

CHAPTER VIII

1860-1861, 1862

For there can be no state of life, amidst public or private affairs, abroad or at home—whether you transact anything with yourself or contract anything with another—that is without its obligations. In the due discharge of that consists all the dignity, and in its neglect all the disgrace of life.—CICERO.

Whatever is good is also beautiful in regard to purposes for which it is well adapted, and whatever is bad is the reverse of beautiful in regard to purposes for which it is ill-adapted.—XENOPHON.

SHORTLY after my exhibition had opened I received an invitation from Mrs. Gladstone to attend a breakfast in Carlton House Terrace. I found many old friends were present ; but the last arrival was the Rev. Joseph Wolff, who had recently returned from a mission to Bokhara.

When we sat down he was interrogated about his experiences at the Amir's Court, and what he reported may probably be read in his book ; but the noticeable character of his narrative was the Oriental and antiquated phraseology he used :—

“ And accordingly the King arose and spoke aloud. ‘ Oh, Traveller, wherefore art thou come ? Declare unto us thy mission, and make known unto us the desire of the great Queen who sent thee.’

“ And I spoke, ‘ The great ruler in the Isles of the Sea desires to send unto thee salutations of friendship and recognition of the grandeur of thy sceptre, and to beseech

that thou shouldst give thy kingly attention to the hardships and the cruelty which Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly, my subjects, have suffered in the regions belonging to thee, and I am commanded to demand of thee what has befallen these two brave and pious officers of Her Majesty, the Queen of the Sea.'” The story was recounted in loud and sonorous voice in notes that rang without pause, as though the words had been read from a book, the cleanly-cut face of our host, almost Dantesque in the compression of features, being riveted on the speaker the while, all other guests forbearing talk to listen. When the quaintly told story was ended, Mrs. Gladstone referred with great indignation to the report that Lord Palmerston had headed the subscription in Parliament to recognise the courageous endurance of Tom Sayers, the pugilistic champion of England, he being a man of five feet eight and a half inches in height, who, with his right arm broken at the beginning of the contest with Heenan, a handsome American of six feet two inches, had continued the struggle with his left hand only. Mrs. Gladstone was horrified at the brutality, and at its approval by statesmen of eminent position, and appealed to the table to support her in denunciation, saying, “I am sure, William, you did not subscribe.” The great statesman replied with serious gesture, ‘Indeed I did not.’”

Amid the company the lady perhaps noticed that I was more reserved in my endorsements of her sentiments than some others, and I was challenged to declare my views. I could only say that while I regarded pugilism as savage, I did so with regret that violence in one form or another could not be eliminated from rude states of society, and that pugilism was regarded by me as less objectionable than the means resorted to amongst people whose custom it was not, for settling quarrels without use of murderous weapons. Unless there were some men, like prize-fighters, who perfected boxing into a science, there would not be that degree of proficiency which

English boys acquire at school, which stands them in ready stead in travelling and colonizing, when barbarous natives think they may with impunity attack a stranger. This was a dreadful confession of faith, which I could see shocked Mrs. Gladstone profoundly; and the recounting of tragedies in the use of knife or pistol by travellers on occasion of threatening, together with the existing system of blood revenge, did not alter her judgment on the subject. When we rose from the table I took the opportunity to look at a painting of a female head by Dyce, which I had seen in the Exhibition a few years before. Mr. Gladstone accompanied me, saying, “I indeed feel ashamed of possessing that picture; I saw it in the Academy Exhibition, and admiring it exceedingly, inquired the price; finding that it was only £37 I purchased it; but since then Dyce’s reputation has so justly grown that I increasingly feel how very inadequate the payment was.” To this he added many expressions of admiration of Dyce’s genius. He then paused with me before a large Spanish picture representing a saint, who, desiring to evangelise a distant country, and having no ship, had thrown down his cloak on the surface of the water, and stepping upon it, had voyaged over the Mediterranean to the land which he subsequently converted.¹ With pleasant talk we reached the door, where I stood apologising for having taken up so much of his precious time, but he insisted upon accompanying me to the hall. I remembered Lord Stair’s obedience to Louis XIV. when charged to ascend the carriage before him, and proceeded through the antechamber. Passing a sideboard with choice specimens of Dresden and Sèvres china, I observed, “I may judge that you take a special interest in this German and French porcelain; in my small way I commit extravagances only with Oriental china.” He asked, “And why do you prefer Oriental ware, Mr. Holman Hunt?”

¹ Supposed to be St. James the Apostle.

"I must admit that Sèvres and Dresden porcelain cause me pain in their elaborate determination to defy the fundamental principles of sound design," I said.

"But how do they do that?" he inquired.

"By disregard of the fitness of things."

"In what way does 'fitness' enter into the question?" he asked.

