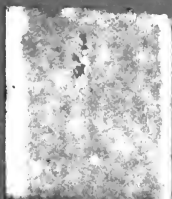


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*TENNYSON AND HIS PRE-RAPHAELITE  
ILLUSTRATORS.*

*With Lord Rosebery, I think the thesis—that life can be reduced to a Blue-Book and a Biscuit—is one which does not stand the test of time and experience.*







TENNYSON READING "MAUD," 1855.

*From the copy of the thumb-nail sketch by Rossetti, in the possession of  
Mr. William Sharp.*

~~PAINE~~  
L

# Tennyson and his Pre-Raphaelite Illustrators.

*A BOOK ABOUT A BOOK.*

BY

GEORGE SOMES LAYARD,

*Author of*

*'Life and Letters of Charles Keene, of "Punch,"' etc., etc.*

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WITH SEVERAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON: ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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1894.



To

NINA FRANCES LAYARD

'AS IN WATER FACE ANSWERETH TO FACE,  
SO THE HEART OF MAN TO MAN.'



## P R E F A C E

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*T*HIS volume contains nothing more than an inadequate tribute from a bookish person to a book of outstanding merit, and the author ventures upon its publication for the sake of indicating the methods by which a book may be made to yield discursive and innumerable delights beyond and above those which are at first apparent.

To Miss Christina Rossetti, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, Mr. Holman Hunt, Mr. William Sharp, and Messrs. Macmillan and Co. he would here take the opportunity of tendering his most grateful thanks for enabling him to present to his readers the illustrations which form this little volume's chief attraction.

Those after water-colour drawings by Mrs. Dante Gabriel Rossetti have been inserted because of the

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*peculiar interest which attaches to them, though with full recognition that they are not strictly germane to the subject in hand.*

*Oxford and Cambridge Club,  
Fall Mall, S. W.*



## CONTENTS.

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CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY - - - - -	I
II. AS TO THE ORIGIN OF THE 'P. R. B.' - - - - -	12
III. MILLAIS - - - - -	18
IV. HOLMAN HUNT - - - - -	34
V. ROSSETTI - - - - -	49



## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

**I**N 1827, as all the world knows, Tennyson's first published work appeared in the little duodecimo volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, but it is not so well known that just thirty years were to pass before the pencil of the book-illustrator was to mete out to the splendid efforts of his genius due and adequate pictorial treatment, and that it was to the enterprise of Edward Moxon that the world is indebted for one of the most enchanting volumes it has ever been privileged to possess.

Let it, however, be understood that it is of purpose that I do not say that the quarto of 1857 is among the *best illustrated* books the world has seen. It is far from being this, as will appear; but that it is among the most interesting will, I think, as surely be granted. The mere mention of the names of the artists who were called upon to collaborate in this most intrinsically valuable of all Tennysonian volumes is enough to excite the appetite of the picture-lover to the ravenous

point. This he may be sure will be no merely illusive joy, no Barmecide's feast.

First we have good solid stuff from Rossetti, Woolner, Millais and Holman Hunt. And then we have *réchauffés* from Mulready, perhaps a trifle too familiar; fricassees from Maclise, just a shade too dry, and needing a good enough digestion; kick-shaws from Creswick, just a thought too sweet; clean and wholesome *légumes* picked from Stanfield's own garden; and quite innocuous etceteras from the painter of *The Pride of the Village*, but yet in all a square-meal of quite delightful variety, such as we do not have the chance of sitting down to every day.

When we come to take our artists one by one, Woolner for a moment claims our attention, rightly included amongst the book-illustrators of Tennyson, not by virtue of the portrait of his friend by which he is here represented, but by virtue of the exquisite statue of Guinevere, which, by the poet's special request—he said of it, 'That is the stateliest figure I have ever seen'—was engraved and published in the 1888 edition of *The Idylls of the King*.

It is, however, the work of the three more prominent members of the 'P. R. B.,' as such, that gives the real emphasis to this edition, and, before proceeding to deal with their respective contributions at some length, I would ask my readers to consider carefully what Ruskin says about the attitude of mind with which the volume should be approached. 'Observe,' he says, 'respecting these woodcuts, that, if you have been in the habit of looking at much spurious work, in which sentiment, action, and style are borrowed or artificial, you will assuredly be offended at first by all genuine work which is intense in feeling.'

Genuine art, which is merely art, such as Veronese's or Titian's, may not offend you, though the chances are that you will not care about it; but genuine works of feeling, such as *Maud* or *Aurora Leigh* in poetry, or the grand pre-Raphaelite designs in painting, are sure to offend you; and if you cease to work hard, and persist in looking at vicious and false art, they will continue to offend you.' That is what Ruskin most wisely says, and, with his words in our ears, let us proceed with what is, at least to me, a delightful task. I only hope my readers will find it the same.

Here we have in a nutshell, so to speak, characteristic and typical work by three of the most interesting artistic personalities of our generation brought into closest juxtaposition, and challenging the comparison of which every picture-lover must recognise the interest and importance. In these pages we have side by side the direct, single-minded, forcible simplicity of Millais' *Mariana* and *Edward Gray* rubbing shoulders with the extremes of spirituality and sensuousness which we find in Rossetti's *Palace of Art*, with its curious sadness born of the transience of things. We have Holman Hunt's dignified, solitary *Lady of Shalott*, more than half sick of the shadows of a world seen in a glass darkly, not a touch of harshness, not a note that is not beautiful in its composition—showing that, where he distresses us, Mr. Hunt does so of malice prepense—an exquisite woman yearning for what she cannot tell, impatient of what she hardly knows, less than half conscious of the possibilities of her womanhood, which are so manifest to us who look on—we have this exquisite introduction to the mystic poem giving place to Rossetti's crowded little block—literally *factus ad*

*unguem*—which forms a fitting conclusion to the mournful dirge, the whole world of Camelot hurrying and scurrying out into the night to see a wonder, and such a wonder—the dead pale corpse of the ‘fairy Lady of Shalott.’ And it was for this that she had turned her back upon righteousness, for this that she had listened to the ‘*Tirra lirra*’ by the river, for this—to have Sir Lancelot muse a little space :

‘He said, “She has a lovely face” :  
God in His mercy lend her grace’ ;

and to be a vulgar nine days’ wonder to the ‘knights and burghers, lords and dames.’ Not for her was even the one perfect kiss for which Lancelot was himself to give ‘all other bliss and all his worldly worth.’

She had turned her back on the good, and found only hopeless Death.

Holman Hunt always speaks hope, Rossetti always hopelessness ; and it was, as will be seen, not a high sense of fitness, but the very happiest of chances, that brought about the appropriation for pictorial representation of the opening passages of the poem to the former, whilst to the latter was allotted the task of picturing the unutterable sadness of the vanity of things with nothing beyond which marks its conclusion.

And here I cannot do better than give the interesting particulars, which I have from Mr. W. M. Rossetti, of some of the circumstances under which the volume was constructed. As far as his recollection goes, the project for an illustrated edition of the ‘Poems’ was first settled in a general way between the poet and the publisher, before any details as to the artists to be invited were considered. In the choice of collaborators Moxon was mainly the moving spirit, although it is more than probable that, in

pitching upon the three pre-Raphaelites, Tennyson himself may have taken the initiative.\*

Beyond, however, suggesting their names, it would appear that there was no further action taken by him. The selection of subjects was no doubt discussed and settled between the artists and the publisher. The treatment was left to the artists themselves. The designs were never seen by the poet until in a completed state—some of them, indeed, not until they had been already cut upon the wood.

It should be mentioned that Rossetti, through his customary dilatoriness, found himself, as he imagined, left out in the cold, and complained that all the good subjects had been already appropriated when he was prepared to set to work. Indeed, when he found that Mr. Holman Hunt had chosen the *Lady of Shalott*, he said that that was the very subject upon which he had particularly set his heart. But, in addition to having made a pictorial study in illustration of the poem some years before, Mr. Hunt had already made considerable progress with the design which figures at its head in this volume, and, fortunately for the result,—for we could ill have spared this exquisite picture—could not see his way to yielding up the subject altogether. He, however, met his friend half-way by relinquishing the treatment of the latter half of the poem, whence, by a fortunate chance, we get the happy contrast which has been alluded to above.

That Rossetti was well suited, too, in his other subjects, and had no real cause to grumble, will, I think, be readily apparent when we come to the consideration of his designs in these pages.

\* Mr. Holman Hunt tells me that probably Tennyson also suggested Maclise.

Writing on the subject of this edition to me, Mr. Horsley, R.A., gives the following additional particulars: 'I well remember,' he says, 'that, at the end of 1855, or early in 1856, I had a long visit from Tennyson, who was accompanied by his publisher, Moxon, when I undertook to make the illustrations which ultimately appeared in the edition of 1857. I never saw the great poet again, but had the gratification of hearing that he had expressed much contentment with my work in illustration of his lovely themes. It was no little pleasure also for me to hear from a mutual friend of Tennyson's and my own—Arthur Coleridge—that when the latter was staying during the autumn of '91 in the Isle of Wight with the poet, and enjoying the infinite privilege of long walks and talks with him, he spoke much and most kindly of me and my work, making many inquiries respecting me. . . . I do not remember the exact way in which the subjects were assigned to the various artists, but have no doubt I named those I wished to undertake, and that there was no *clashing* with the desire of others. I am quite sure I had no correspondence with Tennyson on this point.'

And this reminds me, in passing, of the curious indifference which Tennyson seems, as far as can be judged from his poems and from the few particulars generally known of him, to have manifested towards the pictorial and plastic arts. How different, for example, is this quiet submission to the independent pictorial treatment of his literary creations, without hint or interference on his part, to the wild excitements and fevers into which Dickens used to work himself over the illustrations to his novels! Of that to Mrs. Pipchin and Paul, it will be remembered, he wrote to Forster: 'Good heaven! in the commonest





ST. AGNES' EVE.

*After an unpublished watercolour by Mrs. Dante Gabriel Rossetti.*



and most literal construction of the text, it is all wrong. . . . I can't say what pain and vexation it is to be so utterly misrepresented. I would cheerfully have given a hundred pounds to have kept this illustration out of the book.' This was but one of many such outbursts. But how far otherwise it is with Tennyson! Any objection that he did make, interesting enough in itself, was of the practically useless *ex post facto* kind. Nor was it only in the matter of illustrations to his own work that he seems to have been unconcerned and incurious, but he appears to have through life manifested a general insensibility to pictorial art which strikes one at first as something more than remarkable. The story is well known of Lord John Russell coming up to him, on his return from Italy, and asking how he had enjoyed the pictures and works of art in Florence. 'I liked them very much,' said Tennyson, 'but I was bothered because I could not get any English tobacco for love or money. A lady told me that I could smuggle some from an English ship if I heavily bribed the Custom-house officers; but I didn't do that, and came away.'

This only in passing, but it has a not unimportant bearing upon the subject with which we are dealing, as showing that Tennyson's illustrators worked absolutely independently of any counsel from their author, and were confined to their own interpretation of the poems for the inspiration they were to draw therefrom. And this consideration will be found to be of particular importance in examining and comparing the work in the 1857 edition of Rossetti, Millais and Holman Hunt—Rossetti, without question, as Mr. Ruskin says, 'the chief intellectual force in the establishment of the modern romantic school in

England,' the poet-painter, mystic, imaginative, as sensuous at one time as at another he was spiritual; Millais, the matter-of-fact, simple-minded, strong common-sensible Englishman, the Davus to Rossetti's Œdipus, no solver of riddles, but with a marvellous power of telling the truth; and Holman Hunt, the Puritan, the man to whom Christianity is 'not merely a reality, not merely the greatest of realities, but the only reality,' and consequently gives colour to everything he takes in hand. Had it been that Tennyson had in any way superintended the efforts of the artists, all would have been different. We might, indeed, have obtained a more perfect and sympathetic collaboration, but we should certainly not have got within the corners of one book so much that is instructive, so much that is stimulating and of surpassing interest. Its value does not lie in the fact that it is pre-eminently a well-ordered monument of poetico-pictorial co-operation. It is rather as a bundle of splendid incongruities that it appeals to our eclecticism. In it Millais seems to me to play Icarus to Tennyson's Dædalus, and under his personal conduct to have seen in adventurous flights glorious perspectives from altitudes to which alone he could never have attained. His sight was all his own, but his wings were of Tennyson's devising. Rossetti, for his part, has stood and seen the bold Athenian's flight. He knows that he too has pinions to soar skywards on his own account, and, following the poet's example, shoots sometimes even higher than his pioneer, and finds with some dizziness altitudes and wonders of his own. And Holman Hunt, too, fired with emulation, has essayed aërial navigation unaccompanied, and, with cooler head and calmer calculation than

the last, has seen from his own point of view the poet's panorama.

