CHAPTER VII

1848–1849

Attempt the end and never stand in doubt,
Nothing's so hard but search will find it out.

HERRICK.

Let her hang me. He that is well hanged in this world need fear no colours.—*Twelfth Night.*

As iron sharpeneth iron, so is the wit of man sharpened.

AT the beginning of the autumn of 1848 Millais had still some panels of the series of decorative designs in monochrome for Leeds to bring to completion, and these occupied him so late in the season that there seemed a danger that the first essay in our new manner would suffer; but once free of his contract he painted a small portrait of Mr. Fenn, so strong in form and finish, and so rich in well-justified colour, that it resembled a perfect Van Eyck or Holbein, and yet its excellence was in no way mere truth at second-hand. This was the earnest of what his picture would be, but in that he would have to ride not a single horse but to drive a team. It was towards the end of October 1848 that his new canvas was installed on the easel. Any fresh design must have been undertaken with the disadvantage of not having been re-judged after the heat and prejudice of the original drawing had died away; he therefore settled upon the composition made for our intended series of etchings for Keats's *Isabella*.[1] Both his and mine were illustrations of the household life of the actors in the story. It certainly seemed to be a

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great undertaking for the time available before the date of sending in, but a very few days' work on the picture, each part being completely finished at a sitting, was convincing that the artist's estimate of his own range of power in the character and in the extent of work he had to do was perfectly justified; so exact was the pitch of tone and colour of each fresh venture, and so unerring and rich in unexpected graces was the performance in all respects, that it was easy to see how much strength it would give to the status of our movement. Every visitor to his studio brought away a higher report than the last. Gabriel, who sat for one of the figures in the picture, became perfectly unbounded in his admiration, and William, who had also acted as a model, turning his head aside, raising his eyebrows, and extending his hands, intoned in separated notes, "It certainly is distinctly marvellous," and so the reputation of the picture grew with its own growth.

Once, in a studio conclave, some of us drew up a declaration that there was no immortality for humanity except that which was gained by man's own genius or heroism. We were still under the influence of Voltaire, Gibbon, Byron, and Shelley, and we could leave no corners or spaces in our minds unsearched and unswept. Our determination to respect no authority that stood in the way of fresh research in art seemed to compel us to try what the result would be in matters metaphysical, denying all that could not be tangibly proved. We agreed that there were different degrees of glory in great men, and that these grades should be denoted by one, two, or three stars. Ordinary children of men fulfilled their work by providing food, clothing, and tools for their fellows; some, who did not engage in the labour of the earth, had allowed their minds to work without the ballast of common-sense, and some of these had done evil, but the few far-seeing ones revealed to us vast visions of beauty. Where these dreams were too profound for our sight to fathom, our new iconoclasm dictated that

such were too little substantial for human trust; for of spiritual powers we for the moment felt we knew nothing, and we saw no profit in relying upon a vision, however beautiful it might be.

Arguing thus, Gabriel wrote out the following manifesto of our absence of faith in immortality, save in that perennial influence exercised by great thinkers and workers:—

We, the undersigned, declare that the following list of Immortals constitutes the whole of our Creed, and that there exists no other Immortality than what is centred in their names and in the names of their contemporaries, in whom this list is reflected:—

Jesus Christ ****
The Author of Job ***
Isaiah
Homer **
Pheidias
Early Gothic Architects
Cavalier Pugliesi
Dante **
Boccaccio *
Rienzi
Ghiberti
Chaucer **
Fra Angelico *
Leonardo da Vinci **
Spenser
Hogarth
Flaxman
Hilton
Goethe **
Kosciusko
Byron
Wordsworth
Keats **
Shelley **
Haydon
Cervantes
Joan of Arc
Mrs. Browning *
Patmore *
Raphael *
Michael Angelo
Early English Balladists
Giovanni Bellini
Georgioni
Titian
Tintoretto
Poussin
Alfred **
Shakespeare ***
Milton
Cromwell
Hampden
Bacon
Newton
Landor **
Thackeray **
Poe
Hood
Longfellow *
Emerson
Washington **
Leigh Hunt
Author of *Stories after Nature* *
Wilkie
Columbus
Browning **
Tennyson *

William Rossetti publishes an expression of Gabriel's astonishment made in his last years that men should assume that he denied an after life, seeing that what he had painted and written ought to convince them of his belief in immortality. For my part, it may be pointed out that not many weeks after the signing of the document I was designing my "Christian" picture to honour the obedience to Christ's command that His doctrine should be preached to all the world at the expense, if need be, of life itself. Our non-belief in the immortality of the soul, therefore, was not long retained. The treatment we accorded in our document to painters and poets illustrates the character of our tastes and aims at this time.

Beginning with an agreement that three stars should only be given to the greatest, it will be seen that the author of Job and Shakespeare alone gained that distinction, but there was one Captain of men who could not by us be left out of the list of heroes, One who had not only sung persuasively of the way conducting to peace, but had trodden the thorny way Himself. A poem as well as a poet He was; commander and at the same time foremost of His army, He had even against His own human nature been a conqueror to the end.

He must, we said, be above all, and on this account we were obliged to extend our purpose, and place four stars after the name of Jesus Christ, that He might stand supreme above all others.

Some twenty years ago I came upon my copy of this document in an old desk, and tore it up, from no horror of the practical atheism it professed, a man should come face to face with himself on such a momentous question; the list included further names than those in the present copy, amongst them were many contemporaries now utterly forgotten. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* My good father had copied the first draft carefully, and it is from this copy of his that I have printed the list here.