"It is not my personal theory I am propounding, it is often spoken of now as 'Ruskin's principle,'" I said; "but in fact many before him tacitly or openly declared it. Socrates, as an artist, where he lays it down that beauty depends upon fitness, and all true artists have recognised the law." Seeing him hesitate, I said, "Allow me to explain," and I took up a cup. "This is a vessel out of which a man drinks, and it should give an undisturbed impression as to its purpose, but when the cup is in our hands, observing it on the outside, we see a picture of linear and aerial perspective, with full light and shade of distant mountains, of a great plain with trees and a platform of steps in the foreground; we turn it forward, and under the teacup there is a distant bay, a ruined temple, a fountain close at hand, with statues, and cavaliers and dames dancing about. Our mind is in a state of discord to reconcile opposite impressions, one impression being that this is a half-globe to hold the liquid that is within it, the other being that of distances and buildings, on concave or convex surfaces, which could only be rightly depicted and intelligibly understood when seen on a flat surface; the cup and the pictures are perfectly incongruous, and elegant manipulation is misplaced."

"But," said he, "Oriental porcelain sometimes has representations of objects and landscape painted on its surfaces."

"It is true," I said, "but these are not portrayed with the aid of elaborate perspective and light and shade. The objects are represented as ornaments, controlled by design fit for the nature of the thing in use."

"You surprise and interest me," he said; "it is a question to work out, and I sincerely thank you."

In moving on to the door I reminded him not to assume that I claimed any originality in laying down this principle, and so I took my leave, much impressed by the humility of this leader of men.

I was still not my own master, and could not therefore yet return to the East. Having long been engaged on works of scale below life-size, it seemed wise now to take up the painting of figures of full proportions. Through the kindness of friends a young lady sat to me, and I commenced a picture which I afterwards called "Il dolce far niente."¹ I made use of the Egyptian chairs, which, having been borrowed and painted by other artists, were no longer attractive to me for Oriental subjects. I was glad of the opportunity of exercising myself in work which had not any didactic purpose. The picture, however, had to be laid by for the time, and finished at a later period from another model. I then devoted myself to designing the full-length picture of "The Afterglow" on a small canvas.²

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hughes had become my valued friends, and when a "Cosmopolitan" gathering was to take place they often asked me to meet a pleasant company at dinner on my way to the club.

Little Holland House was still exercising its fascinations on the London world; but its lord was declining in health and years, and its gaiety was much impaired in the eyes of those who remembered its brighter days.

In the autumn of 1860 Tennyson, Palgrave, Woolner, Val Prinsep, and I undertook a walking tour through Cornwall and Devon. As Woolner could not stay more than the first week, and Prinsep and I could not start till a day or two after the rest, they had begun their walk on the north coast, visiting Tintagel, reaching Land's End, and had gone over to the Scilly Isles ere we arrived at Penzance. We learnt their whereabouts, and followed

¹ In the possession of Thomas Brocklebank, Esq., J.P., Allerton Hall, Liverpool.

² Now in the Combe Collection, Oxford.

in the packet-boat to St. Mary's Island, where we found our friends at an inn. Woolner there took his



W. H. H.

IL DOLCE FAR NIENTE.

leave of the company. Inchbold had been found painting at the old Arthurian castle, and Tennyson's account of the

mysterious place whetted my desire to go there, but this thought had to be relinquished ; and after a day spent in visiting the gardens of the Scilly Isles we returned to Penzance. During the intercourse of this journey we were much engaged in discussions on the character of English poetry of all periods. Palgrave was a man of solid culture, and was engaged at the time on his unrivalled forthcoming selection *The Golden Treasury*. While Burns was under review, his poem *To Mary in Heaven* was excluded from the selection, Tennyson agreeing that the refrain of "Hear'st thou the groans that rend this breast?" had the ring of hysterical insincerity and bombast in it, a rare fault in that simple poet. The judgments on the verses offering themselves for consideration were finally resolved upon after dinner, when pipes and a "pint of port" ripened the humour of the company. Palgrave refers in his enthusiastically graceful acknowledgment in the dedication to his volume to the advice and assistance he had gained from the great poet in these critical investigations ; they were at times continued throughout the day, at times on the heights of a cliff or on the shore below, while we painters were loitering over notes of features of the scene which fascinated us. We could watch Tennyson in his slouch hat, his rusty black suit, and his clinging coat, wandering away among rocks, assiduously attended by our literary friend, and if by chance the poet escaped his eyes for a minute, the voice of Palgrave was heard above the sea and the wind calling "Tennyson, Tennyson," while he darted about here and there till he again held the arm of the errant comrade. It had been understood from the beginning that Tennyson's incognito should be preserved, as the only means of escaping bores or burrs who might spoil all our holiday, so the devotion of Palgrave evidently arose from consideration of the danger that might overtake Tennyson owing to his extreme short-sightedness. The poet, who was singularly unpretending on his world-wide glory and his twenty or thirty years' seniority over any

of the party, perseveringly besought us not to use his surname in addressing him or speaking of him in the hotels. When this was forgotten by any one of us he remonstrated, "Why do you always use my name? You must understand the danger of some one noting it, and instituting inquiries which would result in discovery, and then we should be mobbed out of the place."