✓ Millais' illustrations in this volume are as immediately and directly inspired by the poet as Rossetti's are not. Except in one amusing instance, where the former has tried to emulate his brother 'P. R.'s,' Millais and Tennyson have gone hand-in-hand. Hunt and Rossetti have sometimes sprung ahead; sometimes, it is true, they have fallen behind. So that, judged by the ethics of book-illustrating, Millais most undoubtedly bears the palm. To put it broadly, Millais has realized, Holman Hunt has idealized, and Rossetti has sublimated, or transcendentalized, the subjects which they have respectively illustrated. The two latter have, in greater or less degree, introduced subtleties which Tennyson never dreamed of. Rossetti, indeed, has done more. He has not hesitated to *contradict* the text. ✓ Trollope, writing upon the illustrations to his novels, has said: 'An artist will frequently dislike to subordinate his ideas to those of an author.' And I think it will be evident to the student of these illustrations that Rossetti's main object has not been to 'promote the views of' the poet, but that he has unhesitatingly attempted to overpower the text, and in some cases successfully, by the brilliancy of his own imagination. ✓ This will not be surprising to those who were acquainted with the artist's temperament, and, after all, it is easy to forgive him, in view of the splendid, albeit unorthodox, achievement. Nor can it be doubted that the picture-lover pure and simple will be thrilled to the finest fibre of his nature by Rossetti's divergences, rather than by the rhythmic harmonies of Millais; but, in the opinion of the well-balanced mind, that looks for the lawful wedding of

pen and pencil, the latter unquestionably surpasses his rivals.

There is, however, one general characteristic common to the work of this great brotherhood upon which I should like to dwell for a moment, and which cannot be, in these days of scamped and hurried work, running riot under the garb of 'impressionism,' too often and too strongly insisted upon. I mean the finish, the wealth of detail, the conscientious completeness which, although one of them at least was working for his immediate bread-and-butter, and one at least was eaten up with the impatience of genius, distinguish their work.

We shall, I hope, soon have the history of the 'P. R. B.' from the pen of Mr. Holman Hunt himself. But, as he but lately said to me, new matter is always cropping up from occurrences such as the death of Woolner, which makes it necessary to remodel in one place and possible to augment in another. It has, however, as Mr. Quilter says, been already too long delayed, and, as nothing can be complete in this world, this would seem to be as good a time as a few years hence. When it does come, nothing will appear more remarkable to those who study the movement than the self-evident nature of the principles which burst upon that little band of artists in the light of a revelation. In literature the principles had already been recognised, and had taken deep root. Indeed, Jane Austen had put the protest that they were formulating into the mouth of Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*. 'I detest jargon,' she says, 'of every kind, and sometimes I have kept my feelings to myself, because I could find no language to describe them in, but was worn and hackneyed out of all sense and meaning.'

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But pictorial art, except in the case of certain noteworthy individuals, was far behind when it occurred to these young men that surely it would be better to speak to their fellows in the vernacular instead of with the pedantic altiloquence of the schools. We declare against hyperorthodoxy, they said. We take our stand upon Nature, as Luther did at Worms on God's Word. And they called themselves pre-Raphaelites, when they should have called themselves Dissidents, or by some term that the world would have understood. As it was, the world did not understand, and called them charlatans, a name which the world always applies at first to persons of any real distinction and originality.

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## CHAPTER II.

AS TO THE ORIGIN OF THE 'P. R. B.'

HERE I should like to say a word upon the inception of the movement which has been so far-reaching in its results, a word which I should have hesitated to write were it not that Mr. Quilter's account of the 'P. R. B.' has been published, whilst Mr. Hunt's is still on the stocks.

Mr. Quilter has a chapter in his charming book of *Preferences* headed, 'Ford Madox Brown: the Teacher of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Holman Hunt,' and those who read this and the chapters following will go away with the impression that to Mr. Madox Brown is unquestionably due the credit for the new direction which the 'P. R. B.' movement gave to art in the immediate future. Now I do not presume to say that Mr. Quilter is altogether wrong. Indeed, I think it will be clear to all that Mr. Madox Brown was ripe as anyone to grasp the spirit of the new impulse. But I think that the world should be reminded that there is a view of the matter which differs very materially from his, and which is based upon authority certainly as good as that which Mr.



Quilter quotes. And to that view, which has been stated to me directly, I feel it my duty to give a like prominence, as far as I am able.

Let us see for a moment what Mr. Quilter says as to the beginning of the 'P. R. B.'

'Very amusing,' he writes, 'is Brown's account of the way in which Rossetti's lessons used to be received by the pupil, and very characteristic of the behaviour of Rossetti and the matter-of-fact way in which his master treated him—setting him down to still-life groups, in which an old tobacco canister\* figured as one of the chief objects. "Rossetti was most impatient of this work. He used to clean his palette on sheets of notepaper, and leave them lying about on the floor, and they would often stick to my boots when I came in in the dark!" Here is *sans phrase*, the beginning of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood,' continues Mr. Quilter, 'and the source of the inspiration of its chief member, an impatient pupil fuming at the representation of a tobacco canister, and littering the studio with palette scrapings, which stick to his master's boots!'

Yes, the writer may well put a note of admiration at the end of such an astounding statement. Truly, to parody Boileau, '*la souris en travail enfante une montagne.*' Put plainly, what we are conjured to do is to give Mr. Madox Brown the credit for the 'P. R. B.' movement. Why? Because, if you please, Rossetti was driven away by disgust at Mr. Madox Brown's method of instruction from his studio to that of Mr. Holman Hunt. Truly, we shall be told next to sing the praises of Catherine de' Medici as the foundress

\* Mr. Hunt, in his article in the *Contemporary Review* (p. 479), says it was the 'bottles' which Rossetti dwelt upon, but that is immaterial.

of the Huguenot Society of London. If this is the method we are to go upon, we shall in good sooth have to make a clean sweep of the world's Valhalla.

Now, I quite agree with Mr. Quilter that her most gracious Majesty the Queen might just as well 'shake hands with Madox Brown as with an aged negress from South Carolina,' and have no doubt that our august Sovereign would find very great pleasure in doing so if occasion presented itself.\* I am also prepared to feel indignant because this finest of living colourists, as Rossetti called him, should be neglected and forgotten, whilst certain other artists that shall not be named roll about in their carriages and live in Queen Anne houses. Why they should not as long as they can afford to do so I am at a loss to understand. At the same time, these considerations do not make me any the more willing to give Mr. Madox Brown more credit than is his due, to the exclusion of Mr. Hunt, who seems to me to have much stronger claims upon the gratitude of those who rejoice in what has been called the English Art Renaissance. No one, I take it, will deny that Rossetti became eventually the head and brain of the movement, but equally, I think, it cannot be denied that, had it not been for Holman Hunt, the nineteenth century ran the risk of being deprived of all the influence which this most remarkable genius was to bring to bear upon pictorial art, despairing and dispirited as he was by the unsuitable tasks to which his first master had set him down.

It is quite true that Rossetti was immensely impressed by Mr. Madox Brown's Westminster frescoes, but it is equally true that he was immensely dis-

\* This was of course written before the lamented death of the eminent painter.

gusted with the methods by which his master sought to lead him on to their emulation. The fact was that mere drudgery, in which he seemed to get no forwarder, was impossible to one of his impetuous and original temperament, and, in despair, he fled to Holman Hunt and told him that he proposed to 'chuck the whole thing.' With difficulty Hunt dissuaded him from doing anything final or rash which might possibly have pledged him to the exclusive pursuit of literature, as was the case with his great namesake, to the regret, no doubt, of those who loved painting more than poetry, and at last induced him to fall in with a suggestion, original in idea, and one which commended itself to Rossetti's ambitious enthusiasm. He was to pick out one of his favourite drawings in which he could take some intelligent interest, and set to work and draw it out to scale, and space out the figures on a large canvas. He was then to work all round the figure-spaces at the still life, doing every atom of this from Nature. One item was a vine which Hunt packed him off to paint in a conservatory in the Regent's Park. Then, after a month or two of such work, when he had painted up to the outline of his figure-spaces, he was to attack them, and by the time the faces were reached he would find that his technical skill had so increased that he would be able to storm this most difficult part with some prospect of success. Rossetti enthusiastically grasped the idea, and begged hard to be allowed to share the studio which Hunt was just then starting. Hunt at first said that it was not large enough, as he proposed to put up a bed in it and sleep there. But Rossetti was importunate, and complained that he could never get on unless continuously under his friend's guidance and within

reach of his advice. Finally Hunt gave way, and in the result found him a most charming and inspiring companion. And it is not difficult to realize with what enthusiasm one of Rossetti's impressionable nature would recognise, for example, the importance of painting a face in the open air, so as to get the true goose-fleshy appearance that would be lost in the warmth of the studio. This was the beginning of the Cleveland Street time, and, I venture to affirm, was the true origin of the modern romantic school of painting.

Here, surely, we have a more likely genesis of the pre-Raphaelite idea than that which Mr. Quilter has given us. Indeed, I am inclined to think that it came nearer to being suffocated than being born in Mr. Quilter's tobacco canister. Not that I would for a moment wish to seem to support the theory that any great movement is the outcome of one original personal impulse alone, and that we can put our finger down and say this was the hour, without which it had not been. With Mr. William Sharp, on this point, I am wholly in accord, and see that Dante, for example, was 'led up to through generations of Florentine history.' On the other hand, we are bound, I think, to give the special credit to those bold spirits who have not hesitated to

'Take the current when it served,'

and have boldly faced the rocks of criticism and misrepresentation which awaited them in their uncharted course.'

Mr. Madox Brown, we all know, or ought to if we don't, has done what is called pre-Raphaelite work of the purest and most notable description; but it would surprise me to learn that the principles in-

volved in that term were adopted independently, and are not distinctly traceable to the period of his association with these young men.

So much for this divagation, which the importance and interest of the subject will, I hope, be held to justify. Now for the more immediate consideration of the 'P. R. B.'s' as illustrators of Tennyson.

### CHAPTER III.

#### MILLAIS.

OF the three pre-Raphaelites, Millais claims our first consideration, with his exquisite drawing of *Mariana in the Moated Grange*, and it is a happy chance that gives the foremost position to one who, whatever may be the limits of his original imagination, undoubtedly holds highest rank amongst the illustrators of other men's fancies. And, when we talk about illustrating, what is it exactly that we mean? We use the word in its primary sense, as Chapman does in the line:

‘Here, when the moon illustrates all the sky.’

Literally, to illustrate means to elucidate, although of course to many an illustrated book is merely tantamount to a book with pictures. We shall find that this distinction assists us in properly appreciating the difference between the work of Millais and that of Rossetti in this volume. The value of the former we shall discover is intrinsic. The value of the latter is extraneous. Millais's moon ‘illustrates’ Tennyson's sky, and belongs to it.

Rossetti adds another heaven, or perhaps, rather, another earth.

Nothing is more wonderful to me in the whole history of art-collaboration than Millais's exuberant sympathy with those men of letters with whom he has been called upon to join forces. Shoulder to shoulder he has fought with them, never overpowering their text with the splendour of his achievements, but loyally confining himself to the accomplishment of their purposes rather than his own. His instinct rarely seems to be at fault in catching the exact meaning of words; his knowledge, once he has grasped the thought how to translate it graphically, never. Every time I set myself down to look at his book-illustrations, I am the more astonished at the apparently inexhaustible depths of the knowledge of things he possesses.

It is a far cry from Anthony Trollope's novels to Alfred Tennyson's poems, and yet he handles the one as easily and unpedantically as the other. Of the former, I have had many occasions to speak. To the latter, the aim of this book confines us.

We know how some people's thoughts naturally clothe themselves in appropriate language, and we marvel how gracefully and with what propriety the beauty of form is suggested by the exquisite garment; but, still, we are conscious that at best more is concealed than divulged. As a vehicle for conveying an idea from one man's mind to another's, language is comparatively slow-paced and leisurely. It can never at a flash present a story, a character, an inspiration. It seems at times to go near doing so, but sound is a sluggard by the side of light. It is only given to the pictorial artist to impart an idea with anything approaching what we call 'the swift-

ness of thought.' And I know of no man who has a greater power of recognising, as if by inspiration, the essential pictorial requirements of an idea than the great artist of whom I am now treating. It may be true that at Sir John Millais's birth there were only twelve golden plates, and that the cross-tempered fairy was not invited. It may be that, when nearly every wonderful gift had been showered upon him by the fairy godmothers, the cross-grained old harridan came hobbling in at the last moment and deprived him of Imagination, by which all was spoiled. But if this was the case, then, I am sure, when all was sorrow and despair, it was suddenly found that the twelfth fairy had not yet made her gift, and that she came forward and said in her gentle voice: 'Although I cannot take away the evil, I can soften it. He shall have such a quick artistic sympathy that, so long as he is content to draw his inspiration from others, his lack of Imagination shall hardly be perceptible.' And it is this quick artistic sympathy, combined with extraordinary technical skill, that makes him stand out as the greatest book-illustrator we have seen. Probably, indeed, this is because of his lack of originality, rather than in spite of it.

