Firstly, it was inevitable ; the situation had "taken charge." Secondly, the founders saw and did their best to avoid the errors which had spoilt previous attempts, both here and abroad.

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Academies of Art have fallen into disrepute all over Europe through one great initial mistake ; they have, one and all, attempted to teach *art*. It may seem, *primâ facie*, unreasonable to restrict an institution from doing what appears to be implied in its very title, but a little thought will be enough to show that the above sentence is not such a paradox as it sounds. An artist is one who has something to say, some emotion to express, in paint, or marble, or whatever other material he may select. The emotion must be radically his own, and sincere, for otherwise it cannot possibly lead to the organic congruity which means creation. How is such a quality to be taught ? It must be there, potentially, from the beginning, and all the teacher can do is to enable its fortunate possessor to use it. The true business of an academy is to train its students in the use of their tools, and in nothing whatever else. The painter's business at a school is to learn (1) how to draw correctly, (2) how to paint as he wants to, and (3) how to so select and marshal his materials that they may express the passion he has within him. The rest is not matter for teaching at all, unless, indeed, you wish to throw off swarms of sham artists, who will bear the same relation to real ones that a rhetorician does to a poet. "Academic art"—the very phrase contains a proof of what has just been said. What does it mean, except art that has been taught, and is therefore insincere, which is tantamount to saying it is not art at all ? The vice of all foreign academies lies in their non-recognition of this vital principle. They have all, in their time, taught their pupils not only how to paint, but what to paint, and have made their rewards depend on matters which lie outside their province. The founders of our Royal Academy were the first to see this mistake, and avoid it. They made their teaching arrangements in such a way that the student was practically forced



VISCOUNT ALTHORP
EARL SPENCER, K.G.

THE ACADEMY AS TEACHER

to keep his independence, and to choose his own line of development. The instruction was put into the hands of the whole body of Academicians, who taught in rotation, so that no single man could obtain such control as would substitute his own personality for that of his pupil. I am well aware that at the present moment this method of instruction is under a cloud, and that its demerits seem more obvious to the young artists of to-day than its advantages. But that, I think, is due to matters not of principle but of accident. The schools of Paris are more popular than those conducted by our Academy, not because they work on better lines, but because their *personnel* is more efficient. French artists draw better, and are better equipped in other ways, than their English rivals; and so, as teachers, they can set higher technical standards, and do more to help their pupils over the initial difficulties. If French technical efficiency could be combined with our better arrangements for safeguarding a scholar's personality, we might have the ideal Academy.

The first home of the Royal Academy was in a building in Pall Mall, immediately adjoining old Carlton House. It had once been Lamb's Auction Rooms, but, when the Academy took it, was in the occupation of Dalton, the King's Librarian and Keeper of the Prints, as a print warehouse. It afterwards became the place of business of Christie, the founder of the great firm of auctioneers. The Academy exhibitions were held there for eleven years, until, in 1780, they were installed in the new palace in the Strand, which Chambers had been rearing on the site of old Somerset House. The King had granted rooms in the old palace to the Academy, to be used as offices and lecture rooms, some nine years before.

CHAPTER IV

1769—1772



HE ten years which followed the foundation of the Royal Academy were the busiest and most characteristic in the life of Reynolds. His sitters, indeed, were not so numerous as they had been in the sixties, but he made up for the falling off by turning his attention to fancy pictures, which at this time rapidly increase in number. Outside his art, his interests widen prodigiously. He takes every opportunity of extending his acquaintance among people of light and leading, as well as among those irresponsible amusers of society who are to the lighters and leaders what cotton-wool packing is to a gem. We find him member of many clubs, and a candidate for Almack's. He frequents Vauxhall, the Pantheon, Mrs. Cornely's. He is a regular first-nighter, in days when first-nights were more frequent than they are now, in spite of the short tale of theatres. He steers with remarkable skill in and out among political dangers and animosities, painting Mrs. Trecothick, the rebel Lady Mayoress, at 2, and King George, at 4, on the same day, and collecting the most incongruous Parliamentary personalities at his table without disaster. He floats, in short, above the arena of political, moral, and social prejudice, attaching himself to his

FIRST ACADEMY EXHIBITION

kind through the undeniable verities of human nature, and giving perhaps the best example we Britons can point to of the just, kindly, and imperturbable egoist.

Reynolds became "Sir Joshua" at the levee held at St. James's on the 21st of April, 1769. The first Exhibition of the Royal Academy was opened five days later, on the 26th. The total number of pictures exhibited was 136, which is exactly the number contained in the first two rooms at Burlington House in this present year of 1900. In spite of the modest extent of the show, the motto on the title-page of the catalogue—NOVA RERUM NASCITUR ORDO—was justified. The room was always crowded, and even the street outside was often impassable through the waiting carriages and footmen, and the people pressing to get in. Sir Joshua's contributions were the "Duchess of Manchester and her son, as Diana disarming Cupid,"* "Mrs. Blake (*née* Bunbury) as Juno receiving the cestus from Venus,"† "Miss Morris, as Hope nursing Love,"‡ and the famous group, "Mrs. Bouverie and Mrs. Crewe," now at Crewe Hall. According to Northcote, the other pictures round which the visitors chiefly congregated were Gainsborough's "Lady Molyneux"; Hone's "Piping Boy," a small canvas now in the Irish National Gallery; Angelica Kauffmann's "Hector and Andromache," and "Venus with Æneas and Achates"; West's "Regulus," and "Venus lamenting Adonis"; Cotes' "Hebe," "Duke of Gloucester," and "Boy playing Cricket"; Penny's "Scene from 'King John'"; Barret's "Penton Linn," a beautiful site in Liddesdale; Cipriani's "Annunciation"; and Dance's portraits of George III. and Queen Charlotte. It is not an exciting list, and yet twenty-nine thousand people were attracted in a single month. Of the Sir

* In the possession of the Duke of Manchester.

† At Barton, Bury St. Edmunds.

‡ At Bowood.

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Joshuas, the finest at the time was probably the group of the two beautiful women now at Crewe. Time has not been kind to it, but when first painted it must have glowed like a gem, while in arrangement it is happier than most of its author's attempts to combine two portraits on a single canvas.* The pathetic story of Miss Morris is well known. She was the daughter of a Colonial Governor, who died and left his widow and children penniless. She tried the stage, appearing as Juliet at Covent Garden, but was overcome by weakness and stage fright, and her career was confined to a single performance. She was sitting to Reynolds as a model at the same time. But consumption was upon her, and she died of a rapid decline while her picture was hanging on the Academy walls. Sir Joshua repeated the composition more than once.

The year 1769 was one of the most sociable of Sir Joshua's life. The list of sitters is very short; it includes only seventy-seven appointments altogether. On the other hand the dinners are frequent, and some have become famous. It was apparently in 1769 that the painter's physician, Dr. Baker, gave his party for the Hornecks, and drove Goldsmith into that protest against his belated invitation which throws such a genial beam of light on the Reynoldsian circle. "Little Comedy," "the Jessamy Bride," and "the Captain in Lace" henceforth hang in the short but delightful gallery of Goldsmith's portraits. Sir Joshua dines often this year with Wilkes, Goldsmith, the Hornecks, the Nesbitts, the Bastards, Dr. Baker, and Dr. Francklin. He has engagements, too, with Lord

* On a tombstone in the background Reynolds has written "Et in Arcadia Ego." The thought came not from Guercino, as Tom Taylor supposes, but from the famous Poussin now in the Louvre, in which some happy shepherds and shepherdesses are grouped about a tomb bearing the same words.



DINNER AT BOSWELL'S

Charlemont, Mr. Hoole, Lord Ossory, the Duke of Grafton, Dr. Markham (Dean of Christ Church), Dr. Hinchcliffe (Master of Trinity), and Dr. Hawkesworth ; with the Nugents, the Burkes, and Lord Robert Spencer ; also with more of his brother painters than usual, the favourites being, curiously enough, two who had avoided the academic fold, Ramsay and Hudson. It was in the autumn, on the 16th of October, that he formed one of the party at Boswell's rooms in Old Bond Street, and met the famous bloom-coloured coat. Besides Sir Joshua and Goldsmith, the guests included Johnson, Garrick, Arthur Murphy, Isaac Bickerstaffe, and Tom Davies. The memory of this dinner ought to live for ever were it only for Boswell's picture of Garrick and Johnson. "Garrick played around him with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, and, looking up in his face with a lively archness, complimented him on the good health which he seemed then to enjoy ; while the sage, shaking his head, beheld him with a gentle complacency." What a sketch it is ! Worth all the wonderful report of the night's talk which follows. A few days after the dinner came the catastrophe of Baretto, who was put on his trial for murder at the Old Bailey. After his acquittal Sir Joshua obtained for him the dignified but unpaid post of Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Royal Academy, while Johnson persuaded the Thrales to engage him as resident tutor to their children.

About four years before this time Reynolds had made the acquaintance of Barry, who had been imported from Cork through the generosity of Burke. At first the two men had got on well together. Barry was warm in praise of Sir Joshua's art, while Sir Joshua seems to have taken a quite unusual interest in Barry's preparations for a career. The time was to come when the President would confess

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that if he hated any man it was Barry, but in the early years of their relations they seem to have formed a little society for mutual admiration, and certainly Reynolds took more trouble to advise the young Irishman and to keep him in the way he should go, than he did in the case of any one else. A letter was written to Barry at Rome by Sir Joshua in this year, 1769, which must be quoted for the light it throws on the relations between the two :

“DEAR SIR,

“I am very much obliged to you for your remembrance of me in your letter to Mr. Burke, which, though I have read with great pleasure as a composition, I cannot help saying, with some regret to find that so great a portion of your attention has been engaged upon temporary matters, which might have been so much more profitably employed upon what would stick by you through your whole life.

“Whoever is resolved to excel in painting, or indeed in any other art, must bring all his mind to bear upon that one object, from the moment he rises till he goes to bed. The effect of every object that meets the painter’s eye may give him a lesson, provided his mind is calm, unembarrassed with other objects, and open to instruction. This general attention, with other studies connected with the art, which must employ the artist in his closet, will be found sufficient to fill up life, if it were much longer than it is. Were I in your place, I should consider myself playing a great game, and never suffer the little malice and envy of my rivals to draw off my attention from the main object, which, if you pursue with a steady eye, it will not be in the power of all the cicerones in the world to hurt you. While they are endeavouring to prevent the gentlemen from employing the young artists, instead of injuring them, they are, in my opinion, doing them the greatest service. Whilst I was at Rome I was very little employed by them, and that I always considered as so much time lost; copying those ornamental pictures which the travelling gentlemen always bring home with them as furniture for their houses, is far from being the most profitable manner of a student spending his time.

“Whoever has great views, I would recommend to him, whilst at Rome, rather to live on bread and water than lose those advantages which he can never hope to enjoy a second time, and which he will find only in the Vatican, where, I will engage, no cavalier sends his students to copy for him. I do not mean this as any reproach to the gentlemen!

LETTER TO BARRY

the works in that place, though they are the proper study of an artist, make but an awkward figure painted in oil and reduced to the size of easel pictures. The Capella Sistina is the production of the greatest genius that was ever employed in the arts; it is worth considering by what principles that stupendous greatness of style is produced, and endeavouring to produce something of your own on those principles will be a more advantageous method of study than copying the St. Cecilia in the Borghese, or the Herodias of Guido, which may be copied to eternity without contributing one jot towards making a man a more able painter.

“If you neglect visiting the Vatican often, and particularly the Capella Sistina, you will neglect receiving that peculiar advantage which Rome can give above all other cities in the world. In other places you will find casts from the antique and capital pictures of the great masters, but it is *there* only that you can form an idea of the dignity of the art, as it is there only that you can see the works of Michelangelo and Raffaello. If you should not relish them at first, which may probably be the case, as they have none of those qualities which are captivating at first sight, never cease looking till you feel something like inspiration come over you, till you think every other painter insipid in comparison, and to be admired only for petty excellences.

“I suppose you have heard of the establishment of a Royal Academy here; the first opportunity I have I will send you the Discourse I delivered at its opening, which was the first of January. As I hope you will be hereafter one of our body, I wish you would, as opportunity offers, make memorandums of the regulations of the academies that you may visit in your travels, to be engrafted on our own if they should be found useful.

“I am, with the greatest esteem, yours,

“J. REYNOLDS.

“On reading my letter over, I think it requires some apology for the blunt appearance of a dictatorial style, in which I have obtruded my advice. I am forced to write in a great hurry, and have little time for polishing my style.”

Another letter with no signature whatever was found among Barry's papers after his death. Northcote believed it to have been written by Burke and Reynolds jointly,

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but the opinions are scarcely such as to require two men to formulate them :

“Portrait painting may be to the painter what the practical knowledge of the world is to the poet, provided he considers it as a school by which he is to acquire the *means* of perfection in his art, and not as the *object* of that perfection. It was practical knowledge of the world which gave the poetry of Homer and Shakspeare that superiority which still exists over all other works of the same kind, and it was a philosophical attention to the imitation of common nature, which portrait painting ought to be, that gave the Roman and Bolognese schools their superiority over the Florentine, which excelled so much in the theory of the arts.”

The general tone of these letters suggests that Barry was indebted to Reynolds, as well as Burke, for more than good advice. I can find no direct evidence that the President helped the student with funds, but it was inconsistent with his character to write thus to one who was under no obligation to listen. Barry, of course, profited nothing by Sir Joshua's solicitude. Nature had deprived him of all capacity for taking advice, or, indeed, for seeing any path but that marked out by his own narrow perceptions and truculent will.

The year 1770 was one of the least remarkable in Sir Joshua's painting career. In the political world it was stormy enough, and much of his attention may have been given to the adventures of his friends in the Government and Opposition. It was the year of “Wilkes and Liberty,” of Beckford's *réplique* to the King, of the formation of the ministry which was to lose the American colonies. Political events may account for the complete absence of statesmen from his painting-room. The appointments for portraits entered in the pocket-book only number forty-four, and, if we except the King, the sitters do not include a single political personage. The Exhibition opened on the 24th of April. Sir Joshua's contribu-

PORTRAIT OF GOLDSMITH

tions were Lord Sydney and Colonel Acland as archers ;* Mrs. Bouverie and child ;† Miss Price ;‡ Lady Cornwallis ;§ Johnson ;|| Goldsmith ;¶ George Colman ;** and “ The Babes in the Wood.” †† It was in this Exhibition of 1770 that Gainsborough was “ beyond himself in a portrait of a gentleman in a Vandyke habit,” †† which I think may be identified, beyond reasonable doubt, with the “ Blue Boy.” Zoffany’s Garrick as Abel Drugger was also at this year’s Exhibition. Mary Moser, whose phrase I have quoted above, also tells us that the Garrick was bought by Sir Joshua for one hundred guineas, but that he resigned his purchase to Lord Carlisle, passing on the consideration of twenty guineas to the painter. “ He is a gentleman !” is her comment.

The Exhibition closed on the 26th of May, and on the same day the “ Deserted Village ” was published, with its dedication to Reynolds. It was a pity the publication did not come a little sooner, when Sir Joshua’s portrait of Goldsmith might have gathered a little court about it in the Academy rooms. It is one of the best known and

* In the possession of the Earl of Carnarvon.

† In the possession of the Earl of Radnor.

‡ Her daughter, Frances Mary, married James, 2nd Marquess of Salisbury. The picture is now at Hatfield.

§ In the possession of the Earl of St. Germans.

|| In the Duke of Sutherland’s collection, at Trentham.

¶ In the Duke of Bedford’s collection, at Woburn.

** The property of Sir Henry Hawley, Bt.

†† In Leslie and Taylor and also in the catalogue of Graves and Cronin, there seems to be some confusion over this picture. The original “ Babes in the Wood ” appears to have come into the possession of Lord Palmerston, from whose collection it passed through the hands of Mr. Cowper-Temple, Mr. Evelyn Ashley, and Messrs. Agnew and Sons, to Mr. T. N. McFadden.

‡‡ Mary Moser’s letter to Fuseli, then in Rome. For the arguments on which the identification of this picture with the “ Blue Boy ” is founded, see the present writer’s “ Gainsborough,” pp. 121-124.

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most sympathetic of all his works. The original picture, painted for Thrale, is now at Woburn. A good repetition is at Knole, and a fine old studio copy in the National Gallery of Ireland. The taste of Reynolds was never better shown than here. He has painted Goldsmith without any of the adventitious frippery which in his case so fatally obscured the real man. He wears no wig, and his dress is no bloom-coloured coat, but a loose wrapper with folds thrown according to the painter's fancy. It is the author of the "Vicar" and the "Deserted Village," not the client of Mr. John Filby in Water Lane, that we see.

In the autumn of 1770 Sir Joshua paid a short visit to York, and a comparatively long one to his native county. He left London on the 7th of September, and returned on the 14th of the following month. His diary shows that in the interval he visited Wilton, Mount Edgcombe, Saltram, and Mamhead, as well as Dorchester, Bridport, Axminster, Plympton, Plymouth Dock, and Exeter. Many entries refer to sport. On the 11th of September he is up at seven, to hunt. On the 13th, 15th, and 21st the entry is repeated. At that time of the day and year it must have been cub-hunting. On the 14th he shot partridges, and at Saltram he was induced to back himself for five guineas in a match with one Mr. Robinson, "to shoot with Mr. Treby's bullet gun at 100 yards distance; and a sheet of paper to be put up, and the person who shoots nearest the centre wins." The wording of the bet shows that entering wagers was not among Sir Joshua's habits.

Sir Joshua was again in London on the 14th of October. He did not return alone. His niece Theophila, the second daughter of his widowed sister, Mrs. Palmer, travelled with him, to live in his house with but a few short intervals,



WILLIAM ROBERT, SECOND DUKE OF LEINSTER
DUKE OF LEINSTER

until she became the wife of Mr. Gwatkin. Her elder sister, Mary, afterwards Countess of Inchiquin and Marchioness of Thomond, was to follow three years later, and in the end to become her uncle's heir. The only other event belonging to this year which need be noticed is the first distribution of Academy medals, on the 11th of December, when Reynolds delivered his third discourse. Out of the eleven medallists two, both sculptors, afterwards became distinguished in their profession; they were Bacon and Flaxman.

The list of sitters for 1771 is again very short, although rather longer than in 1770. It contains sixty-seven appointments altogether. Romney—the “man in Cavendish Square”—as, we are told, Reynolds would call him in moments of irritation—was beginning to divide the patronage of the town. Northcote tells us roundly that after Romney came into fashion, Sir Joshua was not much employed, but this seems to be an exaggeration. There is no doubt, however, that the two men were in a sense pitted against each other. “The town,” said Thurlow, “is divided into two factions; I am of the Romney faction.” To the writers of fifty years ago it seemed absurd that any one could have hesitated for a moment between the pair, but to us, who know Romney better, and have had so many opportunities of admiring his finest things, the preference seems not so strange. Romney's native gift was not inferior to Sir Joshua's, his sense of female beauty was even greater, while his methods of execution were infinitely sounder and more honest—if I may be pardoned the word. In 1771 Romney had only been two years in London, but he had already painted many portraits and had established himself in the same street as Reynolds. Four years later, when he returned from his stay in Italy and took the house in Cavendish

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Square, the actual rivalry began, and the two ran their neck and neck race for public favour.

Perhaps the real causes of Sir Joshua's comparative idleness were the political ferments of the time, which drew men's attention from other matters, and his own preference of ease and competence before hard work and a mountain of guineas. Certain it is that as his sitters fall off, his social engagements of every kind increase. He multiplies his clubs, his dinners, his visits to Carlisle House and Vauxhall, until we feel tempted to put the Quaker's question, "Friend, when dost thee think?" Certainly not at home! For there his hospitality was of that informal kind which makes it impossible for a man to keep his house to himself. He never records the names of his own guests. It would, indeed, have been difficult to do so, for his habit seems to have been to order dinner for half-a-dozen, and then to have invited every one he met during the day, until the party reached twice that number. In his preface to the *Poetical Review of Dr. Johnson's Character, Moral and Literary*, by John Courtenay, Sir James Mackintosh quotes the following description of the Leicester Fields hospitality, which Courtenay himself, a frequent guest of Sir Joshua's, had given him:—

"There was something singular in the style and economy of Sir Joshua's table that contributed to pleasantry and good humour; a coarse inelegant plenty, without any regard to order and arrangement. A table, prepared for seven or eight, was often compelled to contain fifteen or sixteen. When this pressing difficulty was got over, a deficiency of knives, forks, plates, and glasses succeeded. The attendance was in the same style; and it was absolutely necessary to call instantly for beer, bread, or wine, that you might be supplied with them before the first course was over. He was once prevailed on to furnish the table with decanters and glasses at dinner, to save time, and prevent the tardy manœuvres of two or three occasional, undisciplined, domestics. As these accelerating utensils were demolished in the course of service, Sir Joshua could never be persuaded

HIS HOSPITALITY

to replace them. But these trifling embarrassments only served to enhance the hilarity and singular pleasure of the entertainment. The wine, cookery, and dishes were but little attended to; nor was the flesh or venison ever talked of or recommended. Amidst this convivial animated bustle among the guests, our host sat perfectly composed; always attentive to what was said, never minding what was eat or drank, but left every one at perfect liberty to scramble for himself. Temporal and spiritual peers, physicians, lawyers, actors, and musicians composed the motley group, and played their parts without dissonance or discord. At five o'clock precisely dinner was served, whether all the invited guests were arrived or not. Sir Joshua was never so fashionably ill-bred as to wait an hour perhaps for two or three persons of rank or title, and put the rest of the company out of humour by this invidious distinction. His friends and intimate acquaintance will ever love his memory, and will regret those social hours, and the cheerfulness of that irregular, convivial table, which no one has attempted to revive or imitate, or indeed was qualified to supply."

"Is it possible to believe that the man who thus entertained was a cold and ungenial being, equable, chiefly because he felt nothing and cared for nobody? I think we may take Goldsmith's affection, and the Leicester Square dinners, if we had no other evidence, as conclusive against the theory of Sir Joshua's character." Such is Taylor's comment* on Courtenay's description and its significance. *Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*, a maxim which may as fairly be applied to a man's advocate as to himself. Cold and ungenial Reynolds could not, of course, have seemed to acquaintances. His manner, no doubt, was genial enough, while the want of root in his benevolence, his incapacity to feel deeply the pain and joy of others, would be an aid rather than a hindrance in his rôle of neutral between the conflicting passions of his sharply contrasted friends.

Sir Joshua's engagements this year include dinners with Lord Melbourne, Lord Palmerston, Garrick, Colman,

* Leslie and Taylor, Vol. i. p. 384.

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Lord Delawar, Mr. Lock of Norbury Park, Mr. Parker, Mr. Fitzherbert, Mrs. Cholmondeley, and, on several occasions, with a new friend, Major Mills.* In May, he dines with the Cumberlands, and this, as Tom Taylor suggests, may be the dinner recorded by the dramatist, when Reynolds reproached Johnson with his eleven cups of tea, and the lexicographer retorted with, "Sir, I did not count your glasses of wine, why should you number up my cups of tea?" Not the only hint we get that Sir Joshua was fond of his glass.

As for the studio occupations in this year, 1771, the list of appointments includes many such entries as "child," "boy," "old man," "Egyptian," "George White (the paviour who sat for Ugolino and other figures)," side by side with "Miss Kennedy," "Mrs. Abington," "Mrs. Baddeley," "Lady Waldegrave," "Sir Charles Bunbury," "Bartolozzi," &c. The "Ugolino," which was to fill so much of his time and give him so much trouble before it was finished, was begun, and probably accounts for most of the models above quoted. The best fruits of the year, however, were the portraits of Lady Waldegrave, already Duchess of Gloucester, although the world was not to know it until twelve months later, of Mrs. Baddeley, of Mrs. Abington—the picture lately in the collection of Lord Carrington—and of Polly Kennedy. The last-named picture has recently migrated from Barton, where it hung so long, to Cliveden. It was finished during the months when the frail but good-hearted Polly was in agony over the misfortunes of her two brothers, condemned to

* Cumberland describes Mills as "Collecting about him a considerable resort of men of wit and learning, at no other expense on his part than that of the meat and drink which they consumed." What more did Cumberland want? Would he have had Mills fee his guests for their company?



WHITE, THE PAVIOUR, WITH A BEARD

EARL OF CREWE

PORTRAIT OF POLLY KENNEDY

death for the killing of a watchman, one Bigby, in a brawl in Westminster, in the first weeks of 1771. The story, with its more or less happy ending, is told in detail by Leslie and Taylor.* The portrait seems a good instance of Sir Joshua's readiness to give a certain *apropos* to his conceptions. The girl's expression is one of tension and anxiety; she holds a handkerchief away from her face as if a sudden gleam of hope had interrupted a long fit of weeping. The portrait was a commission from Sir Charles Bunbury, to whom Sir Joshua writes in September, 1770:—

“ I have finished the face very much to my own satisfaction. It has more grace and dignity than anything I have ever done, and it is the best coloured. As to the dress, I should be glad it might be left undetermined till I return from my fortnight's tour. When I return I will try different dresses. The Eastern dresses are very rich and have one sort of dignity; but 'tis a mock dignity in comparison of the simplicity of the antique, &c.” The last sitting was given in January, 1771, when Miss Kennedy's persevering fight had been so far successful that she had at least saved her brothers' lives.

The pictures sent this year to the Academy by Sir Joshua were:—“ Venus chiding Cupid for learning to cast accounts,”† “ Nymph and Bacchus,”‡ “ Reading Girl (Offy Palmer, absorbed in 'Clarissa'),”§ “ An Old Man (White the paviour),”|| “ Portrait of Mrs. Abington,”¶ and “ Portrait of a gentleman,”—unidentified. Sir Joshua's *protégé*, Barry, sent his first contribution, the “ Adam and

* Vol. i. pp. 394-398.

† Was in the collection of the late Earl of Charlemont.

‡ Belongs to the Hon. W. F. B. Massey-Mainwaring.

§ Was in the collection of Mr. John Heugh.

|| Burnt in the fire at Belvoir Castle, 1816.

¶ Belongs to Mr. Charles Wertheimer.

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Eve," now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. There were seven Gainsboroughs, and West was represented by the famous "Death of Wolfe." The catalogue runs to a total of 276 numbers, or rather more than the first three rooms at Burlington House can now display. The well-known print by Earlom, after Brandoin represents this year's Exhibition. In it Barry's picture occupies the place of honour, while Sir Joshua's "Venus and Cupid" is at one side.

It was in 1771 that Sir Joshua added to his household the only pupil* whose name is still remembered. James Northcote was a fellow-countryman of his own. He was born at Plymouth in 1746. His father, a watchmaker, kept him at his own trade until he had grown to manhood. When he was twenty-five, having, I suppose, acquired some little smattering of the rudiments of art, he escaped to London, and shortly afterwards found himself in some sort a pupil of Reynolds. He lived in the Leicester Fields house for five years; then he practised for two years as a portrait painter, saved some money, and made the voyage to Italy, where he stayed two years. In 1781, he finally established himself in London, where he lived and painted for half a century, dying in July, 1831, at the age of eighty-five. As the best source of information on one side of Sir Joshua's career, Northcote can never cease to be of interest, but even as a painter he does not deserve to fall into absolute oblivion. His historical "machines" are poor enough, but his few portraits have merit, and many of his copies

* Several famous painters passed through Sir Joshua's studio, Turner and Lawrence among them. But their stay was so short and their relations with their master so slight, that it would be misleading to call them his pupils.

JAMES NORTHCOTE

from Reynolds now make a brave show over the name of Sir Joshua himself.*

At Barton, Sir Joshua's own "Master Bunbury" hangs in the same house as Northcote's copy. If the former perished, the latter would recall its beauties, although a trained eye could not mistake it for an original Reynolds. Northcote's time in Leicester Fields passed happily enough. He was a *persona grata* with Miss Reynolds, who enjoyed his talk, we are told, and the sound of the west country burr. Whether Reynolds himself would have been pleased had he known to what an acute observer he was giving houseroom, is not so certain.

* Northcote's appearance was remarkable. Fuseli said he was like a rat which had seen a cat; and Haydon, a brother Devonian, gives a curious account of his manners and home:—

"He lived at 39, Argyll Street. I was shown first into a dirty gallery, then upstairs into a dirtier painting-room, and there, under a high window with the light shining full on his bald, grey head, stood a diminutive, wizened figure, in an old blue striped dressing-gown, his spectacles pushed up on his forehead. Looking keenly at me with his little shining eyes, he opened the letter, read it, and in the broadest Devon dialect said, 'Zo, you mayne ta bee a peinter, doo'ee? What zort of peinter?' 'Historical painter, Sir.' 'Heestorical painter! Why, ye'll starve with a bundle of straw under your head!'

"He then put his spectacles down and read the note again; put them up, looked maliciously at me, and said, 'I remember yeer vather, and yeer grand-vather tu; he used to peint.' 'So I have heard, Sir.' 'Ees; he peinted an elephant once for a tiger, and he asked my vather what colour the inzide of's ears was, and my vather told un reddish, and yeer grand-vather went home and peinted un a vine vermilion.' He then chuckled, inwardly enjoying my confusion at this incomprehensible anecdote. 'I zee,' he added, 'Mr. Hoare zays yee're studying anatomy; that's no use—Sir Joshua didn't know it; why should ye want to know what he didn't?' 'But Michael Angelo did, Sir.' 'Michael Angelo! What's he to du here? You must peint portraits here.' This roused me, and I said, clinching my mouth, 'I won't!' 'Won't!' screamed the little man, 'but you must! your vather isn't a moneyed man, is he?' 'No, Sir; but he has a good income, and will maintain me for three years.' 'Will he? hee'd better mak'ee mentein yeerzself.'"

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In a letter written within a few days of his reception into the President's house, Northcote gives the following account of the arrangements for pupils :

“The first day I went to paint there I saw one of Sir Joshua's pupils, and on conversing with him was much surprised to find that his scholars were absolute strangers to Sir Joshua's manner of working, and that he made use of colours and varnishes which they knew nothing of, and always painted in a room distant from them ; that they never saw him unless he wanted to paint a hand or a piece of drapery from them, and then they were always dismissed as soon as he had done with them.

“He has but two young gentlemen with him at this time, and they both behave to me with great good nature. . . .

“I find Sir Joshua is so entirely occupied all day with business or company that I have seldom an opportunity of seeing him. . . .”

Again, in a letter to his brother, he says :—

“I go regularly to Sir Joshua Reynolds' every day, and copy from the pictures in his collection. He is very kind to me, and often invites me to dine with him, and Miss Reynolds is the most good-natured woman I ever met with. . . .”

