

CHAPTER X

1851

His name was Talus, made of yron mould,
 Immoveable, resistless, without end;
 Who in his hand an yron flae did hould,
 With which he thresht out falsehood and did truth unfould.

SPENSER'S *Faerie Queene*.

True painting can only be learned in one School, and that is kept
 by Nature.—HOGARTH.

IN 1851 Millais had painted "The Woodman's Daughter," "Mariana of the Moated Grange," and "The Return of the Dove to the Ark." Rossetti made no appearance in public this season.

Our pictures this year had less good places than before; they were separated, and all suffered as to their key of colour and effect by want of support. The wrath against us now was of triumphant tone, our enemies spoke as though we must see we were defeated. Yet there were painters who stood attentive before the pictures, and in the end turned and shook our hands heartily, saying, "Do not heed all this clamour." Millais¹ came back with me early from the Academy to Chelsea on the first day of the Exhibition, and there he took up a pen and sketched the scene representing our rivals' wrath at our pictures, with others engaged in touching up their own work. No sooner had the Exhibition opened than

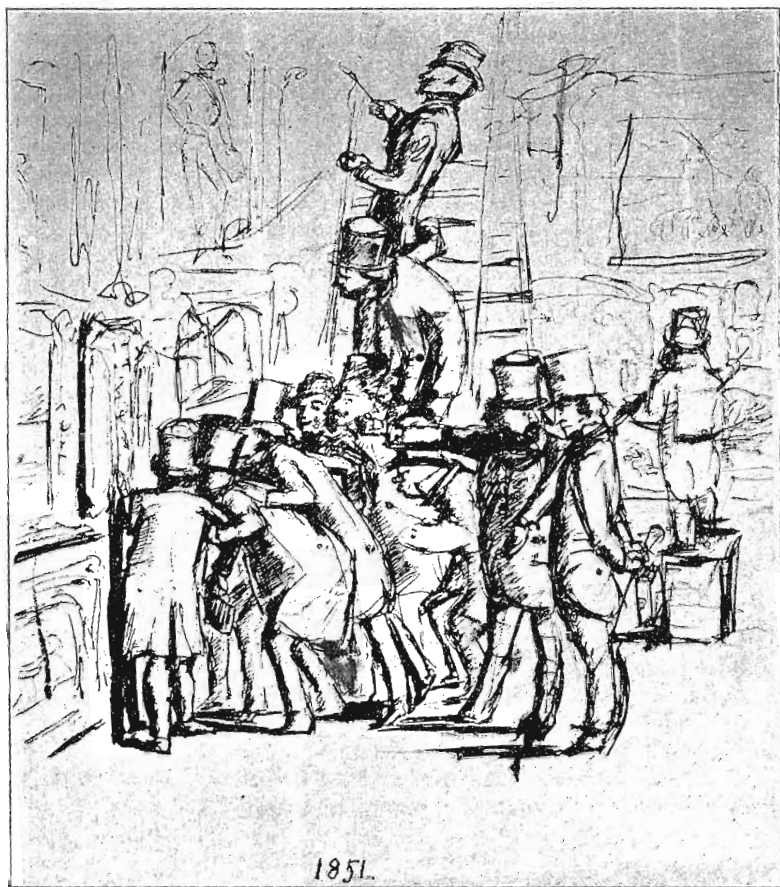
¹ Page 250.

we found that the storm of abuse of last year was now turned into a hurricane. The following quotations will illustrate the studied determination to destroy us altogether:—

"We cannot censure at present as amply or as strongly as we desire to do, that strange disorder of the mind or the eyes which continues to rage with unabated absurdity among a class of juvenile artists who style themselves P.R.B., which, being interpreted, means *Pre-Raphael-brethren*. Their faith seems to consist in an absolute contempt for perspective and the known laws of light and shade, an aversion to beauty in every shape, and a singular devotion to the minute accidents of their subjects, including, or rather seeking out, every excess of sharpness and deformity. Mr. Millais, Mr. Hunt, Mr. Collins—and in some degree—Mr. Brown, the author of a huge picture of Chaucer, have undertaken to reform the art on these principles. The Council of the Academy, acting in a spirit of toleration and indulgence to young artists, have now allowed these extravagances to disgrace their walls for the last three years, and though we cannot prevent men who are capable of better things from wasting their talents on ugliness and conceit, the public may fairly require that such offensive jests should not continue to be exposed as specimens of the waywardness of these artists who have relapsed into the infancy of their profession.