I cannot do better than quote here what Mr. Quilter says of these Tennyson illustrations of his:

'All are delightful, all are beautiful, with truth of keen visual perception, artistic spirit and knowledge; but the imaginative quality is hardly to be found in a single instance. Yet these designs are, if we accept Ruskin's definition, the most definitely and essentially pre-Raphaelite compositions which any member of the brotherhood or sympathizer with the school has produced. They *do*



one and all present their subjects with the simplicity and reality which were the distinguishing qualities of early Italian art. Also in this presentation there is to be found nothing strained or morbid, as in Rossetti; nothing harsh or disagreeable, as was too often the case with Holman Hunt; nothing bizarre or awkward, as occurs in several of Madox Brown's pictures. They have Ruskin's idea of pre-Raphaelitism, but no mannerisms derived from the study of mediæval art, and are clearly unaffectedly modern; failing no whit in truth, they fail as little in beauty. It was my good-fortune when quite a lad to stay in a house where on the drawing-room table (as was the custom in those days) there lay some large gift-books, and amongst them a folio volume entitled *The Cornhill Gallery*, which contained careful reprints of these drawings, and I think it was to this fact that I owed the sympathy and admiration I have ever since felt for Millais's genius, and for that view of art which was inculcated by him; a view in which pictorial beauty appeared to be considered in terms of truth and simplicity, to depend ultimately on its correspondence with facts of nature and life, and to be absolutely superior in the attainment of these objects to any possible short-coming in the character of its subject-matter, or to almost any breach of the conventional rules of art.

'How it is that, with all our talk about art—some of which must be sincere—no one cares to-day to think about this grand collection of drawings, or hold them up as models for our young painters, is to me inexplicable. From the point of view of craftsmanship alone the work is a model of excellence, both Rossetti's and Millais's pen and pencil work

being even in their youth entirely admirable, and beyond all comparison superior to any of which we can boast in England to-day.'

So writes Mr. Quilter, and I think all who have studied the art of book-illustrating will have come to the conclusion that Millais's consummate technique is only equalled by his consummate understanding. Nor is this extraordinary capacity of assimilation only evident where his collaborator is of a subtler imagination than his own. As we find him elevated here by association with the poet into the empyrean of Tennyson's genius, so we find him dragged down by the ugly purport of Miss Martineau's novels, with which he was oppressed in the last days of his connection with *Once a Week*.\*

Mr. Holman Hunt has himself said to me that both he and Rossetti in the days of the 'P. R. B.' congratulated themselves that their clever brother had found himself, and it was not till long after, when each had gone his own way, that they were able to realize that he had been feeding upon the fancies which surged around him.

Chameleon-like, Millais is able to draw his colour from his immediate surroundings, and with such an absolute mastery that not only do we assent to him as relevant, but he compels our belief in him as component and essential.

It may be too much to declare that the best of these pen-and-ink drawings kiss these poems into a fuller and completer life, as Carlyle said Browning's love did for Elizabeth Barrett; but at least we may say that, once we have seen them together, we cannot bear to think of them divorced.

\* Vide my article in *Good Words* for August, 1893, on Millais and *Once a Week*.



LADY CLARE.

*After an unpublished watercolour by Mrs. Dante Gabriel Rossetti.*



And here I should like to say a few words as to the methods by which the drawings in this book have been reproduced. As I have pointed out elsewhere, it was only at the beginning of the decade in which the quarto Tennyson was published that wood-engraving was recognised as a fitting means for the multiplication of designs in facsimile; that is, as nearly as possible as they left the hands of the artist. In the history of wood-engraving the publication of *Once a Week* marks the inauguration of this all-important era. Up to the point of time when it was started, with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. George Thomas's work in the *Illustrated London News*, the xylographer's was the only hand which was recognisable upon the wood-block. All that was to be recognised of the artist was the composition and invention. There was not necessarily a line in the reproduction that corresponded to his pen-and-ink drawing. So we see in many illustrated books of the period the name of the engraver upon the title-page, with no mention of the designer. Nor did the former give up his position of honour without a struggle. Up till now he had got most, if not all, credit for the result, poor as it almost invariably was; but in the end Millais, Fred Walker, and their colleagues came off victorious, and insisted upon drawing directly upon the block and having every line faithfully left as they had drawn it. And this was first recognised as an almost invariable rule in the pages of *Once a Week*. True, it has not proved an unmixed blessing. The result is that whereas, up to the middle of the century, drawings were chiefly done on paper and translated by the wood-engraver in his own way on to the block, from the moment when artists them-

selves began to draw on the block the drawings, as such, were cut away and destroyed for ever. In the former period, therefore, the original work still exists on paper, but in the latter it is irrevocably lost. However, in 1872, a method discovered a few years previously was for the first time put systematically into practice, by which a drawing on paper could be photographed on to the block. Hence wood-engraving is not now of necessity the destructive process that it formerly was.

Thus we see that the impressions from the wood-blocks in *Once a Week* are as nearly reproductions in facsimile as the wood-engraver and the printer were able to make them, and Mr. Pennell is wrong in his book on Pen-Drawing and Pen-Draughtsmen when he says of them: 'We have neither the drawings nor their facsimile reproductions, but a translation according to the wood-engraver.' This emphatically does not apply to the work in *Once a Week*, however true it may be, and is, of xylography before that period. It must of course be remembered that, in his delightful book, Mr. Pennell is holding a brief for modern mechanical processes, and is thus tempted to protest too much. There is much to say, no doubt, in favour of these new developments, but nothing will convince me that the best style of wood-engraving of a drawing best adapted to that method will not hold its own against the best process-plate in the world.

Who, indeed, that has ever studied Bewick's exquisite wood-blocks regrets that the pen-and-ink drawings were not made on paper and reproduced by process? We are always knocking our heads against metaphors, to the damage of both. Indeed, I am free to confess I have knocked mine in the past against

this very same analogy, but I here deny that facsimile wood-engraving is a translation into another language. I say, on the contrary, it is but a repetition of the same words in a different voice. True, the voice has a less delicate tone, but every word and every sentence is there and distinguishable.

Let us take the first drawing by Millais in *Once a Week*, vol. i., p. 11, to Tom Taylor's poem, *Magenta*. Dalziel is the engraver, and a terribly difficult block it must have been to cut. Can anyone say that there is more here of the hand of the xylographer than of the artist? I know that it is not a perfect piece of work. Who can expect such elaborate operations to be perfect in the hurry of a weekly publication? But this I do say, that there is an effect of the light airiness of muslin skirt in the dusk which shows the master-hand at work, and is as surely the artist's as the type of the poem which it illustrates is *not* the handwriting of Tom Taylor. Far be it from me to say that the reproduction is equal to the original pen-and-ink drawing. No one who has seen the master's original work would dare to say this. But that it is a satisfactory popularization of it, at which there need be no carping, I confidently assert. So I wrote in *Good Words*, and so I maintain still.

Coleridge has said 'Imitation is the mesothesis of Likeness and Difference. The difference is as essential to it as the likeness; for without the difference it would be Copy or Facsimile.' So we may say wood-engraving (old style) is the mesothesis of the original drawing of the artist and the engraver's untrammelled treatment of the subject. The engraver's treatment is as essential to it as the original drawing of the artist, for without the

engraver's treatment it would be a Copy or Facsimile. Under the new system the engraver's treatment vanished, and he became to all intents and purposes a Copyist.

In the quarto Tennyson we find the engraver acting in both capacities. In the *Mariana* of Millais, for example, the Dalziel Brothers are Facsimilists. In the *Morte d'Arthur* of Maclise, on p. 199, the same engravers are Imitators, and who, comparing the two, can doubt for a moment which is the most successful, notwithstanding such a protest as that which has been raised by Mr. W. J. Linton in his splendid work on wood-engraving? We can, of course, all sympathize with one who finds himself amongst the last of the great engravers who looked, and rightly looked, upon xylography as a great original art, and, when opportunity offered, prosecuted it as such; but at the same time it must, I think, be confessed that wood-engraving has done more for art as its handmaid than as its mistress.

It is a terrible thing to realize that many of the exquisite drawings in this volume were drawn straight on to the wood, and that no photographic copy was kept. For, however skilled the hand of the engraver, their counterparts were bound to prove more or less faulty.

In some cases, happily, we shall find that the drawings were first made on paper, and then redrawn on the block, often with slight alterations, and in one instance at least a sun-picture was taken of the drawing on the wood before it was cut away by the burin. It cannot but be a source of regret that all the artists did not see the necessity of at least calling in the cheap aid of photography for this purpose; but probably they looked upon this work



as only sublimated pot-boiling, and little realized of what surpassing interest it would be to another generation.

Messrs. Macmillan and Co. are republishing the quarto Tennyson, of which they now hold the copyright, and it is a matter, I think, for regret, that in doing so they do not see their way to have some of the designs re-engraved.

Mr. Ruskin, writing of them in an appendix to the *Elements of Drawing*, says: 'An edition of Tennyson, lately published, contains woodcuts from drawings by Rossetti and other pre-Raphaelite masters. They are terribly spoiled in the cutting, and generally the best part, the expression of feature, *entirely* lost. This is specially the case in the St. Cecily, Rossetti's first illustration to *The Palace of Art*, which would have been the best in the book had it been well engraved . . . still, they are full of instruction, and cannot be studied too closely.'

I could have wished that Messrs. Macmillan had laid this well to heart, and if they could have omitted a few of the less successful non-pre-Raphaelite designs, the loss would not have been severely felt, and the gain in balance would have been more than considerable. Would that we could have had for these drawings such an engraver as Holbein had for *The Dance of Death*, or such a master as Kretzschmar, without whom the public would have little idea of the glory of Menzel's pen-work.

Now, it is not my purpose here to discuss these illustrations one by one and in methodical order. What I want rather to do is to bring my readers generally into touch with them, to demonstrate the relative position and attitude of each artist to the

poet, and thus to bring them to enjoy the combination of the two arts in an intelligent and discriminating manner.

Of Millais's drawings especially it would be superfluous to do much more than generalize, since, as has been shown above, he is in the truest sense an illustrator, and text and woodcut should be studied together. It would be no good for me to point out the beauties of Millais's *Mariana*, for, if I may be allowed to invert the order of things, Tennyson's poem may be said to be a better commentary upon it than that which anybody else could ever write; and so it is with almost all his drawings, whether it be the extraordinarily successful *St. Agnes' Eve*, or the perhaps even more convincing *Edward Grey* and *Emma Morland*. It would be easy enough to go into rhapsodies over them, but I shall leave my reader to do so much on his own account; and it would be still easier to make such remarks as that to which Mr. Ruskin gave vent in criticising another treatment of the Mariana subject which Millais had painted in 1851. 'This picture,' he wrote many years later, 'has always been a precious memory to me; but if the painter had painted Mariana at work in an unmoated grange, instead of idle in a moated one, it had been more to the purpose.' Such ethical observations would however, I am inclined to think, be hardly acceptable, and somewhat beside the mark.

It would no doubt have been delightfully funny if we could have had Tennyson's poems embellished with woodcuts representing Tennyson's ideas as they ought to have been, rather than as they were; but such treatment would hardly have met with the wishes of those who demanded an illustrated edition of the poems.

And here I must pause a moment to point out an exception to the rule of Millais's complete knowledge. In *Mariana*, Tennyson writes :

‘Hard by a poplar shook alway,  
All silver-green with gnarled bark :  
For leagues no other tree did mark  
The level waste, the rounding gray.’

Now, if there is one poplar to which this description does not apply, it is assuredly the Lombardy variety. Tennyson undoubtedly had in his mind the white or abele poplar, of which Cowper wrote :

‘The poplar that with silver lines his leaf,’

which is certainly inapplicable to the tall, straight, spire-like species which waves outside the window in Millais's drawing. Leigh Hunt emphasizes the peculiarity of the Lombardy poplar, which differs in the plume-like sweep of *its whole form* from other trees which wave their *branches*, in the lines :

‘The poplar's shoot,  
Which, like a feather, waves *from head to foot*.’

But to proceed—Mr. Theodore Watts has pointed out how Tennyson's ‘artistic instinct was so true and sure that, in his narratives, he is as careful as Homer, as careful as Chaucer, never to let the movement of the reader's imagination be arrested by the unnecessary obtrusion of landscape, however beautiful.’ Now, I want for an instant to demonstrate, how one is always finding that any fundamental characteristic of Tennyson's poems, such as this, will be as surely discovered in Sir John Millais's illustrations to them, from which we recognise that they are not merely the result of a consummate technique in superficial contact, but are the outcome of a profound and sympathetic insight. Look for a

moment again at the *St. Agnes' Eve*, on p. 309. Read the exquisite poem, and then let the exquisite picture sink into your mind. Each is most perfect as each is the last dwelt upon. The chaste severity,



ST. AGNES' EVE.