After a time, Northcote's enthusiasm made such an impression on Reynolds that he offered to take him into his house on the same terms as other pupils, an offer which was joyfully accepted.

The side lights thrown by Northcote on Sir Joshua's habits and disposition all help to confirm the reading of his character which I have ventured to adopt. Writing to his brother, in August, 1771, he says :—

“Your letter . . . was brought to me while I was at dinner with Miss Reynolds, Miss Offy Palmer, and Mr. Clark. Miss Reynolds had also had a letter by the same post, but it was not from Sir Joshua, who is at this time in Paris, for he never writes to her, and, between ourselves, but seldom converses as we used to do in our family, and never instructs her in painting. I found she knew nothing of his having invited me to be his scholar and live in the house till I told her of it.

JAMES NORTHCOTE

She has the command of the household and the servants as much as he has. . . . The other day, Dr. Goldsmith dined here; it was the first time I ever saw him. I had before told both Sir Joshua and Miss Reynolds that I had a great curiosity to see him, and when I came into the room the first word Sir Joshua said to me was, 'This is Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Northcote, whom you so much wished to see; why did you desire to see him?' The suddenness of the question rather confused me, and I replied, 'Because he is a notable man!' This, in one sense of the word, was so much unlike his character that Sir Joshua laughed heartily, and said he should always in future be called the Notable Man; but what I meant was a man of note or eminence."

Two more stories from the same source, which add touches to the portrait :

"One morning, when Garrick paid a visit to Sir Joshua Reynolds, I overheard him, as I was then at work in the adjoining room. He was speaking with great freedom of Cumberland, the author, and condemned his dramatic works. I remember his expression was this—'Damn his dish-clout face! His plays would never do for the stage if I did not cook them up, and make epilogues and prologues for him too, and so they go down with the public.' He also added, 'He hates you, Sir Joshua, because you do not admire his Correggio.' 'What Correggio?' answered Sir Joshua. 'Why, his Correggio,' replied Garrick, 'is Romney!'"

Northcote was fond of using his ears. On another occasion he overheard Mrs. Garrick abusing Foote for his perpetual girding at Garrick, both in the newspapers and in private conversation. Sir Joshua replied that it ought not to give her pain, as it evidently proved Foote to be the inferior, for it was always the lesser man who descended to envy and abuse.

Northcote worked in a room, now destroyed, adjoining Sir Joshua's own painting room. It was also used as a sort of store-room for plaster casts, rejected portraits, and other wreckage from the main studio. Leslie asserts that the pupils daily saw their master's works in every stage of progress, but we have Northcote's own statements to

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show that no such openness was practised by Reynolds. Leslie too often writes, in fact, as a partisan. Northcote tells us :

“ I remember once when I was disposing the folds of drapery with great care on the lay figure, in order to paint from it into one of his pictures, he remarked that it would not make good drapery if set so artificially, and that, whenever it did not fall into such folds as were agreeable, I should try to get it better, by taking the chance of another toss of the drapery stuff, and by that means I should get Nature, which is always superior to art.”

Upon this Leslie remarks :

“ And yet Northcote, after recording this, said to Hazlitt, ‘ If I had any fault to find with Sir Joshua, it would be that he was a very bad master in art.’ ”

As if a single remark, however much to the point, were enough to make a man a Léon Cogniet. The truth about Sir Joshua’s activity as a teacher is probably contained in the statement that he only gave instruction “ when accident produced an opportunity to give it.”*

Northcote stayed five years with Sir Joshua, quitting him in 1776 (to glance forward a little), partly because he thought he could learn no more, partly because he found his position in the house irksome. In a letter to his brother, dated February, 1775, he says :

“ I find it very displeasing to Sir Joshua for any one to come to me in any of the rooms in which I paint, so that all the day I must live like a hermit, which I submit to, as I wish to oblige him in everything that is in my power. Thus, every visitor by day is attended with great inconvenience to me on many accounts, which I could better explain to you were we together ; for those reasons, I would not have you encourage D. to call often on me, or to think of chatting. . . . All those things

* Gwynn’s *Memorials of an Eighteenth Century Painter* (*James Northcote*): p. 100.



THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

EARL SPENCER, K.G.

VISIT TO PARIS

I must quite give up. . . . The only place in which I can receive any person without Sir Joshua's knowledge is such a room as I am mortified for anybody to see me in. . . . Dawson, when he called on me, was very desirous of seeing the room in which I worked, and I led him into the dismal hole, but it mortified me."

About the 12th of May, 1776, Reynolds and Northcote said goodbye with what passed for cordiality in the eighteenth century, Sir Joshua's last piece of advice being to remember that, for success in art, "something more must be done than that which succeeded formerly. Kneller, Lilly, and Hudson will not do now," an impromptu remark dwelt upon by Northcote as if it had been deeply premeditated.

Returning to the year 1771, the only remaining event in Sir Joshua's life which need be chronicled was a visit to Paris. Between the 13th of August and the 6th of September, he was in the French capital, but no entries in his pocket-book or other indications exist to show what took him there and how he spent his time. The next year, 1772, is chiefly notable for the numerous entries referring to the Ugolino. Most of the work on the picture was done in these twelve months, and work comparatively wasted it was. It is pitiful to let the eye wander down the list of appointments, and see how often "boy (for Ugolino)," "old man (for Ugolino)" break into the entries of "Mrs. Abington," "Mrs. Baddeley," "Duchess of Buccleuch," "Lady Mary Scott," "Mr. Dunning," "Miss Meyer," and others, which were to lead to real additions to the world's treasure of art. This year, too, saw more than the usual number of interruptions through Sir Joshua's love of floating on the main stream of London society. In social matters he seems to have taken as his models such men as Topham Beauclerc, Lord Melbourne,

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Lord Palmerston. Wherever amusement was combined with fashion—the fashion both of *grand* and *demi-monde*—there we find him. We know from his pocket-book that he was at the Pantheon on the famous night when Mrs. Baddeley was carried in past the protesting stewards by the young men who had shared her favours, and one cannot help suspecting that Dr. Johnson's reason for appearing in such a vanity fair was suggested by the President. To Boswell's remark that there was not half-a-guinea's worth of pleasure in seeing the place: "But, Sir," replied Johnson, "there is half-a-guinea's worth of inferiority to other people in not having seen it." The sentiment is much more like Sir Joshua than Johnson. Reynolds was also regular during this year at the Mondays of the Club in Gerrard Street, the Wednesday dinners at the British Coffee House, the Thursdays of the Star and Garter, and the alternate Sundays of the Dilettanti. Many entries in the pocket-book refer to Sir William Chambers, with whom, no doubt, Sir Joshua was discussing the arrangements for the new rooms at Somerset House, which were to be commenced eighteen months later. The relations of the Academy with the Incorporated Society also took up much of his attention, for this year the latter opened its fine new room on the site now occupied by the Lyceum Theatre, and invited the Academy Council to the inaugural ceremony, an invitation gracefully, if not very graciously, declined. The Academy Exhibition continued to expand, for in 1772, the catalogue runs to a total of 324 numbers, including several contributions sent across the Channel by members of the French Academy of Painting. The most attractive picture in the collection was the well-known Zoffany; "Academicians gathered about the Model in the Life School at Somerset House."

It was in the September of this year that Sir Joshua

ALDERMAN OF PLYMPTON

received that honour from his native town in which he took so curious a pleasure. On the 9th, Samuel Northcote writes to his brother : " I was much surprised when I first heard from you that Sir Joshua was coming down to be made an alderman of Plympton ; I had heard of this indeed from Mr. Mudge, but I gave not the least credit to the information, looking upon the foul transactions of a dirty borough as things quite foreign to Sir Joshua Reynolds's pursuits ; indeed, the only way I can account for this is by supposing that Sir Joshua's mind has been so much engaged in the pursuit of knowledge in the art, that he has not looked about to observe the villainy and corruption in these affairs ; but, on the contrary, he perhaps retains somewhat of the ideas he had of a Plympton alderman when he was a boy."

Samuel Northcote seems to have been a very sensible person, but having spent all his life in his native place, he failed, perhaps, to realise how, to one who has left it young, distance lends enchantment to the half-remembered scenes and people of his childhood.

CHAPTER V

1773—1778



THE fiftieth year of Sir Joshua's life was perhaps the most characteristic of his whole career. It saw the painting of at least three of his most famous pictures, it brought him a peculiar pleasure in the success of that friend who seems to have touched his sympathies more closely than any one else, it gave him opportunities for a few of those quasi-public appearances for which he had a decided, though sober, taste, and it found him still in the full tide of social enjoyment. It was the year of the "Ugolino," of the "Three Ladies decorating a term of Hymen," and of the "Dr. Beattie," with its sky full of painted flattery. It was the year of Goldsmith's triumph in "She Stoops to Conquer." It was the year of that D.C.L. degree which afterwards enabled him to escape from sober blacks and browns in his portraits of himself, of his election as Mayor of his native Plympton, which seems to have pleased him, and of his assistance at the great pro-Russian naval review on board the flag-ship of his friend, Lord Edgcumbe. A greater contrast—within its limits—could scarcely be conceived than that between the lives at this time of the two greatest painters of their age: between Gainsborough, at Bath, spending his days partly in the feverish creation of works



REYNOLDS DAY BY DAY

of art in which a vivid and spontaneous genius made much thinking needless, partly in a life which might be sketched by judicious thefts from "Tam O'Shanter"; and Reynolds, lavishing more thought on his art than any one else of his century, extending his acquaintance at every opportunity but always among those who figured in the public eye, never leaving a duty undone and never acting on impulse, until in the end he had left a career behind him which, putting passion aside, has seldom been equalled in completeness and symmetry.

In his second volume, Leslie's editor and completer, Tom Taylor, gives a *catalogue raisonné* of Sir Joshua's doings for seven days of his life, the first week of March in this year 1773. I cannot do better than copy it out, omitting a few lines in which Taylor seems to go too far outside his brief:

"Monday, March 1:—'The boy' comes at ten; probably for the youngest son but one of the Ugolino group, which Sir Joshua is finishing for the exhibition. At eleven arrives an Irish gentleman, the Right Hon. Luke Gardiner,* now in London for his marriage with Miss Elizabeth Montgomery, one of the three beautiful daughters of Sir William Montgomery, of whom another is engaged to Viscount Townshend (lately succeeded in the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland by Lord Harcourt), and the third to the Hon. John Beresford. All three marriages are to come off this year, or next at latest. The upshot of Mr. Gardiner's sittings, besides his own picture, was a commission to paint the three beautiful sisters, who began to sit to Sir Joshua in May. Mr. Gardiner wished, as he says in a letter introducing Miss Montgomery, to have their portraits 'representing some emblematical or historical subject.' Hence the picture, now in the National Gallery, of the three young ladies wreathing a term of Hymen with flowers. If an allegory was to be employed—and we see it was the patron's suggestion, and not the painter's—there could not be one more appropriate to these three beautiful girls, standing hand in hand on the threshold of marriage, with the future so bright before them. No other sitter is appointed for

* Afterwards first Earl of Blessington.

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Monday, but at seven in the evening there is the Academy lecture, which Sir Joshua never misses,* though Mr. Penny could hardly teach him much about painting. There is a reminder, 'To speak for a painter—Lord Pembroke,' which hint we may eke out as we please; either Lord Pembroke had some work for a painter, and had asked Sir Joshua to find him one—a kind of commission the President very often had—or there was some painter in whom Lord Pembroke was interested, and had asked Sir Joshua to speak in favour of the man, or his pictures, to the Academicians whom he might meet at the lecture.

“On Tuesday, between nine and eleven, Sir Joshua, strange to say, is not to be found in his painting-room. He is ‘in the City,’ no doubt busy with one of his investments; perhaps getting rid of some of his India stock, which keeps falling as the struggle between the Company and the Government grows more and more fierce. He is back in Leicester Fields at eleven, to receive Mr. Gardiner, and perhaps the design for the picture of the three Irish † beauties is already discussed. But Sir Joshua has an appointment with Mr. Knapp for twelve, so Mr. Gardiner’s sitting is interrupted, but resumed at two, and probably continues till four o’clock strikes, and Sir Joshua lays aside his palette for the day. As he has no engagements to dinner abroad, he very likely receives one of his pleasant, unceremonious, scrambling parties at five, followed by a rubber or loo-table, with talk, and tea presided over by his nieces, Mary Palmer and her younger sister, Sir Joshua’s pet, ‘Offy,’ who has lately been sitting for the Strawberry Girl, but thinks her uncle has made her far too much of a child for fourteen. Between cards and conversation, the guests sit late, and twelve has struck before steady Ralph Kirkley has lighted the last of the party out, and barred and bolted the house. Such precautions are not unnecessary in Leicester Fields, where the neighbourhood swarms with loose characters, and supplies a large proportion of their cases to Sir John Fielding and Justice Welch at Bow Street.

“On Wednesday, at ten, the boy comes to sit for ‘The Shepherd,’ ‡ and Sir Joshua either keeps him till four, or works on his Ugolino, or his Strawberry Girl, or the portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, or passes a last golden glaze over his group of the beautiful young actress, Mrs. Hartley, as a Nymph, carrying on her shoulder her

* T.T. ought to have said “never fails to enter in his pocket-book.” We know from Boswell and other sources that he often missed them.

† As a matter of fact they were Scotch.

‡ The Piping Shepherd, now in the possession of the Earl of Camperdown.

REYNOLDS DAY BY DAY

boy, vine-wreathed, for an infant Bacchus.* And so the moments fly till it is time to dress for a four o'clock dinner at the British Coffee House, where Sir Joshua has appointed to meet a party, Sir Thomas Mills, probably, Cumberland, Adam Drummond, Richard Burke (now home on leave from his post at Grenada), and perhaps Caleb Whitefoord and Dr. Barnard. They adjourn to Drury Lane at half-past six. The play is Home's new tragedy of 'Alonzo.' This is the third, or author's, night, when the proceeds of the house, after deducting the expenses, go into the pockets of the author, who, besides, often realised by the sale of his copyright to the publishers as much as he received from the theatre. Mr. Home's 'Douglas' has made him a reputation, and the house is crowded. 'Alonzo' is a terrible specimen of the heaviest legitimate tragedy, with all the stock motives and machinery. . . . In spite of respect for Mr. Home, admiration for Mrs. Barry, and excellent breeding, one imagines Sir Joshua hiding an occasional yawn, and very thankful when they came to the killing, and he could get away to bed, or, likelier still, to a merry supper at the British or the Turk's Head.

"Thursday is blank of appointments for either sitter or model . . . At four there is a 'dinner at home,' but the party breaks up in time for Sir Joshua to attend Mrs. Ord's *conversazione* at eight. Mrs. Ord is the clever wife of a wealthy Northumbrian gentleman, and, though only a surgeon's daughter, has made her way to the front rank of the Blues . . . immediately after Mrs. Montague, Mrs. Walsingham, and Mrs. Vesey. Here Sir Joshua is certain to meet the chief literary lions of the day, Johnson . . . a bishop or two—very probably Shipley, of St. Asaph, or Newton, of Bristol . . . a sprinkling of lawyers and doctors, Dr. Warren or Dr. Brocklesby, Mr. Pepys, or young Mr. Jones, who has lately published his poems from the Persian. There will drop in, besides, during the evening, some of the fashionable wits and noblemen who mix with the literary society of the time—Topham Beauclerc, Lord Palmerston, Lord Lucan, Lord Mulgrave, Lord Ossory; and even George Selwyn may saunter in like a man walking in his sleep, and drop out one of his *mots*, of which the pungency is doubled by the languid gravity of the speaker. More formidable than the gentlemen is the closely-packed circle of ladies, in high *têtes* . . . long stomachers, ample ruffles, and broad, stiff skirts of substantial flowered silk or rich brocade. There will be Mrs. Montague, with her thin, clever face, her grand air, her bright eyes, and her blaze of diamonds, talking formally and pompously, but neither unkindly nor sillily, to the Duchess of Portland and Lady Spencer, flanked perhaps by Mrs. Chaponé . . . or Mrs.

* Presented by Sir William Agnew to the National Gallery.

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Carter . . . or Mrs. Lenox, now in great distress, as the apartments which have been granted to her in Somerset House are about to be pulled down in the course of Sir William Chambers' projected rebuilding. . . .

"The ladies sit late, and St. Martin's may be striking two as Sir Joshua's carriage turns the western corner of Leicester Fields on its way home.

"Lord Cathcart sits on Friday morning . . . a distinguished officer, who served and was wounded at Fontenoy, has been Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and is now about to be appointed Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly. He is proud of his Fontenoy scar, and requests Sir Joshua to arrange that the black patch on his cheek shall be visible.* . . . But before Lord Cathcart's arrival, Sir Joshua has had a sitting of one of his 'Boys.' Between him and Lord Cathcart, and pictures on hand to be finished and sent home, the day is consumed, and at four the painter dines with one of the oldest and most intimate of his friends, Mr. John Parker, one of the members for Devon, and afterwards Lord Boringdon. Sir Joshua has known him from a boy; they are of about the same age. On the President's visits to Devonshire, Mr. Parker is always one of his hosts; Sir Joshua shoots and hunts with him, and advises him about purchases for his gallery, for Mr. Parker loves pictures as well as country sports, and is bent on having a good collection in his house at Saltram, for which the Parkers have left their fine old Tudor hall at Boringdon. His amiable and beautiful wife, Theresa, is now sitting to Sir Joshua for that graceful portrait of her, with her boy of two years old, which now hangs in the Saltram gallery.

"On his way from Mr. Parker's, Sir Joshua drops in at the Club, which now sups on Fridays, and at which he is the most constant of attendants. Johnson is absent, being confined to his house in Johnson's Court by gout and catarrh. But there is no lack of company or topics; Topham Beauclerc has to tell the humours of the last masquerade at the Pantheon, on the 18th of February, where Garrick had shone so brilliantly as King of the Gipsies, and jolly Sir Watkin had produced a great effect by riding in as St. David mounted on a Welsh goat. Then there is Garrick's admission to the Club to discuss, the ballot for which is fixed for this month. Johnson is known to be warmly in Garrick's favour, in spite of his contemptuous tone in speaking of the players. Johnson has talked of putting up Boswell's name for ballot when he

* "In all the portraits of Lord Cathcart, which ever side is turned to the spectator, the black patch is on the side most fully seen." (T.T.).



STUDY FROM WHITE THE PAVIOUR

EARL OF CREWE

REYNOLDS DAY BY DAY

arrives from Scotland, in April. Sir Joshua says a good word for the loose-tongued, brazen-faced, pushing, chattering Scotchman, whom everybody else has his fling at. Sir Joshua compels them to admit that he is good company, that he thaws reserve wherever he comes, and sets the ball of conversation rolling. Then Colman opens the budget of his difficulties and doldrums over Goldsmith's unlucky comedy, now on the point of production. It must fail; the public will never stand a farce in five acts; all the actors are throwing up their parts; Gentleman Smith declares he won't go on for young Marlow; Woodward has flatly refused Tony Lumpkin; and now Mrs. Abington is in the pouts, and protests she don't see herself in Miss Marlow. Poor Goldy is in despair. They haven't even found a name yet for his hapless play. 'The Mistakes of a Night' is pronounced too trivial for a comedy; 'The Old House a New Inn' is voted awkward. Sir Joshua proposes the 'Belle's Stratagem,' and declares if Goldy does not take *his* name, he will go the first night and help to damn his comedy. 'There will be no need of his help for that,' Colman whispers his next neighbour, silent, shy, kindly Bennet Langton. But the tide at the Club runs for the author against the manager. Johnson has given his weighty *fiat*, has declared the comedy the best written for years, and has pinned his reputation on its success. Reynolds warmly maintains Johnson's opinion; Burke throws his eager and impassioned eloquence into the same scale; and before the Club disperses for the night, Goldsmith is comforted and buoyant with hope, and Colman silenced if not convinced.

"On Saturday, at half-past ten, before Lord Cathcart arrives, Sir Charles Davers has a sitting.* Sir Charles is an honest country gentleman of Suffolk, and member for Weymouth. He is a friend and neighbour of the Bunburys, and has a good deal to say of Sir Charles's bets and gallantries and Mr. Blake's wagers and matches. But his most interesting subject of conversation, I should suppose, must have been the terrible sufferings of the poor people about Bury St. Edmunds in the famine of last year, when the starving mob stopped the corn and carcase carts, and forcibly sold the flour, and meat, and coals at their own prices; threatening to raise an English jacquerie, till the squires and farmers combined to put them down; Sir Charles Davers, with other loyal gentlemen, last April, having ridden into Bury St. Edmunds market-place at the head of 800 of their tenantry and servants, ready to

* This portrait is either the one at Rushbrooke, near Bury St. Edmunds, with the hands coarsely repainted, or the one in the possession of Lord Morley, at Saltram. A replica, with slight variations, belongs to Lord Bristol, at Ickworth.

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trample down and fire upon the rioters, if necessary, which happily it was not.

“No sitters succeed Lord Cathcart; Sir Joshua dines at home, at five as usual. At seven he goes out to tea and cards (probably supper) at Mr. Roffey’s, of whom I know nothing but that Sir Joshua seems to have visited him a good deal.

“On Sunday (let us hope after he has taken his niece to church) he has a sitting from the Duke of Grafton, now Lord Privy Seal. But this practice of receiving sitters on Sundays is even now—though Johnson has not yet bound Sir Joshua to give it up—exceptional, and only occurs in the case of persons whose time is little at their own disposal, or of very great people, who make the seventh day of the week bend to their occasions as well as the other six.

“This happens to be a Dilettanti Sunday, and Sir Joshua rarely misses one of the Society’s pleasant dinners at the Star and Garter, where he is sure to find old friends and congenial companions. Here he can discuss good wine and pictures with Lord Mulgrave or Mr. Bouverie; bow to Lord Palmerston’s or the Duke of Devonshire’s praises of the last imported antique; hear Mr. Fitzpatrick’s or George Selwyn’s freshest bon-mot; and raise his eyebrows at the news that Lord Holland is thinking of paying off Charles Fox’s debts, which his club friends put at something above a hundred thousand. Perhaps he takes part in the discussion of the dresses for the Henry Quatre and Charles the Second quadrilles at the next Almack’s, hears the speculations as to the authorship of the *Heroic Epistle*, just now as much the rage at the Court end of the town as the *Bath Guide* before it, or the *Rolliad* afterwards; and shifts his trumpet as Lord Spencer expatiates on the last Andrea Sacchi which he has bought for a Guido. He has besides to beat up votes for his new friend, Mr. Luke Gardiner, who is a candidate for the Dilettanti, and comes forward for ballot to-night. There is a great deal of wit and *virtu* talked, a great deal of laughing, a great deal of wine drunk, in all which Sir Joshua takes his part genially but temperately.”

A good deal of this—the reader may say—is conjecture, but a collation of the pocket-books with Boswell, Northcote, the publications of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, and other authorities, leaves us with a curious sense of conviction as to how Reynolds passed the normal days of life. He was free from those erratic impulses by which people are led into adventure. It was his nature to

“SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER”

foresee, to advance by stages booked beforehand, and to keep engagements with such punctuality that we never get a hint of the smallest failure to fulfil them. If he were ever tempted to be eccentric, it was, we may safely guess, in connection with Goldsmith, for whom he seems to have felt an affection bordering on the paternal. It was tried during this year, 1773. In the first months of it, Goldsmith was in bad health and worse spirits, for his debts were pressing, and his play—according to those who ought to have known best—was simply waiting to be damned. Perhaps, however, the tales to this effect contain some exaggeration. It is difficult to believe that a manager and a company of experienced actors can have read “She Stoops to Conquer” without any suspicion of its merit dawning upon them. They may have had serious doubts; a farce in five acts was an experiment; but they can scarcely have been so decided in their conviction of failure as we are told they were, or it would not have been brought out at all.

The first night was the 15th of March. Goldsmith and his friends dined together before the play at the Shakespeare tavern, near the theatre. The company included Reynolds, Johnson, Steevens, the two Burkes, father and son, Caleb Whitefoord, Sir Thomas Mills, Cumberland, and some Scotsmen, “prominent among them one Adam Drummond, an invaluable man for the first night of a comedy, being gifted with the most sonorous and contagious of laughs.” Goldsmith, of course, was wretched. He couldn’t eat, and when it was time to move on to the theatre he had vanished. The story of the play’s triumph is too well known to be repeated, but when Goldsmith was caught wandering about in the Mall and brought into the house just as the curtain rose for the last act, we may be sure that Reynolds, in his double capacity as friend and

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justified prophet, was moved to a warmer handshake than usual.

The Exhibition of 1773 included twelve pictures by Reynolds : Portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, * the Duchess of Buccleuch, † Lady Melbourne with her child, ‡ Mrs. Damer, Mr. and Mrs. Garrick, § Mr. Banks, a young lady, a gentleman, a “ Nymph with a young Bacchus ” (Mrs. Hartley and child), || the “ Strawberry Girl,” ¶ and “ Ugolino and his Children in the Dungeon.”** Leslie suggests that the unusual generosity of Sir Joshua to this year’s Exhibition is to be explained by the fact that Gainsborough did not send at all, and that the consequent gaps had to be filled up. The reason of the latter’s abstention is unknown, except through Walpole, who notes in his catalogue that “ Gainsborough and Dance, having disagreed with Sir J. Reynolds, did not send any pictures to this exhibition.” Gainsborough was an intimate friend of Kirby’s, which may account for some want of cordiality between him and his brethren of the Academy ; he was a touchy mortal too, and causes of dispute are never wanting between those who paint pictures and those who hang them. Ten years later there was to be a final rupture, a rupture for which Gainsborough has too long borne the whole of the blame, and in 1772 a similar cause of quarrel may have arisen. Of Sir Joshua’s twelve contributions, the most famous, though far from the best, is the “ Ugolino.” Leslie comments on it: “The

* The portrait of the Duke is at Windsor Castle ; that of the Duchess at Waddesdon.

† In the Duke of Buccleuch’s collection at Dalkeith Palace.

‡ Engraved as “ Maternal Affection ” ; now at Panshanger.

§ Painted for Lord Shelburne’s brother ; now the property of the Marquess of Lansdowne.

|| Now in the National Gallery.

¶ Now in the Wallace Collection.

** Now at Knole.



THE "UGOLINO"

'Ugolino' leaves nothing to be desired, except that it had never been painted." With the last half of this dictum we may cordially agree. Reynolds had none of the special gifts required for success in such an undertaking. He could not express tragedy in terms of line and colour. The human horror of the story grips his mind, but instead of suggesting a pictorial equivalent, it merely sets him thinking how to realise the facts as told by Dante. The picture has no design, no envelope of colour, no welding chiaroscuro. Northcote says it was the result of chance. Reynolds painted the Count's head from White, the paviour, some years before 1773. It was on a half-length canvas, and the painter had no idea of making it anything more than an ideal portrait until, one unlucky day, it was seen by either Burke or Goldsmith, "who immediately exclaimed that it struck him as being the precise person, countenance, and expression of the Count Ugolino as described by Dante in his *Inferno*." Sir Joshua had the canvas enlarged, and proceeded to act upon this idea. Northcote sat for the figure of the young man with his hand over his face. How many Ugolinos would we give for the "Strawberry Girl" or the "Mrs. Hartley"?

The Exhibition had grown nearly threefold in the five years since 1769. The numbers in the catalogue had risen from 136 to 385. The receipts, however, had only increased about 30 per cent. The duration of the show was still from the fourth week of April to the last week of May. It was after the doors had closed that Sir Joshua assisted at the Naval Review. A few days later he travelled to Oxford to receive his doctor's degree. On this occasion he visited Nuneham Courtenay, Gregories, and Blenheim—where he gave offence to their Graces by appearing, like Tottenham, in his boots. Soon after his return to London, he began the portrait of Dr. Beattie.

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The account given by Beattie in his diary of the commencement of his friendship with Sir Joshua is interesting, both for its glimpses of the President's mode of life, and for the strange opinions on his art which could be formed by an intelligent contemporary :—

“On Sunday, the 15th (of August) . . . Sir Joshua insisted on it that we should stay till to-morrow, and partake of a haunch of venison with him to-day at his house on Richmond Hill. Accordingly, at eleven, Mrs. Beattie, Miss Reynolds, Mr. Baretti, and Mr. Palmer set out in Sir Joshua's coach for Richmond. At twelve he and I went in a post-chaise, and by the way paid a visit to the Bishop of Chester (Dr. Markham), who was very earnest for us to fix a day for dining with him. . . . After dining at Richmond, we all returned to town about eight o'clock. This day I had a great deal of conversation with Sir Joshua Reynolds on critical and philosophical subjects; I find him to be a man, not only of excellent taste in painting and poetry, but of an enlarged understanding and truly philosophical mind. His notions of painting are not at all the same with those that are entertained by the generality of painters and others. Artificial and contracted attitudes and groups he makes no account of; it is the truth and simplicity of nature which he is ambitious to imitate; and these, it must be allowed, he possesses the art of blending with the most exquisite taste, the most animated expression. He speaks with contempt of those who conceive grace to consist in erect position, turned-out toes, or the frippery of modern dress. Indeed, *whatever account we make of the colouring of this great artist (which some people object to), it is impossible to deny him the praise of being the greatest designer of any age.*”

He goes on to say that the picture of Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy had been painted in a week. If we take the literal meaning of the words, the sentence I have put in italics contains as absurd a judgment on Sir Joshua as we could readily conceive, but Beattie's meaning may, nevertheless, have been more judicious than it sounds. That Sir Joshua was a great colourist even we, who only know his colour after more than a century of degradation, can assert, while, as a designer, he is seldom either correct or coherent. On the other hand, if we

PORTRAIT OF BEATTIE

suppose that by design the Scots philosopher meant simply a pictorial idea, such an idea as we see embodied in the "Strawberry Girl," or the "Age of Innocence," or the "Princess Sophia Matilda," or the "Master Bunbury," then, sweeping as his assertion is, I do not know that it can be contradicted. I, at least, can think of no painter whose invention remained so fresh and surprising for so long a time. Imagine what Velazquez would have been had he been able to combine the playful fancy of a Reynolds with his own unrivalled execution. Imagine the technique of an "Infante Prosper" or an "Infanta Margarita" wedded to as fine a movement as that of the "Mrs. Abington as Miss Hoyden" or the "Miss Bowles," and you will see the value of Sir Joshua's invention.