James Collinson had been an amiable fellow-student, painstaking in all his drawings, and accurate in a sense, but in his own person tame and sleepy, and so became all the figures he drew. "The Apollo Belvidere," "The Laocoon," "The Wrestlers," "The Dancing Faun," and the drunken gentleman of that race, all seemed to belong to one somnolent family. No one, a year later, could have trusted his memory to say whether our quiet friend had or had not been in the schools, so successfully had he avoided disturbing any one in any way. It was a surprise to all when, in the year 1848, he appeared in the Exhibition with the picture called "The Charity Boy's Début." To represent the bashfulness of a poor boy appearing before his family in the uniform of his parish was an honest idea, and although the invention did not go far beyond the initial conception, the pencilling was phenomenally painstaking throughout. It transpired that he had roused himself up of late and entered the Roman Church, and had summoned effort to paint this picture. All the students blamed themselves for having ignored Collinson, but Rossetti went further, and declared that "Collinson was a born stunner," and at once struck up an intimate friendship with him. It will be seen that Rossetti had decided that Collinson only wanted our enthusiasm to make him a great force in the battle. Accordingly we gave him permission to put the secret initials on his works, to attend our monthly meetings, and to receive us in his turn.

Whether we were at Collinson's in the Polygon, where a dragoness of a landlady, six feet in height, provided quite a conventional entertainment—for he still had a liberal allowance from home—or at our Bohemian repasts in Cleveland Street, or elsewhere, he invariably fell asleep at the beginning, and had to be waked up at the conclusion of the noisy evening to receive our salutations. In figure he was far from being like the fat boy in *Pickwick*, for he was both light and small. He could but rarely see the fun of anything, although he sometimes

laughed in a lachrymose manner, and I fear our attempts to enliven him were but futile.

Once, concluding a meeting at my studio, on going to the door with him near midnight, we discovered that it was a magnificent moonlight night, and we resolved that, instead of going to bed, we would take a long walk in the country. He pleaded that he must go home to bed, and when we pointed out that for a real change, which might be of great permanent benefit to him, he should consider that he had had enough sleeping, he insisted that he must really go back to change his boots; and eventually we let him depart with the promise that he would be ready for us when we should call in half an hour. We arrived punctually, but knocked for a time in vain. In ten minutes a voice from the second-floor window thundered out to ask why we went on knocking when we knew Mr. Collinson had long since been in bed. It was the conclusion that he was asleep which had made us knock so loud, we said, and we hoped the landlady would take no further notice while we continued the same measures to wake him; on which she invited the aid of a passing policeman, who, however, was persuaded that we were strictly within the law in insisting upon seeing the gentleman himself. Collinson came to his window sleepily entreating to be left alone; but we explained that we had chosen a northerly course solely on his account, and that he must not now disappoint us. He gave in, and came with us on our walk.

The long night stands out in my memory ever clear, precious, and surprising, although many midnight skies have since in distant lands revolved over my wandering steps. Passing through streets which were fast emptying, some of them echoing to our ears the footsteps of Keats, we climbed the hill that shut us off from the true country. Above and beyond lay moonlit and moon-shaded heath and common land, decked with drowsy trees against the unchanging and unclouded heavens. Walking down the vale we saw a settlement of haze, level

as water sleeping in the hollow, broad as the ancient river must have been which scored it out, and this vapour gradually immersed the trees on the descending slope from roots to topmost branches. As we reached its margin we played with the phantom water and descended step by step, until, breast deep, we reached out our arms feigning to swim; lower and lower we went under chill thick mist; arriving at the little bridge over the dwindled stream, as we looked up we saw the haloed moon casting spoke-like shadows of the trees round about us. From the depth of this rayed region we ascended to the further margin of the mist lake into the crystal air. Continuing our journey, we arrived at a village a mile beyond, where, surrounded by a semicircle of cottages, we seated ourselves on the pedestal of the village pump. Our conversation at first was exclusively for our own benefit, but in the end we set up a lusty shout with a view to waking Collinson for the homeward journey. It was a great hurrah; at the same instant we saw a candle lighted in the first-floor window of each cottage of the little hamlet, and twenty or thirty nightcapped heads were thrust out simultaneously at the surrounding casements.

On our return journey, moonlight was slowly exchanged for ever increasing dawn and sunrise, with London, seen from Hampstead Heath, offering its first incense to the waking day. Frequently our poor Collinson dozed on the way, leaning on one or other of us, and we aided him with gentle support, but I must confess that no treatment adopted thoughtfully for his good either on this journey or other where seemed permanently to relieve his overweighted mind.

The doubt more than once returned to me whether Gabriel, after all, would ever discipline himself steadily enough to become a proficient painter, for when he had been so constant to his canvas as to secure a certain advance, some new invention would become his idol, and to this he would devote himself so passionately that his main task was apparently in danger of being forgotten.

When he had fairly got entangled in a new design he would refuse the attraction of home, meals, out of door engagements, or bed, and sit through the night, sleeping where he sat for an hour at the time, recommencing his work when he woke. He ate whatever was at hand when hunger suggested, and when time came for bed on the second night he would ask me to leave him ; in the morning I would find him still at his engrossing task. "The Girlhood of the Virgin" was a composition with but little intricacy in it, and therefore a penitential return to the easel soon made up for truancy. There was a special trial, however, in store not to be lightly passed by, for when he advanced to the painting of the child angel, for whom he had four or more models in succession, an untried one ever promising to be more manageable than the last, he increasingly lost patience. The unsteadiness of one mild little girl so overtried his temper that he revealed his irritation beyond bounds, storming wildly, overthrowing his tools and stamping about, until the poor child sobbed and screamed with fright, clinging to her conductress, much too alarmed to listen to any comfort he repentantly offered her. After this scene, which had raised clouds of dust and destroyed my tranquillity of mind, further work that day was out of the question. This was one of sundry experiences which caused the doubt whether his real enthusiasm for art would survive the needful pressure of self denying labour ; I thereupon invited him to go out walking with me, and in the shining wintry sun, on the broad walk of Regent's Park, bade him consider the certain consequences of action such as his, and argued that indulging all his humours would be fatal to his prospects of becoming a painter. This he had an undoubted right to give up for himself, but he must not destroy my chance of getting my picture done, since its completion was a very vital matter to me. I added that his want of self control affected my power of work more than he imagined, and that unless he could observe a