(By kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co.)

the subdued and lofty passion, are absolutely co-extensive. The poem, like some perfect plant, connotes a flower, and suddenly under the artist's hands it bursts forth into its necessary blossom,

fragrant with a mental odour at once subtle and refined.

The poem of *St. Agnes* was first published in the *Keepsake* for 1837, and here in 1857, just twenty years later, it found its true pictorial counterpart in simple black and white, a so-to-speak journeyman drawing, printed from a wood-block a few inches square, and more significant than the largest canvas that has ever been painted on the subject. The poem's picturesqueness of description is such that it is surprising to find that it should not have commanded an illustration on its first appearance in *Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley's* illustrated annual.

Before leaving Millais, as a Tennyson illustrator, I should like to say one word as to the illustration to *The Sisters* on p. 109, that superb and much-discussed pictorial representation of the mournful and ever-varying refrain: 'The wind is blowing, howling, roaring, raging, raving, in turret and tree.' The no less than marvellous sympathy with which the troubled atmosphere of the poem has been caught by the artist is worthy of Charlotte Brontë's splendid 'failure,' as Swinburne calls it, which 'nothing can beat, no one can match,' where 'The moon reigns glorious, glad of the gale; as glad as if she gave herself to its fierce caress with love.'

Like it, this picture seems to me 'the first and last, absolute and sufficient and triumphant word' (in the language of black and white) 'ever to be said on the subject.' A writer in the *Contemporary Review* gives this as an example of Millais's originality, as opposed to his translatory capacity, and then contradicts himself by saying that 'Tennyson's by-thought of the storm breaking in on the old murderess's confession is observed and grandly worked out.'

I have remarked elsewhere that we are always knocking our heads against metaphors, to the damage of both, and as I have denied that it is misleading to say that facsimile wood-engraving is a translation of a pen-and-ink drawing into another language, so I assert that it is misleading to deny that this woodcut is a translation of Tennyson's poem by Millais into another language. I maintain that in this drawing we have a perfect pictorial representation of the idea which the poet's words convey, and that the artist's production neither adds to nor detracts from but illuminates it—in other words, makes it possible for our physical eyes to read in their own language what before was only known to us in language of the lips.

It is instructive to learn that Millais was especially pleased with his Cleopatra at the beginning of *A Dream of Fair Women*, p. 149, and maintained to Hunt and Rossetti that it was a highly imaginative piece of work, hinting that it was quite on a level in this respect with their contributions to the volume. But when we come to look at it, we find how strangely bad a judge a man is of his own productions. If there is one of Millais's drawings that verges on failure, surely this it is, not only in that it is devoid of all imaginative qualities, but because it is only a swarthy woman pointing at her swarthy bosom, instead of being the queen who made

‘The ever-shifting currents of the blood  
According to her humour ebb and flow’;

the woman at whose nod

‘The Nilus would have risen before his time’;

the woman with the piercing orbs which

‘Drew into two burning rings  
All beams of Love, melting the mighty hearts  
Of captains and of kings.’

No, if we want to know how Antony’s mistress was capable of treatment, let us take down an old volume of the *Cornhill Magazine* and mark how Frederick Sandys has portrayed for us the woman of ‘the low, large lids.’ But that was Swinburne and Sandys. This is Tennyson and Millais.

## CHAPTER IV.

H O L M A N   H U N T .

**H**OLMAN HUNT next, of the pre-Raphaelites, claims our attention, but before dealing with him directly, I want to say a word as to the proper relation of book illustrations to the type with which they are incorporated, a matter which suggests itself in the contemplation of his contributions to the volume under notice.

Everyone who has taken the trouble to think about the subject is aware that the eye has a range of vision varying according to the distance at which it happens to be situated from what we may call its plane of observation. In other words, that, with the head held steadfast, the eyes have quite definitely limited regions over which they can wander, greater or less according to the remoteness or propinquity of the ultimate background.

To take a convenient example. Hold this book touching your nose, and you will see nothing but a few inches of paper ; hold it at arm's length in your library, and you will see not only the whole of the book itself, but also objects on the wall all round it for the space of several square yards ; stick it up on the top of your chimney-stack, with the blue sky as



a background, and you will see, or rather would see, if your vision were penetrating enough, the best part of half creation, running to innumerable millions of square miles.

Now, just as it is with general objects, so it is with the type in which words are printed. The extent of the plane of observation varies according to the distance at which any given fount of type can be easily read. Hence it is evident that the clearer, which practically means the larger, the type is, the longer is the line of print that can be read with the head held rigid, and only the eyeballs allowed to move from side to side. It is for this reason that a well-printed book should have larger type, if the lines are printed from margin to margin, than if the pages are double-columned. Suppose for a moment that the type which is suitable to a two-inch line be extended to a line of four inches, we shall find that either the head will have to come to the assistance of the eyeballs, and librate on the neck, wagging from side to side, as do the heads of spectators at a tennis match, as they watch the ball fly to and fro across the net, or else the hand will have to do its part, and draw the volume see-saw across the face. Think for a moment of the agony of perusing a legal script engrossed on parchment a foot or two broad, and you will realize what I mean. Not that I would undervalue the muscles of the neck, which give our heads a limited pivot movement, nor do I undervalue the muscles of the legs and thighs; but that is no reason why we should print our type all round a column or inside a hollow cylinder, so as to bring into play bodily movements which are wholly unnecessary. Indeed, I am inclined to

think that the modern impressionist school will almost find some fault with me for going so far as to allow the use of the muscles of the eyes even, for it seems to me that they have developed in themselves a basilisk gaze, with which they can only see one central point quite clearly.

But I digress. To proceed, it is, I think, quite evident, from what has been said above, that every fount of type connotes a certain proper length of line, which can be computed to a nicety, and is dependent upon the distance at which it can be most easily read by a person of good average sight.

Thus, then, can be readily understood the relationship that should exist between the page and the type used on it. So far so good; but now we come to a further principle, which I fear is borne in mind by few if any of what we may call the architects of books. Mr. Hamerton in *The Graphic Arts* tells us much that is of interest about the harmony, the artistic qualities, and the excellent family likeness to be found in the letters of the best-designed alphabets. But I doubt whether even he, with his ready eye for accord and conformity, has ever gone so far as to consider the proper correlation of type and typo-blocks. What I am about to maintain is this—that, as every fount of type connotes its proper linear length, so every fount also connotes a certain proper quality in the woodcut or process-block which is incorporated with it. And let it be understood that here I am talking primarily of the blocks, wood or otherwise, which are used to illustrate the text, and are printed at one and the same moment as the type itself. In the case of full-page illustrations the matter is not of such importance.

What, then, is the proper tie by which type and

block should be joined together? We have realized above that the length of a line of type depends upon the distance at which that type can be most clearly read. In the same way, there is in every picture an inherent quality that requires an eye which is of good average power to be at a certain distance from it. If the eye is too near or too far off, the effect will be ill-defined, confused and blurred. From which it is evident that, where we have letterpress and picture on the same page, we should have the former, as the more adaptable, so chosen that each shall be most clearly visible from one and the same point. In other words, that it should be no more necessary to move the page nearer to or further from the eye, as we wish to glance from illustration to letterpress, than it should be to turn the head or move a book from side to side in reading.

It is clear that Rossetti himself had some such idea when he wrote, in reply to a proposal that an inscription should be added upon the frame of his *Sibylla Palmifera*, 'An inscription is much more difficult to do properly than a picture. If it is a bit too large or too black, the picture goes to the devil; and if you have not some one to do it who has an elective affinity for commas and pauses, I will ask you to spare my poor sonnet.'

Let us see if we cannot find in this quarto Tennyson with which we are dealing, examples in this respect of well-constructed and ill-constructed pages. And that we are the more likely to do so in a book illustrated by various hands, than in one illustrated throughout by one and the same, is, I think, sufficiently obvious to justify the bare statement. The want of balance in such a case is of course almost inevitable.

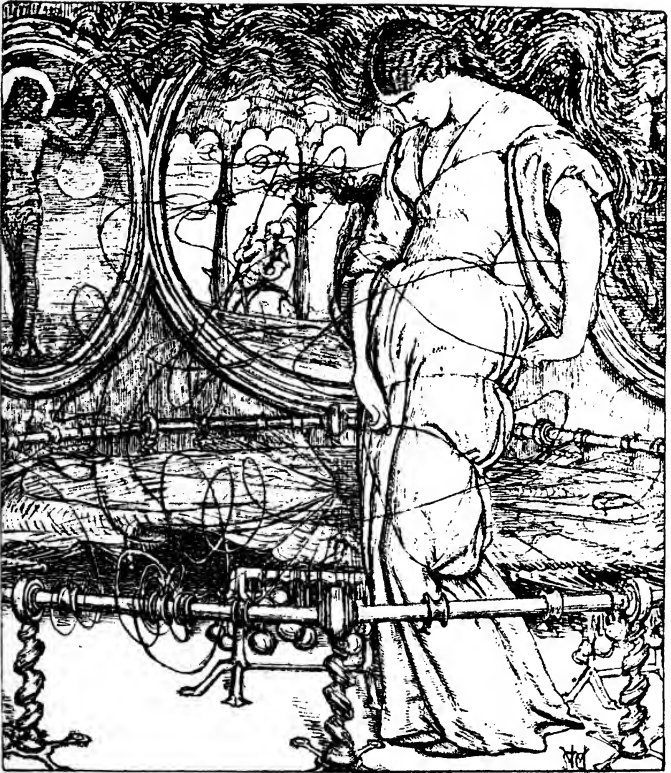
This, then, brings us back to the consideration of the part which Mr. Holman Hunt plays in the illustrating of this book. Turn as we will to his designs, we find that the type here used harmonizes almost invariably with them, whereas it is far from doing so with the majority of the others. Take for example *The Lady of Shalott* on p. 67, where

‘Out flew the web and floated wide,  
The mirror cracked from side to side,’

and then turn from it to the tailpiece by Rossetti on p. 75, and you will see what I mean. After reading the last verse of the poem, you will find that, to get a clear view of Lancelot musing on her lovely face, the book must be drawn some six inches nearer to your eyes. Indeed, you will find that this want of harmony—of course, not in any way to be laid at the door of the artist—is almost as invariable where Rossetti’s is the pencil employed, as it is the reverse where it is Holman Hunt’s.

It will, of course, be objected by the practical person that such considerations are frivolous, that none but an intellectual sybarite could demand such an undoubling of rose-leaves, and that only a *Ripaille* publisher could be expected to take such matters into consideration; but I confess to being one of those who love perfection just because it is unattainable, and who find greater satisfaction in the assurance that the proposition, that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, has never been proved, and never can be proved, than in all the finality of Euclid’s Q.E.D’s.

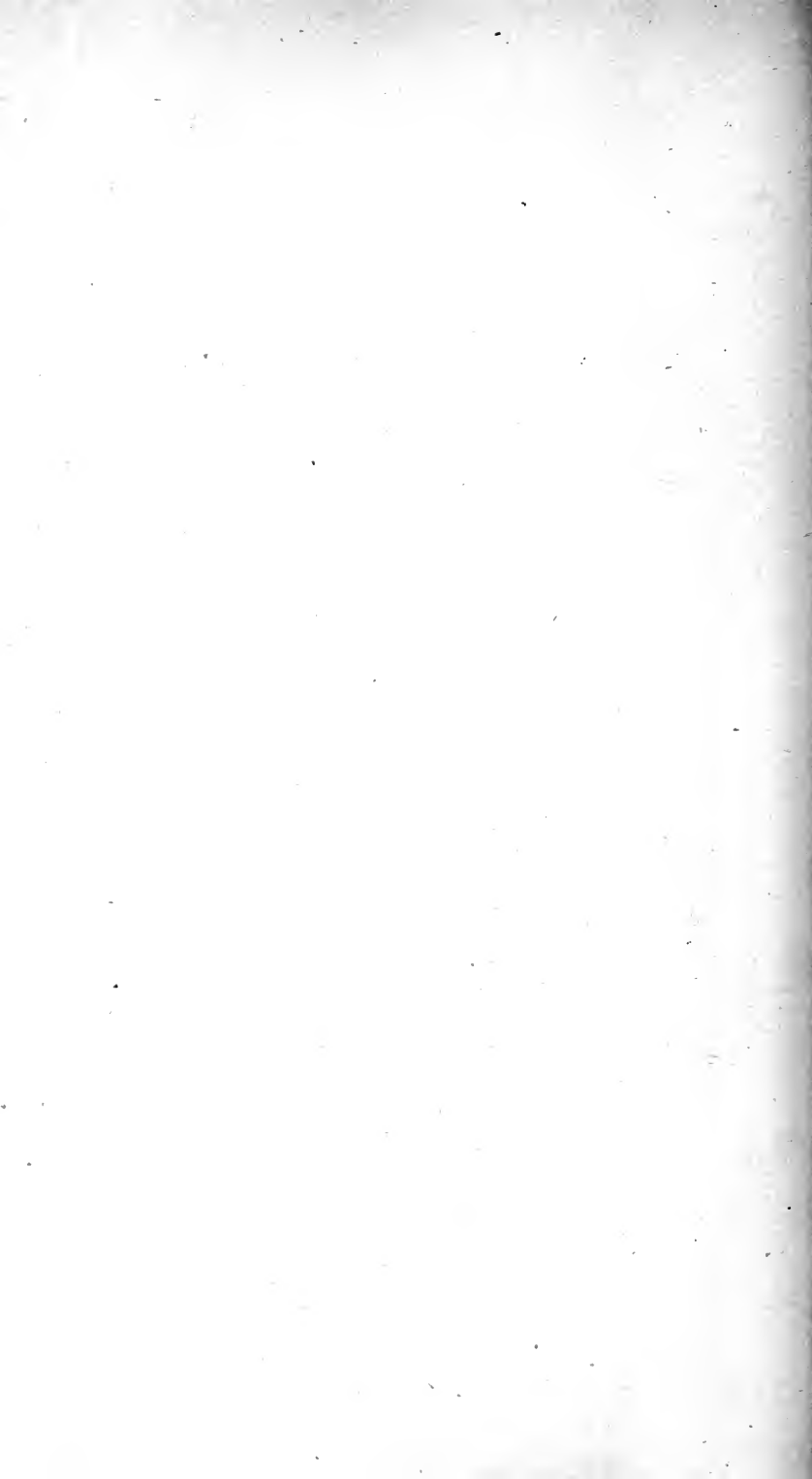
It is very tempting to go farther and point out that the length of every picture connotes its breadth, and *vice versâ*, since the eyes, placed as they are side