Dr. Beattie sat on Monday, August 16th, for the first time.* He gives the following account of the sitting :—

"Breakfasted with Sir Joshua Reynolds, who this day began the allegorical picture. I sat to him five hours, in which time he finished my head and sketched out the rest of my figure. The likeness is most striking, and the execution most masterly. The figure is as large as life. Though I sat five hours, I was not in the least fatigued, for, by placing a large mirror opposite to my face, Sir Joshua Reynolds put it in my power to see every stroke of his pencil; and I was greatly entertained to observe the progress of the work, and the easy and masterly manner of the artist, which differs as much from that of all other painters I have seen at work as the execution of Giardini on the violin differs from that of a common fiddler." †

* No entry of the sitting appears in the pocket-book, probably because it was only arranged the previous day, on the way home from Richmond.

† It is curious that Gainsborough makes the same use of Giardini to illustrate the ease of complete mastery; he compares Giardini's "bowing" with Dunning's conversation.

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The picture led to one of those outbursts of trenchant good sense on the part of Goldsmith which are in such curious contradiction with his general reputation as a talker. Sir Joshua filled the background of Beattie's portrait with an allegorical group, suggesting that the worthy doctor's *Essay on Truth* had routed Voltaire at least, if not Gibbon and Hume as well. "How could you," asked Goldsmith, "degrade so high a genius as Voltaire before so mean a writer as Beattie? The existence of Dr. Beattie and his book together will be forgotten in the space of ten years, but your allegorical picture and the fame of Voltaire will live for ever, to your disgrace as a flatterer."*

The picture of the "Three Ladies" had been begun before the Beattie. In July, Sir Joshua had written a letter to Mr. Luke Gardiner, from whom he had the commission, explaining the motive he had chosen—

"the adorning a term of Hymen with festoons of flowers. This affords sufficient employment to the figures, and gives an opportunity of introducing a variety of graceful historical attitudes. I have every inducement to exert myself on this occasion . . . from the subjects which you have presented to me, which are such as I am never likely to meet with again as long as I live."

He concludes with the usual declaration that it will be "the best picture I ever painted." In the Academy catalogue it was entered as "Three Ladies decorating a Term of Hymen." The name by which it is miscalled in the catalogue of the National Gallery—"The Three Graces decorating a Term of Hymen"—springs from a confusion between Sir Joshua's title and the name given to both sitters and picture by contemporaries. The ladies were the daughters of Sir William Montgomery of Stanhope

* The picture now belongs to Mr. Glennie, of Aberdeen, a kinsman of Beattie.

THE SCOTS GRACES

and Magbie Hill, Peebleshire, the collateral ancestor, if I may put it so, of the present Sir Graham Montgomery of Stanhope. They were called "The Scots Graces," a name which was inevitably transferred to Sir Joshua's picture, and ended in the foolish title now officially sanctioned, and in the mistaken criticisms to which it has given rise. Of all Sir Joshua's more elaborate conceptions, this group seems to me by far the happiest. The "historical attitudes," as he calls them, are full of grace and natural movement, and are well related to each other; the pattern is fine all over, a very rare thing with Reynolds when he ventured beyond a single figure, while the action is so contrived that an essential unity—a unity going deeper than mere line—is reached. In his Marlborough Family picture, he was once again to succeed in putting many figures on a single canvas without falling into confusion, but in no other group that I know of did he touch the level of creation through organised design that we find in the "Scots Graces."

Sir Joshua was elected Mayor of Plympton in September of this year, and took a pleasure in the elevation which seemed extraordinary to Northcote's brother, Samuel. It is said that he also wished to sit in Parliament for his native borough, for which Sir Christopher Wren had sat nearly a century before. Samuel Northcote writes to James, under date 3rd of October :—

" . . . Sir Joshua went to Mount Edgumbe this morning . . . with Mr. Mudge. . . . He speaks of leaving Plymouth on Tuesday morning, but those who know anything of Mayor-swearing think it cannot be so soon, as there is much concomitant business to be done. I find Sir Joshua's receiving the Sacrament is one particular. This the thorough-paced call 'qualifying.' Besides, the Plympton folks are all on tiptoe ready for a dance, and surely Sir Joshua will not leave them without giving a ball. But I suppose you will be more pleased to hear

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that Sir Joshua called on Friday to see your pictures, and liked them. I happened to dine at home that day, and just after dinner he called in and asked to see your father's portrait, imagining you had finished it. After he had seen this, he desired I would let him see the other of me. He said your father's was a very good head, but not so good a likeness as mine, and observed the nose in your father's picture was too full at the end. He desired likewise to see that of your grandmother by Gandy. . . . This he said was a very good picture, and remarked that the eyes were finely painted, and that very few of Sir Godfrey Kneller's were so good. . . ."

On his election to the Mayoralty, Sir Joshua sent a portrait of himself to hang in the Town Hall.* It was hung between "two old pictures," which "acted as a foil, and set it off to great advantage," as Sir William Elford told Reynolds; they were two early pictures by Sir Joshua himself!

Another event of this year which requires to be chronicled is the abortive attempt to have St. Paul's decorated by a select band of Royal Academicians. Happily, the project failed. Neither Sir Joshua nor any of his colleagues knew enough of monumental painting to carry such a task through with any approach to success. Had the Bishop of London allowed the thing to be done, we should have had a cathedral filled with gloomy, semi-classical designs, which would have absorbed light without adding solemnity. Sir Joshua's biographers have lamented the Bishop's stiffneckedness; they should have thanked him on their knees. His action saved the painter from wasting his time on work he was quite unfitted for, and left him free to multiply those fanciful creations in which we all delight.

Besides those already mentioned, the pictures of this year include the full-length portraits of Lord and Lady

* It was sold when the corporation was abolished, and is now at Petworth.



LADY COCKBURN AND HER CHILDREN

ALFRED BEIT, ESQ.

“CORNELIA”

Bellamont;* the Richard Edgcumbe;† several of the Streatham portraits—Johnson, Goldsmith, Arthur Murphy, and Burke; the portrait of Robert Chambers; and the famous “Cornelia”—Lady Cockburn and her three children—which retreated from the National Gallery to the collection of Mr. Alfred Beit when the country’s title to it was discovered to be faulty. It is asserted by Leslie and other writers, that the Lady Cockburn is one of the only two pictures signed by Reynolds, the other being the “Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse.” The assertion is not strictly true. As a rule, Sir Joshua left his pictures to sign themselves, but occasionally he “made sicker” by putting his name upon them. The Lady Cockburn enjoys, perhaps, a little more fame than it deserves. Fine in colour as it is, and exceptionally sound in condition—for a Reynolds—it is too confused in arrangement, both of line and mass, to give unalloyed pleasure. The three children are piled awkwardly upon their mother, and suggest that Sir Joshua misapplied his own favourite theory that nature is superior to art. Certainly, such a group may often be seen in a nursery, but there it should be left.

It was in this year 1773 that the Dean of Derry, Dr. Barnard, had his famous collision with Johnson in Leicester Fields, and wrote those verses which I have ventured to print beside the other two rhymed characters of Sir Joshua, by Goldsmith and Mrs. Thrale, opposite the first page of this volume. The year was one of much dining out. The pocket-book notes engagements with all the painter’s old friends and with a few new ones, the most remarkable of the latter, perhaps, being Lord Bute. Lord Shelburne,

* The portrait of Lord Bellamont is now in the National Gallery, Dublin; that of the Countess belonged until June 1905 to Lord Tweedmouth.

† In the possession of the family.

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Lord Carlisle, Sir Thomas Mills, Lord Palmerston, the Duke of Marlborough, are among his hosts, also Lord Carysfort, whom he visited at Elton, in Northamptonshire, where the walls are still covered with fine examples of his art.

The Exhibition of the year 1774 was a great one for the President. He sent thirteen pictures; the Duchess of Gloucester; * her daughter, the Princess Sophia Matilda; † the "Ladies adorning a Term of Hymen"; Mrs. Tolle-mache as Miranda; ‡ Lady Cockburn and her children; Earl of Bellamont; Dr. Beattie; Bishop Newton; § Baretta (head); || Lord Edgcumbe (whole length); ¶ a whole length of "a Lady"; and one of "a Gentleman"; and an "Infant Jupiter." The pocket-book is missing, so that we can only guess how work went in the studio during the twelve months, from his ledger and from the pictures sent to the Academy in 1775. These were three whole lengths of ladies (Countess of Dysart, for one), ** Lord Ferrers, †† Mrs. Sheridan as St. Cecilia, †† Dr. Robinson, §§ the children of the Duke of Rutland, ||| the Duke of Leinster, ¶¶ the Duchess of Gordon, *** a Gentleman, and "A Beggar Boy and his Sister." ††† Most of the work on these pictures must have been done in 1774, which in other ways was not one of Sir Joshua's most eventful years. He probably

* In Buckingham Palace.

† In Windsor Castle.

‡ Now in the collection of Lord Iveagh.

§ Now in Lambeth Palace.

|| The property of the Earl of Ilchester.

¶ At Mount Edgcumbe.

** At Ham House.

†† Lately belonged to the Marquess Townshend.

‡‡ At Waddesdon.

§§ Belongs to Sir Gerald Robinson, Bt., Rokeby Hall, Co. Louth.

||| Not traceable.

¶¶ At Carton, Co. Kildare.

*** In the collection of the Duke of Richmond.

††† Possibly the Boy with Cabbage-nets in Mr. Alexander Henderson's collection.

GAINSBOROUGH IN LONDON

remembered it afterwards as the year of his first introduction to Hannah More and of Gainsborough's establishment in London. Hannah was a close friend of the Gwatkins, through whom no doubt she was introduced to the family in Leicester Fields. Her description of her first appearance there, of Sir Joshua's kindness, and of the apparition of Johnson, with the famous macaw perched upon his shoulder, has a touch of Boswell's vivacity.

Gainsborough arrived in London shortly after the Exhibition closed. Reynolds called upon him, and we are told that his call was never returned. Leslie adds that for several years there was no intercourse between them, but so far as I can discover, he had no authority for such a sweeping assertion. Gainsborough and Reynolds had many intimate friends in common. Not a few sitters passed backwards and forwards between the studio in Leicester Fields and that in Pall Mall, and if the coldness had been so marked as Leslie makes out we should have heard more about it from them. Leslie, who tests evidence by its agreement or disagreement with his own cherished view of Sir Joshua's character, is particularly unfair to Gainsborough whenever there is any question of comparison. He talks of him as feeling it hopeless to contend with Reynolds in the force of his effects, and so adopting a system of chiaroscuro less ideal—whatever that may mean—than that of his great rival. "He never," he goes on to say, "could have painted in the manner of Reynolds without being below him; but by painting in a manner very different he was often equal to him; and his finest works rise much above the inferior works of Sir Joshua." We hear a good deal of the worthlessness of non-professional opinions on painting, but I doubt whether any hack critic ever wrote a more foolish paragraph than that. Gainsborough's art is infinitely more spontaneous and inevitable

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than Sir Joshua's. While the President was too often controlling his imagination into echoes of the past, Gainsborough was realising visions which had no external suggestors beyond a glance backwards, now and then, to the distinction of Van Dyck.

The year 1775 is memorable in Sir Joshua's life for his introduction to Eliza Sheridan, of whom he was to paint more than one exquisite portrait; for his renewed acquaintance with Georgiana Spencer, now Duchess of Devonshire, whom he had painted as a child of six, and was yet to show to the world as a young wife and happy mother; and for his quarrel with Hone, over the picture in which the latter had combined a portrait of the President with a nude figure identified by brother Academicians as Miss Angelica Kauffmann. The year also witnessed the outbreak of hostilities with the American colonies, disturbing the serenity of Sir Joshua's social horizon, and introducing an element of discord into the convivialities of his many clubs. And yet to these twelve months belong several of the most vivid pictures of the society he moved in, painted by Boswell, Dr. Campbell, and others. It was on the 27th of March that Drury Lane saw that benefit of Mrs. Abington to which Sir Joshua brought a contingent of forty wits, and where Johnson sat in the seat behind Boswell, "wrapped in a grave abstraction," and seeming "quite a cloud amidst all the sunshine of glitter and gaiety," but gave an opportunity for the amusing cross-examination which took place four days later, when "one of the company"—Boswell himself, of course—at a tavern supper asked, "Why, sir, did you go to Mrs. Abington's benefit? Did you see?" Johnson: "No, sir." "Did you hear?" Johnson: "No, sir." "Why then, sir, did you go?" Johnson: "Because, sir, she is a favourite of the public; and when the public cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I



will go to your benefit too." A week later occurred the famous dinner at the Club, with Fox in the chair, when Johnson growled to himself about bears, and startled the company with his famous apothegm: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." A fortnight later, again, Reynolds, Johnson, and Boswell made that expedition to Owen Cambridge's, at Richmond, to which Boswell devotes so many vivacious pages, and Johnson calls up the diverting image of himself as a public singer.

The pocket-book for 1776 is missing, and we have to depend for the routine of Sir Joshua's employments on the sidelights of Boswell, Hannah More's letters, the Academy catalogue, &c. Twelve pictures were sent to the Academy: the Duchess of Devonshire (the Althorp full length); Mrs. Lloyd (full length, cutting her name on a tree); * Lord Althorp (full length); † Lord Temple, called by Walpole the finest portrait Reynolds ever painted; ‡ Mrs. Montagu (half-length); § Master Crewe, as Henry VIII.; || the Duke of Devonshire (three-quarter length); ¶ David Garrick (the Thrale picture; a half-length with the thumbs together); ** Master Herbert, as Bacchus; †† Omiah (full length); ††† the Infant Daniel; §§ and the young St. John. |||

From this list it will be seen that Reynolds seldom did more for the glory of the Exhibition than in 1776. In conception, at least, few of his whole-length portraits of ladies excel the Duchess of Devonshire; in animation, he seldom equalled the Garrick; while for prompt felicity in

* Now the property of Lord Rothschild.

† Now at Althorp.

‡ Now the property of the Earl Temple.

§ The property of the Marquess of Winchester.

|| At Crewe Hall.

¶ At Crewe Hall.

** In the Lansdowne collection.

†† At Highclere.

††† At Castle Howard.

§§ At Knole.

||| There are two examples of this, one at Belvoir, the other at Wynnstay.

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the realisation of a boyish individuality, the Master Crewe must, I think, be put at the head of his portraits of children. Among other pictures worked on, at least, if not begun or finished in this year, were the full lengths of the Duke of Dorset, Sir Richard and Lady Worsley, Lady Melbourne, Lady Frances Marsham, and Mrs. Weyland, the half lengths of Sir Charles Davers, Lady Tyrconnel, and Lord Mount Stewart, and about thirty others. It was an active year—sitters were numerous, and the time given to subject-pictures correspondingly meagre. Only three are referred to in the ledger, the "Samuel," the "St. John," and a "Boy with a drawing in his hand." In other ways, 1776 was an epoch in Sir Joshua's career. It was the year of Garrick's farewell to the stage, and practically of the first appearance of Sarah Siddons upon it.* It was the year, too, of Gibbon's *début* as a historian, and, as we have already seen, of Northcote's departure from the master's house, to set up for himself. This event probably left a less distinct impression on Sir Joshua's memory than his own election into the Academy of Florence, and his recognition of the honour by the despatch of his autograph portrait to the famous collection in the Uffizi.† Of his social engagements at this time we know less than usual. Hannah More mentions a dinner, in February, at which he entertained herself and her sister, and describes what an embarrassment his deafness was in a large party. It was in June or July that the dinner took place in Leicester Fields at which Johnson's epitaph on Goldsmith was discussed, and the round robin protesting against the

* Strictly speaking, her *début* belongs to 1775, for it was on the 29th of December in that year that she made her bow as Portia.

† Reynolds has left a note of the method used in this portrait. "My own (portrait), Florence: upon raw cloth, cera solamente." The picture is in excellent condition.



SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, P.R.A.
THE ROYAL ACADEMY

HOSTS AND GUESTS

“obscurity of a learned language” concocted by Dean Barnard. Tom Taylor, with his usual liberality of conjecture, assumes that Reynolds made one of the crowd in Westminster Hall on the 15th of April, when Elizabeth Chudleigh, alias Countess of Bristol, alias Duchess of Kingston, was put upon her trial before her peers for bigamy. Seeing what Sir Joshua’s habits were, it is likely enough that he was among those who gave way to what it is now the fashion to call a morbid curiosity, especially as he had painted the lady in her youth when she was the beauty of his own native district.* There is no evidence, however, that he did so. With 1777 we get upon surer ground. The pocket-book is extant to help us, and to show that busy as he was in the studio, he yet found time for even more than his usual recreations. Dinner engagements are entered almost nightly. Among his hosts we find the Dukes of Bedford and Marlborough, Lords Edgcumbe, Palmerston, Upper Ossory, Carysfort, Lucan, Aylesford, Mulgrave and Shelburne; George Colman, Garrick, Cumberland, Banks, Sir Thomas Mills, Langton Beauclerc, Gibbon, Sheridan, and Boswell; Mrs. Ord, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Walsingham, Mrs. Boscawen, and Mrs. Cholmondeley; the intervals being filled in with symposia at his various clubs, and with his support of Sheridan in his new venture at Drury Lane.

* Flood, the great Irish orator, who had recently abandoned opposition for office, is Sir Joshua’s guest during the visit he paid to London in January, introduced to the President, doubtless, by their mutual friend Lord Charlemont, or perhaps by Hely Hutchinson, who never failed when in town to visit Sir Joshua. Another Irish guest was Jephson, Master of the Horse to the Lord Lieutenant, with his laurels as the author of *Braganza* still fresh, and soliciting the interest of

* She was the daughter of Colonel Thomas Chudleigh, of Cornwood, near Plymouth.

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Garrick for the new tragedy, *Vitellia*. There is a Sunday engagement with Gibbon, not yet a Lord of Trade, but a pleasure-loving, self-indulgent, though neither idle nor unobservant, man about town, with a seat in the Commons for Liskeard, member of all the clubs from Almack's to the Turk's Head, welcomed in the best society, literary, political, and fashionable, and drinking in with delight the incense of praise and success. The first volume of his history had appeared in 1776. It was just at this time that he was gossiping gaily to Holroyd: 'Town fills, and we are mighty agreeable—last year, on the Queen's birthday, Sir G. Warren had his diamond star cut off his coat; this day the same accident happened to him again with another star. . . .! Sir Joshua might condole with Sir George (whom he knew, and both of whose beautiful wives he painted); for had he not lost his gold laced hat and watch at the installation of the Knights of the Garter only a little before?' *"

The painter and the historian sometimes played together, for on March 11 in this year's pocket-book there is an entry for dinner and the masquerade with Gibbon. As for Sheridan, Sir Joshua never fails at Drury Lane on the production of a new piece, and it is significant that the night he chooses is now generally the third, when the profits go to the author. In February he sees the *Trip to Scarborough*, Sheridan's toned-down version of Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, and in May he enjoys the young dramatist's triumph in the *School for Scandal*. In the former his old friend, Mrs. Abington, was the Miss Hoyden, while another lady, whose features he was to help in immortalising, Mrs. "Perdita" Robinson, exhibited, appropriately enough, endangered virtue in Amanda. The Academy contained thirteen pictures by Sir Joshua. They were full lengths of Lady Frances Marsham,† Lady Derby,‡

* Leslie and Taylor.

† Lady Frances Wyndham, daughter of the Earl of Egremont; she was afterwards Countess of Romney. The picture now belongs to Lord Burton.

‡ Lady Elizabeth Hamilton, daughter of James, sixth Duke of

THE DILETTANTI GROUPS

Lady Bampfylde,* a group of Francis, Duke of Bedford, Lords John and William Russell, and their cousin, Miss Vernon,† Lady Caroline Montagu Scott,‡ “a Lady,” “a Clergyman,”§ “a Lady and Child,”|| “a Gentleman,” “a Child Asleep,”¶ “The Fortune Teller,”** “a Young Nobleman,” and “a Reading Boy.”††

In 1777 Sir Joshua's chief occupation in the studio was with the famous groups for the Dilettanti Society. The pictures are so well known—they were for some years in

Hamilton, and Elizabeth Gunning. The picture is said to have been destroyed by her husband.

* Daughter of Admiral Sir John Moore, K.C.B. The picture passed from the collection of Lord Poltimore into that of Mr. Alfred de Rothschild.

† See Graves and Cronin for notes on this picture.

‡ Daughter of Charles, fourth Duke of Buccleuch. The picture is at Dalkeith.

§ The “Dr. Warton,” now in the University Gallery, Oxford.

|| Lady Elizabeth Herbert and her son, now at Highclere. See Graves and Cronin for an interesting note on this picture.

¶ Cupid sleeping in the Clouds; the picture is at Highclere.

** Two of the Marlborough children; now in the collection of Sir Charles Tennant, Bart.

†† Now in the possession of Lord Normanton, at Somerley. L. and T. have a misleading note on this picture. In a letter to Lord Ossory (December 17, 1776), Walpole mentions two of this year's pictures: “I have seen the picture of ‘St. George’ (the Bedford family group), and approve the Duke of Bedford's head and the exact likeness of Miss Vernon; but the attitude is mean and foolish, and expresses only silly wonderment. Best of all—delicious—is a picture of a little girl of the Duke of Buccleuch, who is overlaid with a long cloak, bonnet, and muff, in the midst of the snow, and is perishing, blue and red with cold, but looks so smiling and good-humoured that one longs to catch her up in one's arms, and kiss her till she is in a sweat and squalls.” Miss Vernon was soon afterwards betrothed to the Earl of Warwick, when Walpole writes to Lady Ossory (June 10, 1777), “Does not Miss Vernon think it would have been more historic to have drawn her accompanying Earl Guy, when he slew the Dun Cow, than St. George killing the Dragon?”

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the National Gallery—that they need no description here.* Many sittings for them are entered in 1777; the pocket-book for 1778 is missing, but one sitting occurs as late as February, 1779. Soon after the pictures were painted they began to cause anxiety, and in the early years of the present century many reports on their state were made to the Dilettanti. In 1805 the paint was scaling off in many places, but nothing heroic seems to have been done until 1820, when they were doctored by Bigg, R.A., at considerable expense. The measures taken seem to have been effectual, for both groups are now in fair condition for Sir Joshuas. In the painter's *œuvre* they are remarkable chiefly for the success, or rather want of non-success, with which he has combined so many figures on comparatively small canvases. As a rule he showed himself quite unfit for such a task, and most of the pictures in which many figures occur—the “Infant Hercules,” the “Ugolino,” the “Death of Cardinal Beaufort,” the “Continence of Scipio,” for instances—are without anything that can be reasonably called design. The Dilettanti groups are artificial, no doubt; we can see easily enough that an effort has been made to give pretty much the same importance to each figure; but there is a pattern, and a fairly agreeable one. The real weak point in their design might have been readily avoided. It is merely, I think, that the canvases are too small. If Reynolds had given his figures a little more elbow room, leaving their mutual relations otherwise unchanged, the result would have been more

* The first group consists of Constantine, second Lord Mulgrave; Thomas, afterwards Lord, Dundas; Kenneth, Earl of Seaforth; Hon. Charles Greville; Charles Crowle; Lord Carmarthen, afterwards fifth Duke of Leeds; and Joseph, afterwards Sir Joseph, Banks. The second group contains Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, Bart.; John, afterwards Sir John, Taylor, Bart.; Stephen Payne Gallwey, Sir William Hamilton, W. Spencer Stanhope, Richard Thompson, and John Lewin Smyth.



LADY BAMPFYLDE
ALFRED DE ROTHSCHILD, ESQ.

THE BLENHEIM FAMILY GROUP

satisfactory. There was nothing in the Society's conditions, so far as I can discover, to prevent this being done.

Leslie has a curious paragraph under the date of 1777. "Politically," he says, "the year must have been a dispiriting one to Reynolds, and all who thought as he did of the American War. The tide of success seemed to be running strong and steadily for the mother country." It is difficult to discover on what grounds he bases this startling assertion. Reynolds, of course, was the friend of Burke, but his acquaintance with Johnson was quite as close. So far as I can find out, he never gave expression, at any time, to such political notions as those on which the opposition to all constraint of our colonies was founded. He had an opinion, and backed it, as to which side had the best prospects of military success, but that gives us no right to assume that he wished for the defeat of the mother country. Politically he was an opportunist, with a leaning towards the side of Burke and Fox determined by nothing more profound than those social predilections which had brought him acquainted with more Whigs than Tories. Leslie's talk of his "despondency," under the political conditions of the time, seems to be quite unwarranted either by evidence or by what we know of his general character. It is pretty certain that neither the capture of Philadelphia nor the surrender at Saratoga disturbed the even tenour of his life.

The other chief events of the year, for Sir Joshua, were the painting of the great Marlborough Family picture, now at Blenheim, and the election of Sheridan to the Club. To the Blenheim picture reference will be made presently, when we come to discuss the painter's contributions to the Academy of 1778. As for Sheridan's election, it took place in March, on the initiative of Johnson. The *Rivals*, the *Duenna*, and the *Trip to Scarborough*, Sheri-

dan's version of Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, had already been produced, the latest and least successful only a few days before. By two of them, probably the *Rivals* and the *Duenna*, Johnson had justified his proposal of their author. "He who has written," he said, "the two best comedies of his age, is surely a considerable man." He must have purred when his judgment was so signally confirmed, within two months of the election, by that first night which gave to the English stage its finest comedy since Shakespeare. The *School for Scandal* started on its great career in May, 1777.

CHAPTER VI

1778—1783



MR JOSHUA only sent four pictures to the Exhibition of 1778, a year in which his brush was less active than it had ever been before. One of his contributions, however, was the Marlborough group mentioned in the last chapter; the others were a half-length of Dr. Markham, Dean of Christ Church and Archbishop of York,* and whole-lengths of John Campbell, afterwards Lord Cawdor,† and of his sister Sarah, afterwards Mrs. Wodehouse.‡ In the Blenheim group Reynolds scored a triumph, for which little in his previous work had prepared his friends. Once before, indeed, he had brought several figures together without confusion—in the picture of the three Montgomeries—but as a rule he had shown a want of capacity to invent an arabesque that was at once complex and coherent. The fact is curious, for not many painters have put more thought into their work than he, or been more fruitful in happy ideas. To some extent reluctance, rather than incapacity, to arrange accounts for the shortcoming. We know that side by side with his respect for

* The picture hangs in Christ Church hall.

† In the possession of the Earl of Cawdor.

‡ In Lord Hillingdon's collection.

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the principles of the great style, he had a profound belief in the superiority of nature over art. In the "Lady Cockburn," for instance, and the "Lady Smith," he fell into confusion through being seduced by the idea that a swarm of babies, crawling over their mother, would enchant on canvas as it does in the nursery. He forgot that the living charm of youthful flesh, the free play of childish limbs, and the kaleidoscopic variation of childish contours, would not be there to help him. He forgot, in short, that art is great by what it makes, and not by what it imitates. To be suggestive is an added glory to art, but it must not depend upon suggestion. Its business is to create, and its creations should be as self-contained as those of nature. Some critics—Northcote among them—have quoted the Marlborough Family as a proof that "Reynolds could not manage a crowded composition." To me it seems the only real exception to the truth of that dictum, for the "Ladies decorating a Term of Hymen," the "Sisters Waldegrave," and one or two others in which three figures are happily combined, cannot be called crowded. Even now, with its division of light and shade obscured by the degradation of the tones, it falls into an agreeable pattern both in depth and elevation. The scheme, no doubt, is artificial. The Duchess stands in the centre and forms the apex to a pyramid of which the Duke and his heir, on her right, and her two elder daughters, on her left, supply the slopes. The young children in the foreground contrast happily with their elders by the irresponsibility of their action, while they help the space-composition. The background, with its statue of Mars, is not ill conceived. It was not always as we see it now, for Reynolds altered it after the picture went home from Somerset House. The other pictures of the year are all among Sir Joshua's successes, especially

“EVELINA”

the half-length of Dr. Markham in his robes. For simple dignity, combined with breadth of execution and general warmth of tone and colour, it holds its own with any portrait he ever painted.

Johnson sat this year. He writes to Mrs. Thrale on the 15th of October: “I have sat twice to Sir Joshua, and he seems to like his own performance. He has projected another, in which I am to be busy; but we can think on it at leisure;” and again (31st October): “Sir Joshua has finished my picture, and it seems to please everybody; but I shall wait to see how it pleases you.” Other sitters were Edmund Malone, now become one of Sir Joshua’s intimates, Lord Lucan, the Parker children, Lady Beaumont, Lord Broome, Mrs. Payne-Gallwey and child, Lord Vaughan, Mr. Bampfylde, and Mr. and Mrs. Huddesford. Huddesford was a son of the President of Trinity, Oxford, and a former pupil of Reynolds himself. He had become known as a sort of Peter Pindar, and had this year published a poem on the soldiering fever of the time, called “Warley, a Satire.” It was dedicated to Sir Joshua, who had just finished his fine portrait of Lady Worsley in that uniform of the Hants Militia which she had been displaying at Warley Camp, as the livery of a husband who was to divorce her not long afterwards.

Outside the studio the chief event of the year for Sir Joshua was probably the publication of *Evelina* and his introduction to its author. The novel appeared at the end of January, but it was not until September that Reynolds and his two nieces encountered Miss Burney at Streatham. The painter had read the book, sacrificing a night’s sleep to get to the end, and had told Mrs. Thrale that he would give fifty pounds to meet the then anonymous author. His importance in the lady’s eyes is proved by the entry in her diary: “He (Sir Joshua) several times

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spoke to me, though he did not make love." Mrs. Thrale had already hinted to "Little Burney" that Reynolds would make a desirable husband. The two were soon intimate friends, and the glimpses we catch of the painter in the lady's diary are invariably pleasant. In this same year, on the 3rd of April, Sir Joshua formed one of a dinner party (at the club?), when the talk was more than usually good, and even more than usually well reported by Boswell.

Burke says: "I have been looking at this famous antique marble dog of Mr. Jennings, valued at a thousand guineas, said to be Alcibiades' dog." Johnson: "His tail, then, must be docked. That was the mark of Alcibiades' dog." "A thousand guineas!" cries Burke. "The representation of no animal whatever is worth so much. At this rate a dead dog would, indeed, be better than a living lion."

Johnson, who is debited with such perverse views on art, answers:

"Sir, it is not the worth of the thing, but the skill in forming it, which is so highly estimated. Everything that enlarges the sphere of human powers, that shows man he can do what he thought he could not do, is valuable. The first man who balanced a straw on his nose; Johnson, who rode upon three horses at a time; in short, all such men deserved the applause of mankind, not on account of the use of what they did, but of the dexterity which they exhibited."