"Oh!" laughed Palgrave, who was singularly pertinacious in the habit he had adopted, "that is absurd. You think no one has any notion in his head but the question, 'Where is Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate?' whereas not one in a hundred we meet has ever heard your name."

The poet returned, "But that one would tell the others."

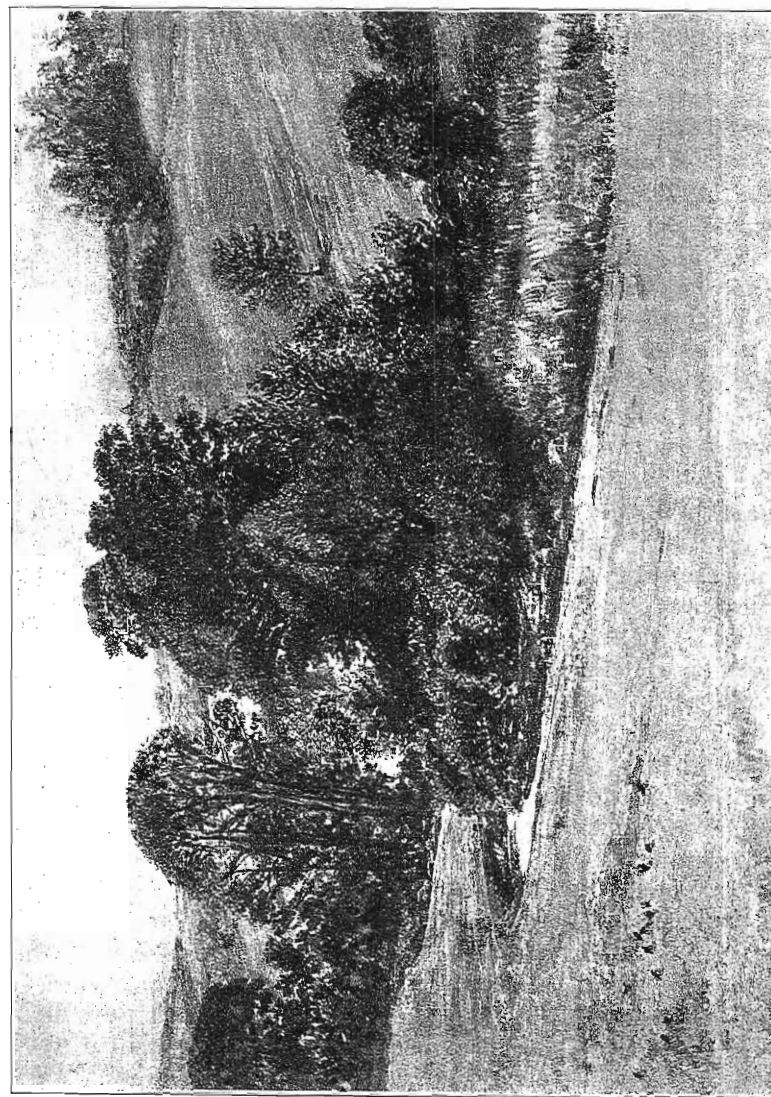
"Not at all," said our friend; "there are many people of the name besides yourself."

"Well, I have known the consequences before, and I wish you would avoid calling me by name," said Tennyson.

I think it was on account of the poet's apprehension of discovery that our stay at Land's End was shortened.

Tennyson's custom at that time was to take a vehicle from stage to stage, for he had hurt his foot. Palgrave ordered a dog-cart, and drove with him. Val and I walked. Val Prinsep was a burly but handsome young athlete, with breadth of shoulders and girth of limb that made him the admiration of Cornishmen, who by their wrestling bouts looked upon strangers as their forefathers did upon any new knights appearing in the jousting field. Our meetings with passers-by and with countrymen at the bars of inns, which at mid-day we entered for refreshments, engaged us in merry talk and badinage.

We joined our two friends at Helston, where they had chosen a comfortable hotel, and Palgrave took all the trouble upon himself of ordering supplies for the party. To the landlord he said with emphasis, "Above all things be particular about the old gentleman's port at dinner, for



HELSTON, CORNWALL.

the old gentleman's very fastidious about his wine. We others would not care about it, but he would be seriously displeased if the port were not quite up to the mark."

"Do you mean *me* by the old gentleman?" said Tennyson, looking round as he was unwinding his large cloak from his broad shoulders.

"Of course I do," Palgrave replied, and, turning to the landlord once more, he added, "You'll be particular, won't you, on account of the old gentleman?"

The landlord had scarcely shut the door when Tennyson, with face more perplexed than angry, said patiently, "What do you mean by calling me the old gentleman?"

"Why, what are we to call you?" pleaded the other. "You won't let us call you by your name, you persuade yourself that the whole country would rise up if they heard that magical word, and so I'm obliged to call you the old gentleman. Besides, you know you are the old gentleman, and every one will at once know who is meant."

"You might find some other appellation, I think," suggested the poet, but he did not pursue the complaint further at the time.