*From W. Holman Hunt to his good Wife Edith Marion. 1881*

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

*From the drawing as it appeared on the woodblock before cutting.*



by side, command a larger field laterally than they do vertically. Mr. Jacomb Hood tells me that to these very considerations we owe the undeviating proportions of Mr. Brett's pictures, which have long been painted on canvases cut according to a hard and fast scale.

So much, then, for the general harmony of type with illustration, as they apply to Holman Hunt's designs in the quarto. In dealing with these specifically, I do not intend to describe each, but shall confine myself to those about which I have information that seems to be of general interest.

*The Lady of Shalott* having already been mentioned more than once, I shall conclude such remarks as I have to make upon it first.

Some years before the publisher, Moxon, projected this volume, Holman Hunt, as I have said, had made a pictorial study in illustration of this poem.\* It differed from that which finally appeared in the quarto, particularly in respect of the 'shadows of the world'

'Moving through a mirror clear,  
That hangs before her all the year.'

In this first conception of the poem, he had sacrificed fidelity to the original for the sake of making the design more comprehensive, and had drawn a series of small mirrors round the large one, in which the successive magic sights of Camelot were by an artistic license made to appear simultaneously.

Now, it will be clear to everyone, I think, that this would inevitably result in a weakening of the motive of the poem, and was really an unwarrant-

\* Further interesting particulars of this design may be found in Mr. Hunt's articles on 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood,' published in vol. xlix. of the *Contemporary Review*.

able liberty to take. The feeling that it was the successiveness of the sights, and of the persons who went by 'to tower'd Camelot,' that proved too much temptation for the Lady, is an essential element in the poem that would necessarily thereby be sacrificed. The sense of a gradual weakening of the will by, first, the lovely reflection of the river-eddy, then of the surly village churls, then the red cloaks of the market girls, then the troop of damsels glad, then the abbot on his ambling pad, then the curly shepherd lad, and the long-haired page in crimson clad, then the knights riding two and two, until there comes the crowning fascination of all, Sir Lancelot with the brazen greaves, when at last the unholy desire to look down to Camelot could be restrained no longer, must be lessened by any such collocation of the passing shadows. It was therefore with a true sense of artistic fitness that this mode of treatment was subsequently abandoned.

Now, it is one thing for an illustrator to come into direct collision with his author. This, I take it, is absolutely contrary to all the ethics of collaboration. It is quite another thing for the artist to import into his work particulars that have been ignored in, but are not inconsistent, with the author's production. Indeed, when we consider the matter closely, it is inevitable throughout that this should be the case. To take an obvious example, Tennyson does not even mention the Lady of Shalott's hair; but that would hardly preclude Mr. Hunt from representing her other than bald. Nor will anyone find fault with the artist for going so far as to render her tresses becomingly crimped. Indeed, it is one of his principal duties to decide what additional particulars



are necessary to a satisfactory pictorial representation of the literary subject, and may be made without interfering with the literary motive.

'My dear Hunt,' said Tennyson, when he first saw this illustration, 'I never said that the young woman's hair was flying all over the shop.'

'No,' said Hunt; 'but you never said it wasn't,' and after a little the poet came to be wholly reconciled to it.

Not so easily did he allow himself to be pacified, however, when he saw the long flight of steps which King Cophetua descends to meet and greet the Beggar Maid, on p. 359.

'I never said,' he complained, 'that there were a lot of steps; I only meant one or two.'

'But,' said Hunt, 'the old ballad says there was a flight of them.'

'I dare say it does,' remonstrated Tennyson; 'but I never said I got it from the old ballad.'

'Well, but,' retorted Hunt, 'the flight of steps doesn't contradict your account; you merely say: "In robe and crown the king stepped down."'

But Tennyson would not be appeased, and kept on declaring that he never meant more than two steps at the outside.

Whilst, however, to return to *The Lady of Shalott*, Tennyson was finding fault with the dishevelled appearance of the Lady's hair, it is curious that he should not have remarked upon a far more patent interpolation on the part of the artist. Whether or not it will be admitted that it was legitimate for Holman Hunt in his capacity of book-illustrator to present the Saviour of mankind nailed to the cross on one side of the fatal mirror, when there is no hint of any specific creed throughout the poem, will

probably depend upon the individual interpretation of the critic. Tennyson's poems have been appropriated by many schools and many religions. So Holman Hunt naturally found in the fundamental truth of this ballad what was to him, as Ruskin says, not 'merely a Reality, not merely the greatest of Realities, but the only Reality;' and he ear-marked the poet's meaning accordingly.

Not long ago, in a board school, a boy was asked, was his father a Christian, a Jew, or a Catholic. The lad said he was none of these, but was a lamplighter. I am inclined to think that this was about what Tennyson was; but Holman Hunt came along and labelled him a Christian one. Rossetti labelled him otherwise. And what else could be expected? Hunt never forgot that the human body masked an immortal soul. Rossetti rarely remembered, if indeed he believed, that the soul is undying. Hunt has faith, and perceives everything with an eye on the future. Rossetti is only really conscious of the present and the past.

Mr. Hamerton, writing in 1862 of 'word-painting and colour-painting,' says of Tennyson, he 'seems to me to understand the limitations of word-painting better than any other man. There is not the slightest straining after unattainable fidelities in any of his descriptions. They go no farther than the limits of the art allow; and they are always exquisite as far as they go. This is the highest praise that can be given to any artist, because it implies his perfect conception of the boundaries of his art, and his mastery over all that lies within those boundaries.' These words apply alike to illustrator and poet, and it appears to me open to question whether Mr. Hunt has not, in this particular instance, in

some measure failed to appreciate the strictest limitations set by the ethics of book-illustrating. When, however, so much is said, all is said, for, in the great canvas upon which Mr. Hunt has been for some time engaged, which I have been privileged to see in its unfinished state, and which is an enlargement of this design, there is evidence that the artist has come to a like conclusion, for I find the panel in which the Christ appeared is now occupied by a wholly different subject. When I saw this canvas in April, the figure of the Lady was nude, and I could not but tell the artist that it seemed to me almost sacrilege to drape so fair and exquisite a conception, which taught the lesson at one flash that modesty has no need of a cloak. This lovely figure bore no evidence 'of having been servilely copied from a stripped model, who had been distorted by the *modiste's* art.' It did not suggest unclottedness, for the simple reason that it gave no impression that it knew the meaning of clothes at all.

I must not forget, whilst on the subject of *The Lady of Shalott* design, to notice that of it Mr. Quilter writes:\* 'Look . . . at the drawing by Mr. Holman Hunt in illustration of *The Lady of Shalott*. Why, this is a Rossetti in all its main points. Face and figure, and arrangement of drapery and pose, all are due to the influence of the last-mentioned painter.' That there is some truth in this, as there is some truth in most of what Mr. Quilter writes, will, I think, be admitted; but no one can read his history of the pre-Raphaelite movement without being struck by the scant justice done to Mr. Holman Hunt throughout. Mr. Hunt does not need, and certainly has never sought, my poor advocacy. At

\* 'Preferences in Art, Life, and Literature,' p. 82.

the same time it would, I think, be improper not to point out that Mr. Quilter seems all through pre-possessed in favour of Madox Brown and Rossetti, and not to realize that the strength of pre-Raphaelitism lay rather in the various great qualities of several individuals, than in the extraordinary personal influence of one or other of their number.

Admitted that in this picture there are Rossetti-like points, is not the drawing all Hunt's, is not the super-sensuousness all his, is not the spiritual exaltation as un-Rossetti-like as Rossetti's own *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*? Look at the firm bones beneath the skin, look at the firm flesh beneath the dress, and say if these are more characteristic of Rossetti than Hunt. Surely we have only to consider the drawings of the two men in this volume to recognise the strong idiocratic qualities of each. And as if to accentuate this cavalier treatment of the great artist who is still with us, we find, for example, on the same page of Mr. Quilter's book from which we have just quoted, so grudging an acknowledgment as the following, still further cheapened by being thrown into a footnote: 'I am bound to add (the italics are mine)—*I am bound to add* that Holman Hunt's influence is also strongly perceptible in some of Millais's work.' If this influence is so strongly perceptible, in the name of common justice, why was all mention of it relegated to the obscurity of an addendum, whilst Rossetti's influence flames out in italics on the mid page?

At the time Hunt was asked to collaborate in the production of the Tennyson quarto, he was in the Holy Land, and was no doubt prevailed upon by the

fact that he had expended all available moneys on his journeys, to undertake work which was not what, under other and brighter circumstances, he would have chosen. He had painted pictures there which he could not sell, and it was necessary to get bread-and-butter where the opportunity presented itself. Let those who have never realized the straits to which he and his associates were driven, turn to the pages of the *Contemporary Review*, in which Mr. Hunt has told us something of them. However, we could ill have spared these illustrations, and the ill wind that forced Hunt to what he considered pot-boiling, blew an undying advantage to the lovers of Tennyson's poetry.

It was, of course, from studies made in Palestine, where, as has been said, Hunt was at the time of receiving the commission, that we get the local colour in the designs done in the quarto for the poem *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*.

There are in this volume at least three portraits which lend it extrinsic interest. The first is in the illustration to the exquisite ballad on p. 51, in which (*i. e.*, in the picture, not in the poem) Oriana ties her kerchief round the wings of her lover's helmet, whilst he strings his bow for luck against her foot—that bow which, before it is again unstrung, shall wing the 'false false arrow,' the 'damned arrow,' and pierce 'thy heart, my life, my love, my bride,' aimed though it was against the 'foeman tall, atween me and the castle wall.'

And here I pause for a moment to point out an addition (in this case it seems to me a perfectly warrantable one) made by the illustrator to the sentiment of the poem. It is a subtle, wholly poetical touch, as fine as anything in the poem

itself, and, at the same time, is interesting as evidencing how the 'only Reality' is here as ever at the back of the artist's pencil. 'It is a heathenish poem,' the artist would seem to say; 'let me enter a



ORIANA.

(By kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co.)

protest against the want of recognition of an overruling but inscrutable Providence.' And so he accentuates the tragic horror by putting the lover down on his idolatrous knees to her, and stringing his bow 'for luck' against her foot, whilst she 'for

luck' ties her kerchief about his crest. 'Here,' seems to say the artist who believes in God above all things, 'here is an opportunity to strike a blow against Mumbo-Jumbo charms, amulets, abracadabra, and to give at the same time additional force to the tragedy. Down on your knees to God would have been the thing; but kneeling to your mistress, your bow cursed as it were by her presumptuous blessing, your helmet crowned with her scarf, instead of putting on for an helmet the hope of salvation, you shall find that your "lucky" bow-string shall speed an arrow to the charmer's heart, and that her talisman shall bewitch your hand and eye instead of nerving them.'

Not that the artist, as in the case of the crucified Christ in the picture to *The Lady of Shalott* referred to above, forces his opinions willy nilly upon the reader, but, with a more admirable reticence, confines himself to strategic accentuation of pagan performances, and leaves the poem itself to be its own most convincing commentary.