"In the North Room will be found, too, Mr. Millais' picture of 'The Woodman's Daughter,' from some verses by Mr. Coventry Patmore, and as the same remarks will apply to the other pictures of the same artist, 'The Return of the Dove to the Ark' (651), and Tennyson's 'Mariana' (561), as well as to similar works by Mr. Collins, as 'Convent Thoughts' (493), and to Mr. Hunt's 'Valentine receiving Proteus' (*sic*) (59), we shall venture to express our opinion on them all in this place. These young artists have unfortunately become notorious by addicting themselves to an antiquated style and an affected simplicity in Painting, which is to genuine art what the mediæval ballads and designs in *Punch* are to Chaucer and Giotto. With the utmost readiness to humour even the caprices of Art when they bear the stamp of originality and genius, we can extend no toleration to a mere servile imitation of the cramped style, false perspective, and crude colour of remote antiquity. We do not want to see what Fuseli termed drapery 'snapped instead of folded,' faces bloated into apoplexy or extenuated to skeletons, colour borrowed from the jars in a druggist's shop, and expression

forced into caricature. It is said that the gentlemen have the power to do better things, and we are referred in proof of their handicraft to the mistaken skill with which they have transferred



J. E. Millais.

VARNISHING MORNING.

to canvas the hay which lined the lofts in Noah's Ark, the brown leaves of the coppice where Sylvia strayed, and the prim vegetables of a monastic garden. But we must doubt a capacity of which we have seen so little proof, and if any such capacity did

ever exist in them, we fear that it has already been overlaid by mannerism and conceit. To become great in art, it has been said that a painter must become as a little child, though not childish, but the authors of these offensive and absurd productions have continued to combine the puerility or infancy of their art with the uppishness and self-sufficiency of a different period of life. That morbid infatuation which sacrifices truth, beauty, and genuine feeling to mere eccentricity deserves no quarter at the hands of the public, and though the patronage of art is sometimes lavished on oddity as profusely as on higher qualities, these monkish follies have no more real claim to figure in any decent collection of English paintings than the aberrations of intellect which are exhibited under the name of Mr. Ward."—*Times*, 7th May 1851.

"Of the Pre-Raphaelite brethren little need now be said, since what has been already said was said in vain. Mr. Charles Collins is this year the most prominent among this band in 'Convent Thoughts' (493). There is an earnestness in this work worth a thousand artistic hypocrisies which insist on the true rendering of a buckle or a belt while they allow the beauties of the human form divine to be lost sight of. Mr. Millais exhibits his old perversity in a scene from Tennyson's 'Mariana' (561), and in 'The Return of the Dove to the Ark.' The last is a good thought marred by its Art language. 'The Woodman's Daughter' (799) is of the same bad school, and Mr. Hunt brings up the rearward move by a scene from the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 'Valentine receiving (*sic*) Sylvia from Proteus' (594)."—*Athenæum*, 1851, p. 609.

Not satisfied yet, one paper a week or two later wrote that although the Academy had been too indulgent to such folly as ours, it was a matter for congratulation that no gentleman of taste who valued his reputation would purchase such atrocious examples of art. There was only one paper in England that did not join in the hue and cry. This exception was *The Spectator*, the editor of which permitted William Rossetti to defend our cause according to his best light. No stalking-horses were now used in the attack upon us. In the lecture-room of the Academy a professor improved the occasion by referring to our productions in such terms of severity that the sense of fairness

in some of the bolder minded students was so far aroused that they indulged in the unprecedented course of expressing their dissent aloud; but many went with the stream, and one, whom none of us had ever regarded seriously, sent a message to Millais to warn him that he would be cut in the street when next they met. My part seemed to be that of a convicted felon, without any of the pity which criminals often excite; the post brought nothing but anonymous insults, and our further fortunes seemed as dark as they well could be. What was being said by influential talkers in society may now be gathered from examples of the opinions of Macaulay and Charles Kingsley.¹

In the first month of this year Collinson, who was assumed to be deep in hibernation, had suddenly waked up and sent in his formal resignation of the Brotherhood. At the same time he sold his easel, painting materials, and lay figure by forced sale, and went to Stonyhurst to study for the priesthood. He was an amiable fellow and in a year or so he was convinced that after all his true vocation was art, and he retired from conventual life, he then gained a footing in the Society of British Artists, and there exhibited paintings of ecclesiastical type said to be much above the common level. A good decade later I met him one night in the street, and during a friendly talk I gathered that he no longer was a convert to any special church, but since then I have been assured that he died a good Catholic. Certainly he had more reason to feel the pure and sweet peace of an innocent life than many more daring men may enjoy at the end of their days. If I have dwelt too exclusively upon his weaknesses I must plead that it was necessary to explain how the

¹ "Pre-Raphaelitism is spreading, I am glad to see; glad, because it is by spreading that such affectations perish" (Lord Macaulay's *Life and Letters*).

"The result was he had caricatured every wrinkle, as his friend has in those horrible knuckles of Shem's wife. . . . The only possible method of fulfilling the Pre-Raphaelite ideal would be to set a petrified Cyclops to paint his petrified brother. . . . A picture is worth nothing, you say, unless you copy Nature. But you can't copy her. She is ten times more gorgeous than any man can dare represent her" (*Two Years Ago*, Kingsley).

nominal extension of our number to seven had now become a means of weakness, of confusion, and of serious mischief to our cause. Collinson had been by no means our least effective probationary member, but his qualities were not those either of a van-guard soldier or of a reformer.