The next day Val and I went out to sketch. In the evening we told the others of a poor old woman who had come while we were at work, saying that she had a black paper profile of a sailor son who had been away years, and she had long ceased to receive tidings from him. "What consoles me now," said the loving old soul, "is that every day more that he's away must be a day nearer to his return." Her business with us was to ask whether we were not in the same line as the profilist who did the silhouette, and if so, whether we could not undertake the restoration of the portrait, which she was grieved to find had lost some of the features by reason of the black paper coming unglued and falling off. She added that it had been an excellent resemblance, and she had left it at home, but if we would come and see it and state our price, she should, if she could afford it, be glad to bear the expense. We had asked the address and meant to find it out in the

morning. Tennyson urged us to give what attention we could to the lonely mother, and matters were progressing happily as we smoked the calumet of peace, until the landlord appeared to take final orders, then our scholarly caterer repeated his references to "the old gentleman." The poet was startled from his restored tranquillity at each repetition of the obnoxious epithet, and immediately the landlord closed the door Tennyson, with a show of suppressed wrath, renewed his complaint. With an eloquence that would have done credit to an academic wrangler, Palgrave justified his position in successive stages: first of all, Tennyson must be called something; the natural mode of addressing him would undoubtedly be by his proper name, but then this was objected to, for what all rational people would consider quite inadequate reason, and so it had to be given up. Almost every other name would be objected to. "Mr. Alfred," or "our old friend," for instance, would not do, nor "the elderly gentleman" either. "No, on the whole, 'the old gentleman' is, I am sure, quite the best term," he said. "Notwithstanding your black cloak and your mysterious secrecy, the folk won't really interpret it as meaning his Satanic Majesty," and here he laughed heartily.

Tennyson asked us whether we did not think he had a right to object, and we agreed, but the argument persisted until the business of the further journey was mooted, and a resolution was come to that we should start next morning. A gig was accordingly ordered, and on the morrow after breakfast it was at the door ready for the two non-walkers. Prinsep and I had counted upon having another day to complete drawings already begun, but we decided not to stay behind our friends. When we had seen them depart, after some inquiries, made altogether in vain, for the whereabouts of the old mother of the lost sailor, we started for the appointed place of meeting at the Lizard. When we arrived at the little hostel, dinner had been ordered for four; our friends were away at the coast, and we could

not stray far from the inn for fear of missing them. There were two coaches, which belonged to a party come from Falmouth, unhorsed, waiting in front of the inn. The company were returning from the coast in little groups, and were taking their places on the vehicles while the animals were brought out and harnessed. It was a pleasant scene in the evening light, and we were idly gazing, when suddenly I was recognised and saluted by one of the ladies, the graceful and pretty Miss Stirling, and her sister, the nieces of the Rev. F. D. Maurice. They said they had been down at the coast all day, which made me ask if they had seen the two other members of our party there. The reply was "Yes, we met them in coming up the cliff." In guarded undertone I said, "Then I hope you understood from Tennyson that he wished his presence here to be kept strictly secret?" "Tennyson!" exclaimed they, the ladies next them joining in with delighted surprise. "We were not close enough to recognise him." I saw by the commotion created among all the company that I had unwittingly done more mischief than Palgrave had yet brought about. I implored all to be cautious, adding that the poet would never forgive me. Other ladies asked that I should introduce him to them when we arrived at Falmouth; and when I renewed my regret at the blunder I had committed, they playfully said they were extremely glad, and all entreated me to beg Tennyson to come to the Misses Fox when we left the Lizard.

At our meal that night, with converse smooth and delightful, although sometimes ending in wrangling, Tennyson asked whether we had visited the old woman at Helston to see whether we could not repair the black profile of her boy's portrait. I explained that her account of its condition had given us but little hope of repairing the damage, and that we had failed in the attempt to find her house. I felt how reasonable seemed his reproaches to us, repeated as they were in kindly tone, but without stint, over the wine and pipes. That night happily ended without any serious contention between

the men of letters ere we wended our way to bed. The next day we were all down on the white shore admiring the purple marble rock polished and made lustrous by the sea washing it in calm and storm. Each of us found his own particular object of interest apart from those which appealed equally to all. Perhaps it was the peaceful noise made by the laughing waters, or the bellowing of the cave-entrapped wave, that made Palgrave less mindful than his wont, and again he was heard calling out the Laureate's name whenever for a moment he had escaped observation.

Prinsep and I each began a drawing of Asparagus Island, and as we settled to work, Tennyson proved how, despite his short-sightedness, he had acquired the knowledge of details found in his poems.