In the next passage the rôles are reversed: it is Burke who hits upon at least a partial truth, and Johnson, Boswell, and Reynolds who contest it.

E. (Burke): "We hear prodigious complaints at present of emigration. I am convinced that emigration makes a country more populous." J. (Reynolds): "That sounds very much like a paradox." Burke: "Exportation of men, like exportation of all other commodities, makes more to be produced." Johnson: "But there would be more people were there not emigration, provided there were food for more." Burke: "No; leave a few breeders, and you'll have more people than if there were no emigration." Johnson: "Nay, Sir, it is plain there will be more people if there are more breeders. Thirty cows in a pasture will



MASTER CREWE

EARL OF CREWE

DINNERS IN LEICESTER FIELDS

produce more calves than ten cows, provided they have good bulls." Burke: "There are bulls enough in Ireland." Johnson (smiling): "So, Sir, I should think from your argument."* . . . Burke: "From the experience I have had—and I have had a great deal—I have learnt to think *better* of mankind." Johnson: "From my experience, I have found them worse in commercial dealings, more disposed to cheat, than I had any notion of; but more disposed to do one another good than I had conceived." Reynolds: "Less just and more beneficent."

Six days later Sir Joshua had a dinner and party afterwards at his own house. The guests at dinner were: Johnson, Gibbon, Owen Cambridge, Bennet Langton, Allan Ramsay, Boswell, and the Bishop of St. Asaph. The classics governed the talk. Boswell's report is sprinkled as freely with the dead languages as a speech in Parliament of a century ago. The "rich assemblage" which awaited the diners in the drawing-room included Garrick, Dr. Percy, Dr. Burney, Mrs. Cholmondeley, Miss Hannah More, and Mr. Harris, of Salisbury. Boswell "gets into a corner with Johnson, Garrick, and Harris," so our further knowledge of the evening is limited to this quartet. A fortnight later, on the 25th of April, Sir Joshua entertained again, the company including Johnson, Boswell, Dr. Musgrave, the editor of Euripides, Leland, the son of the Irish Antiquarian, Mrs. Cholmondeley, Miss Reynolds, and other ladies. A discussion arose as to how a man should reply to an author asking a serious opinion on his own work and advice whether to publish or not. Reynolds makes the sound answer:

"You must, upon such an occasion, have two judgments; one as to the real value of the work, the other as to what may please the general taste of the time."

* It is a pity Burke could not quote the modern game-preserve's experience.

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Johnson's answer is one of our documents for the eighteenth century :

“But you can be *sure* of neither; and therefore I should scruple much to give a suppressive vote. Both Goldsmith's comedies were once refused; his first by Garrick, his second by Colman, who was prevailed on at last, by much solicitation, nay, a kind of force, to bring it on. His *Vicar of Wakefield* I myself did not think would have much success. It was written, and sold to a bookseller, before his *Traveller*, but published after—so little expectation had the bookseller from it. Had it been sold after *The Traveller*, he might have had twice as much money for it. Though sixty guineas was no mean price. The bookseller had the advantage of Goldsmith's reputation from *The Traveller* in the sale, though Goldsmith had it not in selling the copy.”

In the drawing-room again they find “a considerable increase of company,” and Johnson propounds the excellent rule for a man's talking of himself, that he should only assert simple facts, such as can be tested with the yard measure. It was a few days later that the dinner with Paoli took place, when Johnson used his club to Reynolds over the question of wine.

“Boswell,” said Johnson, “is a bolder combatant than Sir Joshua; he argues for wine without the help of wine,* but Sir Joshua with it.” Reynolds: “But to please one's company is a strong motive.” Johnson (who from drinking only water supposed everybody who drank wine to be elevated): “I won't argue any more with you, Sir. You are too far gone.” Reynolds: “I should have thought so, indeed, Sir, had I made such a speech as you have now done.” Johnson (drawing himself in, and, I really thought, blushing): “Nay, don't be angry. I did not mean to offend you.”

Four days afterwards Sir Joshua gave the dinner to a large company, including Ursa Major and his leader, at which “there were several people by no means of the Johnsonian school,” with the result that the neglected Doctor turned upon poor Boswell and so rent him that it took a week to heal the wounds.

* It was during Boswell's teetotal experiment.

HIS "DIALOGUES"

Sir Joshua's idea of Johnson need not, however, be taken at second hand. He wrote two imaginary dialogues which portray the "great cham of literature" quite as vividly as his painted pictures. In the shorter and better of the two, Johnson's antagonist is Reynolds himself.*

"REYNOLDS.—Let me alone. I'll bring him out. [*Aside.*] . . . I have been thinking, Dr. Johnson, this morning on a matter that has puzzled me very much; it is a subject that I daresay has often passed in your thoughts, and though *I* cannot, I dare say *you* have made up your mind upon it.

"JOHNSON.—Tilly fally! what is all this preparation? What is all this weighty matter?

"R.—Why, it is a very weighty matter. The subject I have been thinking upon is Predestination and Free Will, two things I cannot reconcile together for the life of me; in my opinion, Dr. Johnson, free will and foreknowledge cannot be reconciled.

"J.—Sir, it is not of very great importance what your opinion is upon such a question.

"R.—But I meant only, Doctor J., to know your opinion.

"J.—No, Sir, you meant no such thing; you meant only to show these gentlemen that you are not the man they took you to be, but that you think of high matters sometimes, and that you may have the credit of having it said that you held an argument with Sam Johnson on predestination and free will—a subject of that magnitude as to have engaged the attention of the world, to have perplexed the wisdom of man for these two thousand years; a subject on which the fallen angels, who *had yet not lost all their original brightness*, find themselves in *wandering mazes lost*. That such a subject could be discussed in the levity of convivial conversation, is a degree of absurdity beyond what is easily conceivable.

* They were first printed, privately, by Lady Thomond, in 1816. They were first published in Croker's Boswell in 1838. Lady Thomond sent a copy to Hannah More, who in writing her thanks says: "Dear Sir Joshua, even with *his* inimitable pencil, never drew more interesting, more resembling portraits: I hear them all speak, I see every action, every gesture which accompanied every word. I hear the deep-toned and indignant accents of our friend Johnson; I hear the affected periods of Gibbon; the natural, the easy, the friendly, the elegant language, the polished sarcasm, softened with the sweet temper of Sir Joshua." This letter is dated 15 March, 1820.

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“R.—It is so, as you say, to be sure; I talked once to our friend Garrick upon this subject, but I remember we could make nothing of it.

“J.—O, noble pair!

“R.—Garrick was a clever fellow, Dr. J.; Garrick, take him altogether, was certainly a very great man.

“J.—Garrick, Sir, may be a great man in your opinion, as far as I know, but he was not so in mine; little things are great to little men.

“R.—I have heard you say, Dr. Johnson——

“J.—Sir, you never heard me say that David Garrick was a great man; you may have heard me say that Garrick was a good repeater—of other men’s words—words put into his mouth by other men; this makes but a faint approach towards being a great man.

“R.—But take Garrick upon the whole, now, in regard to conversation——

“J.—Well, Sir, in regard to conversation: I never discovered in the conversation of David Garrick any intellectual energy, any wide grasp of thought, and extensive comprehension of mind, or that he possessed any of those powers to which *great* could with any degree of propriety be applied.

“R.—But still——

“J.—Hold, Sir, I have not done. There are, to be sure, in the laxity of colloquial speech, various kinds of greatness; a man may be a great tobacconist, a man may be a great painter, he may be likewise a great mimic; now, you may be the one and Garrick the other, and yet neither of you be great men.

“R.—But, Dr. Johnson——

“J.—Hold, Sir! I have often lamented how dangerous it is to investigate and discriminate character to men who have no discriminative powers.

“R.—But Garrick, as a companion, I heard you say—no longer ago than last Wednesday, at Mrs. Thrale’s table——

“J.—You tease me, Sir. Whatever you may have heard me say, no longer ago than last Wednesday, at Mrs. Thrale’s table, I tell you I do not say so now; besides, as I said before, you may not have understood me, you misapprehended me, you may not have heard me.

“R.—I am very sure I heard you.

“J.—Besides, besides Sir, besides—do you not know—are you so ignorant as not to know—that it is the highest degree of rudeness to quote a man against himself?

“R.—But if you differ from yourself, and give one opinion to-day——

“J.—Have done, Sir; the company, you see, are tired, as well as myself.”

HIS "DIALOGUES"

The second dialogue exhibits Johnson on the other tack. Gibbon has been belittling Garrick, and the Doctor takes up the defence of his property.

"JOHNSON.—No, Sir; Garrick's fame was prodigious, not only in England, but over all Europe. Even in Russia I have been told he was a proverb; when any one had repeated well, he was called a second Garrick.

"GIBBON.—I think he had full as much reputation as he deserved.

"J.—I do not pretend to know, Sir, what your meaning may be, by saying he had as much reputation as he deserved; he deserved much and he had much.

"G.—Why surely, Dr. Johnson, his merit was in small things only; he had none of those qualities which make a real great man.

"J.—Sir, I as little understand what your meaning may be, when you speak of the qualities that make a great man; it is a vague term. Garrick was no common man; a man above the common size of men may surely, without any great impropriety, be called a great man. In my opinion he has very reasonably fulfilled the prophecy which he once reminded me of having made to his mother, when she asked me how little David went on at school, that I should say to her he would come to be hanged, or come to be a great man. No, Sir, it is undoubtedly true that the same qualities, united with virtue or with vice, make a hero or a rogue, a great general or a highwayman. Now, Garrick, we are sure, was never hanged, and in regard to being a great man, you must take the whole man together. It must be considered in how many things Garrick excelled in which every man desires to excel; setting aside his excellence as an actor, in which he is acknowledged to be unrivalled, as a man, as a poet, as a convivial companion, you will find but few his equals, and none his superior. As a man, he was kind, friendly, benevolent, and generous.

"G.—Of Garrick's generosity I never heard; I understood his character to be totally the reverse, and that he was reckoned to have loved money.

"J.—That he loved money nobody will dispute; who does not? but if you mean, by loving money, that he was parsimonious to a fault, Sir, you have been misinformed. To Foote and such scoundrels, who circulated those reports, to such profligate spendthrifts, prudence is meanness, and economy is avarice. That Garrick in early youth was brought up in strict habits of economy I believe, and that they were necessary I have heard from himself; to suppose that Garrick might inadvertently act from this habit, and be saving in small things, can be no wonder; but

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let it be remembered at the same time that, if he was frugal from habit, he was liberal from principle; that when he acted from reflection he did what his fortune enabled him to do, and what was expected from such a fortune. I remember no instance of David's parsimony but once, when he stopped Mrs. Woffington from replenishing the teapot; it was already, he said, as red as blood; and this instance is doubtful, and happened many years ago. In the latter part of his life I observed no blameable parsimony in David; his table was elegant and even splendid; his house, both in town and country, his equipage, and I think all his habits of life, were such as might be expected from a man who had acquired great riches. In regard to his generosity, which you seem to question, I shall only say, there is no man to whom I would apply, with more confidence of success, for the loan of two hundred pounds to assist a common friend, than to David, and this, too, with very little, if any, probability of its being repaid.

"G.—You were going to say something of him as a writer. You don't rate him very high as a poet?"

"J.—Sir, a man may be a respectable poet without being a Homer, as a man may be a good player without being a Garrick. In the lighter kinds of poetry, in the appendages of the drama, he was, if not the first, in the very first class. He had a readiness and facility, a dexterity of mind, that appeared extraordinary even to men of experience, and who are not apt to wonder from ignorance. Writing prologues, epilogues, and epigrams he said he considered as his trade, and he was, what a man should be, always and at all times ready at his trade. He required two hours for a prologue or epilogue, and five minutes for an epigram. Once at Burke's table the company proposed a subject, and Garrick finished his epigram within the time; the same experiment was repeated in the garden, with the same success.

"G.—Garrick had some flippancy of parts, to be sure, and was brisk and lively in company, and by the help of mimicry and story-telling made himself a pleasant companion; but here the whole world gave the superiority to Foote, and Garrick himself seems to have felt as if his genius was rebuked by the superior powers of Foote. It has been often observed that Garrick never dared to enter into competition with him, but was content to act an under part to bring Foote out.

"J.—That this conduct of Garrick's might be interpreted by the gross minds of Foote and his friends as if he was afraid to encounter him, I can easily imagine. Of the actual superiority of Garrick over Foote, this conduct is an instance; he disdained entering into competition with such a fellow, and made him the buffoon of the company—or, as you say, brought him out. And what was at last brought out but



HIS "DIALOGUES"

coarse jests and vulgar merriment, indecency and impiety, a relation of events which, upon the face of them, could never have happened, characters coarsely conceived and coarsely represented? Foote was even no mimic; he went out of himself, it is true, but without going into another man; he was excelled by Garrick even in this, which is considered as Foote's greatest excellence. Garrick, besides his exact imitation of the voice and gesture of his original, to a degree of refinement of which Foote had no conception, exhibited the mind and mode of thinking of the person imitated. Besides, Garrick confined his powers within the limits of decency; he had a character to preserve, Foote had none. By Foote's buffoonery and broad-faced merriment, private friendship, public decency, and everything estimable among men, were trod underfoot. We all know the difference of their reception in the world. No man, however high in rank or literature, but was proud to know Garrick, and was glad to have him at his table; no man ever considered or treated Garrick as a player; he may be said to have stepped out of his own rank into a higher, and by raising himself he raised the rank of his profession. At a convivial table, his exhilarating powers were unrivalled; he was lively, entertaining, quick in discerning the ridicule of life, and as ready in representing it; and on graver subjects there were few topics in which he could not bear his part. It is injurious to the character of Garrick to be named in the same breath as Foote. That Foote was admitted sometimes in good company (to do the man what credit I can) I will allow, but then it was merely to play tricks; Foote's merriment was that of a buffoon, and Garrick's that of a gentleman.

"G.—I have been told, on the contrary, that Garrick in company had not the easy manners of a gentleman.

"J.—I don't know what you may have been told, or what your ideas may be of the manners of gentlemen; Garrick had no vulgarity in his manners; it is true Garrick had not the airiness of a fop, nor did he assume an affected indifference to what was passing; he did not lounge from the table to the window, and from thence to the fire, or, whilst you were addressing your discourses to him, turn from you and talk to your next neighbour, or give any indication that he was tired of his company; if such manners form your ideas of a fine gentleman, Garrick certainly had them not.

"G.—I mean that Garrick was more overawed by the presence of the great, and more obsequious to rank, than Foote, who considered himself as their equal, and treated them with the same familiarity as they treat each other.

"J.—He did so, and what did the fellow get by it? The grossness

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of his mind prevented him from seeing that this familiarity was merely suffered as they would play with a dog; he got no ground by affecting to call peers by their surnames; the foolish fellow imagined that lowering them was raising himself to their level; this affectation of familiarity with the great, this childish ambition of momentary exaltation obtained by the neglect of those ceremonies which custom has established as barriers between one order of society and another, only showed his folly and meanness; he did not see that by encroaching on others' dignity he put himself in their power, either to be repelled with helpless indignity, or endured by clemency and condescension. Garrick, by paying due respect to rank, respected himself; what he gave was returned, and what was returned he kept for ever; his advancement was on firm ground, he was recognised in public as well as respected in private; and as no man was ever more courted and better received by the public, so no man was ever less spoiled by its flattery. Garrick continued advancing to the last, till he had acquired every advantage that high birth or title could bestow, except the precedence of going into a room, but when he was there he was treated with as much attention as the first man at the table. It is to the credit of Garrick that he never laid claim to this distinction,—it was as voluntarily allowed as if it had been his birthright. In this, I confess, I looked on David with some degree of envy, not so much for the respect he received, as for the manner of its being acquired; what fell into his lap unsought I have been forced to claim. I began the world by fighting my way. There was something about me that invited insult, or at least a disposition to neglect, and I was equally disposed to repel insult, and to claim attention, and, I fear, continue too much in this disposition now that it is no longer necessary; I receive at present as much favour as I have a right to expect. I am not one of the complainers of the neglect of merit.

“G.—*Your* pretensions, Dr. Johnson, nobody will dispute; I cannot place Garrick on the same footing; your reputation will continue increasing after your death, when Garrick will be totally forgot; you will be for ever considered a classic—

“J.—Enough, Sir, enough! The company would be better pleased to see us quarrel than bandying compliments.

“G.—But you must allow, Dr. Johnson, that Garrick was too much a slave to fame, or rather to the mean ambition of living with the great, terribly afraid of making himself cheap, even with them; by which he debarred himself of much pleasant society. Employing so much attention and so much management upon such little things implies, I think, a little mind. It was observed by his friend Colman that he never went into company but with a plot how to get out of it; he was every

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minute called out, and went on, off, or returned, as there was, or was not, a probability of his shining.

"J.—In regard to this mean ambition, as you call it, of living with the great, what was the boast of Pope, and is every man's wish, can be no reproach to Garrick; he who says he despises it, knows he lies; that Garrick husbanded his fame, the fame he had justly acquired, both at the theatre and at the table, is not denied; but where is the blame, either in the one or the other, of leaving as little as he could to chance? Besides, Sir, consider what you have said: you first deny Garrick's pretensions to fame, and then accuse him of too great attention to preserve what he never possessed.

"G.—I don't understand——

"J.—Sir, I can't help that.

"G.—Well, but, Dr. Johnson, you will not vindicate him in his over and above attention to his fame, inordinate desire to exhibit himself to new men, like a coquet ever seeking after new conquests, to the total neglect of old friends and admirers:—

'He threw off his friends like a huntsman his pack;'

always looking out for new game.

"J.—When you quoted the line from Goldsmith, you ought, in fairness, to have given what followed:—

'He knew, when he pleased, he could whistle them back;'

which implies at least that he possessed a power over other men's minds approaching to fascination. But consider, Sir, what is to be done: here is a man whom every other man desired to know. Garrick could not receive and cultivate all, according to each man's conception of his own value—we are all apt enough to consider ourselves as possessing a right to be excepted from the common crowd; besides, Sir, I do not see why that should be imputed to him as a crime which we all so irresistibly feel and practise; we all make a greater exertion in the presence of new men than old acquaintance. It is undoubtedly true that Garrick divided his attention among so many that but little was left to the share of any individual; like the extension and dissipation of water into dew, there was not quantity united sufficiently to quench any man's thirst; but this is the inevitable state of things; Garrick, no more than another man, could unite what, in their natures, are incompatible.

"G.—But Garrick was not only excluded by this means from real friendship, but accused of treating those whom he called friends with insincerity and double dealing.

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“J.—Sir, it is not true; his character in that respect is misunderstood; Garrick was, to be sure, very ready in promising, but he intended at the time to fulfil his promise; he intended no deceit; his politeness or his good nature, call it which you will, made him unwilling to deny; he wanted the courage to say ‘No’ even to unreasonable demands. This was the great error of his life; by raising expectations which he did not, perhaps could not gratify, he made many enemies; at the same time, it must be remembered that this error proceeded from the same cause which produced many of his virtues. Friendships from warmth of temper too suddenly taken up, and too violent to continue, ended, as they were likely to do, in disappointment, his friends became his enemies, and these, having been fostered in his bosom, well knew his sensibility to reproach, and took care that he should be amply supplied with such bitter potions as they were capable of administering; their impotent efforts he ought to have despised, but he felt them, nor did he affect insensibility.

“G.—And that sensibility probably shortened his life.

“J.—No, Sir, he died of a disorder of which you or any other man may die, without being killed by too much sensibility.

“G.—But you will allow, however, that this sensibility, those fine feelings, made him the great actor he was.

“J.—This is all cant, fit only for kitchen wenches and chambermaids; Garrick’s trade was to represent passion, not to feel it. Ask Reynolds whether he felt the distress of Count Ugolino when he drew it.

“G.—But surely he feels the passion at the moment he is representing it?

“J.—About as much as Punch feels. That Garrick himself gave in to this foppery of feelings I can easily believe; but he knew at the same time that he lied. He might think it right, as far as I know, to have what fools imagined he ought to have, but it is amazing that anyone should be so ignorant as to think that an actor would risk his reputation by depending on the feelings that shall be excited in the presence of two hundred people, on the repetition of certain words which he has repeated two hundred times before in what actors call their study. No, Sir, Garrick left nothing to chance. Every gesture, every expression of countenance and variation of voice, was settled in his closet before he set his foot upon the stage.”

The claim of Reynolds to literary ability rests on these two *jeux d’esprit* with more security than upon his Discourses. They are nervous and to the point, in a way that his more pretentious writings are not; and even if the

DEATH OF GARRICK

ideas are entirely those of Johnson, as Malone asserted, Sir Joshua deserves praise for the vivid way in which they are expressed.

This was the year of Garrick's death. He died on the 20th of January, leaving behind him the large fortune, for his day and profession, of £140,000. Five days later he was followed by Sir Joshua's old master, Thomas Hudson. Reynolds and Hudson had kept up their friendship to the end, in spite of the little difficulty which had led to the breaking off of their relations as master and scholar. Hudson had long ago abandoned painting, and had satisfied his artistic instincts during his later years by adding to the fine collection of drawings by the "old masters" he had inherited from his father-in-law, Jonathan Richardson. The unbroken friendship between the two painters was creditable to them both. A small minded man in Hudson's place would have resented his complete eclipse by his own scholar, while Sir Joshua must have understood the workings of a generous soul, or the consciousness of his own triumph would have held him aloof from the man at whose expense it had been chiefly won. Another death which took place this year was that of Dr. Armstrong, the medical poet, who had formed one of Sir Joshua's circle ever since the painter's arrival in London.

To the Exhibition of this year Reynolds sent his picture of the Nativity,* and his three figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity,† for the window in New College Chapel; full lengths of Lady Louisa Manners,‡ Lady Crosbie,§ and a young lady; a three-quarters group of a Lady

* Burnt at Belvoir Castle, in 1816. A sketch for it is at Somerley.

† At Somerley, in the collection of the Earl of Normanton.

‡ Afterwards Countess of Dysart. The picture is now in the collection of Lord Iveagh.

§ In the collection of Sir Charles Tennant, Bart.

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and Child; Andrew Stuart,* and a "Portrait of a Gentleman."

Judging from the sketch at Somerley, from the engraving, and from the window in New College, the Nativity was one of Sir Joshua's more successful attempts at elaborate composition. It must, however, have been sadly wanting in sincerity, and in the kind of imagination which enables an artist to combine the probable emotions of the people he is attempting to restore, with the feelings that time, faith, and association have implanted in those to whom he appeals. The single figures of the virtues are much better. In them, indeed, Sir Joshua again touches his highest level as a designer. They were at first intended to be cartoons, in the usual sense of the word, but Reynolds had been so long in the habit of depending on brush and colour alone, that he painted them at once on canvas. "Jervas, the painter on glass," he told Mason, "will have a better original to copy, and I suppose persons hereafter may be found to purchase my paintings."†

Mason's fragment on Reynolds has an interesting passage on the painting of these glorified cartoons:—

"When he was employed upon the central part of the window in his famous 'Nativity,' I happened to call on him,‡ when his painting-room presented me with a very singular and pleasing prospect. Three beautiful young female children, with their hair dishevelled, were placed

* A Scottish "writer," engaged in the celebrated Douglas filiation case.

† The "Nativity" was bought by the Duke of Rutland for £1,200; the seven "Virtues," sold at Lady Thomond's sale in 1821, were bought by Lord Normanton for £5,565; the side pictures to the "Nativity," with portraits of Reynolds himself and the glass painter, Jervas, were acquired after the painter's death by Lord Fitzwilliam, and are now at Wentworth-Woodhouse.

‡ There is an entry in the pocket-book for the 30th of June, "Children, 2. Mr. Mason."



THE VISCOUNTESS CROSBIE
SIR CHARLES TENNANT, BART.

THE NEW COLLEGE WINDOW

under a large mirror which hung angularly over their heads, and from the reflection in this he was painting that charming group as angels which surrounded the Holy Infant. He had nearly finished this part of his design, and I hardly recollect ever to have had a greater pleasure than I then had in beholding and comparing beautiful nature, both in its reflection and on the canvas. The effect may be imagined, but it cannot be described. The head of the Virgin in this capital picture was first a profile. I told him it appeared to me so very *Correggiasque* that I feared it would be throughout thought too close an imitation of that master. What I then said, whether justly or not I will not presume to say, had so much weight with him that, when I saw the picture the next time, the head was altered entirely; part of the retiring cheek was brought forward, and, as he told me, he had got Mrs. Sheridan to sit for it to him.

“With the copy Jervas made of this picture he was grievously disappointed. ‘I had frequently,’ he said to me, ‘pleased myself with reflecting, after I had produced what I thought a brilliant effect of light and shade on my canvas, how greatly that effect would be heightened by the transparency which the painting on glass would be sure to produce. It turned out quite the reverse.’ And I must myself own, when I saw the window at Oxford some time before Sir Joshua expressed this sentiment to me, that I had thought precisely as he did. It is true that I saw it when not illuminated by the sun behind it, an advantage which such paintings particularly require: I saw it on a dull morning, whereas, supposing the chapel to stand east and west, a bright evening is the proper time to examine it.*

“The day of opening the Exhibition that year, when this picture was in hand, approached too hastily upon Sir Joshua, who had resolved that it should then make its public appearance. I saw him at work upon it, even the very day before it was to be sent thither; and it grieved me to see him laying loads of colour and varnish upon it, at the same time

* I have seen it often, and under all conditions of light; it is never quite satisfactory, and that for a very obvious reason. The success of such a scheme of chiaroscuro depends entirely on the effective contrast of the light parts with the parts in shadow, a contrast easily established on canvas by opposing opaque and reflecting surfaces to transparent and absorbent ones. When the whole of the light has to come through the substance of the picture, it is scarcely possible that the necessary contrast should be obtained. A bright sun streams through both the deepest shadow on which the glass painter can venture and the highest light, and takes all the vigour out of the contrast.

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prognosticating to myself that it would never stand the test of time."

Whether Mason's prophecy were well-founded or not we can never know, as the picture was burnt at Belvoir in its thirty-eighth year. The "Virtues," at Somerley, are in fair condition.

Socially, 1779 was an average year with Sir Joshua. The dinner engagements entered in his pocket-book are, perhaps, a little less numerous than usual, but they include one or two evenings which Boswell has made famous. One of these was the day after the condemnation of Hackman for the murder of Miss Ray, when Johnson and Topham Beauclerc came to high words over the significance of carrying two pistols. Another was the 24th of the same month, when the discussion ran upon the character of Garrick, and Boswell came as near as he dared to finding fault with his hero, who had said that "Garrick's death had eclipsed the gaiety of nations." On both these occasions Reynolds was present, but he is not recorded as having taken any part in the talk. A sketch of the painter as he seemed to an unsympathetic contemporary is quoted by Leslie, who calls it "a view of one's hero through the reversed opera glass." Mr. B——y was an Irish ex-commissary who had sat to Reynolds in the old days at Minorca. He speaks of him "as if he had been a carpenter or farrier."

"Did you ever see his "Nativity"?" asks Mrs. Thrale. 'No, madam; but I know his pictures very well. I knew him many years ago, in Minorca; he drew my picture there, and then he knew how to take a moderate price; but now, I vow, ma'am, 'tis scandalous—scandalous, indeed! to pay a fellow here seventy guineas for scratching out a head!'

"Dr. Delap reminds him that he must not run down Sir Joshua, because he is Miss Burney's friend. 'Sir, I don't want to run the man down; I like him well enough in his proper place; he is as decent as

NEW SOMERSET HOUSE

any man of that sort I ever knew; but for all that, Sir, his prices are shameful. Why, he would not—looking at the poor Doctor with an enraged contempt—‘he would not do *your* head under seventy guineas!’ Mrs. Thrale declares that too much could hardly be paid for such a portrait as Mr. Stuart’s in the last Exhibition. ‘What stuff is this!’ exclaims Mr. B——y; ‘how can two or three dabs of paint ever be worth such a sum as that?’ ‘Sir,’ says Selwyn, delighting to draw him out, ‘you know not how much he is improved since you knew him in Minorca; he is now the finest painter, perhaps, in the world!’ Mr. B——y pooh-poohs this, and reiterates he has no objection to the man. ‘I have dined in his company two or three times; a very decent man he is, fit to keep company with gentlemen; but, ma’am, what are all your modern dabblers put together to one ancient? Nothing! A set of—not a Rubens among ’em! I vow, ma’am, not a Rubens among ’em!’”

In these days we are apt to forget that to many of Sir Joshua’s contemporaries, with the stricter notions of social precedency in vogue a century ago, the painter’s station in London society must have seemed almost an outrage, especially as it had been won without any kind of pretence or undue submission to those who were then called “the great.” Fond as he was of the best that Society could give, he lived his life in his own way, invited whom he chose to his own table, leaving his guests to shake down among themselves as best they could, and, so far as we can discover, paying little heed to prejudices on the matter of birth, and still less to those which had to do with politics or conventional morality.

The year 1780 saw the transfer of the Exhibition from Pall Mall to the new home of the Academy in Somerset House. The rooms designed for it by Sir William Chambers still exist, on the right-hand side of the arched entrance in the Strand. They consisted of exhibition rooms for drawings and sculpture on the ground floor, a library, antique academy, &c., on the first floor, and two top-lighted picture galleries, one large, the other very small, on the third floor. Some of the rooms were

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decorated with the pictures by Cipriani and Angelica Kauffmann which have lately been placed in the vestibule at Burlington House. The first exhibition in the new building was a great success. The takings amounted to £3069, more than twice what they were in the previous year, and many other signs of increasing interest were given. Sir Joshua's contributions to the show were portraits of Lady Beaumont,* Gibbon,† the Earl of Cholmondeley,‡ Lady Worsley, in the Hants Militia uniform,§ Miss Beauclerc (daughter of Topham Beauclerc), as "Una,"|| and of Prince William Frederick of Gloucester,¶ in a Van Dyck dress. He also sent the cartoon for "Justice," in the New College window. To the same exhibition Gainsborough sent fourteen pictures, eight portraits and six landscapes. Among these were some of his finest things, such as the George Coyte ("Coyte alive"), Mr. Alfred de Rothschild's "Mrs. Beaufoy," Mr. Hirsch's "Madame Le Brun," and the "Horses drinking," now in Sir Charles Tennant's collection. To us, looking back over more than a century, it seems amazing that twenty such pictures as those just enumerated could hang in one room, and yet cause no abnormal excitement among those who paid their shillings to see them. In these days, when painters swarm, it would be difficult to find twenty pictures worth a second glance in any exhibition room in Europe. Certainly such things as Gainsborough's "Mrs. Beaufoy" and Sir Joshua's "Lady Worsley" would now, by themselves, give prestige

* Probably the picture now, or lately, at Coleorton.