calmer demeanour we must separate at once, whereas I could assure him that latterly, when he had made good progress, I had hoped not only that he would learn all that he desired, and bring his picture to a conclusion in the fulness of time, but that he might do so early enough to appear with Millais and myself at the next Academy Exhibition. He took my remonstrance in the best possible spirit, and assured me that he would put an effectual curb upon his impatience for the future. He held to his promise manfully, and with a fresh model for the angel brought this part of his work to an end. It was a striking mark to me of his increasing self reliance that about this date when in a difficulty he called me to his aid, and I as usual held out my hand for his brush and palette, he asked me to trust to him to carry out my instructions, seeing that he felt it would otherwise be said that I had painted the picture throughout. Undoubtedly at this pass the "drudgery" of Brown's system did stand him in good stead, giving him greater efficiency of handling.

The visitations of Gabriel's numerous friends during the precious daylight, which, being of no account to them, they treated as without value to us, occasionally became a vexatious condition of our partnership. I could not remonstrate, because with the visitors were some whom it was a pleasure to know, and I could not state my objection to others.

I cannot conceal that as the spring advanced I felt many anxieties for my "Rienzi." It was so intricate in composition, and I was working with such minute finish, that a day's labour rarely made any show ; moreover, from dread of injuring the paint while working at other parts I had left the sky to the last, and as there were several gaps of white canvas between the groups, the parts that were already finished showed to but small advantage ; my calculation of the number of days' work to be done gave me sufficient time, but I could not pretend that the effect of the picture warranted my confidence.

Each night on returning from the Life School, after boiling my coffee, I sat down to my meal and read with enjoyment. I had counted my ways and means, and for economy's sake and from the example of Shelley, I abjured meat. When Gabriel and William joined me as guests at my simple meal, the hour of relaxation was all the pleasanter. More than once the former appeared with a small company of his own Life School fellow-students, whom I had never before seen. Once when the strangers were unusually many, and the novelties of the studio had been shown, it did not seem necessary to display the motley tea service of my establishment, but Gabriel suddenly intimated that the delay was too protracted by saying, "Now, Hunt, don't keep us waiting any longer, I have promised them all supper." At this the table was set, and we made the best of a simple menu.

If this history may appear to be a revelation of personal events disconnected with professional efforts, it is because I feel myself under pledge to recount faithfully the individual trials of an artist's career in those days, and therefore I am led to reveal the burden brought to me in a dark hour when I was altogether beaten down. On the way back from the Life School one night, I chanced to run against Mr. James, the surveyor, who told me that he was anxious to understand more fully than he had been able to do at casual meetings what I had been about since leaving my father's house. I explained that it had seemed better to defer invitation for him to see my work until all was completed, but that if he were free then, the picture was not too much out of order for him to understand it; indeed, as there was but a fortnight to the sending-in day, his frank opinion might be of use to me. We walked on, I being confident that my studio was vacant that night. Entering, I brought my picture to the light, and explained the subject in all its details. My old friend only sighed mysteriously from time to time, and finally turning to me, asked impressively, "Did you tell

Rienzi.

me that there is only another fortnight in which to finish, and that what is done has already cost eight or nine months?" I assented. "Do not then, Willie, I charge you, cherish the futile idea of being able to complete the picture; indeed, if for a moment we assume the difficulty were overcome, and even that the painting were accepted, could you persuade yourself that such a weak piece of work could command any attention? It is obvious enough that all the minutiæ introduced must have taxed the greatest patience and labour, but who do you think would trouble their heads about that? No, take my advice. Look! turn up your canvas end way up; it's of beautiful proportions. Now, do a tragic-looking head screaming war, famine, and slaughter; in one hand make him holding a flaming torch above his head, throwing a lurid glare on the face, let him carry a threatening sword in the other, and make the background black as possible." He looked exultant, putting an encouraging hand on my shoulder. "In a fortnight you will get it finished, and so you will gain your object of having a picture in the Exhibition, and one, too, which no spectator could fail to see." He was so insistent upon the idea while I conducted him down the fitfully lighted stairs to the street, that he had no suspicion what was behind my spasmodic and irrepressible laughter.

I remounted to the room; a chill had come over my spirit, it trickled between my shoulder blades. I shut the door, turning the key, and sank doubled up in a chair to hear this accusation formulating against myself. "Why, when with only enough means to do your appointed task with undisturbed leisure, did you hamper your hopes by subjection to daily hindrances? to have restricted your attention to Rossetti by visits to his own room in the evening would have been all that you could afford or he expect; now, you see many days of your life have been spoiled, most of your money spent, you have not gone the way to keep your health; a sensible friend comes and laughs at the calculation that you can finish your work in

time, and you know that you had before dreaded that it might be as he thinks ; at the best, you see the work is incapable of making any impression. What is the good of struggling ? your chances in life are overweighted, and you have not the tact to make the burdens less." After having sat a time frozen through listening to these fancied reproaches, a step ascended the stairs ; it stopped on the landing, and a hand was put familiarly upon the door knob, turning it without effect. At first I did not feel inclined to move, but on Gabriel shouting out twice or thrice I opened the door ; he came in, peered about and said, "Who's here ? I heard some one talking to you. Who the devil was it ? " "It was the devil," I replied. "Whatever is the matter ? Why is your picture put endways up ? Isn't there some one else here ? The fire is out, you haven't had your coffee yet. I say, bring it out and let's have the stove alight at once."