THE EAGLE

He clasps the crag with hooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

He was not satisfied with the first casual impression made by a new experience; he went about from point to point of his first observations, and conferred over each impression with his companions. We painters had placed ourselves upon a tongue of cliff which divided a large bight into two smaller bays; thence we could, to right and left, see down to the emerald waves breaking with foam white as snow on to the porphyry rocks. Our seats were approached by a shelving saddle of a kind that required keen sight and firm feet to tread. The poet had made up his mind to look down into the gulf, and we had to find an abutting crag over which he could lean and survey the scene. In the original sense of the word, he was truly nervous, but looked steadily and

scrutinisingly. The gulls and choughs were whirling about to the tune of their music, with the pulsing sea acting as bass, and it was difficult for eye or ear to decide whether the sound or the sight were most delightful. Tennyson, when led away to a broader and safer standpoint, said, "I could have stayed there all day." He sat and talked for a time, then strolled away with Palgrave out of our sight and hearing. That night after dinner the conversation began again about the English classics, and while it lasted there was little said that was not of inexhaustible interest, for Palgrave, as his books show, was an ardent appreciator of high thought and polished scholarship; but in time the divergent note was struck. "You're always losing your temper," said Palgrave.

"I should be sorry to do that, unless the reason were a very weighty one," said Tennyson.

"Surely," said Palgrave, "you must see that you've been offended with the most inadequate cause ever since our start. I appeal to the others," and after referring to the objection of the poet to the use of his name and the alternative epithets, he made it his text that Tennyson had complained to me about the revelation of his name to the Misses Stirling.

I at once said Tennyson was quite right on this point, that I had been foolish in making the blunder, and that the alertness of the ladies had proved how well founded was his dread of being lionised.

The poet, taking up his candlestick, said, "Each must do as he thinks best, but I have no doubt what to do. There is no pleasure for any of us in this wrangling, and I shall to-morrow go on to Falmouth and take the train home."

"There now," said Palgrave as Tennyson was at the door, "you're always most unreasonable; if things that you have a whim for are not absolutely yielded, no one else is to have a voice in the matter." When the poet had gone, Palgrave said to us, "You've no idea of the perpetual worry he causes me."

Val ejaculated, "Did you say that he caused *you*?"

"Yes," he returned. "The last words that Mrs. Tennyson said to me on leaving were that I must promise her faithfully that I would never on any account let Tennyson out of my sight for a minute, because with his short-sight, in the neighbourhood of the cliffs or on the beach of the sea, he might be in the greatest danger if left alone. I'm ever thinking of my promise, and he continually trying to elude me; if I turn my head one minute, on looking back I find him gone, and when I call out for him he studiously avoids answering."

"But you call him by his name?" we pleaded for the poet.

"Of course I do, for I find that his fear of being discovered gives me the best chance of making him avow himself."

Gradually Palgrave gathered that our sympathy for him was limited, and then he took his candle and went off to bed. Val and I, when quietly talking together afterwards over the dispute, had our attention arrested by creaking steps on the stairs, the door was quietly opened and Tennyson appeared in his slippers. Putting his candle down and taking a chair, he spread both his hands out afar on the table and said, "I've come down to say to you young fellows that I'm very sorry if I seem to be the cause of all the bickerings that go on between Palgrave and myself. It is I know calculated to spoil your holiday, and that would be a great shame. I don't mean to quarrel with any one, but all day long I am trying to get a quiet moment for reflection about things. Sometimes I want to compose a stanza or two, and find a quiet nook where I may wind off my words, but ere I have completed a couplet I hear Palgrave's voice like a bee in a bottle making the neighbourhood resound with my name, and I have to give myself up to escape the consequences." We explained that all this arose from Palgrave's desire to keep him from danger, for he felt responsible. "Oh, I know he means very well," said Tennyson, "but it worries me, and I am going away

to-morrow morning, but I hope you all will stay and enjoy yourselves."

The next morning before we had finished breakfast a dog-cart stood before the window, and the landlord came in to say that the trap was ready for the luggage. Palgrave cut short the speaker, deciding that it was not for our party, but the Laureate interposed with the explanation that he had ordered it, and he held to his determination to go to Falmouth at once.

When he had already got up into the dog-cart, and Palgrave found that further remonstrance would be in vain, he darted back into the inn, entreating his friend to wait a minute. It was fully ten minutes ere he reappeared, preceded by his luggage, and then jumped up beside Tennyson, greatly to the poet's surprise. He protested, but the remonstrance was met by Palgrave appealing to us to come too, and declaring that he was under promise to Mrs. Tennyson never to leave him on the journey, and as the pair were driven away we heard the two arguing as to whether such watchfulness were necessary.

Palgrave, it was evident, had counted upon our departure, for on the walls of the inn where John Smith of Exmoor and Henry Muggins of Battersea had, with an equally distinguished multitude, set their autographs, he had at the last moment neatly described a cartouch in which figured our four names, headed by that of the poet, and it or a duplicate will be found there to this day.

For two or three days Val and I remained working on the cliffs. My drawing was on a block, of which the sun had gradually drawn up one corner; this warped surface did not seriously interfere with my progress until one day a sudden gust of wind compelled me to put my hand on brushes in danger of going to perdition, when, turning round on my saddle seat, I saw my nearly completed picture circling about among the gulls in the abyss below. Luckily, a fresh gust of wind bore it aloft, until the paper was caught by a tuft of grass at the brink of the

precipice. It proved to be within reach of my umbrella, which fixed it on the spot until with the help of my friend, I was able to rescue the flighty thing for completion.