† Belongs to the Earl of Rosebery.

‡ Not identified.

§ Belongs to the Earl of Harewood.

|| The picture engraved by T. Watson, and also by S. W. Reynolds. The picture belonging to Lord Normanton seems to be an unfinished replica, although it may possibly be the one exhibited in 1780.

¶ At Trinity College, Cambridge.



MASTER BUNBURY

SIR HENRY BUNBURY

PRINCESS DASHKOW

to any exhibition. Is it not possible that we are habitually unfair to the public of 1780? May not the cause of the prompt and permanent vogue of the Royal Academy Exhibitions have been simply the magnificent art with which they were filled in those early and critical years? Writers, Sir Joshua himself among them, have been perhaps over ready to ascribe the success of the Academy to the King's patronage and other outside influences. I do not see why the more generous explanation should not be the true one, that people would rush to where such painting as that of Gainsborough and Sir Joshua was to be seen and would set a fashion not easy to kill.

This year, 1780, was one of the most active of Sir Joshua's later life. His sitters were numerous. They included Sir W. Molesworth, Sir W. James, Lady Laura Waldegrave, Lady Gertrude Fitzpatrick, Lady Cornewall, Mrs. Eckersal, Mrs. Harcourt, the Duchess of Rutland, Mrs. Musters, Henry Dundas, Strahan the printer, Miss Ingram, and the evergreen General Oglethorpe, who had fought under Marlborough and Eugene, had founded the Savannah, and had shot snipe in Conduit Street.* Lord Richard Cavendish sat in June for that fine portrait with the Egyptian desert for background, which was so well engraved by John Raphael Smith.† Among Sir Joshua's friends, companions, or entertainers for this year the most insistent are Burke and Dunning; the newest, the Princess Dashkow, the friend of the Empress Catherine and the future President of the St. Petersburg Academy. The Princess timed her visit to London at an exciting moment, for the Gordon Riots took place in June, and she, with some of her fellow-countrymen at the Russian Embassy, were curiously well-informed as to some of the intentions

* *Table Talk of Samuel Rogers.*

† The picture belongs to the Duke of Devonshire.

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of the rioters. She does not appear among Sir Joshua's sitters, but while in Ireland she had seen the famous review of Volunteers in College Green, Dublin, and Wheatley had introduced her portrait among those who were looking on.* During the disturbed month Reynolds was among her guests more than once. In the autumn Sir Joshua paid another visit to Devonshire, where he was a guest at Spitchwick, Dunning's house on Dartmoor, as well as at Saltram, Port Eliot, Mount Edgcumbe, and other places where his presence was no novelty. He was away a month, from the 24th of August to the 22nd of September.† His return to London was probably determined by the fact that the winter session of the Academy Schools was to open on the 16th of October in its new home in Somerset House, and that the President had to prepare an address for the occasion. To this year also belongs a letter printed by Tom Taylor, in which Reynolds gives advice to Nicolas Pocock, the young marine painter, who had sent a belated picture to the Exhibition. The letter is curious :

“DEAR SIR,—Your picture came too late for exhibition. It is much beyond what I expected from a first essay in oil colours; all the parts, separately, are extremely well painted, but there wants a harmony in the whole together; there is no union between the clouds, the sea, and the sails. Though the sea appears sometimes as green as you have painted it, yet it is a choice very unfavourable to the art; it seems to me absolutely necessary, in order to produce harmony, and that the picture should appear to be painted, as the phrase is, from one palette, that those three great objects of ship-painting should be much of the same colour, as was the practice of Vandervelt; and he seems to have been driven to this conduct by necessity. Whatever colour predominates in a picture, that colour must be introduced in other parts; but no green colour, such as you have given to the sea, can make a part of the sky. I believe the truth is, that, however the sea may appear green when you

* The picture is in the Irish National Gallery.

† The pocket-book for 1780 gives his whole itinerary.

LETTER TO POCOCK

are looking down upon it, and it is very near—at such a distance as your ships are supposed to be, it assumes the colour of the sky.

“I would recommend to you, above all things, to paint from Nature, instead of drawing; to carry your palette and pencil to the waterside. This was the practice of Vernet, whom I knew at Rome; he there showed me his studies in colours, which struck me very much for that truth which those works only have which are produced while the impression is warm from Nature. At that time, he was a perfect master of the character of water, if I may use the expression; he is now reduced to a mere mannerist, and no longer to be recommended for imitation, except you would imitate him by uniting landscape to ship-painting, which certainly makes a more pleasing composition than either alone.”

To the exhibition of 1781 Sir Joshua sent fourteen pictures: Dr. Burney,* Mr. Thoroton, the well-known friend and agent of the Duke of Rutland,† Master Bunbury,‡ Lord Richard Cavendish,§ the three Ladies Waldegrave,|| Duchess of Rutland,¶ Countess of Salisbury,** Children of the Duke of Rutland,†† a Child Asleep,‡‡ a Listening Boy, “Thais,”§§ “Temperance,”||| “Fortitude,”¶¶ and the “Death of Dido.”*** It is a splendid list, and the people may well be envied who saw fourteen such pictures in all their glory. The happiest in

* In America (Hearn collection, New York); a very good replica is in the University Gallery, Oxford.

† Burnt at Belvoir?

‡ At Barton.

§ Belongs to the Duke of Devonshire.

|| In the collection of Mrs. Thwaites.

¶ Burnt in the fire at Belvoir.

** At Hatfield.

†† Lord Granby and Lady Elizabeth Manners, with two dogs. The picture is at Belvoir Castle.

‡‡ At Packington Hall (Earl of Aylesford).

§§ Portrait of Emily Pott, alias Bertie, a well-known courtesan, at this time in relations with Charles Greville. Walpole and other contemporaries find fault with Reynolds for the muscularity of Miss Pott's legs, as if he had not only painted, but originally designed them! The picture is now at Waddesdon.

||| For the New College window: now in Lord Normanton's collection.

¶¶ *Ibid.*

*** In Buckingham Palace.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

invention of them all is, no doubt, the group of the Ladies Waldegrave, which may, perhaps, be called the most famous of Sir Joshua's pictures. In conception, it shows the painter at his best, and may fairly be put on a level with the three Montgomeries in the National Gallery. In execution, however, it is open to criticism. The painter has trusted entirely to his design and the beauty of his sitters, and has allowed the actual conduct of his brush to become a little perfunctory. The result is a certain emptiness, which makes it necessary to stand well away from the canvas if we wish to feel that the picture deserves its reputation. What Horace Walpole meant by saying that the lock and key on the work-table are "finished like a Dutch flower painter" it is difficult to guess. Tom Taylor calls the "Death of Dido" "the finest ideal picture by Sir Joshua included in the Royal collection." With this judgment it is impossible to agree, when we remember that the "Cymon and Iphigenia" hangs on the same wall. But the "Dido" is certainly among the more successful attempts by Reynolds to justify his own theories on the great style. It is a pity that Sir Joshua could not have assimilated the theories of Lessing before he completed his own ideals.* Had he read the first four chapters of the *Laocoön*, he would never, I think, have afflicted us with the figure of the Carthaginian sister, hanging over the moribund Queen like some monstrous bird, and producing exactly those feelings of discomfort, irritation, and *bathos* against which Lessing's first argument is directed. The Greeks, on the rare occasion when they dealt with emotion in action, chose the moment before it reached its culmina-

* As a matter of date, he might have done so: for the *Laocoön* was published in 1766, fourteen years before the "Dido" was painted. But we have no reason to believe that Reynolds knew any German, and it was not until 1836 that the famous treatise was first published in English.



THE LADIES WALDEGRAVE

TOUR ON THE CONTINENT

tion, while the spectator could still anticipate, and justify the inevitable failure of art by putting the supreme instant beyond that portrayed by the artist. Reynold was ill-advised enough to fall upon this supreme instant itself. He selects the moment of the Queen's death, and of her sister's fullest dismay, the very moment when the emotions excited in the mind of an actual beholder would outrun the image gathered by his eyes, and degrade facts most hopelessly below imagination. Sir Joshua was an excellent hint-taker; if he had known his Lessing he would have chosen his moment better, and left his drama unfinished.

In the late summer of 1781, Sir Joshua made a two months tour on the Continent. Leaving Margate on the 26th of July, in company with his friend Metcalf, he visited Bruges, Ghent, and Brussels during the first week, moving on afterwards to Mechlin and Antwerp. In Antwerp he saw Rubens's "Rape of the Sabines," then to be sold for 24,000 florins.* Leaving Antwerp on the 9th of August, he passed by Dort and "Rotirdam" to The Hague, where he spent six days. On the 17th he travelled to Amsterdam, seeing "three or four pictures by F. Hals" at Haarlem on the way. After a week in Amsterdam, spent in seeing pictures and in dining out, he set out for Dusseldorf, by the way of "Utrick," Nimeguen, and Cleves. Five days were spent at Dusseldorf, where the museum then contained many of the finer pictures now in the Munich Gallery; then one each in Cologne and Aix-la-Chapelle. Two days at Spa, one day at Liege, and then after dining at Louvain, he is back at Brussels on the 7th September. After a week in the Belgian capital he travels to London by the route he had followed when outward bound, and arrives home on the 16th of September.

* The picture in the National Gallery.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

During his tour Sir Joshua made copious notes on pictures, meaning, apparently, to publish them, as he left a fragmentary dedication to his friend and travelling companion, Philip Metcalf, among his papers. The whole were published after his death by Edmund Malone, in the first edition of the Discourses. They form an important document for any one attempting to fit Sir Joshua into his true place in the history of art, and will have to be discussed at some length in connection with his Italian Notes and his Discourses.

The chief event, no doubt, of Sir Joshua's life in 1781 was the marriage in January of Offy Palmer to Richard Lovell Gwatkin, which took place from Mrs. Palmer's house in Torrington. And yet, with all his affection for his favourite niece, the marriage does not seem to have stirred Reynolds from his normal attitude towards the concerns of other people. Here is the letter he wrote upon the occasion :—

“MY DEAR OFFY,

“I intended to have answered your letter immediately, and to have wrote at the same time to Mr. Gwatkin, but was prevented, and have been prevented every evening since. However, I proposed doing so this evening, and disengaged myself from Mrs. Elliot's (where Polly is gone) on purpose. But this moment Mr. Edmund Burke has called on me, and proposes a party, but desires I would write while he waits at my elbow, for that he will add something himself. You must suppose, therefore, that I have wished and expressed everything that affection to you and friendship to Mr. Gwatkin would dictate.

“That you may be as happy as you both deserve is my wish, and you will be the happiest couple in England. So God bless you. I will leave the rest to Mr. Burke.

“Your most affectionate uncle,

“January 30th, 1781.”

“J. REYNOLDS.

Burke was less summary, and, putting aside one little touch of pomp, sent as graceful a letter as any young couple could wish for at their setting out in life. The

MARRIAGE OF OFFY PALMER

marriage was happy. Offy was to live for seventy years after that January day, and to found a family that still flourishes. Before the year was out, she and her husband were in London, sitting to Sir Joshua for the portraits now in the possession of their own descendant.* During this year, Opie came to London under the wing of "Peter Pindar," and the Thrals moved into their fine new house in Grosvenor Square, where Sir Joshua had for a few short short weeks many opportunities for the demure quasi-flirtatious talks he carried on with Fanny Burney.

"Sir Joshua," she says, "is fat and well. He is preparing for the Exhibition a new Death of Dido; portraits of the three beautiful Ladies Waldegrave, Horatia, Laura, and Maria, all in one picture, and at work with the tambour; a Thais, for which *Miss Emily*, a celebrated courtesan, sat at the desire of the Hon. Charles Greville; and what others I know not, but his room and gallery are both crowded."

It was not long after this entry in the famous diary that the club had an extra night, in preparation for one of the Grosvenor Square assemblies, when a note arrived from Johnson (at this time living in Thrals's house) to say that the brewer had that very morning fallen dead in a fit of apoplexy. Other engagements during the year were at the Bishop of St. Asaph's (the dinner at which Boswell drank too much and was rebuked by Hannah More), and at Mrs. Garrick's, in the Adelphi, the first party she had after David's death.

The exhibition of 1782 contained fifteen pictures by Reynolds. They were:—Whole lengths of Mrs. Baldwin, "The Fair Greek," in Smyrniote dress; † Lady George Cavendish (begun as Lady Betty Compton); ‡ and Lady

* Mr. R. Gwatkin, of the Manor House, Potterne, Devizes.

† Now at Bowood.

‡ Afterwards Countess of Burlington. The picture belongs to Lord Chesham.

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Charlotte Talbot ; * heads of Lady Althorp, † “Perdita” Robinson, ‡ Lady Aylesford, § and one not identified ; portraits of Dr. Thomas, Bishop of Rochester, as Dean of the Order of the Bath ; || of Col. Tarleton, ¶ Col. Windham, ** and Lord Chancellor Thurlow ; †† “Children,” a girl and an angel contemplating a Cross, for the Oxford window. ‡‡ Again, we find Sir Joshua’s list answered by one no less important from his great rival. Gainsborough, too, was represented by a “Colonel Tarleton,” with a horse, as well as by his two famous portraits of the Prince of Wales and Colonel St. Leger, with their horses. §§ The same painter’s splendid “Mrs. Dalrymple Elliot” ||| was also at Somerset House, where it had for companion the famous “Girl with Pigs,” bought by Sir Joshua, but transferred by him to M. de Calonne. Two years later, Gainsborough was to finally shake the Exhibition dust from his feet, but his pictures of 1782 show his easy vigour, his airiness, his unique combination of gaiety, irresponsibility, and light-handedness, with solidity and no-nonsense, at its best, and must have made Reynolds ask with more perplexity than ever, “How *does* he get his effects ? ”

The year 1782 saw the death of one great English

* Afterwards Countess Talbot. The picture used to be at Ingestre, but is now in America.

† Lavinia, afterwards Countess Spencer ; in Lord Spencer’s collection at Althorp.

‡ In the collection of Baroness Mathilde de Rothschild, at Frankfort.

§ Belongs to the Earl of Aylesford.

|| In the Birmingham Gallery.

¶ Formerly in the collection of Mr. Wynn Ellis, who bequeathed it to the sitter’s family ; it now belongs to Mr. A. H. Tarleton.

** Whereabouts unknown. †† Belongs to the Marquess of Bath.

‡‡ In the Duke of Portland’s collection at Welbeck Abbey.

§§ Not mounted on them, however, as Tom Taylor erroneously says.

||| “Dolly the Tall” ; the picture is at Welbeck.

REYNOLDS AND WILSON

painter to whom Sir Joshua seems never to have done justice. Richard Wilson died in May, at Llanberis, whither he had retired but a short time before. It is difficult to understand how Sir Joshua failed to perceive the great beauty of Wilson's art. Pictures of his own exist * in which, *mutatis mutandis*, a startling affinity with Wilson may be traced. Perhaps the President was blinded by antipathy to the man, for Wilson was not a person with whom the friction-avoiding Reynolds could have much in common. The true version of the *gaffe* committed by Sir Joshua over Gainsborough as a landscape painter, is probably the one given by Northcote. According to this, the President came into the Artists' Club one day, having just seen a fine landscape by Gainsborough. He described it, and ended with "Gainsborough is certainly the finest landscape painter now in Europe." "Well, Sir Joshua," called out Wilson, who was present, "it is my opinion that he is also the greatest portrait-painter at this time in Europe." Reynolds felt his mistake, and apologised to Wilson.†

It was in this year that Sir Joshua sat to Gainsborough. Appointments to sit are entered on the 3rd of November, and again on the 10th, both Sundays. The first sitting

* The "Master Hare," in the possession of Mr. Lionel Phillips, may be named as a good instance.

† Sir Joshua's neglect of Wilson has been imitated by the English people ever since, and yet he is one of the really great and original masters of the eighteenth century. His best works unite the dignity of Claude and the atmospheric truth of Cuypp or De Hooze with the fat, rich brushing preached by Reynolds himself. At his worst he was the equal of many men admitted to collections the doors of which would never be opened to a Wilson, while at his best he produced things to which, in their way, no other landscape painter can show a parallel. Unfortunately he is represented in our national collections mainly by ambitious failures, "Niobes," and "Villas of Mecænas," that overwhelm the modest conceptions in which his delicate art is most fully shown.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

took place ; but before the President could appear a second time in Schomberg House, he had one of those "two shakes of the palsy" to which Fanny Burney alludes in a letter protesting against the connection of his name with hers by the matchmakers. On the 14th of November Johnson writes from Brighton :—

"I heard yesterday of your late disorder, and should think ill of myself if I had heard of it without alarm. I heard likewise of your recovery, which I sincerely wish to be complete and permanent. Your country has been in danger of losing one of its brightest ornaments, and I of losing one of my oldest and kindest friends ; but I hope you will still live long for the honour of the nation ; and that more enjoyment of your elegance, your intelligence, and your benevolence is still reserved for, dear Sir, your most affectionate," &c.

Ten days seem a short time in which to receive and recover from a stroke of paralysis, however slight, and it is possible that the dates above given have been wrongly interpreted. The one sitting Sir Joshua is known to have given to Gainsborough may have been earlier than the 3rd of November, in which case it is not entered in the pocket-book. On his recovery he wrote to his brother painter hinting that he was now ready to sit again, but the hint was not taken, and no portrait of Reynolds by Gainsborough, or of Gainsborough by Reynolds, exists.* In the last days of the year—on the 28th of December—Sir Joshua gives a dinner of which we catch a glimpse in

* Perhaps some good-natured friend had repeated to Gainsborough a remark made by Reynolds in the hearing of Northcote, and reported by the latter years afterwards to James Ward. "Sir Joshua . . . and Gainsborough could not stable their horses together, for there was jealousy between them. Gainsborough, I remember, solicited Sir Joshua to sit to him for his portrait, and he no doubt expected to be requested to sit to Sir Joshua in return. But I heard Sir Joshua say, 'I suppose he expects me to ask him to sit to me ; I shall do no such thing !'" *Conversations of James Northcote, R.A., with James Ward* ; edited by Ernest Fletcher, 1901, p. 159.

GAINSBOROUGH'S LAST YEAR

Fanny Burney's diary. It is of interest chiefly because one of the guests was "Jackson of Exeter," the musician and bosom friend of Gainsborough. Jackson's character was not unlike Gainsborough's own. He is described as very handsome, full of originality, fire and passion, but with flashes of silence and distraction. He and Fanny romp a little, and the whole party brings the year merrily to its end, Fanny with Sir Joshua's kiss upon her cheek.

Sir Joshua was not in his usual force in the exhibition of 1783. He sent ten portraits, but none of them, with perhaps one exception, would find a place in a list of his best works. They were: Mrs. Gosling,* "A Lady," "A Young Lady" (Miss Falconer, by moonlight),† "A Young Nobleman,"‡ two groups of children,§ Mr. Egerton,|| Mr. Albany Wallis,¶ Lord Harrington,** and William Strahan, printer and M.P.†† This, the last year of Gainsborough's appearance on the Academy walls, showed him in such strength as to throw Sir Joshua completely into the shade. He exhibited no fewer than twenty-five pictures, including some of his finest things, such as the full lengths of Mrs. Sheridan and the Duchess

* Bought by Agnew and Son in 1884.

† In Lord Normanton's collection.

‡ Walpole says Lord Albemarle, then a boy of thirteen; another authority says Lord Cobham. The picture has not been identified.

§ One of these groups was the "Master Brummell and his Brother," now in Lord Iveagh's collection. The elder brother was afterwards the famous beau.

|| So says Walpole: another authority identifies the sitter as Sir Abraham Hume, who did not sit, however, until 1786.

¶ Garrick's friend and executor. The present owner of the picture is unknown.

** In Lord Harrington's possession, at Elvaston Castle, Derbyshire.

†† Belongs to Mr. Arthur Lemon. A copy by Sir Wm. Beechey was presented to the Stationers' Company by Mr. Andrew Strahan, M.P., in 1815 (Graves and Cronin).

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of Devonshire, the "Sir Harbord Harbord," the "Boys with Fighting Dogs," and the wonderful heads of George III. and his children which now fill a series of fourteen panels in the private audience chamber at Windsor. Sir Joshua's eclipse was but momentary. Some of his finest things were yet to come. But the impression made by his appearance this year is recorded in one of the few happy couplets hit upon by Wolcott :

" We've lost Sir Joshua—ah ! that charming elf,
We grieve to say, hath this year lost himself."

Two minor exhibitions attracted a large section of the public this year : Barry's pictures at the Society of Arts, which 6540 persons paid a shilling, and one, Jonas Hanway, a guinea, to see ; and Jarvis's peepshow of his Oxford window after Reynolds. Jarvis contrived, in a darkened room in Pall Mall, to make his window realise the ideas of the painter, and so to all the more deepen the disappointment in store when the undoctored daylight of New College Chapel came in to upset calculations. Other notable events in Sir Joshua's life this year are his second tour in the Low Countries, when he bought some good pictures released from the religious establishments through the somewhat reckless policy of the Emperor ; his painting of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse ; and his last welcome of Dr. Johnson to the Academy Dinner.

During his foreign tour he noticed, and was troubled by the fact, that Rubens seemed less brilliant to his eye than he did two years previously, when he first saw Brussels and Antwerp. He thought he had discovered the reason of the apparent falling off when he remembered that on his previous visit he made many notes, and was continually looking up to the pictures from the white pages of his pocket-book. Northcote suggests that the real explanation



CHARLES JAMES FOX
EARL OF LEICESTER, K.G.

SECOND TOUR IN BELGIUM

was the progress made by himself during the two years, which had lessened the gap between his own productions and those of the Fleming. Northcote's explanation may be disregarded. It was suggested rather by his admiration for his old master than by any visible diminution of the distance between Sir Joshua, as an executant, and Rubens, during the twenty-four months which separated the two visits to Belgium. On the other hand, no one who has been in the habit of making notes in picture galleries will deny that the explanation given by Reynolds himself has some foundation. The continual reference to a catalogue, momentary as each glance may be, will make a collection of pictures seem warmer in colour than they do without such accidental aid. But the difference is hardly enough to account for such disappointment as that felt by Sir Joshua. The truth, no doubt, was simply that his imagination had been at work ever since 1781, heightening the impression made upon him by the daring colour and miraculous brushing of Rubens, and that by 1783 these enhanced impressions had substituted themselves for genuine memories, to the disadvantage of the actual pictures. No extraordinary effort of imagination is required to enable us to push a work of art a little farther in certain directions than even the greatest artist can carry it. In our mind's eye we can easily add to the glow of a Titian, to the force and depth of a Rembrandt, to the brilliance of a Gainsborough; and when we indulge the habit, and allow its creations to impose themselves as tests, such disappointment as that felt by Sir Joshua on his second visit to Rubens is always the consequence. Our pleasure in any experience depends mainly on our expectations. Sir Joshua expected much from the paintings in the Vatican, and so, at first, he was disappointed. He expected less from Rubens, and so on his first introduction he was agreeably

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

surprised. Two years later he expected the same delight to be renewed, if not enhanced; but the element of surprise was gone, and his imagination had been at work; the result was inevitable. It was not surprising that Reynolds took so kindly to Peter Paul. Between the Fleming's way of conceiving a picture and his own, the likeness sometimes comes near to identity. Putting technique aside, the differences between the *Chapeau de Paille*, or rather *de Poil*, and the *Nelly O'Brien* of the Wallace Gallery, are accidental rather than temperamental.

CHAPTER VII

1784—1792



IR JOSHUA'S pocket-book shows that 1784 was one of the most crowded years of his life. His sitters were more numerous than they had been for years, while his social engagements trod so closely upon each other's heels that we wonder how he kept his head clear enough for art. To the Exhibition, nevertheless, he sent no fewer than sixteen pictures, among them some of his finest things. Here is the list:—Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse;* Miss Kemble, Mrs. Siddons' sister, afterwards Mrs. Twiss;† Mrs. Abington as Roxalana;‡ Mr. Warton;§ Lord Leveson;|| Sir John Honeywood;¶ Master Braddy;** Lady Dashwood and Child;†† Charles James Fox;‡‡ Prince of Wales;§§ Lady Honeywood and Child;||| Dr. Bourke,

* Now in Grosvenor House. † In Mr. Bradley Martin's possession.

‡ In the Duke of Fife's collection.

§ Thomas Warton, Poet Laureate. In Trinity College, Oxford.

|| Lord Lewisham, afterwards 3rd Earl of Dartmouth. In the Aylesford collection.

¶ Was in the possession of Sir C. Honeywood, Bart.

** In the possession of Lord Rothschild.

†† Was in the possession of Sir Henry Dashwood, Bart., in 1867.

‡‡ The picture at Holkham.

§§ At Bocket Hall; in Earl Cowper's collection.

||| Belongs to the Earl of Devon.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

Archbishop of Tuam;* Pott, the famous surgeon;† Nathaniel Chauncey;‡ Nymph and Cupid;§ Boy reading.|| The portrait of Fox shows him at his best as a painter of men, and may fairly be put beside the Lord Heathfield of the National Gallery, which was to follow it three years later. The "Fox" was on Sir Joshua's easel when the Coalition Ministry came to an end in December, 1783, and the painter had felt some delicacy in carrying out one of his sitter's requests. Fox had wished his India Bill, the immediate cause of his expulsion from office, to be introduced into the picture, legibly docketed. After the crash Reynolds hesitated to perpetuate a failure, but Fox stood to his guns, and those who see the picture at Holkham may still read upon it, "A Bill for the better regulating the Affairs of the E.I. Company." Another fine portrait is the Archbishop of Tuam, which recalls the "Dr. Markham" of the year before. Sir Joshua's variety was splendidly shown by the appearance on one wall of the delightful *espiègliere* of Mrs. Abington as "Roxalana," and the majesty of Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse. The former, of course, is the more characteristic. It might have been painted if Reynolds had never seen any one's pictures but his own. But the tact with which hints from the Sistine Chapel are used in the "Siddons" is so consummate as to justify the plagiarism, and to convince us more than anything else he did of the sincerity of his own worship of Michelangelo. A number of different stories have come down to us on the origin of the pose.

* At Palmerstown House, Kildare; belongs to the Earl of Mayo.

† Pott of "Pott's Fracture" fame; the picture is in St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

‡ The picture was exhibited at the British Institution in 1813 by Thomas Carter.

§ The "Snake in the Grass" of the Peel collection in the National Gallery.

|| Belongs to Mr. Joseph Sidebotham.



THE "TRAGIC MUSE"

According to one account, Reynolds asked Mrs. Siddons to choose her own attitude, which she did at once, just as we see it in the picture.* Another tale makes the design the result of accident, and that pounce upon a lucky change of position which was characteristic of Sir Joshua. In all probability each story has some truth in it. A single glance is enough to show that if Michelangelo had never painted his prophets and sibyls in the Vatican Chapel, Reynolds would never have left us the "Tragic Muse" we know. Not that it takes much from any one of them. It has echoes both of the Joel and the Isaiah, but it is rather on the general conception—the throne, the large disposition of the limbs, the figures in the background—than upon details of pose that one's conviction is based that Reynolds had the Sistine figures in his mind when he erected his mental scheme. Clothe the "Tragic Muse" in Michelangelo's colour, and you might substitute her for one of the existing sibyls without causing a blot on the ceiling. The various claims made by Mrs. Siddons herself, that she chose the attitude, that she prevented Sir Joshua from spoiling the picture by the introduction of "all the colours of the rainbow," and the likeness by working on the face after her sittings were over, were no doubt made in good faith; but they repeat too exactly what every sitter who sits for a successful portrait, what every patron who co-operates with an architect in the building of a successful house, what every manager who brings out a successful play, says of his own contribution to the final result, to be worth refutation. As a matter of fact, this "Tragic Muse" is perhaps the only creation of Sir Joshua, at once important and entirely successful, in which he put his theories of the great style into literal execution. Founded upon the imitation—I use his own word—of Michelangelo,

* See note in Appendix to Leslie and Taylor's "Life."

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

it is carried out with the peculiar reticence, in the matters of colour and texture, which Reynolds was always preaching. In light and shade, too, it obeys a principle laid down in the Discourses, and its whole aspiration, if we put aside the bowl and dagger business in the background, is towards that abstract method of vision which he discussed so much and practised so little.*

Sir Joshua quarrelled with Valentine Green over the "Tragic Muse." Green, who had scraped several plates after his works, asked permission to engrave the picture. Reynolds answered that if the choice of an engraver should depend on him, Green's application being the first, "should certainly be remembered." Mrs. Siddons, however, preferred Francis Haward, to whom the commission was accordingly given. Green lost his temper, and not only abused Reynolds for passing him over but declared that his statement, that Mrs. Siddons had recommended another artist, was not true. Reynolds seems to have sent him the following amusing *mélange* of Joshuaesque and Johnsonese :

"LONDON, June 1st, 1783.

"Sir,—You have the pleasure, if it is any pleasure to you, of reducing me to the most mortifying situation. I must either treat your accusation with the contempt of silence (which you and your friends may think pleading guilty), or I must submit to vindicate myself like a

* The price put upon the original "Tragic Muse" by Sir Joshua was a thousand guineas; but after keeping it for some years, he sold it to M. de Calonne for £800. At the Calonne sale, in 1795, it was sold to Mr. Smith, of Norwich, for £700; Smith sold it for £900 to Mr. G. Watson Taylor, at whose sale, at Christie's, in 1823, it was bought by Earl Grosvenor for £1837 10s. The replica at Dulwich seems to have been finished and sold to Desenfans in 1789, a year after Calonne had bought what I have called the original. Desenfans paid £735 for it. I agree with Graves and Cronin in thinking that both pictures are by Reynolds himself. For some further details bearing on their history see the Catalogue at the end of this volume.

VALENTINE GREEN

criminal from a charge given in the most imperious manner; and this charge no less than that of being a liar. I mentioned, in conversation, the last time I had the honour of seeing you at my house, that Mrs. Siddons had wrote a note to me respecting the print. That note, as I expected to be believed, I never dreamt of showing; and I now blush at being forced to send it in my own vindication. This I am forced to do, as you are pleased to say in your letter that Mrs. Siddons never did write or even speak to me in favour of any artist.

“But, supposing Mrs. Siddons out of the question, my words (on which you ground your demand of doing the print as a right, not as a favour), I do not see, can be interpreted as such an absolute promise; they mean only, in the common acceptation, that, you being the person who first applied, that circumstance should not be forgot—that it should turn the scale in your favour, supposing an equality in other respects.