The exquisite grace and beauty of Oriana in this picture must strike everyone, and all who go with eyes into Mr. Hunt's drawing-room will recognize in the portrait of his first wife, which hangs there, the source of his inspiration. As for Mr. Hunt himself, his face is now bearded, and it is hard to make up one's mind about his mouth and chin; but if I am not very much mistaken, he sat to himself for King Cophetua, on p. 359, in these early days when the hire of models was an expense not lightly to be incurred.

The third portrait is that of Miss Christina Rossetti, in the picture of Uther's wounded son on p. 119. She is the 'weeping queen' whose cross-set

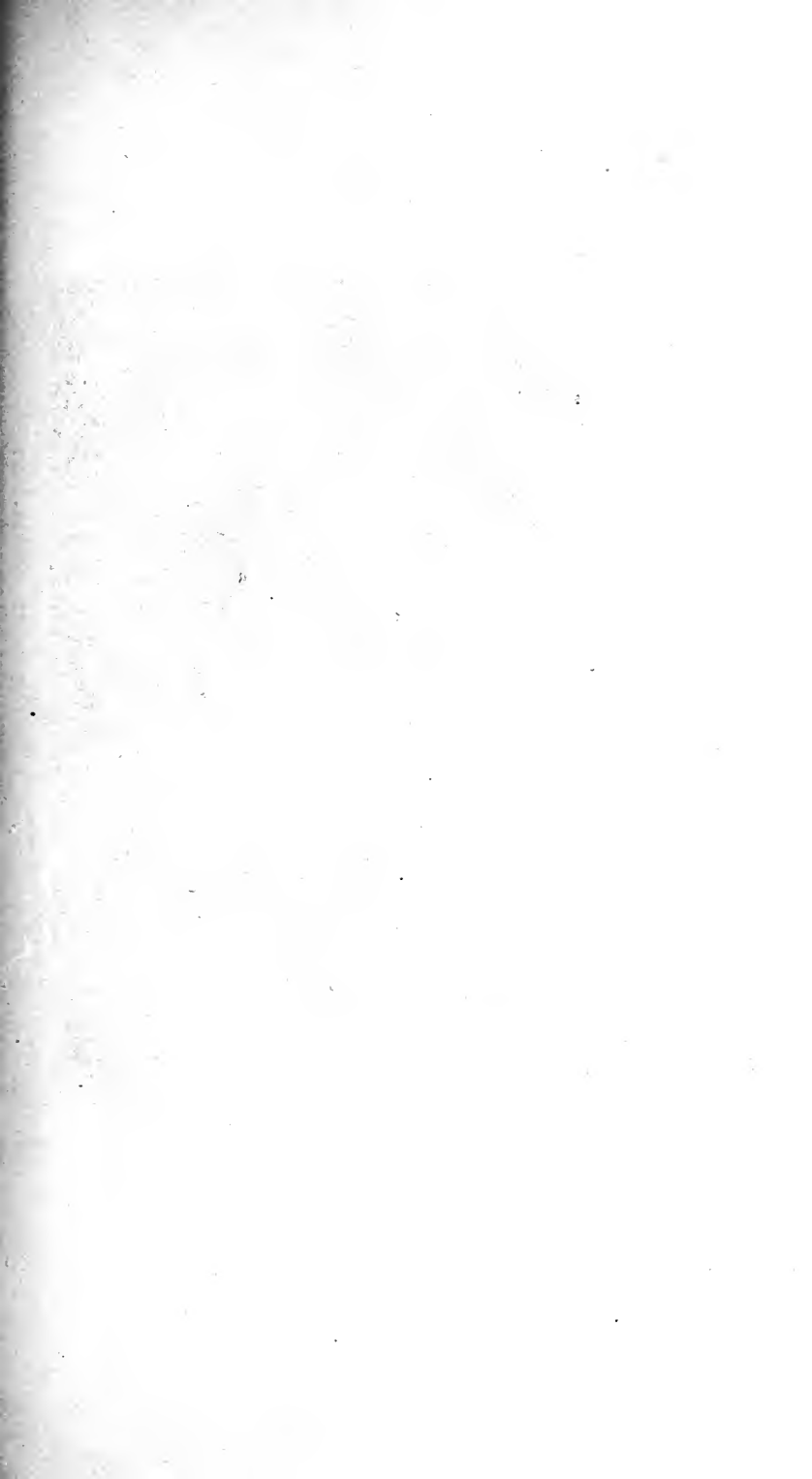
crown is directly below the little building on the surf-beat promontory. Seven or eight years before, the painter's sister had sat for the title rôle in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, of whose face Mr. Sharp writes: 'It is pale and ascetic, exactly such a Mary as Renan imagines, full of dreams and visions; it is quite unlike the painter's best-known type, uniting as it does the simplicity of refined girlhood with the individuality of approaching womanhood.' In this Tennyson picture we find the womanhood attained.\*

It may be interesting here to note how fond Rossetti was of using his relations as models. His mother appears as the St. Anna in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. His wife lives in *Beata Beatrix*. 'This picture,' says Mr. William Rossetti, 'was painted some while after the death of my brother's wife, probably beginning in 1863, with portraiture so faithfully reminiscent that one might almost say she sat in spirit and to the mind's eye for the face.' The heavenly visitant in *The Annunciation* was to have borne the likeness of his brother, for he writes humorously, complaining that he had given up the angel's head as a bad job, *owing to William's malevolent expression*.

So much for the portraits, and, with the mention of Rossetti's presentment of his sister, we pass from Mr. Holman Hunt to the consideration of the pre-Raphaelite indeed.

\* A wood engraving, after the chalk drawing by Rossetti of his sister, made in 1866, is given in Mr. Edmund Gosse's delightful article on the poetess in *The Century* for June, 1893, and is worth comparing with the Tennyson block.







STUDY FOR THE SECOND ILLUSTRATION TO "THE PALACE  
OF ART." BY D. G. ROSSETTI.

## CHAPTER V.

### ROSSETTI.

IT was, as we have seen, through dilatoriness on Rossetti's part that his limited choice of subjects to illustrate in this volume was due ; and even when they were chosen we find him writing on August 2, 1856, that he was 'at the last gasp of time' with the designs which he had undertaken to produce. This we learn from Mr. W. M. Rossetti's notes on his brother's work, and he goes on to say :

'I judge that he received £30 per design, as I find in one of his letters the phrase, "Moxon owes me £30, as I have done the King Arthur block." He preferred Linton as a wood engraver to the Dalziels, and was particularly pleased with his second proof of the Mariana subject. Another letter—addressed this time to Mr. Moxon—sets forth that the design for *The Lady of Shalott*, though delayed for a week, would be soon ready. "I have drawn it twice over, for the sake of an alteration, so you see I do not spare trouble." He speaks also of the block for *Sir Galahad*, and of a second 'Sir Galahad,' which he intended to do without delay.

This intention, it appears, must have miscarried, for there is not in the Tennyson volume any second illustration to the poem in question.

‘Another project, equally abortive, was that of doing a design for *The Two Voices*. “Nothing would please me better,” he adds, “than that Mr. Madox Brown should do *The Vision of Sin*, as I hear Hunt proposed to you. His name *ought* by all means to be in the work.” And so it ought, but it is not ; more’s the pity—for Moxon’s illustrated Tennyson. Mr. Moxon did, in fact, apply to Mr. Brown to take up the various subjects which Rossetti had at first intended to design, but had, for one reason or another, omitted. But at that late date Brown was unwilling to entertain any such proposal, and it came to nought.

‘All this matter of designs and blocks, I well remember, became a sore subject between Moxon and Rossetti. Moxon used to write or call frequently, and considered himself aggrieved because the blocks, when he expected or required to have them ready, were still uncompleted. He suffered much worry and disappointment, and I have even heard it said—but I suppose this is only to be construed as a grim joke, not as a sober and grievous reality—that “Rossetti killed Moxon.” It is true that the publisher did not long survive the issue of the illustrated Tennyson.

‘On the other hand, my brother, besides being very fastidious, and therefore somewhat dilatory, over his own share in these designs, found constant reason to be doubly fastidious over the guise which his work assumed at the hands of the wood engravers. He corrected, altered, protested, and sent back blocks to be amended. My brother was, no doubt,

a difficult man with whom to carry on work in co-operation, having his own ideas, from which he was not to be moved; his own habits, from which he was not to be jogged; his own notions of business, from which he was not to be diverted. Co-operators, I can easily think, railed at him, and yet they liked him too. He assumed the easy attitude of one born to dominate—to know his own place, and to set others in theirs. When once this relation between the parties was established, things went well; for my brother was a genial despot, good-naturedly hearty and unassuming in manner, and only tenacious upon the question at issue. To play the first fiddle, and have the lion's share—surely that is, as Burns says, “a sma' request” for a man conscious of genius.’

This note by the artist's brother throws a light on book-production which cannot fail to be of great interest. Before passing from it I may mention that, through the kindness of Mr. Fairfax Murray, the well-known possessor of so much of Rossetti's work, I have had the privilege of seeing three of the original drawings for these wood-blocks.\* It will be remembered that the artist speaks above of alterations made in *The Lady of Shalott* design. This I also find applies to the *St. Cecily*, which is amongst Mr. Murray's treasures. In this drawing the shaggy-headed angel is not kissing the woman, as Rossetti finally drew on the wood-block. The woman's face, too, is far more beautiful in the drawing, and the difference in texture of the man's hair from the woman's is far more strongly marked than in the woodcut; but this is

\* These may be now seen at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery.

probably due to the limitations of the engraver's skill. On the other hand, it must be added, the face of the soldier eating the apple in the left corner is better in the woodcut. These drawings are, I believe, to be published in facsimile by Mr. Murray, with some fifty of the original Rossettis now in his possession.

With reference to the proposed employment of Mr. Ford Madox Brown mentioned in the above quotation, Mr. Brown himself told me shortly before his death that he had some recollection of a gentleman calling on him about the matter, but how it was the commission went to some one else he never knew. That it should have done so all true lovers of art will, I am sure, regret.

One word, too, as to what Mr. W. M. Rossetti designates his brother's fastidiousness about the manner in which his drawings were cut upon the wood. Personally I think an artist cannot be too nice in such a matter, and it is interesting to note how consistent Rossetti was in his determination that bad reproduction of his work should not get abroad. His constant practice in later years was to reserve all copyright in the pictures that he sold, although no doubt their prices were thereby diminished, 'not really for the purpose of preventing the purchaser from getting the work engraved, were he so minded, but in order to provide against any mischance of a *bad* engraving, apart from the painter's own control.'\*

As I have said above, though not in so many words, Rossetti, even when illustrating, must not be taken seriously as an illustrator. He is not one, and, in consequence, his designs in this Tennyson,

\* 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti,' by his brother, p. 94.

and in the few other books in which his work appears, are apt to receive but scant acknowledgment from those who do not understand the position. If I may be allowed to use a sporting metaphor, the reading public is only a gazehound, and, seeing a picture stuck over a poem having all the outward characteristics of an illustration, it goes for it as such, without questioning the nature of the quarry. But when it comes to close quarters, and finds that it is not a pictorial presentment of the letterpress, it, not being a smell-hound and trained to scent an artist whatever his surroundings, passes it by and thinks it of no account. And, from the purely literary point of view, this is natural enough. On the other hand, those who love a picture for itself, apart from any literary meaning, are thankful, and recognise the artist pure and simple wherever found.

In his notorious *Fleshly School of Painting*, Mr. Robert Buchanan, trying to write down Rossetti as a poet, in his intemperate way said that he possessed 'great powers of assimilation and some faculty for concealing the nutriment on which he fed,' and that he had 'the painter's imitative power developed in proportion to his lack of the poet's conceiving imagination.' Now, I maintain that no greater nonsense was ever talked, except perhaps in other parts of Mr. Buchanan's noisome article. I am glad to know that Mr. Buchanan, years afterwards, retracted much that he there wrote; but mud not only sticks but stains, and abjuration is but an ineffectual detergent.

Just as well might Shakspeare be accused of want of originality, because he founded his plays on Boccaccio and history, or Tennyson because he went to the old chronicles and romances for the foundations of his stories, as Rossetti be accused of being

an imitator on this gentleman's facts. I wonder did Mr. Buchanan ever take the trouble to look at the Tennyson quarto? If he did not and will, I challenge him to show me a trace of *imitation* of the Tennyson poems in any of Rossetti's designs. Indeed, the very obvious fault that is to be found with them is the negligence of their prototypes. It was no doubt the artist's duty to have subserved the poet, and, surely, had thinly-disguised paraphrase been as characteristic of his work as Mr. Buchanan would have us believe, he would most certainly have shown some trace of it on an occasion when that was just the very thing he was employed to do.

Take, for example, the 'weary, wasting, yet exquisite sensuality,' the heavily-laden, stifling atmosphere of these drawings, and contrast them with the comparatively cold intellectuality, the airy salubrity of the poems. Indeed, it is quite astonishing how completely the artist has succeeded in ignoring the idealism of the poet. It reminds us of the first four lines of the sonnet embodying the pre-Raphaelite principle that appeared on the front page of *The Germ* :

'When whoso merely hath a little thought  
Will plainly think the thought that is in him,  
Not imaging *another's* bright or dim,  
Not mangling with new words what others taught.'