We, in our turn, went on to Falmouth, and learned from the Misses Fox that Tennyson and his friend had been with them for more than a day, and had been very happy until a notice of the poet's presence in a local paper startled him to take train direct to the Isle of Wight. We enjoyed the hospitality of this family for a few days before our return home by Salisbury and Stonehenge. Val Prinsep commenced his Exhibition career at the R.A. two years later, and attracted annual attention, particularly well merited in the year 1865 with his painting of "The Hiding-Place of Jane Shore."

Gad's Hill must have been known to Shakespeare, who certainly travelled to and on the sea, like many Englishmen in his days who had the Vikings' passion for wandering.

He was dear to Dickens, and perhaps the singling out of this outlying suburb of Rochester by Shakespeare had as much to do with Dickens's choice of it for a home as his early family associations had. Once, falling into a talk with him about the great dramatist, I asked which of all the passages in Shakespeare entranced him most. "Ah!" he said, "that's an embarrassing question to answer, for I love passionately so many; one comes to mind in *Henry IV.*, of Justice Shallow in his house and orchard, talking to his man Davy about the management of his several acres, and Davy's appeal to his master to take up his rascally friend's cause, saying at last, 'I grant, your worship, that he is a knave, sir. . . . I have served your worship truly, sir, these eight years; if I cannot once or twice in a quarter bear out a knave against an honest man, I have but very little credit with your worship.' Then the arrival of Falstaff to enrol the men of the new conscription, and at last the scene in Shallow's garden, with Justice Slender

added to the party, and Falstaff returning from the Northern wars. As I read I can see the soft evening sky beneath the calm twilight air, and I can smell the steaming pippins as they are brought on to the table, and when I have ended my reading I remember all as if I had been present, and heard Falstaff and the whole company receiving the news of the King's death."

It was a pleasure to all his friends to hear that Charles Collins was engaged to Miss Kate Dickens. I was invited to the wedding at Gad's Hill, where many good friends were present. When at school I used to hear the name of "Boz" in connection with the *Pickwick Papers*, and the two words met my eyes as inseparable on all the advertising boards of the circulating libraries until the name of Nicholas Nickleby superseded the earlier announcement. What an unrealisable dream it would have seemed to me then, had it been forecast, that I should be a guest at this magical writer's table on one of the most personal and sacred events of his life. He was not yet advanced in years, but rich in laurels and still multiplying them, with a name honoured around the world, and a distinction coveted without envy. Yet he revealed a certain sadness during the feast, and this it was that induced him, when Forster rose up to make a speech, to command him not to proceed.

It was a lovely day, and when the ladies left the room and we stood up, no more graceful leader of a wedding band could have been seen than the new bride. I was near the father, and found myself opposite and close to a small picture of the Sphinx by Roberts; it had probably been given by the painter to the author. In turning I bent my head towards it; Dickens suddenly said, "You will not find anything in that picture to suit your particular taste, but I admire it."

I replied, "It interests me particularly, because I lived next-door neighbour to the Sphinx for several months."

"And what do you find fault with in it?" he asked.

"I had not any intention of finding fault with it," I

said; "and if Roberts had never been to Egypt, and had painted it only as a poetic conception, I should have had no perplexity about it."

"What are you perplexed at now?"

"Well, that he should have put the orb of the setting or the rising sun immediately behind the profile of the Sphinx does puzzle me."

Dickens abruptly said, "I admire it in that respect."

"But surely you do not mean that licence should go so far in a topographical picture as to justify a painter in making the sun set in the full south?"

"But I do not see why he should not if he thinks it aids the effect."

"But," I urged, "consider that the whole idea connected with this 'Watchful One' may be that it is lifting up its head to look always towards the rising sun for that Great Day in which the reign of absolute righteousness and happiness shall come, so that the sun strikes on its brow each morning and sends a shadow towards the west along the great plain; and as the sun advances to the west a shade closes over the face like sleep. To put the sun against the profile is therefore a very unaccountable liberty, because it is destructive of the cardinal idea."

"Ah! well, I had not thought of that; that certainly makes a difference; but I admire it as a poetical conception all the same," he persisted.

"I hope you will believe that my critical feeling does not blind me to its merits," I replied, and so it ended.

He was in no such overstrained mood whenever I met him again. He had the habit of walking about ten miles each day as a constitutional; sometimes I encountered him and walked with him, enjoying his brilliant humour.

After the wedding breakfast it was my fortune to drive out about Rochester with dear old Mrs. Collins and John Forster. It was a favourable time for talking with this healthy-minded writer, and I enjoyed a long debate with him on literary responsibility and the false influence of what is called poetic justice in a plot. Douglas Jerrold,

with his caustic wit, had summed up Forster's appearance with the stigma that he was "the Bumbeadle of Creation"; and indeed, till he talked, you might have thought the epithet somewhat justifiable, but his large reason soon gave dignity to his otherwise over-comfortable aspect.