Soon we were seated down at a comforting meal, and gradually I was drawn on to tell and act Mr. James's visit and remarks ; Gabriel enjoyed it as a screaming joke, and ended in a burst of laughter, exclaiming, "But the man's a born fool." "No, Gabriel, he's not, he is a really superior man ; I have a true affection for him and quite a considerable respect for his opinion as an index of the intelligence of that portion of the public who have a little knowledge of art ; his verdict seems only a forecast of theirs, and gives a dismal enough outlook for me."

"Tell me," Gabriel next asked, "do you really believe in the devil ? "

"Well," said I, "we don't wish to go into an examination of the question of a personal devil ; we might as well undertake an inquiry into the mystery of free-will and fate, which equally twists itself round and round the differences of meaning attached to the same words by opposite disputants ; we won't waste time over this matter, but I have no more hesitation to admitting belief in a force of evil than I have in acknowledging a power of good in life, and I believe that one or the other takes

possession of each person, temporarily or permanently, as they are encouraged to gain the mastery. Don't you agree ? "

"Certainly two interests are often found battling together, and the combatants are called good and evil ; but this conclusion is gratuitous ; why should not each be equally justifiable ? They are simply two different tempers," replied Rossetti.

"All that I can say to your challenge is that you don't really feel as you say, or you would not paint themes illustrating the beauty of innocence and righteousness. I regard your argument as only part of the extravagances in which we revel at times ; they are amusing when we are in good spirits, but with cheerfulness gone, their black angels come back and demand a heavy price for their defiant entertainment. To-night I have to thank you for driving away the 'Prince of Darkness,' whatever he is." And so we parted.

In sober moments we had agreed that orthodox religionists made such claims to entrammel judgment, conscience, and will, that they drove thinking men to the extreme alternative of throwing away all faith in divine over-rule ; yet on whichever side we argued we were merely testing how far our theories would bear the strain of life. Each position that we held was a sincere one for the time ; and whatever the standpoint I thus occupied, it debarred me from the painting of subjects which could not be justified as in accordance with my views, any more than it could have been warranted to make declarations against my conscience. For Rossetti, the fact that so many modern poets had been defiant was enough to justify revolt, while the precedent of the older poets and artists in song and design was warrant for the ecclesiastical strain of work he favoured. His consistency was taxed alone for loyalty to the supremacy of genius, and perfection in art was synonymous in his mind with the amplest wisdom. Yet beneath all Gabriel's dis-

cordant phases of profession he still cherished the habits of thought he had contracted at his mother's knee, and I do not think he ever altogether cast away the gentle yoke from his oft o'erweighted heart.

About mid-winter Madox Brown had commenced his cabinet picture of "King Lear asleep in the tent with Cordelia." He brought it to exhibition pitch in due time, and sent it to the Gallery at Hyde Park Corner, but it did not reach its present state until some years later. He listened to the reports which any of us made of Millais' painting and its wonders with nothing but a very self-possessed smile, saying, "Yes, I daresay he has improved since he did 'The Widow's Mite.' He was very young then."

More exciting rumours of Millais' picture came towards the sending-in day, and then Brown went to Gower Street with the stream of visitors. On his way back he called at my studio when I alone was in. He seemed impatient to cancel every tinge in detraction of Millais' merit that he might ever have expressed before, intensifying the force of his latest testimony by an extra syllabic precision, saying, "I assure you, Hunt, I never was so astonished in my whole life. Millais is no longer merely a very satisfactory fulfiller of the sanguine expectations of his prejudiced friends, he is a master of the most exalted proficiency, no one since Titian has ever painted a picture with such exquisite passages of handling and colour, and these charms, with a rare *naïveté* of character of his own, make the work astonishingly enchanting." He went from point to point of the picture, dwelling much on the drawing of the foremost figures and on the design of the hounds, discriminating with exquisite pleasure on the colour of the majolica plates and fruit on the table, on the pure tints of the costumes; coming slowly to a climax, he at last well-nigh closed his eyes in rhapsody on the perfection of modelling and tone of the white napkin hanging over the servant's arm. Brown, spite of his original prejudice against the painter's pretension,

was too true an artist to count the cost of his praise of a noble performance.

The earliest work by Madox Brown reproduced in this volume necessary to show his development, is a picture

F. Madox Brown. THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.

illustrating an episode in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. It is a loyal and clever revival of French art before the classicalists swept away the prestige of the worn out followers of Watteau, when Fragonard held the field with his tapestry cupids and dry flower wreaths, and when Dresden china artificialities were in favour. It was in Rome that

Brown first turned to the Munich type of art with his "Chaucer"; it was there afterwards that he was charmed by Overbeck himself, who gave a last colour to his chameleon-like course. Rossetti, when Brown's pupil, fondly followed his master in this fashion, and was still doing so.

One scarcely expressed purpose in our reform, left unsaid by reason of its fundamental necessity, was to make art a handmaid in the cause of justice and truth. Millais in childish faith wrought out his fancies in this spirit. In the range of subjects then in my mind, eschewing all whose tenor I could not justify as according with my sincerest convictions, I had relinquished the painting of Christ with the "Two Maries." Rossetti treated the Gospel history simply as a storehouse of interesting situations and beautiful personages for the artist's pencil, just as the Arthurian legends afterwards were to him, and in due course to his younger proselytes at Oxford.