“You say you wait the result of my determination. What sort of determination can you expect after such a letter? You have been so good as to give me a piece of advice—for the future, to give unequivocal answers; I shall immediately follow it, and do now, in the most unequivocal manner, inform you that you shall not do the print.”*

The Exhibition of 1784 is memorable in the history of English Art, for the breach between the Council of the Royal Academy and Gainsborough. For the garbled account of the quarrel which was so long accepted by English writers, the historians of the Academy and C. R. Leslie must share the blame. I have gone into the whole matter at such length in my volume on Gainsborough, that I need here only warn readers of Leslie's pages that the paragraph on pp. 432-433 of his second volume is more than disingenuous. Gainsborough made no claim to have a group of full length portraits hung on the line, as one academic apologist after another has asserted; the moderate demand he really did make was not acceded to, and so he withdrew all his pictures and never exhibited again. Gainsborough, in truth, was not an academizable person. He was no man of business, and he could never have so

* An account of this passage of arms was published in the newspapers of the time, with the correspondence.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

organized his ideas as to make them of much use to students. But his fellow Academicians should have seen that in supplying their Exhibition every year with delicious and most attractive works of art, he was in fact contributing more than any one except Reynolds himself to the financial success of the institution. It is absurd to write as if he deserved ill of the Academy because he neither came to meetings of the Council nor took his turn as visitor. He would have been a mere embarrassment if he had done these things. His mission was to help Sir Joshua in making the annual appeal to the public irresistible, and superbly he fulfilled it.

The Academy dinner of 1784 was the last to number Johnson among the diners. On the 21st of April he had returned thanks in St. Clement's for his restoration to comparative health, and had surprised Mrs. Thrale by announcing his intention to form one of Sir Joshua's supporters. "I cannot publish my return to the world more effectually, for, as the Frenchman says, *tout le monde s'y trouvera*," he writes before the date; afterwards he tells the same correspondents:

"On Saturday I showed myself again to the living world at the Exhibition; much and splendid was the company, but, like the Doge of Genoa at Paris, I admired nothing but myself. I went up all the stairs to the pictures, without stopping to rest or to breathe,

'In all the madness of superfluous health.'

During the summer negotiations went on between Reynolds, Boswell, and Lord Chancellor Thurlow, with the object of procuring a grant from the King's purse to enable Johnson to winter in Italy. The project failed, it is said through the Chancellor's reluctance to ask a favour of Pitt; while Thurlow's own personal offer of a gift, disguised as a loan, of five or six hundred pounds, was gratefully



DR. JOHNSON

MRS. KAY AND MISS DRUMMOND

DEATH OF JOHNSON

declined by the Doctor. In December Johnson died. On his death-bed he made three requests of Reynolds : never to paint on Sunday ; to read the Bible whenever he could, and always on Sunday ; and to forgive him a debt of thirty pounds. Sir Joshua made no difficulty over making all three promises, but the first two he thought it needless to keep.

The following character of Johnson is printed in Leslie and Taylor's biography, from a manuscript lent to them by Miss Gwatkin. Like the two dialogues printed in the last chapter, it shows Sir Joshua as an eager observer when he was not winding himself up in generalizations and abstract ideas :—

“ From thirty years' intimacy with Dr. Johnson, I certainly have had the means, if I had equally the ability, of giving you a true and perfect idea of the character and peculiarities of this extraordinary man. The habits of my profession unluckily extend to the consideration of so much only of character as lies on the surface, as is expressed in the lineaments of the countenance. An attempt to go deeper, and investigate the peculiar colouring of his mind as distinguished from all other minds, nothing but your earnest desire can excuse. Such as it is, you may make what use of it you please. Of his learning, and so much of his character as is discoverable in his writings and is open to the inspection of every person, nothing need be said.

“ I shall remark such qualities only as his works cannot convey. And among those the most distinguished was his possessing a mind which was, as I may say, always ready for use. Most general subjects had undoubtedly been already discussed in the course of a studious thinking life. In this respect, few men ever came better prepared into whatever company chance might throw him, and the love which he had to society gave him a facility in the practice of applying his knowledge of the matter in hand in which I believe he never was exceeded by any man. It has been frequently observed that he was a singular instance of a man who had so much distinguished himself by his writings, that his conversation not only supported his character as an author, but, in the opinion of many, was superior. Those who have lived with the wits of the age know how rarely this happens. I have had the habit of thinking that this quality, as well as others of the same kind, are possessed in consequence of accidental circumstances attending his life. What Dr. Johnson said

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

a few days before his death of his disposition to insanity was no new discovery to those who were intimate with him. The character of Imlac in *Rasselas*, I always considered as a comment on his own conduct which he himself practised, and, as it now appears, very successfully, since we know that he continued to possess his understanding in its full vigour to the last. Solitude to him was horror; nor would he ever trust himself alone but when employed in writing or reading. He has often begged me to go home with him to prevent his being alone in the coach. Any company was better than none; by which he connected himself with many mean persons whose presence he could command. For this purpose he established a club at a little alehouse in Essex Street, composed of a strange mixture of very learned and very ingenious odd people. Of the former were Dr. Heberden, Mr. Windham, Mr. Boswell, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Paradise. Those of the latter I do not think proper to commemorate. By thus living, by necessity, so much in company, more perhaps than any other studious man whatever, he had acquired by habit, and which habit alone can give, that facility, and we may add docility, of mind by which he was so much distinguished. Another circumstance contributed not a little to the power which he had of expressing himself, which was a rule, which he said he always practised on every occasion, of speaking his best, whether the person to whom he addressed himself was or was not capable of comprehending him. 'If,' says he, 'I am understood, my labour is not lost. If it is above their comprehension, there is some gratification, though it is the admiration of ignorance,' and he said those were the most sincere admirers: and quoted Baxter, who made a rule never to preach a sermon without saying something which he knew was beyond the comprehension of his audience in order to inspire their admiration. Dr. Johnson, by this continual practice, made that a habit which was at first an exertion: for every person who knew him must have observed that the moment he was left out of the conversation, whether from his deafness or whatever cause, but a few minutes, without speaking or listening, his mind appeared to be preparing itself. He fell into a reverie accompanied by strange antic gestures; but this he never did when his mind was engaged by the conversation. These were therefore improperly called, by — as well as by others, convulsions, which imply involuntary contortions; whereas, at a word addressed to him, his attention was recovered. Sometimes, indeed, it would be near a minute before he would give an answer, looking as if he laboured to bring his mind to bear on the question.

“In arguing, he did not trouble himself with much circumlocution, but opposed, directly and abruptly, his antagonist. He fought with all sorts of weapons; ludicrous comparisons and similes; if all failed, with



NYMPH ("VENUS") AND PIPING BOY

SIR CUTHBERT QUILTER, BART., M.P.

CHARACTER OF JOHNSON

rudeness and overbearing. He thought it necessary never to be worsted in argument. He had one virtue, which I hold one of the most difficult to practise. After the heat of contest was over, if he had been informed that his antagonist resented his rudeness, he was the first to seek after a reconciliation; and of his virtues the most distinguished was his love of truth.

“He sometimes, it must be confessed, covered his ignorance by generals, rather than appear ignorant. You will wonder to hear a person who loved him so sincerely speak thus freely of his friend, but you must recollect I am not writing his panegyrick, but, as if upon oath, not only give the truth, but the whole truth.

“His pride had no meanness in it; there was nothing little or mean about him.

“Truth, whether in great or little matters, he held sacred.

“‘From the violation of truth,’ he said, ‘in great things your character or your interest was affected, in lesser things your pleasure is equally destroyed.’ I remember, on his relating some incident, I added something to his relation which I supposed might likewise have happened: ‘It would have been a better story,’ says he, ‘if it had been so; but it was not.’ Our friend Dr. Goldsmith was not so scrupulous; but he said he only indulged himself in white lyes, light as feathers, which he threw up in the air, and on whomever they fell, nobody was hurt. ‘I wish,’ says Dr. Johnson, ‘you would take the trouble of moulting your feathers.’

“I once inadvertently put him in a situation from which none but a man of perfect integrity could extricate himself. I pointed at some lines in the *Traveller* which I told him I was sure he wrote. He hesitated a little; during this hesitation I recollected myself, that as I knew he would not lye I put him in a cleft stick, and should have had but my due had he given me a rough answer, but he only said: ‘Sir, I did not write them: but, that you may not imagine that I wrote more than I really have, the utmost I have wrote in that poem, to the best of my recollection, is not more than eighteen lines.’ It must be observed there was then an opinion about town that Dr. Johnson wrote the whole poem for his friend, who was then, in a manner, an unknown writer. This conduct appears to me in the highest degree correct and refined. If the Dr.’s conscience would have let him told a lye, the matter would have been soon over.

“As in his writings not a line can be found which a saint would wish to blot, so in his life he would never suffer the least immorality, indecency of conversation, contrary to virtue or piety, to proceed without a severe check, which no elevation of rank exempted them from. . . .

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

“Custom, or politeness, or courtly manners, has authorised such an Eastern hyperbolic style of compliment that part of Dr. Johnson’s character for rudeness of manners must be put to the account of this scrupulous adherence to truth. His obstinate silence, whilst all the company were in raptures, vying with each other who should pepper highest, was considered as rudeness or ill-nature.

“During his last illness, when all hope was at an end, he appeared to be quieter and more resigned. His approaching dissolution was always present to his mind. A few days before he died, Mr. Langton and myself only present, he said he had been a great sinner but he hoped he had given no bad example to his friends: that he had some consolation in reflecting that he had never denied Christ, and repeated the text: ‘Whoever denies me,’ &c. We were both very ready to assure him that we were conscious that we were better and wiser from his life and conversation; and that, so far from denying Christ, he had been, in this age, His greatest champion.

“Sometimes a flash of wit escaped him as if involuntary. He was asked how he liked the new man that was hired to watch by him. ‘Instead of watching,’ says he, ‘he sleeps like a dormouse; and when he helps me to bed he is as awkward as a turnspit dog the first time he is put into the wheel.’

“The Christian religion was with him such a certain and established truth, that he considered it a kind of profanation to hold any argument about its truth.

“He was not easily imposed upon by professions of honesty and candour; but he appeared to have little suspicion of hypocrisy in religion.

“His passions were like those of other men, the difference only lay in his keeping a stricter watch over himself. In petty circumstances this wayward disposition appeared, but in greater things he thought it worth while to summon his recollection and to be always on his guard. . . . Many instances will readily occur to those who knew him intimately, of the guard which he endeavoured always to keep over himself.

“The prejudices he had to countries did not extend to individuals. The chief prejudice in which he indulged himself was against Scotland, though he had the most cordial friendship with individuals. This he used to vindicate as a duty. In respect to Frenchmen he rather laughed at himself, but it was insurmountable. He considered every foreigner as a fool till they had convinced him of the contrary. Against the Irish he entertained no prejudice, he thought they united themselves very well with us; but the Scotch, when in England, united and made a party by employing only Scotch servants and Scotch tradesmen. He held it right for Englishmen to oppose a party against them.

CHARACTER OF JOHNSON

“This reasoning would have more weight if the numbers were equal. A small body in a larger has such great disadvantages that I fear are scarce counterbalanced by whatever little combinations they make. A general combination against them would be little short of annihilation.

“We are both of Dr. Johnson’s school. For my part, I acknowledge the highest obligation to him. He may be said to have formed my mind, and to have brushed from it a great deal of rubbish. Those very people whom he has brought to think rightly will occasionally criticise the opinions of their master when he nods. But we should always recollect that it is he himself who has taught us and enabled us to do it.

“The drawback of his character is entertaining prejudices on very slight foundations: giving an opinion, perhaps first at random, but from its being contradicted he thinks himself obliged always to support, or, if he cannot support, still not to acquiesce. Of this I remember an instance, of a defect or forgetfulness in his Dictionary. I asked him how he came not to correct it in the second edition. ‘No,’ says he, ‘they made so much of it that I would not flatter them by altering it!’

“From passion, from the prevalence of his disposition for the minute, he was constantly acting contrary to his own reason, to his principles. It was a frequent subject of animadversion with him, how much authors lost of the pleasure and comfort of life by their carrying always about them their own consequence and celebrity. Yet no man in mixed company—not to his intimates, certainly, for that would be an insupportable slavery—ever acted with more circumspection to his character than himself. The most light and airy dispute was with him a dispute in the arena. He fought on every occasion as if his whole reputation depended on the victory of the minute, and he fought with all his weapons. If he was foiled in argument, he had recourse to abuse and rudeness. That he was not thus strenuous for victory with his intimates in *tête-à-tête* conversations when there were no witnesses, may be easily believed. Indeed, had his conduct to them been the same as he exhibited to the public, his friends could never have entertained that love and affection for him which they all feel and profess for his memory.

“But what appears extraordinary is that a man who so well saw, himself, the folly of this ambition of shining, of speaking, or of acting always according to the character imagined to be possessed in the world should produce himself the greatest example of a contrary conduct.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

“Were I to write the life of Dr. Johnson, I would labour this point, to separate his conduct that proceeded from his passions and what proceeded from his reason, from his natural disposition seen in his quiet hours.”

In this elaborate description Sir Joshua to some extent justifies the estimate of a painter's qualifications as a judge of character with which he began. It goes a little deeper, perhaps, than “so much only of character as is expressed in the lineaments of the countenance,” but it is by no means profound. Reynolds makes no attempt to realise Johnson's character from within, or to track out the roots of the remarkable personality with which he had been familiar for so many years. He is content with phenomena, and seems unconscious that they must have had causes. We shall find him displaying the same inductive weakness in his Discourses. It would be unfair to criticise this character of Johnson from a literary standpoint. It is merely a first draft, full of redundant words, clumsy phrases, and shaky grammar, which revision, his own and perhaps some one else's, would afterwards correct. To me it seems probable that it was written at the request of Boswell, who may have had the revised copy. The inclusion of Boswell's name among the “very learned” members of the Essex Street Club seems to point in that direction.

Sir Joshua's pictures for 1785 were: Mrs. Smith,* Lady Hume,† Mrs. Musters,‡ a lady unidentified, the Earl of Northington,§ Sir H. Munroe,|| the Prince of

* Mistress of Sir John Lade, Thrale's nephew, who afterwards married her; the picture is at Waddesdon.

† Afterwards Lady Amelia Hume; the picture belongs to Lord Brownlow.

‡ As Hebe; the picture belongs to Lord Iveagh.

§ In the National Gallery of Ireland.

|| At Coutts's Bank in the Strand.



DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE AND HER DAUGHTER

TRIP TO BRUSSELS

Wales,* Mrs. Stanhope,† Three Children of the Duke of Rutland,‡ Venus,§ a gentleman, a little girl, two portraits of noblemen,|| and two of officers,|| sixteen pictures in all. Although no one of the sixteen could be included in a list of Sir Joshua's masterpieces, they nearly all rise above his average level, and show that as yet his brain had lost none of its vigour nor his hand any part of its cunning. The Lord Northington is remarkable for the extreme freedom and felicity of its brushing. It seems to be entirely from the master's own hand, and suggests that the generous praise of Frans Hals, in the sixth Discourse, was accompanied by the sincerest form of flattery. The three full length ladies are all good, although they scarcely reach the level of "Lady Crosbie" and a few others one could name.

In the autumn of this year Reynolds made his third trip to the Low Countries. On September 12 began at Brussels a great sale of pictures removed from religious establishments under an order from the Emperor. Sir Joshua spent about a thousand pounds at the sale, but he appears to have bid through an agent, for he himself was back in England at least two days before the auction commenced. On September 10 he signed his curious bargain with the sanguine Boswell, to paint the latter's portrait, and wait for payment from the first fees he,

* The Peel picture, in the National Gallery.

† Eliza Falconer, married Hon. Henry Fitzroy Stanhope, second son of 2nd Earl of Harrington. The picture was catalogued as "Melancholy." The owner is unknown to me.

‡ Burnt in the fire at Belvoir, in 1816.

§ Bequeathed by Reynolds to the Earl of Upper Ossory; it now belongs to Lord Castletown of Upper Ossory. Sir Joshua repeated the composition several times. The excellent replica in Sir Cuthbert Quilter's collection is the best known of these. Leslie and Taylor are in error when they identify the 1785 picture with the Peel "Snake in the Grass."
|| Not identified.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

Boswell, should earn as a barrister in Westminster Hall. Sir Joshua this year received his commission for a picture from Catherine of Russia, and was hard at work on the Infant Hercules before many weeks of it had passed. His thirteen contributions to the Academy were: A Child with guardian Angels; * and portraits of Erskine, † the Duke of Orleans, ‡ two Children of Benjamin Vandergucht, § Lady Taylor, || the Solicitor-General, Lee, ¶ the Duchess of Devonshire and her little daughter, ** Joshua Sharpe, †† Countess Spencer, †† John Hunter, §§ Miss Bingham, ||| a "young gentleman," and "a gentleman." Walpole's note on the group of the Duchess of Devonshire and her child is surprising. He calls it "little like and not good." As to the likeness, it is difficult for us, who have to be guided by a collation of impressions, to contradict him; but if his judgment upon it was no better than his verdict on the work of art, it need not trouble our pleasure. For the "Jumping Baby" is one of the great achievements of modern painting. It seems to me one of the three most

* In the possession of the Duke of Leeds, at Hornby Castle.

† At Windsor Castle.

‡ Burnt in the fire at Carlton House. There is a good copy, in small, at Chantilly; another is at Petworth.

§ This identification is due to Graves and Cronin. Walpole calls the picture "Children of Lady Lucan," which could not be. The Vandergucht picture was in the Wynn Ellis collection, whence it passed to Mr. B. A. Willcox.

|| Wife of Sir John Taylor, F.R.S. The picture was in the Wynn Ellis collection, and is now in that of M. Groult, in Paris.

¶ "Honest Jack Lee." The picture belonged to Mr. Massey-Mainwaring.

** At Chatsworth.

†† Belonged in 1884 to Mr. Malcolm of Poltalloch. Sharpe died on the day the Academy of 1786 opened.

‡‡ Lavinia (Bingham), wife of 2nd Earl Spencer. The picture is at Althorp.

§§ In the College of Surgeons.

||| Hon. Ann, afterwards Lady Ann, Bingham. The picture is at Althorp.

A BUSY YEAR

entirely successful creations of Sir Joshua, the other two being Sir Charles Tennant's "Lady Crosbie" and the "Nelly O'Brien" of the Wallace Gallery. In each of these delicious pictures Reynolds has hit upon a conception entirely suited to his powers, and has carried it out with a combination of richness, breadth, and simplicity, which raises him for the moment to the highest level touched by portraiture.

In matters disconnected with his work, 1786 was, perhaps, the busiest of Sir Joshua's later years. His love of society was as great as ever, and many new friends, as well as old ones renewed, appear in his engagement book. He becomes a more persistent theatre-goer than ever, and adds the name of Dorothy Jordan to those of the stately Siddons and the impish Abington on his list of stage favourites. He goes often, too, to Mrs. "Perdita" Robinson, who was probably a better talker than either of the others; and an entry for the first of May refers to an evening with the famous Marian Imhoff, the wife of Warren Hastings. His neutrality among warring elements could not be better proved than by this appearance at the Hastings's house on the very day when his life-long friend, Burke, opened his parallels against the ex-Viceroy's reputation. This was the Dreyfus year of the eighteenth century. The Diamond Necklace scandal had set all France by the ears, and London society could talk of little else. The Chevalier—or Chevalière!—D'Eon was here, and Sir Joshua is said to have painted, or at least begun, his, or her, portrait. Tom Taylor says an unfinished picture by Reynolds, which belonged to the late Charles Reade, traditionally bore the name of this mysterious specimen of double humanity.*

* Graves and Cronin quote the following strange paragraph from the *Morning Herald* of 1785: "No. 71. Portrait of a Lady. There surely is a mistake in the Catalogue. The piece is either a gentleman's

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

Thirteen pictures again made up Sir Joshua's quota in the Exhibition of 1787. Here is the list: Lady Smith and her Children; * Lady St. Asaph and Child; † Mrs. William Hope; ‡ Mrs. Stanhope; § Lady Cadogan; || Lady Elliot; ¶ Angels' Heads; ** Lord Burghersh; †† Master Yorke; ‡‡ Miss Ward; §§ the Prince of Wales; ||| Sir Henry Englefield; ¶¶ and James Boswell.*** Several of these appear in Ramberg's well-known picture of the great room at the Academy, which was painted this year. Much of Sir Joshua's energy was at this time absorbed by the ambitious picture of the "Infant Hercules Strangling the Serpents," for the Russian Empress, and there is a considerable falling off in the number of his sitters. His social engagements, nevertheless, are as numerous as ever, the most significant, perhaps, being his presence at the first performance in the Duke of Richmond's theatre at Whitehall, on the site of the present Richmond Terrace. The company was restricted to eighty, and an invitation was a portrait, or else that of Miss D'Eon in the emblems of the Order of the Garter."

* Lately in the possession of Mr. C. P. Huntington, of New York.

† Belongs to the Earl of Ashburnham.

‡ Present owner unknown.

§ The picture known as "Contemplation." It was sold at Christie's with the Monro collection in 1878.

|| Present owner unknown. The sitter was Mary (Churchill), second wife of the 3rd Baron Cadogan.

¶ Anna Maria (Amyand), wife of Sir Gilbert Elliot, afterwards Earl of Minto. The picture belongs to Lord Minto.

** The picture in the National Gallery.

†† In the collection of the Earl of Jersey.

‡‡ Afterwards Lord Royston. Drowned in the Baltic in 1808. The picture belongs to Lord Iveagh.

§§ Natural daughter of John, 2nd Viscount Dudley and Ward.

||| In the Robes of the Garter, with a black servant in Hussar dress arranging his belts. The picture belongs to the Earl of Loudoun.

¶¶ Present whereabouts unknown to me.

*** The Peel picture, in the National Gallery.



THE HASTINGS TRIAL

prize. Politically, the event in which Reynolds may be supposed to have been chiefly interested was the Hastings trial and the delivery of Sheridan's great speech on the Begums of Oude. It must have tried even his tact to show a proper feeling on the oratorical triumph of his old friend, at the same time as he was daily becoming more intimate with Hastings and his wife. That his delicate steering did not involve duplicity we may gather from the fact that on February 13th, 1788, the first day of the trial in Westminster Hall, he did not shrink from appearing in the manager's box with Burke, Wyndham, and Sheridan, or from exchanging bows from that compromising situation with the friends he saw in court. It will be remembered that Gainsborough was also present, and that he ascribed his fatal illness to a chill caught on the occasion.

The following seventeen pictures represented Sir Joshua in the Exhibition of 1788: The Infant Hercules; * A Girl Sleeping; † A Girl with a Kitten; ‡ portraits of Sir George Beaumont; § Colonel Bertie; || Mr. Braddyl; ¶ Mrs. Drummond Smith; ** Lord Darnley; †† Lady Betty Foster; †† Lord Grantham with his Brothers; §§ Miss Gideon with her Brother; ||| Lady Harris; ¶¶ Lord Heathfield; ***

* In the Imperial Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

† In the collection of the Earl of Northbrook, at Stratton.

‡ Known as "Felina"; the picture belongs to Mr. Pierpont Morgan. Many replicas and old copies exist. § At Coleorton.

|| Afterwards 9th Earl of Lindsay. The picture belongs to Lord Wimborne. ¶ Belonged, in 1865, to Cox, the dealer.

** Now the property of Mr. Herbert Gosling, Chertsey.

†† Not certainly identified.

‡‡ Afterwards Duchess of Devonshire. The picture belongs to the Duke of Devonshire. §§ In Lord Cowper's possession.

||| Miss Gideon became the wife of the 11th Lord Saye and Sele. The picture belongs to Mrs. Culling Hanbury, Bedwell Park, Hatfield.

¶¶ Harriet Mary (Amyand), afterwards wife of Sir James Harris, created Earl of Malmesbury. The picture belonged in 1898 to Mr. C. J. Wertheimer. *** In the National Gallery.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

Colonel Morgan ; * Lord Sheffield ; † Mr. Windham ; ‡ and the Duke of York.§

I should be inclined to put Sir Joshua's "Infant Hercules" with his "Ugolino" and his "Death of Cardinal Beaufort" in a class apart, and to label them Tragedies of Compliance. We must accept them, I think, as Sir Joshua's substitute for vices. Most men of unusual powers have wasted part of them in proceedings which were detrimental to themselves and of no profit to their neighbours. Reynolds lived soberly and prudently, except when he over-weighted his easel with these quasi-historical machines. Let us take them as his tribute to human frailty, and give up all attempts to bring them within any reasonable view of art. For the "Hercules" he received from Catherine fifteen hundred guineas, a jewelled box, and a graceful letter of thanks. There were ten pictures under it, he confessed, some better, some worse. Now that the corpses are beginning to force their way to the surface, it is little but an unpleasant *morgue*.

We are now arrived at the last year of Sir Joshua's activity as a painter. At the beginning of 1789 there was little to warn the President's friends that his forty years of industry had arrived at their end. His health was apparently good, his social appearances more frequent than ever. Europe was on the eve of the great convulsion; the Bastille was to fall in July, and the various passions provoked by that event were to divide Sir Joshua's friends and leave his placidity the chief bond of union between them. The year, in short, was the last of

* Sold at Christie's, in 1890, to Mr. Fitzhenry.

† Gibbon's patron; the picture belongs to the present Earl.

‡ The Rt. Hon. William Windham. The picture belongs to the National Gallery, but is hung in the National Portrait Gallery.

§ In St. James's Palace.



MRS. WILLIAM HOPE

LAST YEAR OF ACTIVITY

the real eighteenth century. It saw the end of the indifferentism which had prevailed, in spite of party fighting and royal wars, from the latter days of Dutch William; and it saw the birth of that modern ferment, of that inter-vibration of human atoms, which has driven the world so hard and far since Reynolds laid down his palette and brushes for the last time. Sir Joshua's art knew no decay. His latest pictures were among the best he ever painted. He sent eleven to his last Academy.* They were: Cymon and Iphigenia;† the Continnence of Scipio;‡ Robin Goodfellow, or Puck;§ Cupid and Psyche;|| Miss Gwatkin,¶ Hon. Mrs. Watson,** R. B. Sheridan,†† Lord Henry Fitzgerald,‡‡ Lord Lifford,§§ Lord Rodney,||| and Lord Vernon.¶¶ Four, at least, of these should be included in any list of his finest works; I mean the "Cymon and Iphigenia," the "Robin Goodfellow," the "Simplicity," and the "Lord Lifford." The Buckingham Palace picture has never, I think, received all the

* L. and T. say twelve, but their "Hon. Mrs. Watson" and "Portrait of a Gentleman" probably refer to one and the same picture. There seems to have been a mistake in the R.A. Catalogue or Sir Joshua changed his contributions at the last moment.

† Given to George IV. by Lady Thomond; it is now in Buckingham Palace.

‡ In the Imperial Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

§ In the possession of Mr. Geo. W. Fitzwilliam, Milton House, Peterborough.

|| In the possession of Lady Burdett-Coutts, who also has the sketch for it.

¶ Known as "Simplicity." Many old copies, and perhaps one or two replicas, exist. Lord Tweedmouth has (May 1905) one of the latter. The 1789 picture is at Waddesdon.

** At Rockingham Castle, Northamptonshire.

†† Owner unknown to me.

‡‡ This entry is doubtful. It may refer to Hoppner's well-known portrait of Lord Henry, which was exhibited this year.

§§ Lately in the possession of the Hon. Edward Hewitt.

||| In St. James's Palace.

¶¶ Owner unknown.

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admiration it deserves. It is the best by far of Sir Joshua's experiments in the nude. The conception is controlled by excellent taste, the linear arabesque is agreeable, and, if the obscuring coat of oil varnish with which Seguier protected it were away, the beauty of its colour would surely be disinterred.* The "Robin Goodfellow," or "Puck," as it was generally called, used to be one of the most famous of Sir Joshua's pictures. Rogers tells a story of how people called out, "There it is!" in the street, as it was carried from Christie's auction room on the day of the Boydell sale, in 1805. The "Lord Lifford," a Chancellor in his robes, with the great seal of Ireland and all the paraphernalia of a *portrait de parade*, is one of the most satisfactory things of its class in existence, and the "Sheridan" repeats the success with which the painter had realized the individuality of Fox seven years before.

The end of Sir Joshua's career came with great abruptness. On the 13th of July he was at work on a young lady's portrait, when his left eye became suddenly so much obscured that he had to lay down his brush. He never again seriously took it up. "All things have an end," he quietly said, "and I have come to mine." His niece, Mary Palmer, who had the curious habit of speaking about her uncle's art as if it were a harmless amusement outside the serious business of life,† says, in a letter of

* The story told by Leslie (L. and T., vol. ii., pp. 536-7) of the King's conversation with Seguier is inconsistent with present appearances. Under Seguier's varnish—mastic mixed liberally with linseed oil—the picture is clean enough. The surface must have been cleaned before the varnish was applied. The yellow gloom through which the charms of Iphigenia peer so appealingly seems entirely due to the presence of the oil on which Seguier depended for the prevention of "chill."

† In January, 1786, she wrote to the same correspondent: "My uncle seems more bewitched than ever with his pallett and pencils. He is painting from morning till night," &c.



EMMA AND ELIZABETH CREWE

EARL OF CREWE

THE INTERREGNUM

this year : " He amuses himself by sometimes cleaning or mending a picture, for his ruling passion continues in full force, and he enjoys his pictures as much as ever. . . . He enjoys company, in a quiet way, and loves a game at cards as well as ever." The serenity in which he passed the remaining years of his life was only once interrupted. The history of the petty squabble which led to his temporary vacation of the President's chair at Somerset House has been told so often and is so little to the honour of any one concerned, that I do not propose to tell it again in any detail. Broadly, what happened was this : In 1790 an Associate had to be elected at the Academy. On a ballot being taken, the numbers were equal between Sawrey Gilpin and Bonomi, the Italian architect, who had recently settled in England. Reynolds gave a casting vote for the latter, and justified himself, quite needlessly, by explaining that he had acted in the hope that, when a vacancy occurred, Bonomi might be promoted to the "full honours," and so made eligible for the professorship of perspective. The other members resented the appearance of dictation, and ascribed the President's action to his desire to serve Lord Aylesford, Bonomi's patron. Shortly afterwards a vacancy occurred among the Academicians. Reynolds did his best for Bonomi, and was even instrumental in getting a number of the architect's drawings displayed in the room where the voting was to take place. This again most of those present resented, and the drawings had to be removed. The election then took place, and Fuseli was preferred to Bonomi by a great majority. Thereupon Sir Joshua resigned the Presidency. This bare statement includes, I think, all the facts on which the various accounts agree. A considerable want of courtesy seems to have been shown to Reynolds in the course of the quarrel. Sir William Chambers, the leading spirit of the Academy,

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laid himself open to the suspicion of being fearful lest Bonomi should win too secure a foothold in his, Sir William's, own profession, while Sir Joshua himself scarcely behaved with his usual tact. This, I think, is apparent in the long memorandum, endorsed "Satisfaction in the matter of Bonomi and the resignation of the President's chair,"* in which he gives his own account of the whole transaction. Sir Joshua persevered in his determination to resign, in spite of an intimation from the King that "his Majesty would be happy in Sir Joshua's continuing in the President's chair," until the 16th of March, when, the general assembly having made the *amende honorable*, and the King having signified his approval, he again took his old place in Somerset House.