About this year, 1861, Rossetti persuaded Morris to use the promising artistic power he had shown as a subject painter to take up decorative design. Having capital in hand, this energetic man of genius and of good business capacity incorporated Brown, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and others, founding a firm which, after some eccentric experiments, developed not only into a commercial enterprise, but into a school of taste which it is not too much to say went far, and ought to be still moving forward, to re-establish the best form of artistic invention for English crafts.

The archaic spirit of Gothic times which inspired this offshoot from P.R.B.-ism was undoubtedly a recommendation to the approval of contemporary connoisseurs, for ancient authority has ever been what dilettantism loves as orthodoxy in art; perhaps even in the attainment of artistic success it was of good augury, for the field to traverse was limited, and the men whom Rossetti had enlisted, being late in application to art, could attain their ambition more speedily than had the region before them been of untried boundless extent.

Throughout the period I am writing of, young artists of ability were from time to time appearing. Henry Holiday applied his artistic taste and training to the designing and execution of stained-glass windows. Edward Poynter began to attract the attention of the Exhibition world in 1861, and rapidly year by year advanced in power. In 1865 his admirable painting, "Faithful unto Death," appeared, making a strong impression among thoughtful people, and establishing his claims to high consideration. I was so far affected by its excellence that I advised several friends to buy it,



Seven Doctors by William Holman Hunt

Christ amongst the Doctors.

W. Holman Hunt, 1861

and when they would not, I was seriously tempted to become its possessor, but some richer amateur anticipated me.

My picture of the Temple came nigh to destruction within a year of its exhibition. A canopy had been erected to prevent the dresses of the spectators from reflecting into the glass of the painting; in the dark days of winter a row of gas lights was placed close above this. One freezing morning some of the company remarked upon the excessive heat of the room, and while attention was being given to the question the whole of the large curtain fell down in flames. The crowd escaped into the next room, the flames were spreading fast, and only one pail of unfrozen water could be obtained. In this emergency a lady took off a valuable Indian shawl and threw it to the man to extinguish the fire, which was happily overcome, the picture only being damaged in a way that could be remedied, so that in a week or so it was returned to the Exhibition with no mark of the injury remaining. The lady, although advertised for by the proprietor, never came forward to receive compensation from the Insurance Company for the destruction of her shawl by the gracious act she performed. Years later I heard that she was the wife of Sir Walter Trevelyan.

My friend, Mr. Vernon Lushington, at this time invited me to paint the full-size portrait of his father, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Lushington; therefore I stayed with the family at Ockham to paint it. Sitting down to my first dinner in the house, one of the sons asked me what line I took on the question of the war between North and South in America.

"I had better confess at once that I am on the unpopular side, I must avow that all the arguments I hear for the Southern cause have no weight with me," I said.

"Well done!" he exclaimed, "we are all Northerners here."

Scarcely any circle I had met up to then had received my confession of faith on this question so harmoniously. I felt it was wise to make a study in chalk of the very



W. H. H.

THE RIGHT HON. STEPHEN LUSHINGTON.

interesting head of the great Judge before beginning the portrait in oil. The old gentleman was stirred up to extraordinary vivacity when in conversation, and the expression thus aroused was that best known to his

friends. When silent, his visage settled into a mask, almost grim; but the fact that this aspect was unknown to society made me feel it must be avoided, the difficulty was that in the mobility of his features it was almost impossible to find any phase between the two extremes that could give the interest of the charming old Judge's character. When he saw that his listener was absorbed in his stories, he poured out a succession of wonderful memories, reaching back to before the last decade of the preceding century; he was then eighty-two years of age. He told how he had once, when back from Eton, gone to Drury Lane or Covent Garden, he could not be certain which. At the end of the first act the Manager appeared before the curtain. "Ladies and Gentlemen," he said in tremulous voice, "it is our intention as usual to proceed with the performance of the piece on the boards if it be according to your pleasure, but it is my duty to tell you that sad news has just arrived from France—it is, that the French people have murdered their King. We will obey your commands." No response was made, but every one in the theatre arose, took his hat and coat in silence, and in a few minutes the building was empty. Scores of memories he recounted, that made one regret that the fashion of story-telling was ceasing in society. He had once been in company with Sir Joshua Reynolds, but had not known it at the time. Of Napoleon Bonaparte he had several social reminiscences. In his turn he was also an excellent listener, and applauded a good point with clapping hands. Once, by the entrance of a member of the family when I was painting him, an interruption had come in an account I was giving him of an Eastern adventure. During the pause, I had waited in vain to catch a glimpse of the face in the right view: after resuming work, I was intent on exact observation of my sitter, when I noticed him to be impatient, and he expressed this suspended interest by saying, "Well, Mr. Hunt, tell me how the contention went on." I had to reconsider my words, for my thoughts

were at the moment more on my work than on my story. When I had proceeded a certain way, his face became perplexed and self-absorbed. "But, sir," he gravely said, "I don't understand, your evidence does not fit on."