My "Rienzi," spite of late fears to the contrary, was finished in time, and I took it myself near midnight to the Academy to make sure that it was not too late. Rossetti had painted the two principal heads of his picture at his own home, and did them charmingly, but at the last he surprised us by revealing that he had sent his picture to an Exhibition at St. George's Place. This gave him a few extra days for finishing his contribution, although the Gallery opened a week before the Academy. The course he thus took was not in accordance with our previous understanding, and, though perhaps done without thought, was not "playing the game" fairly.

We might either of us have been excused for taking a substantial rest on release from our tasks, but we had pressing reason for getting to new pictures.

Millais went eagerly to paint landscape near Oxford; Gabriel came no more to my studio, but some weeks after sent a porter for his properties, explaining, to my surprise, that he had closed his partnership in the rent of the studio

last Lady Day. He remained designing in his father's house.

For me, however, the tenancy of the extra room could not close till after a quarter's notice next term day, but I made a compromise with the landlord, and at the earliest date dispensed with it. Very few sovereigns still remained in my purse, but I had a right to count as something my chance of sale at the Exhibition; hence I excused myself for beginning another picture in the hope of snatching a booty from jealous Fate, and, disregarding claims not yet due, I started on my new design.

The Royal Academy had for the forthcoming Gold Medal contest given as a subject "An Act of Mercy," and I was moved by ambition to compete for this. My reading had lately been somewhat extended in the early history of England, and this led me to ponder over the means of illustrating the subject from the conflicting influence going on when Druidism was established here and the energetic Apostles of Christ came to destroy the bloody creed. As I worked out my composition it was apparent that the regulation size of the Academy canvas would not allow me to add to the central group a margin, most precious in my eyes, on which to paint from nature the landscape outside the hut, with the shallows of the river in front, by which the openness of the homestead on this side might be justified. I therefore gave up the wish to become the foremost student of the time, and developed my plans so that the composition should have the more justice done to it. It was for me a race with my fast dissolving funds, but soon the design was upon the canvas, and as the sun shone into my window in the early morning I was able, with the aid of looking glasses, to get the desired effect on my models fairly well.

Notwithstanding that the Government had already committed itself after hard pressure to seek painters and sculptors for the embellishment of the New Houses of Parliament, and that thinking men had revealed

admiration for the work exhibited for competition in Westminster Hall for this purpose, a very respectable proportion of the community still looked askance upon art as an untrustworthy exponent of moral purposes, remarking that taste for it had ever been the precursor of a nation's decline, not considering what degree of estimation the nation would have gained had there been none.

The artistic career under such a bann was not strictly considered as a profession any more than was that of the ne'er-do-well who chalked the pavement or that of the strolling player disguised in motley. It would have been denounced as absurd that truths of sublime meaning could to the passer by be brought to mind by the art of such professors.

I had many reasons to ponder upon such discouraging matters while waiting to know what would be the result of the work that I had already done.

While our pictures were shut up for another week at the Royal Academy, Rossetti's was open to public sight, and we heard that he was spoken of as the precursor of a new school; this was somewhat trying. In fact, when Rossetti had made selection from his three designs of the subject he should paint under me, he chose that which was most *Overbeckian* in manner. This I had regarded as of but little moment, thinking the painting would serve as a simple exercise, probably never to be finished, but simply to prepare him for future efforts. It turned out, however, that the picture was completed and realised with that Pre-Raphaelite thoroughness which it could not have reached under Brown's mediæval supervision; this had made us agree to its appearance with our monogram, P.R.B. That Millais and I did not exaggerate the danger to our cause in this distortion of our principles is shown by the altogether false interpretation of the term Pre-Raphaelitism which originated then, and is current to this day. The fact is that the *Early Christian* school

FIRST DESIGN FOR "CHRISTIAN PURSUED BY DRUIDS."

had been introduced into this country several years before Brown adopted it, by Herbert, Dyce, Maclise, and others.

Antiquarianism in its historic sense was being instructively pursued in connection with art, and in its proper place it did great service, leading to the presentation of ancient story in a strictly historic mould. It made thus a radical distinction between all illustrations by the old masters and those of modern art; to the former the costume, the type of features, and architecture were the same whether the subject were in ancient Egypt or in imperial Rome. When a modern artist, influenced by the new learning, had settled upon a subject and had made his rough design, his further consideration was what character of costume and accessories it would require; he worked thus to give discriminating truth to his representation, this tended to break down some of the prejudice in prosaic minds against modern art which often made itself heard. Antiquarianism, however, as to manner of design and painting was quite foreign to our purpose.

At the Hyde Park Gallery Rossetti's picture, "The Girlhood of the Virgin," appeared pure and bright, and was the more attractive by its quaint sweetness. The Marchioness of Bath bought it for eighty guineas.