Saving in the matter of sitters, Sir Joshua's last years were spent like the rest of his life. His attention was divided between the affairs of the Academy, the companionship of his remarkable circle of friends, the composition of his last address, and the care of his works of art. In a letter written by a daughter of his sister Johnson—to use the phrase of his time—we catch a curious glimpse of his careless hours.

"He is become," she says, "so violently fond of whist, that he scarcely staid to give the gentlemen time to drink their wine, before he proposed playing cards, that he might get a rubber before he went (to the Academy). He is not tied down to common rules, but always has some scheme in view, and plays out his trumps always; for it is beneath his style of play ever to give his partner an opportunity of making his trumps; but, notwithstanding, he generally wins, from holding such fine cards."

His fifteenth and last Discourse was delivered on the 10th of December, 1790. It was mainly devoted to the

* It is printed in L. and T., vol. ii., pp. 558-582.

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character and abilities of Michelangelo, and ends with the famous and happy peroration :

“I feel a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite. I reflect, not without vanity, that these Discourses bear testimony of my admiration of that truly divine man ; and I should desire that the last words which I should pronounce in this Academy, and from this place, might be the name of MICHEL-ANGELO.”

Fourteen months later Sir Joshua Reynolds was dead. The last year of his life saw him occupied over many things which had an atmosphere of good-bye about them. He offered his valuable collection of pictures by the old masters to the Royal Academy at a nominal price, on condition that a gallery for them should be erected on the site of the Lyceum, in the Strand. The offer was declined. He then exhibited a part of the collection in a room in the Haymarket, calling it “Ralph’s exhibition” and handing over the profits to his old servant, Ralph Kirkley. Much of his attention was given to the project for a statue of Johnson, to be erected in St. Paul’s, one of the few projects of the kind which have ended in every way according to the hopes of the projectors. In May he sat for his portrait for the last time, to the Swedish artist Carl Fredrik von Breda. The picture is in the Academy at Stockholm. In October, Sir William Chambers was his substitute at Somerset House, and in November he made his will. A few days later he offered to resign the Presidency, feeling he was no longer equal to his duties. The general assembly, however, re-elected him on the 10th of December, nominating West as his deputy. He never again occupied the chair. At the end of November Boswell writes to Temple :

“My spirits have been still more sunk by seeing Sir Joshua Reynolds almost as low as myself. He has, for more than two months past, had

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a pain in his blind eye, the effect of which has been to increase the weakness in the other, and he broods over the dismal apprehension of becoming quite blind. He has been kept so low as to diet that he is quite relaxed and desponding. He, who used to be looked upon as perhaps the most happy man in the world, is now as I tell you."

Another visitor, Fanny Burney, describes him as wearing a bandage over one eye and the other shaded with a green half-bonnet.

"He seemed serious even to sadness, though extremely kind. 'I am very glad,' he said, ' . . . to see you again, and I wish I could see you better! but I have but one eye now, and scarcely that.' " Burke, writing to his son, declares the peace with which he approached death. "Nothing," he says, "can equal the tranquillity with which he views his end. He congratulates himself on it as a happy conclusion to a happy life."

In the evening of Thursday, the 23rd of February, 1792, Sir Joshua died.

CHAPTER VIII

SIR JOSHUA'S CHARACTER AS A MAN



HE character of Reynolds was not transparent. In this he offers a remarkable contrast to Gainsborough, whose personality might be built up on the evidence of a single letter. Gainsborough's friends knew him as he was. They met him, no doubt, with different measures of toleration: to some, his uncertainty, his irresponsibility, his freedom of manners and tongue, were less pardonable than to others; but they all drew his character in the same lines. It was not so with Reynolds. His friends agree upon superficial matters, but scarcely upon the personality that lay beneath. A strong side light is thrown by a story told by Boswell, which almost certainly relates to Sir Joshua. "Talking of a friend of ours associating with persons of very discordant principles and characters, I said he was a very universal man, quite a man of the world. JOHNSON.— 'Yes, Sir; but one may be so much a man of the world as to be nothing in the world. I remember a passage in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, which he was afterwards fool enough to expunge: 'I do not love a man who is zealous for nothing.' " Reynolds was zealous for nothing. Never do we find the least touch of excited warmth in anything he wrote or anything he said. The famous

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peroration to his last Discourse comes more nearly, perhaps, to *abandon* than anything else. With his well-wishers this was moderation ; with enemies, and with friends when they had been provoked by his imperturbability, it was coldness of heart. Moderation is a good low-water mark, but a bad high one. With Reynolds, I fear, it represented the highest level to which he could drive his interest, rather than any restraint upon bounding feelings or desires. He was essentially self-contained, by which I mean that he depended for his happiness entirely upon the effects of external things on his own personality, and not at all upon reflexes from the enjoyment of others. A life of solitude would not have pleased him ; he was no Diogenes ; but his pleasure did not spring from seeing those about him happy in their own fashion. It came from the way in which their proceedings affected his own sense of what was good in life. In short, he had none of the makings of an altruist ; he felt no impulse, either from heart or mind, to make sacrifices or act against his will for the sake of giving an issue to desires he did not share. And yet it would be misleading to call him an unqualified egoist. His judgment was so unbiassed that his actions were those of a sympathetic man, although not as a fact dictated by sympathy. He appears seldom, if ever, to have given offence, except on those occasions when his quietude was in itself an injury. To a quick and eager personality like that of Mrs. Thrale, the want of passion with which he contrived to be kind was a frequent provocation. We may guess that the turbulent and inconsequent Barry was driven backwards and forwards from good will to ill, by the irritating contrast between his own excitements and the measured way in which Reynolds met them, at one time with approval, at another with censure. Johnson's



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assertion that he was the most invulnerable man he knew, had a double force. It meant not only that it was difficult to find a weak point against which to plant a battery, but that also when a breach was made, the painter's equanimity would form the most effectual retrenchment. Leslie pretends to see in Sir Joshua a warm-hearted person, filled with the milk of human kindness, and energetically benevolent to every one about him. Before accepting such a reading of his character, we should have to ignore all the direct evidence we possess. In the face of such portraits as those drawn by Goldsmith, Dean Barnard, and Mrs. Thrale, it is futile to build up a conception irreconcilable with theirs on deductions which may or may not be true. It is quite certain that Reynolds was not *collet monté*. His relations with people like Wilkes, Charles Greville, Nelly O'Brien, and Mrs. Baddeley ; his union as it were in a single pattern of Sheridan and Hastings, at the very moment when the one was building up his fame by invective against the other ; the readiness—to quote a slight but not insignificant indication—with which he allowed a great lady in all her glory to seat herself in the chair just vacated by some unwashed gutter child ; all these support the charge of indifferentism so often brought against him, and suggest a less amiable explanation of his *insouciance* as a host than the one favoured by Leslie. His dealings with his own family point in the same direction. He seems to have had no intercourse at all with his brothers. With his married sisters, he had business relations, which led to an occasional exchange of ideas. The spinster Frances, who lived in his house until she and he could stand it no longer, was a favourite with all the world except her brother. Offy, his favourite Offy, was allowed to marry an approved suitor without even a letter of

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goodwill, until Burke forced it from him. Northcote disturbed his equanimity by receiving a brother Devonian in the little den in which he was condemned to work ; and for thirty years his house was filled with pupils to whom he scarcely showed himself, pupils to whom he never makes the slightest allusion in his letters or conversation, pupils whose very names are unknown, except for one or two who find a casual mention in the talks of Northcote.

On the other hand if Reynolds had little heart, his instincts were in the right direction, and his taste was consummate. He lived for more than forty years among men and women who had often little in common beyond his acquaintance and a reputation for wit ; and yet he had no quarrels. An occasional outburst against the coolness of his judgment was the only sign of irritation he provoked from those he called his friends. He said he hated Barry ; but we may safely assume that what he felt was not hatred, but the intense irritation set up in a man of reason by the proceedings of a wrong-headed fanatic. He could be quietly jealous. The ephemeral vogue of Liotard spurred him to bitter words ; and his equanimity was disturbed by the outbreak of human nature which took place among his colleagues in 1790. In both these cases his displeasure was excited by attacks on his scheme of life ; by attempts, as it were, to head him off from the line of advance he saw stretching out before him ; and as soon as they ceased he fell back into his normal calm. So far as the aspect he presented to the world is concerned, all the evidence we have points in one direction. He was imperturbably kind, judicial, and non-impulsive. As to what lay beneath the surface, men held different opinions in his lifetime, and have differed ever since. To me it appears indis-

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putable that Sir Joshua's heart was hard, but his mind just—a combination much more usual than we are apt to think—and that his one passion, if it can be called a passion, was ambition, which in his case was a quiet, persistent determination to fill as conspicuous a position in the society and the art of his time as his abilities and the accident of his birth would allow.

Odds and ends of evidence, and we must rely on odds and ends, are worth nothing unless we can see them converging upon a personality, and that a personality consistent with the actual work Reynolds has left us. Now the justification for all this discussion lies in the belief, at which I, at least, have arrived, that the things we really know of Sir Joshua as a man explain both his achievements and his shortcomings as an artist. It is difficult to identify the genial, affectionate, somewhat happy-go-lucky individual in whom Leslie would have us believe, with the painter who, above all others, arrived at excellence by taking thought. Reynolds distrusted genius; and from his own point of view he was right. He arrived at results scarcely to be distinguished from those of genius, and did so entirely by the action of an original mind and a profound taste upon accumulated materials. His path towards excellence was conscious, discriminative, judicial. Every step he took was the result of a deliberate choice. He felt no heats, driving him into particular expression in his own despite. Just as by fairness of mind he produced the effect of sympathy among his friends, so by unerring judgment he produces the effect of creation on us who value his art. He appears to me the supreme, if not the only, modern instance of a painter reaching greatness along a path every step of which was trodden deliberately, with a full consciousness of why it was taken and whither it was

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leading, and with the power unimpaired to turn back or to change the goal at any moment. Superficially, the art of Sir Joshua resembled that of Raphael as little as it well could ; mentally, the processes of the two men were curiously alike. Both possessed taste to such a degree that it became genius ; and both were endowed, for the service of their taste, with a mental industry which is rare.





CHAPTER IX

THE ART OF REYNOLDS



O many people, even among those with whom art is one of the serious considerations of life, any elaborate examination of a painter's individuality seems impertinent. They say the world cares only for results, and that so long as the artist reaches acceptable conclusions, the method of his getting there is of interest to himself alone. Such an assertion raises the whole question of the significance of art. What is it that attracts us in a work of art? In spite of stale jeers about "objective" and "subjective," the answer can only be that the significance of a picture lies mainly in its objective qualities, for the tiro, and in its subjective for the real appreciator. The one is fascinated, like Dr. Samuel Reynolds, by its power to *tromper l'œil*, the other by the beauty and vigour of the personality behind it. If the value of art lay in the feigned reproduction of things already created by a force outside man, then the artist would by no means deserve the pinnacle on which the world has placed him. In that case his genius would be of a secondary kind, and would be rightly compelled to yield the *pas* to those intellects which look upon existing things as stepping stones to something more. The mark of a first-rate mind is the power to create ; to select, combine,

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and organise material into a whole that is at once new, coherent, and finite. No matter where we look—among statesmen, captains, poets, philosophers, painters—this is our last although often unconscious test of what we call greatness. The mind which stops short at analysis, arrangement, and exposition, no matter how acute and pellucid it may be, we relegate to the second row. It has missed that ability to work on the lines of nature herself with which the supreme spirits are endowed.

The one perennial characteristic of the human mind is the determination to understand itself. The best proof of its own efficiency any human mind can give is a feat of synthesis, for the power to synthetize implies the inferior mental gift of analysis as well as a number of moral virtues. The most intimately comprehensible results of synthetic power are those attained by the artist, for there all converging efforts are so focussed that the organic nature of the product can be readily grasped. The deduction from this sorites is that *behind* the work of art lies the goal for which our critical curiosity is making, and that no energy is wasted which tries to understand the artist. “Ce que nous admirons dans l’œuvre d’art, c’est le génie de l’artiste,” was the motto of Véron, one of the clearest of modern writers on æsthetics. “Dans les œuvres qui m’intéressent,” said Thoré, “les auteurs se substituent en quelque sorte à la nature. Quelque vulgaire qu’elle pût être, ils ont eu une perception particulière et rare. C’est Chardin qu’on admire dans le verre qu’il a peint. C’est le génie de Rembrandt qu’on admire dans le caractère profond et singulier qu’il a imprimé sur cette tête quelconque qui posait devant lui.”*

* “In those works which excite my interest, the authors, in a fashion, substitute themselves for nature. However commonplace she may be, they look at her with a singular vision of their own. It is Chardin’s



MARCHIONESS OF TAVISTOCK

L. RAPHAEL, ESQ.

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These quotations will do for a declaration of faith. It is absurd to stop at admiration. Before a Chardin, or a Rembrandt, we feel an irresistible desire to reconstitute the man, to reason out the "why" he became the particular kind of artist he was, to trace the connection between his personality as a whole and those special gifts which made him a creator, and to determine the particular place in the hierarchy of artists to which his creations entitle him. In my last short chapter, I sketched the character of Reynolds as a social unit. I shall now try to show the connection, which was in some ways peculiar, between his lay character—if I may put it so—and his art.

We have seen that through the whole of his life Sir Joshua's impulses were at the disposal of his reason. No untimely passion ever thrust him aside from the path he had traced out. Even as a boy he was free from inconvenient enthusiasms, and was able, when asked to choose a profession, to make distinctions as wise as they were unusual. "I will be a painter," he said, "if you will give me the chance of becoming a good one; otherwise I will sell drugs." No doubt he was seventeen when the choice was offered, but even at that age such common sense is rare. He gives one the impression, not so much, perhaps, that he had no passions, as that he could nourish one and starve another at will. He showed no resentment when he was turned out of the house by Hudson, and I cannot avoid a sneaking belief that he deliberately provoked his own dismissal. He had been an apprentice for nearly two years, and must have felt that to spend two years more at the self we admire in the glass he paints. It is by the genius of Rembrandt that we are fascinated in the presence of the deep and peculiar significance with which he invests the head of any model who happens to pose before him."—*Salon de 1863*.

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work would be waste of time. This guess finds some little confirmation in the fact that of all the influences under which he came, that of his early master seems to be the only one he ever knowingly tried to shake off.* He left Hudson, and began to compile his style. We know from his proceedings in later years how this would be done. He was awakened by Gandy to the possibilities which lie in texture and to the value of breadth. Rembrandt showed him how the incidence of light could be made significant and expressive, and explained, moreover, that a portrait should hint at latent energy although it may scarcely display it in action. Neither in the pictures of Gandy nor in such Rembrandts as were then to be seen in England, did he find much to stir his sense of colour. The early portrait of himself in the National Portrait Gallery is a fine example, perhaps the best we have, of what he could do before his visit to Italy. It shows how well he had profited by such opportunities as had come in his way. Although not a design in the full sense of the word, it is happily conceived. The action allows unity to be won without any sense of effort. The colour is pleasant though sombre, and probably, when the picture was new, the shadow over the upper part of the face was more luminous than now. If Reynolds, at this period in his career, had had the luck to encounter some one to tell him how to give all possible depth and brilliancy to his pigments without danger to their constitution, he might have gone near to treading on the heels of Rembrandt. He tried to penetrate the Dutchman's secret by copying, and not a few pictures which now pass under the name of Rembrandt

* In his master's studio he must at least have learnt to paint soundly, to select and manipulate his materials with some thought of the future; and yet, ten years later, we find him setting the example of recklessness in this respect which has been so ruinous to his school.

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show unmistakably the hand of Reynolds.* It is not often, however, that he carried out a process consistently, and with sufficient foresight. He went over the ground as often as the fancy took him, he employed glazes differing too slightly in tone from the solid painting beneath, and he failed to make sufficient use of the contrast in kind between reflecting and absorbent surfaces. In short, he tentatively felt his way in a method which demands for complete success that its user shall know exactly, from the very beginning, what has to be done.

The eyes of Reynolds were first opened to the possibilities of colour by his visit to Italy. In England he had been preoccupied with effects of light and shadow. In Italy the decorative simplicity, the broad satisfaction with a simple surface, which is one of the marks of the south, touched his imagination, and led him to work, for a time, in a manner that we hardly recognise as his. He remitted his practice of building up a picture. He painted frankly and "straight away," substituting distribution for concentration, and abandoning his cheese theory for the nonce. The best example I can point to of this passing phase in his development—it did pass, entirely—is the parody on the School of Athens, which is quite free from darkening, cracking, fading, or any other sign of premature decomposition. Unfortunately he was not content to persevere in simple methods. Such technique as that of the caricatures is rare in his practice. His satisfaction with Italian simplicity soon gave way to the desire to combine the force and depth of Rembrandt with the decorative splendour of the south. What this led to may be seen in the "Giuseppe Marchi" at Burlington House, and that "Mrs. Chambers" of which McArdell made such an

* Unless I am greatly mistaken there is one in the National Gallery.

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exquisite mezzotint. Both these pictures are Rembrandts plus a Venetian touch in their colour, and when still fresh they probably justified their author's ambition. We know that he was proud of both performances, and was willing to make them his *avant-coureurs* in England. But his technical knowledge was unequal to the task of ensuring longevity to its effects; both pictures were soon thrown out of keeping by irregular modifications of their substance, and both are now somewhat horny and opaque.

The "Marchi" was the first picture finished after his return to London; the "Mrs. Chambers" was painted in Paris, on his way home. The next addition to his æsthetic resources is embodied in the famous "Keppel" of 1753, in which he makes such bold use of dramatic action. The general movement is said to have been conveyed from a statue, but which statue I do not know.* It is clear, however, that the principles of sculpture had for the moment intruded upon the thoughts of Reynolds when he was fixing his design. The perfect balance and detachment of Keppel's figure; the way it stands upon its feet, its promise of equal harmony from all points of view, our feeling that we could turn it, on a pivot; all these support the notion that the first hint was taken from something "in the round," and show once more how ready he was to profit by what other people had done. In a paper quoted by Leslie,† Reynolds declares how he considered himself as "playing a great game" and laying very bold foundations for a success which he hoped was to come. "Instead of beginning to save money, I laid it out faster than I got it, in purchasing the best examples of art that

* The resemblances to the Apollo Belvedere are, of course, obvious, and Leslie seems to allude to some derivative from that too famous figure at p. 106 of his first volume.

† Vol. i., p. 115.

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could be procured ; I even borrowed money for this purpose. The possession of pictures by Titian, Vandyck, Rembrandt, &c., I considered as the best kind of wealth. . . . Study, indeed, consists in learning to see nature, and may be called the art of using other men's minds. . . . My principal labour was employed on the whole together ; and I was never weary of changing, and trying different modes and different effects. I had always some scheme in my mind, and a perpetual desire to advance." Further on in the same paper he says : "I was always willing to believe that my uncertainty of proceeding in my works—that is, my never being sure of my hand, and my frequent alterations—arose from a refined taste, which could not acquiesce in anything short of a high degree of excellence. I had not an opportunity of being early initiated in the principles of colouring : no man, indeed, could teach me. If I have never been settled with respect to colouring, let it at the same time be remembered that my unsteadiness in this respect proceeded from an inordinate desire to possess every kind of excellence that I saw in the works of others." Here, from his own lips, we have the key to Sir Joshua's personality as an artist. He was always gathering both material and ways to use it ; his remarkable success, with "a method which too often leads to insipidity," depended on the union, in his own person, of a fine taste and untiring mental activity.

The painting of the Keppel marks an epoch in the career of Reynolds as well as of modern art. Down to 1752 it is easy to determine whence the inspiration came for everything he did. One picture is a sublimated Hudson, another an echo of Rembrandt, a third a Hogarth with a difference. The Keppel is new mainly because he there draws upon his memories of a different art, but still new. He paints the energy and aptitudes of the man as

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well as his head and body. Such a thing had never really been done before. Some of the great Italians had, no doubt, suggested the dynamic possibilities of their sitters; Velazquez had now and then gripped the nature before him with so nervous a hand as to produce a dramatic result; but before Reynolds painted his Keppel no one had succeeded in fusing frank and veracious narrative with other artistic qualities in a portrait. It was exactly the thing to create a *furor*, for it was at once novel and entirely comprehensible. People could say "How new!" and "Why hasn't it been done before?" in the same breath. Such a success would have been dangerous, if not fatal, to most men. They would have repeated it until all merit had been taken out of the original performance. With Reynolds it seems only to have had the effect of confirming himself in that deliberate eclecticism of which he was to make so excellent a use. From the years immediately succeeding, date the first pictures in which a real personal style of his own appears. And yet these very things vary enormously. We can always trace the eclectic spirit, the desire to utilise accumulated hints, the distrust of inspiration and disbelief in "genius," by which he is divided from all other painters of his own rank.

It is impossible to discuss Sir Joshua's productions during the ten or twelve years which followed his establishment in London in anything like detail. It was the busiest time of his life, and sitters came in regiments. I must be content to select a few characteristic works, and with their help do my best to justify my view of his achievement.

One of the most obvious and at the same time decisive proofs of the deliberate nature of Sir Joshua's conceptions, is the contrast, in character, between his male and female



KITTY FISHER

EARL OF CREWE

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portraits. One would think that the first care of a portrait-painter would be to adapt his ideas—his ideas of design, handling and action—to the sex of his sitter, But, as a matter of fact, very few painters have done anything of the kind, and the best least of all. Titian, Velazquez, Rubens, Rembrandt, Hals and Van Dyck all had pretty much the same formulæ for men and women. As a consequence no one among them, with the possible exception of Titian, succeeded equally well with both sexes. To explain what I mean I may say that, to me at least, Van Dyck's portraits—putting aside the "Cornelis Van der Gheest" and a few more—seem always feminine, while those of Rembrandt, Frans Hals and Velazquez seem no less invariably masculine. The hard thinking of Reynolds preserved him from a similar mistake. His patterns in line and colour have sex. During his first period of maturity, which I take to be the years between 1753 and 1765, he painted some half a dozen magnificent portraits which illustrate this, as well as other characteristics with peculiar force. The earliest of these is the Mrs. Bonfoy, at Port Eliot, painted the year after the Keppel. Better known is the "Kitty Fisher," with the doves, of which more than one competing example exists. The one we reproduce is at Crewe Hall. It is a capital instance of what I mean by femininity in conception. Every element carries with it the notion of woman. The handling is vaporous, sinuous, and long; the colour opalescent, and without masterful contrasts, the design—but that is a matter of course—avoids any hint at the quick aggression of the male. Still finer, though less "important" and much less famous, is the "Lady Tavistock" which used to be at Quiddenhams and is now in the collection of Mr. Louis Raphael. Here Reynolds suggests with extraordinary felicity the atmosphere of tender waiting, of intelligent

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docility, which is proper to the young wife. Technically, too, it is one of the best of his early works, and shows the example of Rembrandt put to the most agreeable use. But finer still than either the "Kitty Fisher" or the "Lady Tavistock" is the great "Nelly O'Brien" of 1763, in the Wallace collection.

On the whole, I think this might be accepted as Sir Joshua's masterpiece. In other pictures he flies at higher game. In the "Duchess of Devonshire with her Baby" he paints maternal interest, energy, love, and paints them with a broader and more audacious brush; in the "Lady Crosbie" he concentrates a life history into a movement and wins a miraculous unity; in the "Laurence Sterne," we can see his own curious smile as he plucks out the heart of a mystery and sets it before us as a man. But two of these three pictures can be criticised, even from his own standpoint. In his determination to be baby-like with the little Lady Georgiana he becomes just a thought clumsy, while the trenchant focussing of the Sterne leaves its outskirts rather unfurnished and insignificant. The "Lady Crosbie," indeed, is no less triumphant than the "Nelly O'Brien," but the triumph was easier to bring off. Nevertheless, Sir Charles Tennant's picture has a better claim, I think, than any other to a place beside the beautiful creation at Hertford House.

Nelly O'Brien was a light of love, a courtesan in the old classical sense, who transferred her affections with facility, and looked to results in purple and fine linen. But like other *demi-mondaines* in the days when there really was a stratum between the outer world and the common ruck of *demoiselles de la petite vertu*, she was prudent in her way, and Reynolds could feel that he had done all the occasion demanded when he had mixed a certain air of detachment, a touch of the looker-on, into the usual air of a fine lady. And so she sits as we see her, collected, and with but the



NELLY O'BRIEN

WALLACE COLLECTION

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least possible hint at curiosity, in the sunlight, and backed by the shade of trees. In colour no Reynolds is more delicious. The pale crimson of the quilted skirt, the blue of the overdress, the rich black, like the blacks of Gainsborough, which veils her shoulders, make up a moving harmony. They also betray the influence under which the picture was conceived. Allan Ramsay was so inconsiderable a painter that his productions have never, so far as I know, been reckoned among those by which the art of Reynolds was affected. And yet among the Sir Joshuas which date from the years immediately following Ramsay's establishment in London (in 1762), the indications that the Scotsman's refined taste, and, especially, his happy use of shy and delicate colours, had their effect, abound. In another particular, in the extreme solicitude with which the three separate layers of drapery over the girl's lap are arranged and painted, the effect of Ramsay's example may be traced. It is exactly what Ramsay would have done himself, carried to a perfection he could not approach. Sir Joshua's first visit to Belgium took place in 1781; had he gone there twenty years earlier we should certainly have suspected him of taking a hint from Rubens also. In his diary at Brussels we read: "Mr. van Haveren has an admirable portrait by Rubens, known by the name of the Chapeau de Paille, from her having on her head a hat and feather, airily put on; it has a wonderful transparency of colour, as if seen in the open air; it is, upon the whole, a very striking portrait; but her breasts are as ill drawn as they are finely coloured." If these words had been written in 1763, and their writer had afterwards set to work to show how he could profit by the beauties and defects of the Chapeau de Paille, he could not have carried out his purpose more completely than in the Nelly O'Brien. And this shows the danger of ignoring coincidence.

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Before saying good-bye to this bewitching picture, I should like to point out one small detail in which the coolness of Sir Joshua's judgment betrays itself. Nelly O'Brien has a dog ; so has Mrs. Robinson, in the superb Gainsborough which hangs on the same wall. Compare the two little beasts and see what a world divides them. Sir Joshua's dog is a flat ornament with a cutting edge. It helps to give an agreeable contour to the light mass in the picture and to reduce the quantity of black, but as a dog it does not exist. It is depressed out of being in obedience to the artist's notions of balance and accent. Gainsborough behaves differently. His interest in the dog, there, waiting to be painted, overcomes his prudence. So with him the ornament is alive, and by its alertness enhances the vivacity of its owner. In the whole range of Sir Joshua's art you will find nothing to compare, so far as technique is concerned, with the vivid and complete way in which this white dog is relieved against the whiteness of the woman beside him. In short, the fire of Gainsborough drove him to face all the difficulties, while the cool blood of Reynolds left him content with an easier success.

The male portraits of this time include the "Laurence Sterne," the first "Garrick" and the "Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy." Between the three we get a complete illustration of how Reynolds approached his portraits of men. In one of the famous Dialogues he makes Johnson say of Garrick, "No, sir, Garrick left nothing to chance. Every gesture, every expression of countenance and variation of voice, was settled in his closet before he set his foot upon the stage." Before such a portrait as the "Sterne" our conviction is strong that Sir Joshua behaved in the same way himself. We feel that

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the conception is based not so much on the studio impression, as upon a mental determination that thus the creator of Uncle Toby should be painted, and in no other way. No artist has been so indefatigable as Sir Joshua in hunting up significant attitudes and gestures when notable men proposed that he should paint their pictures. The "Lord Heathfield," holding the key of the Mediterranean, is the typical instance, but it is the exception to find him handing celebrated people down to us without some hint of how they won their fame. The personality of Sterne, then, lies open in Sir Joshua's portrait, and yet it has a touch of artifice. The attitude and the expression of the face are not in convincing harmony. The man has been posed and wonders what the result will be. The Garrick, though equally profound, is more spontaneous. In spite of his gift of forethought, Reynolds was quicker than most men to profit by a happy inspiration or an accidental hint. The player's attitude—keen, alert, receptive—proclaims itself his own. He has leant forward to talk and listen, and the artist has pounced upon the chance. The picture marks one extreme of Sir Joshua's habit; the second Garrick—between the tragic seducer and the comic—the other. Here everything has been carefully weighed and determined, so much so that the draperies, the turn of the figures, even the facial expressions, seem better suited to sculpture than to the prompt art of the brush.

So far the dominant note of Reynolds has been variety, a variety based partly on the absence of any driving bias within himself, partly on his power to think, and partly on his desire to give some moral or intellectual apropos to every portrait he undertook. He paints women in one spirit, men in another; and in both makes a point of building his conception on something they have been or

done. He is experimental, and exploits his predecessors, depending at one moment on the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt, as in the "Lady Tavistock," at another on the arabesque of—let us say—a Roubiliac, as in the "Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy," at yet a third on the delicacy of a timid artist like Ramsay, as in the "Nelly O'Brien." Through them all runs a connecting thread in that love of a fat texture with which the dictum of Gandy has inspired him, but otherwise they differ in a way that shows a more untiring mental activity than we can point to in any of his rivals. As time passed he was seduced into increasing the dose of self in what he did, into betraying more frankly the native sympathies which underlay his eclectic notions. Down to about 1765, however, we are kept in doubt as to which influence will finally prevail, as to whether he will crystallise into an inheritor from the Dutch, the Venetians, the Bolognese, or the Ferrarese. Curiously enough, he did, as a fact, settle down to a manner in which the Venetians and one of the Ferrarese counted for more than any of the men to whom his gaze was turned during his early maturity. Correggio, Titian, and Paolo had captured his fancy in Italy, but their influence lay comparatively dormant during the years which saw the building up of his fame. After about 1774 we shall find them decisive factors in his art.