"Oh, I see, Doctor," I said. "I was wrong; I had left out an important link. I beg your pardon! I will go back to the point where I left it before," and I supplied what in my pre-occupation I had omitted. His face gradually became radiant as he interjected, rubbing his hands, "That's all right; now I understand exactly, bravo! bravo!"

At dinner the Judge enchanted every one. Afterwards he went into his study, and he told me that he was able then to resolve serious questions of his Court better than at other times. I stopped work at luncheon, and afterwards we took a ride, once trotting to Weymouth, partly across country. The Judge kept us alive with sparkling conversation from the time we started till the moment we again reached the hall door.

When I had completed the chalk drawing, I invited the daughters to see it. They were full of admiration, but I could see there was some reserve in their minds, and when I pressed them to be quite frank, Miss Lushington innocently said, "Why, you've made papa with wrinkles." To her and the family these marks of age had come so peacefully that they did not exist.

Once, when I was talking to Dean Stanley about the Judge's stories, I regretted that being so much absorbed with my work I was not able to write them down, as I felt they certainly should not be left unrecorded; but the Dean told me that he had made it a rule to register all that he had heard. No one could have chronicled them better, but these records have not yet seen the light.

I now had the canvas on which I had begun "The Egyptian Girl" increased to take a life-sized figure, which I proceeded with at intervals, and finished under the title of "The Afterglow."



W. H. H.

KING OF HEARTS.

In the beginning of 1862 all London was enthusiastically stirred in expectation of the glories of the forthcoming International Exhibition, which was to be more extended and superb than any that had preceded it. Sir Thomas Fairbairn, one of the great movers in the Manchester Loan Collection of 1857, was one of the guarantors of the new venture, and came to London to take his place on the board. Pictures and marbles were borrowed from afar, and the prospects were of the most promising character when, one Sunday morning while people were on their way to church, the ominous bell of St. Paul's tolled out the mournful loss that the much-esteemed Prince Consort was dead. This distressful loss grieved the whole nation and threw a great pall over the fortunes of the Exhibition; but preparations had gone too far to allow it to be postponed, and when the opening day came, the joy at the accomplishment of the undertaking and prospects of the gathering together of the latest industrial achievements of the world was not less because of undemonstrative nature. Some of Millais' and my pictures, and, for the first time, several of Woolner's works in marble, were exhibited. In other particulars the Exhibition was of interest to me, for there the firm of Morris, Brown, and Rossetti demonstrated publicly for the first time in our age that the designing of furniture and utensils was the proper work of artists themselves. The determination on the part of the new firm to be markedly *different* in all their productions to the works usually supplied to the market, had made many of their contrivances eccentric, so that the common world stigmatised their tables as rough benches, their sofas as racks, and their beds as instruments of torture; but the designers themselves learnt their lesson, and eventually started on admirable lines.

It was matter of great satisfaction to me to see Woolner's work well exhibited for the first time; he had a dozen fine examples of his marble carving in

the Exhibition, and his busts showed to great advantage in comparison with many of those by others, not a few of which were as though they had been modelled in dough. It was undoubtedly a want that nothing he sent possessed the spirit of design, but it must be remembered that until now he had not had any opportunity of exercising his talent. Sir Thomas Fairbairn was proud to have been one of his early patrons. One night in his smoking-room, when Woolner and I were his fellow-guests, he spoke of the need of an authorised handbook on the works of art in the Exhibition, and asked whether we knew of any writer competent to undertake the guide. Woolner ardently assured our host that he knew the very man, Francis Turner Palgrave, and believed he could persuade him to take it up with enthusiasm. Woolner was appointed to bring his friend to consult over the matter, and the next day Palgrave arrived. He stipulated that he should express his personal opinion on the whole question, no harm was foreseen in this, as the writer was to sign his work. Undoubtedly Woolner was elated by the attention his works were gaining, as was demonstrated one Sunday when Augustus Egg and I were going round the gallery. We came upon a complete set of fine photographs from Michael Angelo's Sistine Chapel; we were admiring the prodigious power of design and drawing shown in these works, and Egg was the speaker, when Woolner happened to come up. "That fine form!" he laughed. "I call that vulgar display; why, a life drawing by Mulready would be worth the whole ceiling," and he passed on. On this Egg dryly commented, "Your friend Woolner is not deficient in self-confidence."

Very soon the authorised handbook was ready. The historic part on English art was excellent reading; but with only a glance I could see that when the modern collection was criticised, the author's prejudice against all other sculptors but Woolner was rampant, and his admiration of him riotous. I told Woolner that it would do him harm, in raising up a strong feeling of

resentment against him, and events soon followed which only too well fulfilled this forecast.

There was a lull for a time in public attention to the handbook, but amongst artists and at clubs there was outspoken displeasure, which marred the recognition of what was undoubtedly highly admirable in Woolner's work.