The notice in *The Athenæum* ran thus:—

> It is pleasant to turn from the mass of commonplace to a manifestation of true mental power in which art is made the exponent of some high aim; and what is of the earth, earthy, and of the art material, is lost sight of in a dignified and intellectual purpose. Such a work will be found here, not from a long-practised hand, but from one young in experience, new to fame, Mr. D. G. Rossetti. He has painted "The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary," a work which, for its invention and for many parts of its design, would be creditable to any exhibition. In idea it forms a fitting pendant to Mr. Herbert's "Christ subject to his Parents at Nazareth." A legend may possibly have suggested to Mr. Rossetti also the subject of his present work. The Virgin is in this picture represented as living amongst her family, and engaged in the task of embroidering drapery to supply possibly some future sacred vestment. The picture, which is full of allegory, has much of that sacred mysticism inseparable from the works of the early masters, and much of the tone of the poets of the same time. While immature practice is visible in the executive department of the work, every allusion gives evidence of maturity of thought, every detail that might enrich or amplify the subject has found a place in it. The personification of the Virgin is an achievement worthy of an older hand. Its spiritualised attributes, and the great sensibility with which it is wrought, inspire the expectation that Mr. Rossetti will continue to pursue the lofty career which he has here so successfully begun. The sincerity and earnestness of the picture remind us forcibly of the feeling with which the early Florentine monastic painters wrought; and the form and face of the Virgin recall the words employed by Savonarola in one of his powerful sermons: "Or pensa quanta bellezza avea la Vergine, che avea tanta santita, che risplendeva in quella faccia della quale dice San Tommaso che nessuno che la vedesse mai la guardo per concupiscenza, tanta era la santita che rilustrava in lei." Mr. Rossetti has perhaps unknowingly entered into the feelings of the renowned Dominican who in his day wrought as much reform in art as in morals. The coincidence is of high value to the picture.

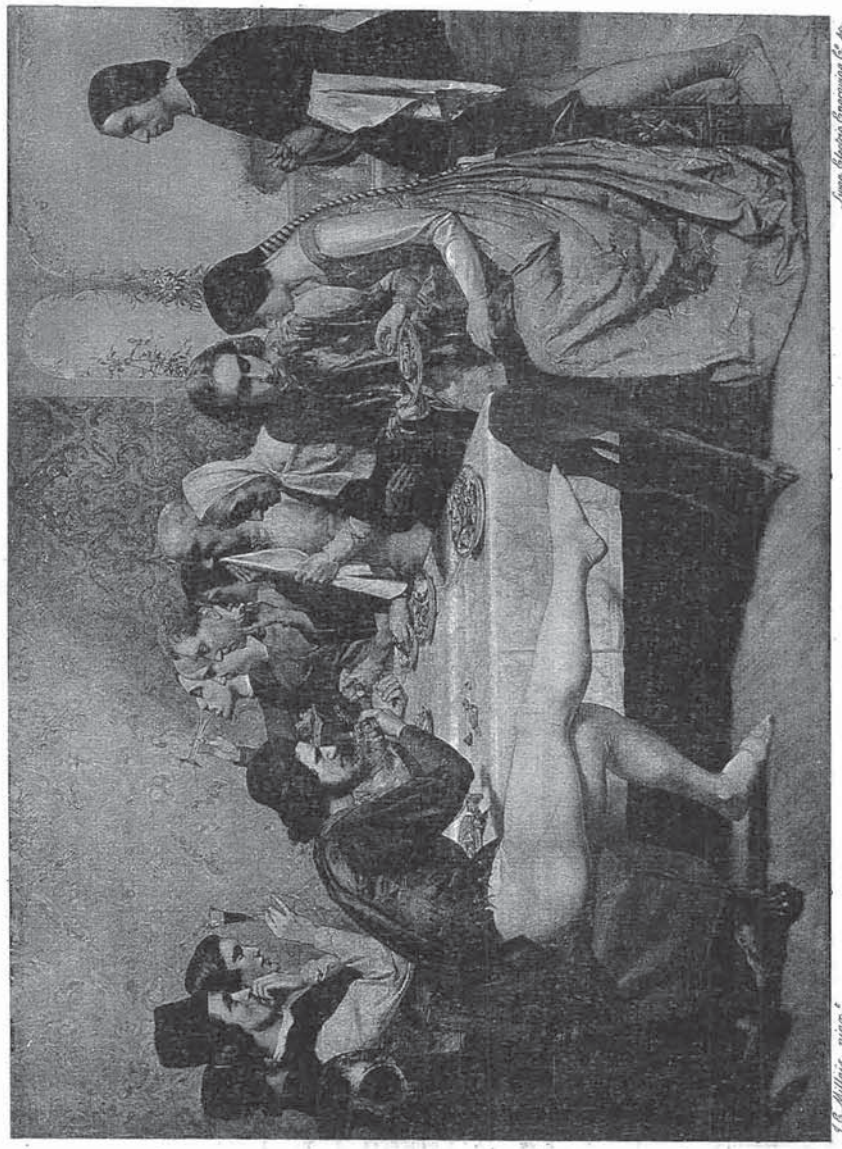
On the first Monday in May, outside artists were admitted to the Royal Academy to touch on their pictures from 7 A.M. till 12, when the public were let in. Millais and I had heard that our works were hung as pendants in the large room just above the line in honourable places. Millais sold his "Lorenzo and Isabella" for £150 to three tailors in Bond Street who were making an essay in picture dealing; the price was a reduction from his original demand, in consideration for which a suit of clothes was thrown in. The dealers who made the venture in partnership were so discouraged by unappreciative comments that they parted with it before the end of the season for the same sum. It changed hands later, year by year, always at a considerable profit to each chapman, until it became the property of the Walker Art Gallery, where I trust it will permanently

justify my contention that it is the most wonderful painting that any youth under twenty years of age ever painted. The *Times* that year was bursting with political surprises, and had no notice of the Exhibition, but we heard that another important paper spoke at great length of our contributions as the novelty of the show.[1] Several of the members of the Academy introduced themselves to me as I was on a ladder touching up my work, and quite confused me with compliments, so that I felt fortified in the hope of the sale of my picture, but the day passed without any patron appearing, and I returned home much discouraged at the apathy of amateurs. When the patter of dissatisfied critics was heard, the enlightened public had no doubt about our demerits, and my chances grew less, but I worked just as determinedly on the picture to which I had committed myself; yet I had to confine myself to the juvenile figures, because it was possible to find models for them at lower price than I should have had to pay to adults.