And it emphasizes the fact that the 'P. R. B.' was rather a bundle of incongruities than a corporation with definite aims, when we find between the covers of the same book such different courses adopted by its three most important members. Indeed, book-illustrating, in its strictest sense, was about the most un-pre-Raphaelite occupation that could well be imagined. Rossetti seems to me clearly to have



recognised this, and to have deliberately ignored the allegiance which, as illustrator, he owed to the text. Whether he was justified, with the principles he held, in undertaking the task, is, I think, open to question, but no one who loves good pictures apart from ethics will regret his acceptance of the commission.

It is interesting to find him complaining, some fifteen years later, of a treatment of his pictures curiously analogous to that he here metes out to the Tennyson poems. Mr. Rae, a large collector of his works, had a catalogue of his possessions drawn up, about the year 1872, inserting in it several quotations from the poems of Mr. William Morris. Rossetti, on seeing it, wrote: 'The quotations from Morris should have been left out, as the poems were the result of the pictures, but don't at all tally to any purpose with them, though beautiful in themselves.'\* Exactly the same might be said of Tennyson's poems and Rossetti's illustrations.

The mere fact that a man's drawings are reproduced in a book, and labelled with the names of the literary productions that find place in that book, is not enough in itself to constitute that artist an illustrator in the truest sense of the term. As we have seen, Rossetti, even when professing to be so occupied, gave freest reins to his imagination. His art was to Millais's what an independently constituted tandem leader is to a well-conducted shaft horse. His Pegasus would go well enough as long as his own masterful imagination held the ribbons, but when another's fancy essayed to handle them there was no making anything of him at all—he

\* 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti,' by his brother, p. 44.

simply kicked himself free, and did the journey his own way.

Let us take, for example, the 'St. Cecily' on p. 113. Who but an artist of the utmost originality could have begotten a design of such apparently alien significance upon the four lines describing the tapestry on which

'In a clear-walled city on the sea,  
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair  
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;  
An angel look'd at her'?

Nay, more, who but an artist absolutely regardless of the whole spirit of *The Palace of Art* could have made, to mention but one of the picture's departures, the angel, who, the saint told her husband Valerian, 'whether she was awake or asleep was ever beside her,' a great, voluptuous human being, not merely kissing (a sufficient incongruity in itself), but seemingly munching the fair face of the lovely martyr.\* Is it not possible that the whole thing is a subtle protest by Rossetti against the super-sensuousness of the exquisite poem, with which his own more voluptuous nature was far from being in sympathy? And I am strengthened in this view of the matter by a feature in the picture which has puzzled all whose attention has been drawn to it. The explanation I am about to give runs the risk, I am aware, of evoking hostile criticism, charging Rossetti as it does with a sort of grim joke, involving something very like the betrayal of a literary trust. At the same time I claim to be

\* Mr. Fairfax Murray, who, I need hardly say, totally dissents from my theory regarding this picture, believes that the wide-openness of the angel's mouth is due to a mistake on the part of the engraver; and, further, believes that the hands of the angel are wrapped in the cloak by way of emphasizing his reverence for the saintly lady. He also believes that a serious attempt has been made by the artist to realize the style of wings adopted by many of the early masters of painting.

giving a possible solution of what is as puzzling as the curious fish-like 'rebus' in the great Holbein in the National Gallery, and one that must serve until a better is found.



ST. CECILY.

*(By kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co.)*

The first to draw my attention to the feature to which I allude was Mr. Holman Hunt, who, talking the matter over in his studio, said, 'What do you make of the wing-like somethings that rise behind the angel's head?' The picture was not before us

at the time, and I confessed I had never given any special consideration to the matter. When I got home, however, and inspected it with particularity, I was in turn as puzzled as Mr. Hunt himself, and, writing a few days later to Mr. W. M. Rossetti, asked for an explanation. His reply runs thus, 'In the design of "St. Cecilia" "the wing-like somethings behind the head of the angel" appear to me to be wings; although until I now inspected the drawing for the purpose of answering your inquiry, I don't know that I had ever paid detailed attention to this point. I must say that, regarded as wings, they are not very elegantly realized; but I see no reason to doubt that wings they are.'

Now, everyone who looks at the woodcut will undoubtedly agree with Mr. Rossetti, where he says the wings are not very elegantly realized. But can anyone for one moment believe that such a master of design as Dante Rossetti was capable of deliberately drawing such apologies for wings, had he intended to represent *real ones*? I, for one, cannot; and I suggest that the explanation of the whole matter lies in the fact that, in the figure who bears them, the artist's intention is to draw, not an angel at all, but *a man masquerading as an angel*. May it not be that the whole thing is meant to be a sort of travesty of the story of St. Cecily, and that some lover, enamoured of the lovely saint, has seen, in her belief of an ever-present guardian angel, opportunity to seek her presence? Further, it would seem that the clumsiness of the wings is accentuated for the purpose of making this more apparent, that the great cloak in which the angel is enveloped is another indication that the whole thing is a deception, and that the soldier eating the apple in the left-hand corner is meant to further materialize the situation.

If a better explanation of the enigma is forthcoming, I shall gladly welcome it. At the same time, I confess that, reading through the poem again and looking again at the so-called illustration, this gloss, extravagant though, I am aware, it must appear at first sight, seems to me more and more reasonable, and if it is the true one, it does, I submit, throw an interesting light on the attitude that Rossetti assumed towards the text.

So much for Rossetti's impatience of the restraint to which an illustrator, if he is to be worthy of the name, must submit. Here I have only taken one picture at random, but let Mr. Buchanan, or anyone else, inspect these lovely designs and then say whether the inspiration has come from without or within, and whether in any true sense Rossetti can be said to be an imitator 'with great powers of assimilation, and some faculty for concealing the nutriment on which he fed.' We shall all agree with Mr. Quilter's verdict that in this picture the artist has pierced to the heart of deep emotions, but to this must be added that the deep emotions to which they have pierced are rather those of the earthly ideal of Rossetti than the spiritual ideal of Tennyson.

Being upon the 'St. Cecily' picture, with all its fascinating detail and elaboration, which, to those only superficially acquainted with the art movement with which we are concerned, are enough to label it pre-Raphaelite, I should like to take the opportunity of unearthing from the pages of the *Contemporary Review* a paragraph of Mr. Hunt's which is too illuminating to be hidden away in the bound volumes of a periodical, and would beg all those who wish to read the history of the 'P. R. B.' aright to keep it well and constantly in their minds.

After instancing Poelemburg as an exemplary artificer, who, from the very fact that he was a mere imitator, made God's sky look hideous, and repudiating the label of 'realists' for himself and his companions, Mr. Hunt proceeds:

'On one other point there has been misapprehension, which it is now time to correct. In agreeing to use the utmost elaboration in painting our first pictures, we never meant more than that the practice was essential for training the eye and the hand of the young artist: we should never have admitted that the relinquishment of this habit of work by a matured painter would make him less of a pre-Raphaelite. I can say this the better now because, although it is not true, as is often said, that my detail is microscopic, I have retained later than either of my companions the pencilling of a student. When I take to large brushes, and enrich my canvases with impasto, it will imply that the remnant of my life would not suffice to enable me to express my thoughts in other fashion, and that I have, in my own opinion, obtained enough from severe discipline to trust myself again to the self-confident handling of my youth to which I have already referred.'

I have heard Mr. Hunt so express himself by word of mouth, but I prefer to set it down here as written in cold ink with due deliberation and weighing of words.

Mr. William Sharp, in his *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: a Record and a Study*, has written of these five engravings on wood, after the artist-poet's designs, so much that is pertinent to the subject of this book, that, with his consent, I shall here, in running rapidly through them, make his text the basis of my descrip-



STUDY FOR " MARIANA IN THE SOUTH. "

BY D. G. ROSSETTI.





tion, only adding those particulars which further examination has rendered apparent.\* The first of these designs is founded on the last two verses of *The Lady of Shalott* on p. 75. In the immediate foreground is the boat bearing its dead burthen, over whose head an arched covering supports burning candles, how there, and how lighted, known only to the designer. Indeed, it is amusing to compare Rossetti's independence in his treatment of the subject with the imitation of *his* idea by others who have followed him and pictured the same poem. For example, take Mr. J. W. Waterhouse's in other respects strikingly original conception, in which not only do three of Rossetti's candles appear, but also Mr. Holman Hunt's 'one great Reality' finds its place in the crucifix, above which they flare and gutter. One and all seem to forget that 'heavily the low sky' was 'raining.'†

But to return to Rossetti's rendering. The boat is moored to the oaken stairway of the palace in Camelot, and the light of the torch held by some servitor gleams on the pale, silent face of her who lies so still and quiet, as well as on the face of Lancelot as he stoops above her, musing on her possible story. Beyond are swans on the river, startled by the sudden commotion, and, farther off, hurrying figures attracted from revelry or service by the strange spectacle. The most satisfactory draw-

\* I have not put all Mr. Sharp's words I quote in inverted commas, as, with the constant interpolations I have found necessary, the reader's eyes would be unduly harassed.

† Since writing the above I have received a letter from Mr. Waterhouse, in which he says: 'With respect to the lighted candles in my picture, I made use of them merely as a means of completing the composition, my excuse being that lighted candles might have been used by the Lady of Shalott as a kind of devotional office before her death. I remember seeing in an engraving from a mediæval manuscript a bier covered with candles.'

ing in this design is that of Lancelot, whose figure is finely foreshortened as he bends from the stairway over the barge; while the half-jesting, half-real curiosity of the courtier behind him is well rendered.

The succeeding illustration is to the ballad, *Mariana in the South*, p. 82, its *motif* being the third verse. Mariana has cast herself down before a crucifix, and is kissing the feet of the body of Christ with 'melancholy eyes divine, the home of woe without a tear.' In her hands she holds old letters written to her by her lover who never comes, and others have fallen from their fastenings below her knees and over the couch on which she rests; and behind her is the mirror in antique wooden frame which had reflected 'the clear perfection of her face, that won his praises night and morn,' but which now apparently is meant only to reflect the back of her cloaked and forlorn figure, although this particular detail is so unsuccessfully drawn that the intention is open to doubt.

On the whole, however, the execution of this design is good, and the interpretation, perhaps, somewhat more in sympathy with the poem than the others. Still, even here we find the illustrator taking the unwarrantable liberty of not only adding to, but differing from, his text in the substitution of a crucifix, whose feet Mariana embraces in mingled adoration and supplication, for the image of 'Our Lady' mentioned in the third verse. This may, as Mr. Sharp says, be an artistic improvement, but that is, I think, no valid excuse. The artist is acting *ultra vires*, and, strictly speaking, the contract made with him might have been repudiated on far slighter grounds.

Mr. Sharp then proceeds to describe the 'St. Cecily': 'Quite different from the simplicity of

“Mariana,” he says, ‘is the first design for *The Palace of Art* already referred to. I have read, or heard it explained, that the two figures represent the soul and the body; the former still in a trance, but being kissed into the music of life by the desire of the latter. The illustration, however, is in reality mainly based on the following verse :

“Or in a clear-walled city on the sea,  
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair  
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;  
An angel look'd at her.”

The design is a marvellously intricate one, and in the extreme so-called pre-Raphaelite manner. The gilded organ-pipes are in centre of the foreground, and seem to be raised above a dungeon, the inner darkness and outer bars of which just appear; in the left corner an armed soldier is eating an apple, and in the right a dove is winging its flight, apparently from the dungeon, symbolizing, probably, a life that has escaped at last the control of any earthly guard. At the organ kneels St. Cecily, with nerveless hands laid on the notes, and head and body inclined backward in the embrace of the very dishevelled and mortal-like angel. Behind the organ is a dial; and beyond, the walls of the great city mounted with cannon; beyond again, the quiet sea thronged with ships from strange waters. Below, in the centre of the design, is a deep court, with a tree very much out of perspective, and a man at a draw-well.\* This, as will be apprehended from the foregoing description, is really an illustration *for* the poem, not *of* any verse therein; but if it is not an interpretation, it is a creation, and therefore interest-

\* The openings of the organ-pipes, too, are as much out of drawing as are the extraordinary stairs in Rossetti's *Hamlet and Ophelia*.

ing in its very disassociation from the work of the poet. . . .

'The companion illustration is much simpler, both in conception and execution. It represents "mythic Uther's deeply wounded son" lying dozing in Avalon, with round him the weeping and watching queens; while the strange barque that brought him there is moored beyond the rocky shore, and what looks like a small chapel stands on the further desolate coast. It is not the Avalon of legend, but the Avalon of the artist, sad with the gloom of a strange land and a strange doom. One of the queens is recognisable as having been modelled on the artist's sister Christina.