From 1765 to 1774 was a sort of middle period. It was a period of good painting expended too often on conceptions which are not essentially pictorial. His eye still lingers on the Bolognese, who count for much in such compositions as "Lady Sarah Bunbury Sacrificing to the Graces," "Mrs. Blake as Juno with the Cestus of Venus," "Ugolino," "Dr. Beattie," and even the great and famous Montgomeries of the National Gallery. In all these we find æsthetic qualities controlled and subdued for the sake



LADY SARAH BUNBURY SACRIFICING TO THE GRACES
SIR HENRY BUNBURY, BART.

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of others which are not æsthetic. His curious theory of drapery in the abstract is allowed to spoil the effect of more than one masterpiece, while unity is often sacrificed to a supposed necessity for hanging art on a lay peg. The drapery idea is particularly unfortunate, for nothing would have done more to cure Sir Joshua of the emptiness which spoils so many of his quasi-historical pictures than attention to the sheen of silk and velvets. Imagine the "Ladies decorating a Term of Hymen" conceived in the same spirit as Paolo's "Family of Darius"! To my mind the best productions as a class of this unequal period were such things as the group of the two Paines, father and son, at Oxford, painted in 1765-66; the Goldsmith of 1770; the "Mrs. Abington as Miss Prue," 1771; the Hertford House "Strawberry Girl," painted in 1773; and the "Baretti," of 1774. Sir Joshua used to say that no artist, however great, had done more than two or three really original things, and that among his own works only the "Strawberry Girl" deserved to be so considered. It is difficult to be sure of how he meant this to be taken. To us onlookers, with another century of experience, he seems to have painted many things quite as original, the "Master Crewe," for instance, or the many versions of Mrs. Abington. I suspect that what sounds like a critical opinion was in reality a plain statement of fact, a confession, in short, that most of his inventions had been founded on some hint from outside.

During the last fifteen years of his active career Sir Joshua shed his irrelevancies. Between 1774 and the failure of his eyes in 1789, he was seldom induced to over-load a picture. He seems at last to have become thoroughly alive to the futility of supporting art with non-artistic props, and from 1774 onwards we rarely find

a composition embarrassed by its extrapictorial elements. His invention is as active as ever, but it runs on truer lines. No doubt he is seldom satisfied, especially in his larger works, to depend solely upon line, colour, and illumination. But his sense of what will fall properly into an æsthetic whole has become more unerring, and we no longer find schemes dislocated by the introduction of things which spoil the focus. His inability to manage a crowded canvas still persists. The "Lady Cockburn and her children" and the very similar group of Lady Smyth and her family, painted in 1774 and 1786 respectively, have no æsthetic unity at all. In the one apparent exception, the Marlborough family group of 1778, the arrangement is so obviously artificial that, in spite of its success, it does not shake our opinion.* But when it is a question of one or two figures, he wins a unity that had been previously beyond his reach, and wins it not seldom by the very means which had once been the chief cause of failure. Mrs. Lloyd writing on the tree; Master Crewe swaggering as Bluff King Hal; Little Montague in the snow; Lady Crosbie stealing off surreptitiously to catch a lover, her own or some one else's; the Waldegraves with their tambours; Georgiana Duchess jumping her infant; Lord Heathfield gripping the key to the Mediterranean; John Hunter meditating among his bones; Mrs. Abington thrusting out her impudent *museau* from behind the curtain; all these are examples of incidents

* It is a little curious that nearly twenty years earlier Reynolds had elaborately jeered at the very principle he here puts into action. In one of his *Idlers* (29 September, 1759), he makes his "cheap connoisseur" exclaim, "What a pity it is that Raffaele was not acquainted with the pyramidal principle! he would then have contrived the figures in the middle to have been on higher ground, or the figures at the extremities stooping or lying; which would not only have formed the group into the shape of a pyramid, but likewise contrasted the standing figures."

growing on the theme, instead of being tied up with it in a sort of bundle. I might also refer to the countless "Muscipulas," "Felinas," "Robinettas," &c., &c., as examples of the same felicity, but in spite of their reputation few of these pictures deserve a place among Sir Joshua's best works. As a rule they are ill drawn, poor in colour, and none too happy in texture. There are exceptions, of course. The "Age of Innocence," in the National Gallery, is not only a delightful image, it is perhaps the happiest of all Sir Joshua's endeavours to get a surface "like cream or cheese." But unlike most artists Reynolds does not seem to have done his best when he worked 'for fun.' "Penelope Boothby," "Simplicity" (Offy Gwatkin the second), "Miss Crewe," "Princess Sophia Matilda," have a charm, both of thought and execution, beyond anything we find in the mementos of his unbespoken hours.

Speaking generally, Sir Joshua made the best use of his powers after he had passed his fiftieth year. Before 1774 he failed oftener than he succeeded, by which I mean that the majority of his works hint rather at unfulfilled than at fulfilled intentions. Now and again he produced a magnificent thing like the "Nelly O'Brien," but on the whole we feel he had not settled down into a secure conviction as to what he could and could not do. He was still experimental; he was still the prey of any notion thrown at him by a sympathetic rival or friend; he was still a sceptic, or rather a positive and militant disbeliever in the existence within himself or any one else of originating genius, requiring nothing but encouragement to throw off the flowers of art. His Discourses show us how his mind worked. He thought the way to produce an artistic thing was to accumulate materials from men who had gone through the same process before, and to call in taste to

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break them to a new service. Like other theorists, before and since, he committed himself to his theories before he *knew*. Certain it is that as life advanced he grew less apt to corroborate his own ideas with a thought from Venice, Bologna, or Amsterdam. Only once or twice in his whole career did he paint a picture in which no trace of any influence outside himself could be recognised, but in his final and greatest period the imported elements are completely digested. Another characteristic of these later years is the disappearance of vacillation. His work is still various, but its variety no longer suggests surrender. He leaves off ringing the changes on Rembrandt, Correggio, Titian, Salviati and Salvator. When he borrows, it is to enrich his vocabulary. He takes what he wants and leaves the rest, mingling on a single canvas some echo of Rembrandt's force with much of Correggio's grace and Titian's splendour. The result is a new homogeneity. His eclecticism has at last landed him in a style, and from 1774 to the end of his life the most malignant of his critics had to confess that he justified his use of the net.

So far I have said little on that side of Sir Joshua's art which is, after all, the cause of his great popularity. His fame, at least in this country, depends not so much on the success with which he unites the sensuous qualities of the south with the more intellectual predilections of the north, as upon his skill in suggesting the energy of English men and in recording the beauty of English women and children. As a painter of masculine personalities he has, I think, no rival. The men of Gainsborough, subtle as they are and full of latent possibilities, have less vitality, less promise of efficiency, than those of Reynolds. You will search in vain among them for a parallel to the Lord Heathfield, or the many Garricks, or the Baretti, or the portrait which Johnson vilified as "Blinking Sam," or the Sterne, or



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MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE, K.G.

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the Goldsmith, or the two Paines at Oxford. In all these and a host of others Sir Joshua was not content to paint his sitter in repose, to paint him when the powers which had made him famous were quiescent, and had to be divined. He chose the less simple task of putting the dots on the i's, and leaving nothing to chance. If the names of all his sitters had been lost, and we had inherited no clues to their identity beyond those given by his brush, we should scarcely have been in a worse position than we are now. We could have identified all the celebrities, and that not by matters implying neither skill nor insight, but by the vigour with which individual character is shown in action. Much of this depends, of course, upon the mere will to show it. No special æsthetic gift is required to hit upon such ideas as those by which Heathfield, and Johnson, and Barette, could be readily picked out of the regiment of Sir Joshua's clients. If Gainsborough, or Raeburn, or even Lawrence, had been driven to find an apposite—Reynolds would have called it an historical—conception for every man of parts among their sitters, they might have been equally successful. But Reynolds alone faced the problem ; he not only faced it, he had set it too, and the success with which he found the solution is one of his legitimate titles to fame.

As for women and children, that is another affair. To me it seems impossible to agree with those who see in Reynolds the supreme painter of female charm and of the fresh innocence of childhood. In both, to my mind, Gainsborough is by far the greater artist. His sympathy with children and women was deeper and more real than that of Reynolds. His finest portraits, the "Morning Walk," for instance, or the "Mrs. Sheridan," show an intimacy of perception, a power to build up from within, which is quite beyond his rival. And so with children. Sir

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Joshua was an amused observer of their ways. Their grace of attitude and spontaneity of movement, the curious innocence of their faces appealed to his judgment as delightful and valuable material. But he did not sympathise with them. He never realised that a child, to itself, is just as much a product of experience as a man of fifty. His point of view was essentially external. He painted a little boy or girl as he would a kitten, making them parts of a lovely scheme, and often suggesting, with curious felicity, their condition as germs of men and women. Gainsborough's children, on the other hand, are real children. They are not merely amusing animals, waiting to grow up; they are bundles of experience of a kind, and show their naïve satisfaction with things in general just like their elders. Sir Joshua was apt to make children look like imps from a different world. Compare his "Miss Bowles," for instance, at the Wallace Gallery, with the "Miss Haverfield" of Gainsborough, which hangs a few feet away. The latter is a real child, with the pride of her eight or ten years showing through the blank page of her future. Beside her the "Miss Bowles" seems a changeling, and her laugh the glee of a creature that had never seen a dog before. You can see that Gainsborough could think like a child, could feel its little triumphs, its shyness, the tragic intensity of its moods. Whereas Sir Joshua is walking round it, with his quizzing glass, observing its outside.

And as Sir Joshua painted children, so he painted women. He observed them keenly, but too judicially, storing up in his wonderful memory the carriage of their heads, the play of their limbs, even the treachery of their sudden looks. He translated their obvious qualities into terms of line and colour with consummate success, finding no more difficulty in the dignity of a Caroline Marl-



borough, or the frankness of a Georgiana Spencer, or the irresponsibility of a Diana Crosbie, than in the vivacity of an Abington, or the languor and inability to say No of a Fisher or a Baddeley. He even found a pictorial equivalent for the venality of a Nelly O'Brien. But of the deeper vision which comes of sympathy, he had little more than a trace. It would be waste of time to look through his works for something to set beside his rival's "Mrs. Hallett," the young bride taking her first walk with her husband after she had learnt the meaning of "wife," or beside the "Mrs. Sheridan," with twenty years of joy and sorrow in her face. With the mere beauty of woman he was at home, like so many other English painters. He knew exactly how to select, how to insist on this and glide gently over that, until he had transferred to his canvas the most favourable impression his sitter was able to give. There, however, his glory is part of his birthright as an English painter, and has to be shared with others both of his own time and ours.

Unfortunately, English women who have distinguished themselves by their mental gifts have not often found their way into the studios of our great painters. As a rule, I suppose, their purses have been too shallow, and the notion of painting them for love has not occurred to artists overwhelmed with commissions. It is a pity. It would have been agreeable to point to portraits of Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, Mary Somerville, Mary Anne Evans, Elizabeth Browning, and the Brontës, in the collection of National portraits, with such names as Reynolds, Lawrence, and Millais beneath them. With such sitters, Reynolds might have left us something to hang beside the "Heathfield" and the Streatham "Johnson."

The drawings left by Sir Joshua are few in number, and

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of no great excellence. They are essentially memoranda ; his drawing was nearly all done with the brush, and has disappeared under subsequent work. In the few cases in which he had recourse to a lead pencil or a pen, it was probably to preserve some idea that occurred to him when he was away from his studio. A few chalk portraits are supposed to be in existence, but in most cases their authenticity is doubtful. He never went through that drudgery of the schools which gives most painters a facility with the point they never lose ; and so in his legacy to the world we find nothing to correspond with the treasure of beautiful drawings left by his rival, Gainsborough.

CHAPTER X

SIR JOSHUA AS A WRITER AND THEORIST



THE fame of Sir Joshua's Discourses is at first sight a little difficult to understand. For a hundred years it has been the fashion to treat them as models of literature and monuments of critical profundity. Their style has been thought so much too good for their putative author, that the great shades of Burke and Johnson have been descried at Sir Joshua's elbow, controlling his expression and even suggesting his ideas. Again, their reasoning on the foundations of art has been so far accepted by those who ought to know, that they have been put, as a text-book, into the hands of some twenty generations of students. And yet Sir Joshua's style is good only through its sincerity; and his teaching sound only if meant to be superficial.

First of all, however, as little or nothing has been said about the Discourses in previous chapters, it may be as well to sketch their history. They are usually numbered from one to fifteen, and printed as if they were all of the same class, addressed to one purpose, and delivered on similar occasions. As a fact, however, two out of the fifteen are not "Discourses" at all. The earliest in date is an address delivered to the members and prospective students immediately after the Academy was founded, and

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is directed to turning their minds into the right channel so far as that institution was concerned. The ninth is a short speech, spoken on the occasion of the move from Pall Mall to Somerset House. The remaining thirteen form the real sequence of Discourses. The first four were delivered annually at the distribution of prizes, the remaining nine biennially, on those tenths of December at which gold medals were awarded. I have called them a sequence, and so, in a sense, they are. But the development of the President's ideas is often erratic, and in one, the penultimate, Discourse, he divagates into that character of Gainsborough which is, perhaps, the most interesting passage in the whole of his writings. The first ten Discourses were printed by Reynolds himself, in 1778, with a dedication to the King. The completed series was published in 1797, five years after his death, by Edmund Malone, his chief executor.

True to its belief that no man can do more than one thing well, the English public began, soon after it had the first ten Discourses at its mercy, to be sceptical as to their origin. At first it fathered them on Johnson. The story is well known, of how the Doctor, when taxed with their authorship, replied, "Sir, Reynolds would as soon require me to paint for him as to write for him." After Johnson's death, a new 'ghost' had to be found, and Burke was pitched upon. This rumour Malone thought it worth while to disprove.* In a note to his short memoir of Sir

* The copy of Malone's second edition (1798) which belonged to William Blake is in the British Museum. It contains a good many amusing and shrewd observations beyond those quoted by Mr. Gosse in his edition of the Discourses (See also Gilchrist's "Blake"). Blake has written on the title-page "This Man was Hired to Depress Art; This is the Opinion of Will Blake: my Proofs of this Opinion are given in the following notes." Among the 'proofs' are the words "Damnd (*sic*) Fool," written carefully in ink beside Sir Joshua's assertion that the



PORTRAITS OF TWO GENTLEMEN

NATIONAL GALLERY

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Joshua, he declares that among his late friend's papers he had found no kind of sign that any one had ever written any part of the Discourses except Reynolds himself. Naturally, Sir Joshua, living among wits and writers, consulted them now and then on points of style and arrangement. But that the final form, to say nothing of the matter, of his writings was not his own, deserves no sort of credence.

To us who have the advantage of a distant perspective, it seems extraordinary that any one should ascribe the eminently human, but somewhat invertebrate periods of Sir Joshua first to Johnson and afterwards to Burke. As a writer Reynolds was, of course, an amateur. He had never been drilled in the use of language, or compelled to notice how the practised writer avoids those involutions and cacophonies which spring from the unguarded expression of complex ideas. He piles relative on relative and participle on participle, until his sentences become so long drawn out that we have to read them twice to grasp their meaning. As interpreted by a good speaker, they would, no doubt, be clear enough. Vocal modulations would bring out the sense. But Reynolds, we are told, had a very bad delivery, and so it is not surprising that his colleagues paid him the compliment of a request to print his sermons! Let us take a few sentences at random. Here is the first my eye falls upon as I open Malone's edition of the painter's writings:—

“And as in the conception of this ideal picture, the mind does not

power of giving grandeur to a work of art comes not from genius but from rules! To Malone's note on the Burke rumour, Blake appends his own: “The contradictions in Reynolds's Discourses are strong presumptions that they are the work of several hands. But this is no proof that Reynolds did not write them. The man, either Painter or Philosopher, who learns or acquires all he knows from others must be full of contradictions.”

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enter into the minute peculiarities of the dress, furniture, or scene of action; so when the painter comes to represent it, he contrives those little necessary concomitant circumstances in such a manner that they shall strike the spectator no more than they did himself in his first conception of the story."

A little further on :—

"The principles by which each is attained are so contrary to each other, that they seem, in my opinion, incompatible, and as impossible to exist together, as that in the mind the most sublime ideas and the lowest sensuality should at the same time be united."*

And again :—

"These are the persons who may be said to have exhausted all the powers of florid eloquence, to debauch the young and inexperienced, and have, without doubt, been the cause of turning off the attention of the connoisseur and of the patron of art, as well as that of the painter, from those higher excellences of which the art is capable, and which ought to be required in every considerable production."†

Such sentences are without any *saisissant* quality. Our attention has to be applied to them; they do not command it. On the other hand, they have a sort of intimate humanity which prevents the application from being irksome. Of Burke and Johnson the converse may fairly be said. In spite of their brilliant technique, they are difficult to read. Their technical ingenuity and their humanity are in proportions inverse to those of Reynolds. Take this paragraph from Burke :—

"At various periods we have had tyranny in this country, more than enough. We have had rebellions with more or less justification. Some of our kings have made adulterous connections abroad, and trucked away,

* This opinion is characteristic of Reynolds. Many instances of such a combination could easily be given, but as, on his premises, it was inconceivable, he denied its existence.

† *Fourth Discourse*, Malone's edition (1798), vol. i., pp. 81, 95, and 100.

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for foreign gold, the interests and glory of their crown. But before this time, our liberty has never been corrupted. I mean that it has never been debauched from its domestic relations. To this time it has been English Liberty and English Liberty only—our love of Liberty, and our love of our country, were not distinct things ;” *

or this from Johnson :—

“ In this disastrous year (1720) of national infatuation, when more riches than Peru can boast were expected from the South Sea, when the contagion of avarice painted every mind, and even poets panted after wealth, Pope was seized with the universal passion, and ventured some of his money.” †

No ingenuity could set such paragraphs as these in Sir Joshua's prose without discovery. They are terse and well made, and betray familiarity with the resources, not to say the tricks, of the stylist. They are, in short, the product of minds very different, both in native quality and in cultivation, from the mind of Reynolds. The point is not worth elaborating further, perhaps, for I do not suppose that, in these days, any one would attempt to dispute Sir Joshua's paternity of his literary children. About it, however, hangs another consideration which has its interest. Beside Burke and Johnson, Reynolds was a bungling writer, taking a long time to say what he had to say, and showing almost complete ignorance of those contrivances by which the cunning scribe prevents the reader from knowing he is bored. And yet, a century and a quarter old as it is, his prose is strangely fresh. Its easiness is by no means inherent in the subject of which it treats, for even the art critic does not cling, voraciously, to a page of art criticism ! To put it frankly, Reynolds is neither profound in induction, nor logical in deduction, nor clear

* *Regicide Peace*, Letter IV.

† *Life of Pope* ; Matthew Arnold's edition of the *Six Chief Lives*, P. 354.

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in expression, and yet his Discourses have vitality, and successive generations of students have read them with interest, and with a pleasant sense that a real personality strove for expression in their unconvincing periods. As a rule an Englishman of good education takes more interest in poetry, and vastly more interest in politics, than he does in art. And yet I feel pretty sure that more readers work their way through the Discourses than through the best works of either Johnson or Burke.* Why is this? I believe it to depend on exactly the same instinct as that which makes us prefer the fifteenth century to the sixteenth in Italian painting.

In reading Sir Joshua, we feel that he is inside his subject, groping his way out. His guesses are often unhappy, and lead him to conclusions which are little else than absurd. But there he is, nevertheless, inside, and doing his best to understand his *milieu*, and to get a right conception of the whole matter. His methods of expression are imperfect, and leave us with the idea that his conceptions are too complicated to be rendered in such words as he can command. He who has more imagination than expressive power is more interesting to his fellow creatures than one in whom the proportions are reversed. His striving is a guarantee that he has done his best, and leaves us with a sense of something to be filled in by ourselves. With writers like Burke and Johnson it is different. Their methods are apt to be more complete, as methods, than their ideas are, as ideas. So that instead of being inside their subjects, they are outside, or even detached

* If the reader doubt this, let him go to the Reading Room of the British Museum, and send for copies of the Discourses, of the Lives of the Poets, and the pamphlet of Burke he thinks the least forgotten. He will find the Reynolds thumbed nearly to ruin, and the others as fresh as when they were published.



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MARQUESS OF CLANRIKARDE

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and a little contemptuous. The kernel of human interest seems to have shrunk away and to be rattling, dry and sapless, within the fine externals of their style. Perfect art, no doubt, demands that imagination and expression shall each rise to the same level, and that style and thought shall be so nearly one that we shall find it difficult to determine where the one leaves off and the other begins. This, however, is a consummation not often reached, and our choice lies, as a rule, between extreme sincerity with more or less halting expression, on the one hand, and less sincerity with greater fluency, on the other. Sir Joshua's Discourses belong to the former class.

Before going on to speak of Sir Joshua's æsthetic theories, I must say something about those other writings in which more literary skill is to be found than in the Discourses. I mean the two famous Dialogues. The short one, especially, in which Sir Joshua attempts to uphold his own and Garrick's importance against the Doctor, is a little masterpiece—dramatic, full of character, and light in touch. The second is nearly as well done, and more pregnant. The two endings show that Reynolds had not been so faithful to Covent Garden and Drury Lane for nothing. The first dialogue is cut off sharply, and yet exactly in the right place, by the angry Johnson; to the second he provided a peroration so vigorous that it makes an excellent "curtain" for both.

The rest of Sir Joshua's writings, whether published or not, are greatly inferior. The character of Johnson is only a rough draft; the three "Idlers" are happy neither in form nor substance; while the "Journal of his Tour in the Netherlands" is only a journal and his notes to Du Fresnoy only notes. As a writer his reputation depends on the fifteen Discourses and the two Dialogues. The superiority of the latter suggests that

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he might, had he tried, have made a reputation as a playwright.

Turning to his ideas about art, the first thing to strike us is the remarkable contradiction between his expressed opinions and his own practice. The whole drift of his Discourses is towards the promotion of those forms of art which spring from and appeal directly and solely to the reason, over those which excite emotion by the expression of more or less sensuous ideas. I do not think it is putting the matter unfairly to say that Reynolds, the theorist, did all he could to promote the belief that fine art is a question of teaching and a good memory, like spelling; while Reynolds, the painter, spent his energies in showing that all risks may be run for the sake of clothing a pictorial idea in a gorgeous envelope. You may say that these two courses are not inconsistent, and that the one may be engrafted on the other. No doubt that is true. It is even true that, in practice, Sir Joshua did attempt to combine the qualities he praised with those he derided, but he did so in such a fashion that if we judged him from his works alone, we should believe his table of precedence to be the reverse of what he himself asserted. Be Venetian, if you like, but at all events draw correctly, keep ideal forms of men, women, draperies, &c., before your minds; generalise, and do not be seduced into any kind of particularity; beware of nature, she is only to be safely looked at through the eyes of others; do not imagine you can invent, the modern substitute is imitation, and the only invention now possible is the making of some infinitesimal addition to previous inventions. That is a fair epitome of his advice to students, but he reversed it in practice. He never entirely forgot his theories about invention, natural accidents, draperies in the abstract, and

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so on, but he postponed them all to the winning of exactly those qualities of individual vision and Venetian richness against which he warned his juniors. It may seem childish, perhaps, to give instances, but one occurs to me which illustrates in a curious way his readiness to practise one thing and preach another. In that strange fourth Discourse, which brings out the opposition between eighteenth and nineteenth century ideas in such a startling fashion, he says : " To give a general air of grandeur at first view, all trifling or artful play of little lights, or an attention to a variety of tints, is to be avoided ; a quietness and simplicity must reign over the whole work ; to which a breadth of uniform and simple colour will very much contribute." Now at the very time when he was thus advising his young men, he was probably painting the " Mrs. Carnac " of the Wallace Gallery. The date of this picture is not certainly known, as no mention of it occurs in the pocket-books or ledgers. By its style, however, it belongs to the seventies, and the fourth Discourse was delivered in 1771. It is perhaps the most audacious example we can find in the whole history of art of the use of a trifling play of little lights ; for the lady's white dress, as she advances through a wood, is covered with the pattern made by the shadows of the leaves playing overhead in the sunlight. He often repeated this effect, which is about as strongly opposed to the whole spirit of his teaching as anything could be. And yet the " Mrs. Carnac " is one of his great efforts, and clearly aims at both grandeur of presence and breadth of effect.

In spite of his independence, Reynolds was not an original thinker. He accepted the ideas of his time as the foundation for his own reasoning, and seems to have felt no impulse to go behind, and test their value for himself. It is impossible to believe that the painter of the " Nelly

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O'Brien," and the "Lord Heathfield" could have felt any sincere emotion before the dry melodrama of *Salvator Rosa* or the cold futility of *Le Sueur*. But instead of confessing his indifference, he wasted his mental energies in searching after "rules" by which their hold on fashion and pretence to set a standard might be confirmed. If he had begun by telling the students that the essential part of art was neither to be learnt nor taught, and that all the academy could do was to enable young men to become such masters of their tools that those born to art could step into visible possession of their birthright, he would have done something to put his theories in their proper place.

The truth is that Sir Joshua, with all his study and introspection, never hit upon a real theory of art at all. His mind took too narrow a sweep. The notion of collating one art with another occurred to him but once, and then he made a most unhappy use of it. It never struck him that a theory of art which might fit a picture but would be absurd if applied to a teapot could not be a universal theory. He never suspected that beneath the whole body of artistic things which man had created lay a deep, solid, and universal foundation on which the beauty of them all was built. He examined phenomena, and when he had collected a certain number of these from famous works of art, he concluded they were the causes of excellence. Raffaele was great, Raffaele painted draperies in the abstract, not silks and velvets, *ergo*, abstract draperies are the cause of greatness. In all seriousness that is too often the fashion of Sir Joshua's reasoning. His objective was false and so, of course, was his way of stepping towards it. His aim was not to help the young men who hung upon his words in making the most of any artistic



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faculties with which nature had endowed them, but to teach them how to produce imitations of the Carracci, at least, if they could not manage Raffaele and Michelangelo. So far does he sometimes go in this direction that one is almost tempted to believe his teaching insincere, to suspect that he was speaking against his convictions, under the belief that it was better for students to believe that hard work could do everything, than to know the artist is not school-made, but conceived in his mother's womb.

I alluded just now to the one attempt made by Sir Joshua to carry his theories beyond the art of painting. This was in that Tenth Discourse, in which he spoke of sculpture. A more convincing proof of his inability to step outside the area of his own experience, could scarcely be given. He makes no real attempt to determine the natural æsthetic boundaries which control the modeller. He takes them as already decided by the practice of the ancients and of such moderns as he chooses to admit into their company. "Sculpture has but one style," he declares, and therefore "can only to one style of Painting have any relation." So far as this was true, and even a century ago it was but a partial truth, it was due to the survival of so many masterpieces of ancient art. With these to imitate, men were slow to explore new paths for themselves. Since the days of Reynolds they have done so, with splendid results; and it is not, perhaps, unreasonable to think that an artist of his distinction ought to have foreseen the feasibility of such a new departure. He was blinded, however, by his system. He tested art, not by its own immutable conditions, but by the forms into which accident had led it. All his theorising rests on the assumption that man had nothing more to discover, no new thoughts to express, no changed forms of civilisation to illustrate, no new beliefs to insist upon. He takes one

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form of the world's art wealth as it existed in his own day, and, instead of attempting to discover the vitalising principle which ran through it all and brought it into line with sister forms, marshals its mere external phenomena into rules to control the new generation, and prevent any future repetition of such free developments as those which make the glory of Greece and Italy.

The experience of a century has refuted Reynolds as a teacher, although as a painter it has set him on a higher pinnacle than ever. How came it that a man who could leave us so many great and delightful pages of art was so unsatisfactory as a theorist, and so discouraging to those who hold that the forms of art are capable of such expansion that all human emotions and aspirations can be expressed with their help? The contradiction is strange, but it must have its origin in some deep-seated propensity of human nature, for it is common to nearly all artists, from Leonardo downwards, who have played with the pen. The explanation seems to be that when an artist sets out to reason upon his art, he instinctively turns for guidance to those features and qualities in his own performance which have cost him thought. He passes over, as impossible to discuss, those selections and decisions which were made in obedience to predilection, which were governed by the desire to convey his own personal emotions to the people about him. They had required no labour; he had felt, not reasoned out, their necessity. That decisions so obvious could be the most important factors in his success he would be slow to believe, and slower still to assert. For by their very nature they admitted of no justification in words, and of little explanation. Let us take a concrete instance from the works of Reynolds himself. Let us suppose that he is trying to so explain the genesis of the Ladies decorating a term of Hymen, that a class of students



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might be enabled to do something of the sort themselves. Judging from his own Discourses, he would slur over or ignore the fine pattern, the sonorous tone, the quick answer of the brush to the painter's mood, on which its harmony and vivacity depend. He would draw their attention to the way in which he had contrived that the dark portions should be to the light as three to one, that the dark figure should be relieved on the light part of the background and yet should be light at the top to prevent its being too much of a silhouette. He would point out that the draperies are by no means clothes, that the vase in the corner is neither copper, brass, nor gold, but simply metal; that the term of Hymen is neither of stone nor marble, but a kind of hint at both. In short, he would insist upon the results of his thinking, and leave those of his feeling—yet art should be “simple, sensuous and passionate”—to take care of themselves. I hope all this does not strike the reader as flippant, for it is honestly based on Sir Joshua's own reasoning about the great style.

The inclination to dwell overmuch on those constituents of art which can be translated into words, Reynolds had in common with nearly all painters who have reasoned on their work at all. Artists who confess, like Millais, that paint is paint and talking talk, and that the one cannot be expressed in terms of the other, are strangely rare. At any rate Sir Joshua was not one of them. His native bent on all occasions was towards antecedent thinking, and what he had thought out he could, of course, explain. He took a curious pleasure in reducing ideas to theories. He liked to lay out his course, to know well in advance what he was going to do, and why. The majority of artists discover such explanations only when asked for them; but we feel that Sir Joshua was quite capable of putting aside an æsthetic inspiration if he could not find its verbal equivalent.

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To me, at least, it appears certain that this propensity has cost us many things of beauty, and that we have often to put up with a *succès d'estime* when, if he had allowed emotion to prevail, we should have had more Lady Crosbies, more Nelly O'Briens, and more Duchesses with their dancing babies.



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