One encouraging circumstance indeed occurred in the

[1] The review in the *Athenæum* of the pictures by Millais and myself was evidently dominated by the key-note of antiquarianism found in Rossetti's work, otherwise its comments are not without phrases marked by unusual intelligence.

"There is so much ability and spirit in two works by men young in age and in fame, mixed up with so much that is obsolete and dead in practice, that some remark is demanded on a system whose tendency may be hurtful to our growing artists and to our School. The 'Isabella' (311), by Mr. J. E. Millais, imagined from a poem by Keats, and 'Rienzi' (324), by Mr. Hunt, are both by artists with whose names we have had before but slight acquaintance. Both are a recurrence to the expression of a time when art was in a state of transition or progression rather than accomplishment. If the artist must have some particular model for his practice, the perfect rather than the imperfect would surely be a wise adoption. To attempt to engraft the genius of foreign nations upon our own is a most dangerous experiment. National art and taste are infallibly destroyed, and foreign excellence is rarely if ever attained. The justice of these remarks as applied to the imitative system in painting must be evident, and the inconsistency to which it leads is subversive of all national characteristics. The faults of the two pictures under consideration are the results of the partial views which have led their authors to the practice of a time when knowledge of light and shade and of the means of imparting due relief by the systematic conduct of ærial perspective had not obtained. Without the aid of these in the treatment of incident and costume we get but such pictorial form of expression as, seen



appearance of a Mr. Nockalls Cottingham. He was an architect about thirty-five years of age; his father had been a celebrated restorer and builder of Gothic churches and cathedrals. The object of this visitor was to declare his great admiration for my picture and for the character of the work of all our school. The reformation we had inaugurated was exactly what was wanted in England, and in his position he would be able to find us an abundance of employment, he said; later he would give us choice of really important paintings to undertake; for the moment he had to offer a humble commission to me; it was to paint four spandrils, illustrating in light decorative manner Morn, Noon, Evening, and Night, for a house which he was then decorating; he could afford just fifty guineas for each work. I accepted the commission, whereupon he gave me an order upon a colourman for a tube of gold ground up in oil to be employed on the paintings. At his expression of desire to know

through the magnifying medium of a lens, would be presented to us in the mediæval illumination of the chronicle or the romance. Against this choice of pictorial expression let the student be cautioned. He may gain admirers by it among those whose antiquarian prejudices may be gratified by the clever revival of the merely curious, but he will fail to win the sympathy of those who know what are the several integral parts necessary to making up the great sum of truth.

"In classing together these two works it should be understood that reference is made merely to the correspondence of views which has actuated both artists. In their several elaborations there is a marked difference. Mr. Millais has manifested the larger amount of resource. There is excellent action, painting, and character in the several heads of his picture (well distinguished in age and sex), and in certain occasional passages of incident and of form, but the picture is injured by the utter want of nationality in the action of a prominent figure carried almost to the verge of caricature. This figure extends his unwieldy legs to the immediate front of the picture so as not merely to divide attention with, but to appropriate all attention from the lovesick Lorenzo and the fair Isabel, who

> Could not sit at meals but felt how well
> It soothed each to be the other by.

In addition to this absurd piece of mannerism there is in the picture that inlaid look, that hard monotony of contour and absence of shadow which are due to the causes before stated. In Mr. Hunt's picture it is the intention or design alone which can be estimated, and there are force of thought and concentration of purpose, though expressed in such affected language."—*Athenæum*, 1849, p. 575.

all our Brotherhood, I gave him introductions to Gabriel and Woolner. To the first he gave commissions for small designs; from the sculptor he bought at a very much reduced price—in consideration of future commissions from millionaires—a statuette of a female figure just modelled and cast ready for the marble reproduction.

Our whole party was invited by this stylish and much-bescented appreciator to his house in the Waterloo Bridge Road. There, after surveying Gothic treasures in other chambers of the house, we were led to a magnificent balustraded fourteenth century flight of steps, with pillars and groined covering leading down to what had originally been the coal cellar, now occupied by canopied tombs, statues, family effigies, and brasses, and in what must have been further excavations were columns and arches of a chapel crypt, while in places where light could be gained was stained glass in casements of the choicest rarity, all of which his father and he had improved off the face of the sacred edifices which the firm had been called upon to "restore."

In those days this form of iconoclasm was regarded as meritorious rather than otherwise, for the restorer had doubtless replaced everything considered necessary, in what was decided to be the most correct Early English style, and the loss of historic interest was then in no way accounted of.

While my patron was conferring with his principal, and I was making my designs, he one morning brought a lady with a request that I should at once begin a portrait of her. This I immediately set myself to do, and he took it away with him shortly after, together with my first sketches of two designs. These he was greatly delighted with. Not hearing from him for a week or so, I wrote saying that it would be a kindness to me if he would, when speaking to his principal, reveal that I was without means to bring the paintings to an end, and that I trusted he would think it right to make me an advance of half the money on each picture at the commencement. This I said

it was the more necessary to apply for, since I had determined, with a view to greater economy, as also to gain fresh experience, to paint them in Paris. The reply was in these terms:

> SIR—You will find hereafter in life that a man may be too grasping and greedy, and so overreach himself. I have consulted my patron on the extraordinarily unreasonable proposal you have made, and, as I foresaw, he would not for a moment listen to it. At his request I now return you your sketches, as he will not avail himself of your services, and I have to beg that you will by return restore to me the order I wrote for the gold paint.—Yours obediently, NOCKALLS COTTINGHAM.