'The last of the designs for this volume, and the most beautiful, is that illustrative of the third stanza of *Sir Galahad*.\* The "Maiden Knight" has reached some lonely sanctuary, having heard afar off in the wood a noise as of chanted hymns; before the altar in the sacred shrine, where he has arrived, seeing neither worshipper nor habitant, the tapers burn, and in their light the silver sacramental vessels gleam; while, standing on rough wooden stairs, he bows before it, stooping to make the sign of the cross on his face with the holy water in a vessel suspended on a beam. In front, between and above him and the altar, a slanted bell is giving forth its solemn clang, tolled by (to him) unseen nuns, singing at intervals strange chants. Beyond, in the forest darkness, his horse, clad with white banner with a red cross, and impatiently pawing the ground, awaits him. The design is simple and impressive to a high degree, and poet and artist seem natural interpreters.'

\* P. 305.

So writes Mr. Sharp, and I think that everyone who studies these wood-blocks, together with the poems, will agree that Rossetti was never an imitator. At best, he was an interpreter. At worst, from the book-illustrating point of view, he was a great artist, with profoundly original conceptions.

In conclusion, there is one word to be said of Rossetti as landscapist. In his poems there is to be found the most exquisite and subtle use of pure, natural scenes as setting for the human creatures of his imagination. In his pictures it is far otherwise. As Ruskin said, somewhat brutally, long ago in one of his *Lectures on the Art of England*, during his second tenure of the Slade Professorship: 'Rossetti refused the natural aid of pure landscape and sky; his foliage looked generally fit for nothing but a fire-screen, and his landscape distances like the furniture of a Noah's ark from the nearest toy-shop.'

Here ends my 'appreciation' of the Tennyson quarto, in so far as the three great pre-Raphaelite brethren were concerned in it. Of their collaborators, Creswick, Mulready, Horsley, Stanfield, and Maclise, opportunity to speak may some day offer itself, if the reception of this book about a book, which is something of an experiment, should indicate that there is a public to whom the results of my studies of all known Tennyson illustrators would prove acceptable.

## INDEX.

- Annunciation, The*, 48  
*Arabian Nights, Recollections of the*, 45  
 Austen, Jane, and the Pre-Raphaelite idea, 10  
*Beata Beatrix*, 48  
 Bewick, his wood blocks, 24  
 Brett, J., A.R.A., the proportions of his canvas, 39  
 Brontë, Charlotte, Swinburne on, 31  
 Brown, Ford Madox, and Rossetti, 13, 14; Quilter on, 12; his Pre-Raphaelite work, 16  
  
*Cleopatra*, Millais's design for, 32  
 Cleveland Street, 16  
*Contemporary Review, The*, on Millais, 31; Holman Hunt on 'P. R. B.' in, 59, 60  
*Cornhill Gallery, The*, 21  
*Cornhill Magazine, The*, Sandys in, 33  
 Creswick, T., R.A., 2  
  
 Dalziel Brothers, 25, 26  
*Dance of Death, The*, 27  
*Dream of Fair Woman, A*, 32  
  
*Edward Gray*, 3  
 English Art Renaissance, 14  
  
*Fleshy School of Painting, The*, 53  
  
*Germ, The*, 54  
*Girlhood of Mary Virgin, The*, 44, 48  
*Good Words*, 25  
*Graphic Arts, The*, 36  
*Guinevere*, Woolner's statue of, 2  
  
 Hamerton, on type, 36; on Tennyson, 42  
 Hood, Jacomb, 39  
 Horsley, J. C., R.A., and the Quarto, 6  
 Hunt, Holman, 34-48; his *Lady of Shalott*, 3, 38-41, 43, 44, 51, 61; compared with Millais and Rossetti, 7, 8, 9; his history of the 'P. R. B.', 10; and Rossetti, 15; harmony of type with his designs, 38; difference of opinion between him and Tennyson, 40, 41; his Christianity, 42, 46; his unfinished picture, 43; his influence on Millais, 44; in the Holy Land, 44; his illustrations to *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, 45; portrait of his first wife, 47; on *St. Cecily*, 57; on the 'P. R. B.' in *The Contemporary Review*, 59  
  
*Idylls of the King, The*, 2  
*Illustrated London News, The*, Thomas's work in, 23  
 Illustrating, Meaning of, 18  
 Illustrations, Manner of reproducing, 23; and type, 34-36  
  
*Keepsake, The*, 31  
 Kretschmar, 27  
  
 Linton, W. J., on wood engraving, 26; Rossetti's preference for, 49  
*Lady of Shalott, The*, 3, 38-41, 43, 44, 51, 61  
  
 Maclise, D., R.A., 2; his *Morte d'Arthur*, 26

- Macmillan and Co., Messrs., 27  
*Magenta*, 25  
*Mariana in the Moated Grange*, 3, 18, 26, 28, 29  
*Mariana in the South*, 62  
 Martineau, Harriet, her effect on Millais, 22  
 Menzel, 27  
 Millais, Sir John, R.A., 18-33; compared with Holman Hunt and Rossetti, 7, 8, 9; the best illustrator, 18; Quilter's opinion of, 20-22; his power of assimilation, 22; his victory over the engravers, 23; his first drawing in *Once a Week*, 25; his *Mariana*, 26, 28, 29; his sympathetic insight, 29; his *Cleopatra*, 32; Holman Hunt's influence on, 44  
 Morris, William, and Rossetti, 55  
*Morte d'Arthur*, 26  
 Moxon, Edward, his enterprise, 1; his choice of illustrators, 4; his relations with Rossetti, 50; and Madox Brown, 50  
 Mulready, W., R.A., 2  
 Murray, Fairfax, 51; on *St. Cecily*, 56 (n.)  
*Once a Week*, Millais's connection with, 22; wood engraving in, 23, 24; Millais's first drawing in, 25  
*Oriana*, 45-47  
*Palace of Art, The*, 3, 56  
 Pennell, Joseph, on wood engraving, 24  
 Photography and wood engraving, 24  
 Poelemburg, 60  
*Poems by Two Brothers*, 1  
 Portraits in the Quarto, 45, 47  
 Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, its history, 10; its title, 11; bundle of incongruities, 54; Holman Hunt on, in *Contemporary Review*, 59  
*Preferences*, Harry Quilter's, 12  
*Pride of the Village, The*, 2  
 Quilter, Harry, on Ford Madox Brown, 12; on origin of 'P. R.B.', 13; on Millais's illustrations, 20; on *The Lady of Shalott*, 43; and Holman Hunt, 43  
 Rossetti, Christina, her portrait, 47  
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 49-65; his dilatoriness, 5; Ruskin's opinion of, 7; compared with Holman Hunt and Millais, 7, 8, 9; and Madox Brown, 13; head of Art Renaissance, 14; shares Holman Hunt's studio, 15; his impetuosity, 15; his *Sibylla Palmifera*, 37; his *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, 44; his models, 48; and Moxon, 49, 50; and the engravers, 50; likes to play first fiddle, 51; no true illustrator, 52; no imitator, 54, 65; his *St. Cecily*, 56-59; William Sharp on his engravings in the Quarto, 60; his *Lady of Shalott*, 61; as landscapist, 65  
 Rossetti, W. M., on the Quarto, 4; on *Beata Beatrix*, 48; on his brother's work in the Quarto, 49-51; on *St. Cecily*, 58  
 Ruskin, John, on the Quarto, 2, 27; on Rossetti, 7; on *Mariana*, 28; on Holman Hunt, 42; on Rossetti's landscapes, 65  
 Russell, Lord John, and Tennyson, 7  
*St. Agnes' Eve*, 28, 30  
*St. Cecily*, 56-59; Ruskin on, 27; original in Fairfax Murray's possession, 51; Sharp on, 62, 63  
 Sandys, Frederick, his *Cleopatra*, 33  
 Sharp, William, on *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, 48; on Rossetti's illustrations, 60; on *Mariana in the South*, 62; on *St. Cecily*, 62, 63; on *Sir Galahad*, 64  
*Sibylla Palmifera*, 37  
*Sir Galahad*, 49; Sharp on, 64  
*Sisters, The*, 31  
 Stanfield, C., R.A., 2  
 Swinburne and Charlotte Brontë's splendid failure, 31  
 Taylor, Tom, 25  
 Tennyson, Lord, his first published work, 1; and Maclise, 5; his in-

- difference to pictorial art, 6 ; on  
 Holman Hunt's illustrations to  
*The Lady of Shalott* and *King  
 Cophetua*, 41 ; Hamerton on,  
 42  
*The Germ*, 54  
*The Vision of Sin*, 50  
*The Two Voices*, 50  
 Thomas, George, his work in *The  
 Illustrated London News*, 23  
 Trollope, Anthony, 19
- Type and length of line, 35 ; and  
 illustrations, 36  
 Walker, Fred, draws directly on  
 the block, 23  
 Waterhouse, J. W., A.R.A., his  
*Lady of Shalott*, 61  
 Watts, Theodore, on Tennyson's  
 artistic instinct, 29  
 Wood engraving, 23-26  
 Woolner, Thomas, R.A., 2

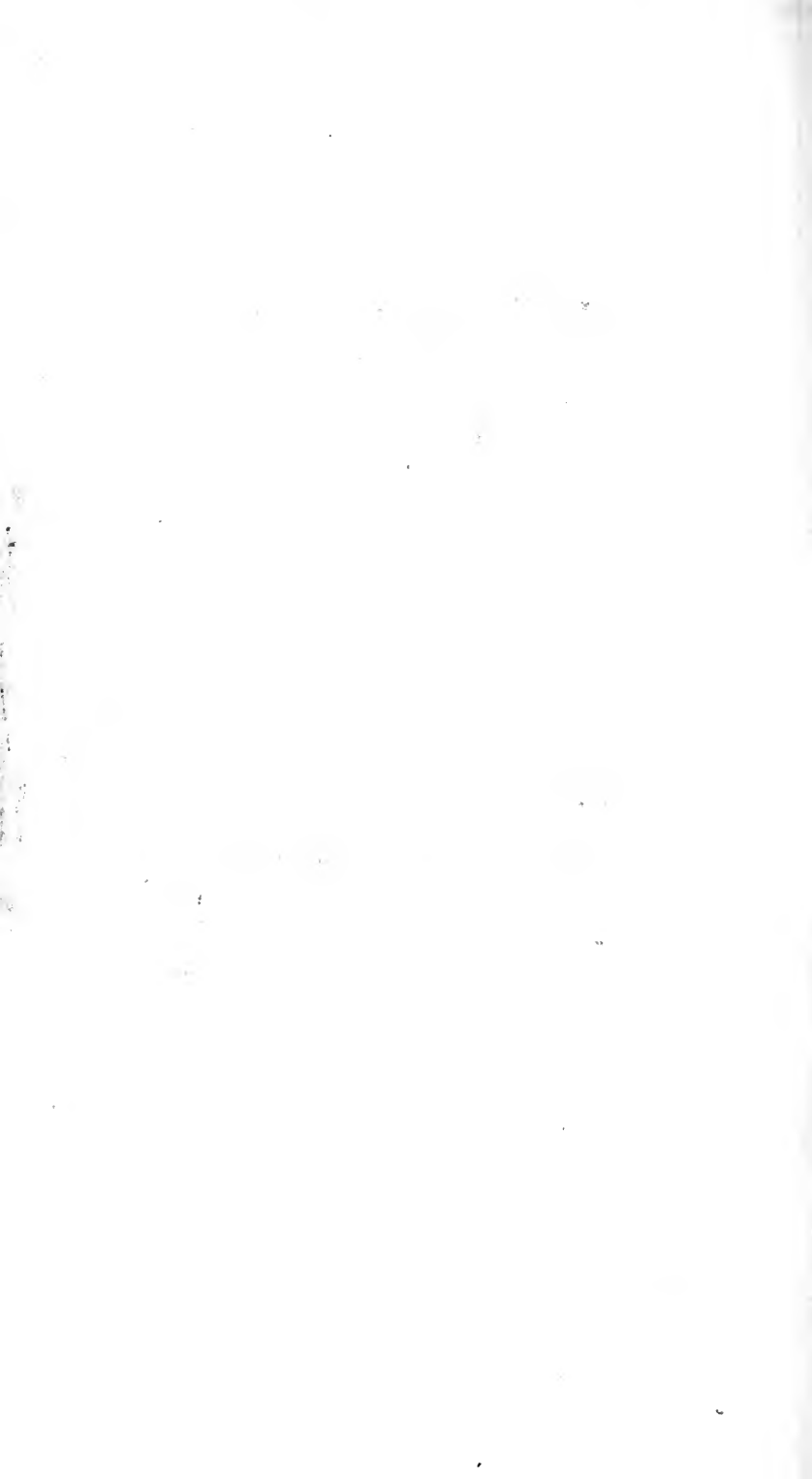
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