I was never paid for either portrait or designs. Woolner soon afterwards saw his statuette exhibited in a shop window repeated in Minton ware, and on going in was informed that it was an exquisite design by the rising sculptor Nockalls Cottingham, from whom the firm had purchased the copyright. Not long after it turned out that the gifted genius had left his native shores for America, and we then found on comparing notes that, although he had been too clever for others, Rossetti had proved his match by exacting some money in advance for drawings never to be claimed by the patron, for his ship, *The President*, foundered in the Atlantic. The whole business wasted precious time, and reduced my nearly emptied purse, but had the business gone on, it might have been worse.

In the first week of August I went to fetch away my unsold "Rienzi" from the Academy.

Although Rossetti had ceased his attendance at my studio his friends frequently came; when some of these visitors were one day present, I heard repeated knockings at the street door below. The Irish servant, having a mistress who indulged too copiously in distilled waters, had her own views of duty, which did not at all times include attention to callers. As the visitor might very well be for me, I descended, and there found a gentleman

whom I recognised as Augustus L. Egg. He apologised with the most courteous mien for his intrusion upon me without formal introduction, assuring me that it was his great admiration of my picture, with the further interest aroused by the intimation he had received that it was not sold, which had induced him to come with only the claim which intimacy with mutual friends might establish. I declared with genuine warmth that I was honoured and grateful at his visit, and invited him to come up to my studio. Mr. Egg declared that my picture looked better than before, and went all over the passages from one point to another with comforting praise, finally making most tentatively a suggestion here or there for my consideration if I should be disposed to touch upon it again. His visit was a ray of sunshine to me, clearer than any given by the autumnal day, tarnished as it was by the coppery atmosphere of unlovely streets.

In a few days my new friend came again. This time he assured me he had to beg a great favour. A friend of his, an invalid, had been sincerely disappointed at not having been able to get to the Exhibition, where he had wished particularly to see this work. Egg's desire now was that I should send it to his own house, that the friend's interest should be satisfied when he should call there, as he had arranged to do in a few days. I promised to let him have it, and so one evening I delivered it at Bayswater.

The next morning my landlord came in very irate, and seized all my sketches, the marketable furniture, and most of my books ; I was ejected, and had to go back to my father's house.

Although I was received with kindness at home, my vacation was not a cheering one, but in two days a note came from Egg asking me to call. I went ; he was not in ; but on returning to his house the servant asked my name, and produced a letter which told me that the friend was Mr. Gibbons, the well-known collector, and that he had bought the picture of "Rienzi" for £100, generously

making the cheque for £5 extra to pay for the frame.[1] When I presented the cheque at the bank I asked for some one in authority, and requested to be allowed to leave the money on account and have a cheque-book, which was granted, so I went with a reserved air and paid off the landlord, who was persuaded, as I heard later from another lodger, that I had been "shamming poverty."[2]

With replenished purse I went off to the Lea marshes for a month ; the river and the meadows were pure and beautiful at that date, so that I painted the background and

[1] The purchase of this picture was an act of generosity, for the gentleman never valued the work, but hid it away in a closet, and at his death the family sold it without distributing his general collection.

[2] Until shortly before the exhibition of my collected work in 1888 at the Fine Art Gallery I had not seen the painting of "Rienzi" for nearly forty years. I then called upon Mr. Cosens, its possessor, to ascertain the nature and extent of damage to it which had been reported to me. Mr. Cosens had purchased it about twenty years earlier in an extremely damaged condition. On examination I found that some ignorant person had flooded the whole surface with a thick resinous fluid to serve as a varnish, which had formed itself into festoons and tears, in some places one quarter of an inch thick ; this had blackened not itself alone, but the paint under it, and in settling itself in the course of years it had twisted and crinkled the background of the picture by the contraction of the different thicknesses of the vicious stuff. The owner confided the picture to my care to do the best that suggested itself for its redemption. My first care was to have it well mounted upon another canvas. In doing this the reliner decided that the varnish was of no known kind, neither mastic nor copal ; that the ordinary expedients for removing objectionable encrustations would not bring it off ; that heat of severe kind had been applied—probably to flatten the roughened coat of oleaginous matter. This fire, however, had destroyed the integrity of the pigment below so much, that when any attempt was made to scrape off the foreign stuff—which curiously where thickened was still undried—the paint flaked off in scraping away the varnish like broken shells. In the sky the damage was so severe that there was no possibility of retaining the pigment on the canvas at all permanently, and I had to take all the loosened layer of ruined azure away. The paint of the figures proved to be sounder. The near ones needed but little retouching, except where the razor in scraping away the dirty varnish tore away the colour below, or where the spirit, which alone would dissolve the sticky matter, left the paint weakened. The trouble altogether, however, proved to be more than I had anticipated, but Mr. Cosens met me with liberality, and although I could not place the picture on the walls in Bond Street at first, towards the later month I was able to show it in a state of renovation. This was not such as any other restorer would have brought about, for I took some trivial liberties in renewing the background which, I being the original painter, it seemed fair to do, and *certainly* impossible not to do. Otherwise the pristine design, with the drawing throughout, and the painting of all the heads, hands, and draperies (except in one instance) was what it was at first. Thus I felt that a great misfortune had been handsomely overcome.

foreground of my "Christian Priests pursued by Druids," and found a shed near by also for the hut and its appendages. I had no studio, and was very fagged with my long, hard, and anxious work, so it seemed a good opportunity to go, together with Rossetti, and see ancient and modern art in Paris and Belgium, as we had long planned to do.