During all the humiliation which we now suffered, my good father most unfairly had a share of the disgrace, for he was met in the City by acquaintances not too sympathetic to laugh and quote the press comments, offering to bet ten pounds that the pictures would be sent back within a week. When he saw me he asked—not with any intention of making a wager, for he would on no account have staked money to gain by another's loss, but to know how to receive such gibes—whether I thought the suggestion would be acted upon. I settled his mind by telling him that I suspected the object was to get a strong support for the exclusion of our works next year. He expressed, with all tenderness for me, his confirmed conviction that in this country it was impossible, without rich and influential friends, to succeed as an artist. There were too many established interests, he said; "and you have not that masonic bond in your favour of having been at a public school." Another relative, with the kindest feelings of friendship, said that to show talent enough to please partial friends was one thing, and not at all to be despised, but to challenge the judgment of great public critics who knew all about the subject was another and very serious matter, and of course it could not have been expected that I should win such approbation. I had made my experiment boldly and perseveringly, and—well! I had failed. I was not, however, the first in such a case, and it would be wise to give up further hopeless effort.

And, indeed, the case every day grew worse. I had been asked to do illustrations for an edition of Longfellow, and I did three drawings; but when I sent them the publisher declined them, saying he had made arrangements with another artist. No one would have his

portrait painted by me while my name was treated as a proverb of ignorance and wrong-headedness little short of criminality. The conclusive fact could not be overlooked that I was now altogether worse off than ever; that there was, indeed, no further prospect for me. I was losing the season for my most important work, and the loss involved failure to appear in the next Exhibition. Rossetti had ceased to exhibit, and he had been obliged to discontinue work at the large picture from Browning which he had commenced; but by the sacrificing generosity of relatives his urgent needs were supplied enough for him still to work at designs and little water-colour compositions. Millais could more boldly defy our enemies. With me debt was increasing every day. I was determined not to drag on, repining over hard fate, but to look at facts fairly and use my best reason in accepting the consequences.

Many of our literary friends expressed their sympathy with us, and declared indignation at the treatment we had received. Patmore said he knew of no such organised conspiracy at any date against young men, and David Masson wished that he had art profundity enough to be of use to us.

In the midst of this helplessness came thunder as out of a clear sky—a letter from Ruskin in *The Times* in our defence. The critic in that paper had denounced our works as false to all good principles of taste, and also as wrong in linear and aerial perspective; he should surely in decency have had something to urge in justification of the statement that was open to scientific demonstration. I knew that my picture would bear scrutiny on both heads, yet I expected to see some attempt made at justifying the accusation, but the critic refrained from taking up the challenge. Ruskin's letters here follow:—

“Putting aside the small Mulready, and the works of Thorburn and Sir W. Ross, there is not a single study of drapery, be it in large works or small, which for perfect truth, power, and finish could be compared for an instant with the black sleeve of the Julia, or with the velvet on the breast and chain mail of the Valentine of Mr. Hunt's picture; or with the white draperies on the table

of Mr. Millais' 'Mariana,' and of the right-hand figure in the same painter's 'Dove returning to the Ark.' And, further, that as studies both of drapery and of every minor detail, there has been nothing in art so earnest or so complete as these pictures since the days of Albert Dürer. This I assert generally and fearlessly. On the other hand, I am perfectly ready to admit that Mr. Hunt's 'Sylvia' is not a person whom Proteus or any one else would have been likely to fall in love with at first sight; and that one cannot feel very sincere delight that Mr. Millais' 'Wives of the Sons of Noah' should have escaped the deluge, with many other faults besides, on which I will not enlarge at present.”

In a second letter to *The Times* the writer proceeded to note a few of the principal errors of the Pre-Raphaelite School, “partly,” as he says, “for the consideration of the painters themselves, partly that forgiveness of them may be asked from the public in consideration of high merits in other respects; the most painful of these defects,” he continues,

“Is unhappily also the most prominent—the commonness of feature in many of the principal figures. In Mr. Hunt's 'Valentine defending Sylvia' this is, indeed, almost the only fault. Further examination of this picture has even raised the estimate I had previously formed of its marvellous truth in detail and splendour in colour; nor is its general conception less deserving of praise. The action of Valentine, his arm thrown round Sylvia, and his hand clasping hers at the same instant as she falls at his feet, is most faithful and beautiful, nor less so the contending of doubt and distress with awakening hope in the half-shadowed, half-sunlit countenance of Julia. Nay, even the momentary struggle of Proteus with Sylvia, just past, is indicated by the trodden grass and broken fungi of the foreground. But all this thoughtful conception, and absolutely inimitable execution, fail in making immediate appeal to the feelings, owing to the unfortunate type chosen for the face of Sylvia. Certainly this cannot be she whose lover was

as rich in having such a jewel
As twenty seas, if all their sands were pearl.

Nor is it, perhaps, less to be regretted that while in Shakespeare's play there are nominally 'Two Gentlemen,' in Mr. Hunt's picture there should only be one, at least the kneeling figure on the right has by no means the look of a gentleman. But this may be on

purpose, for any one who remembers the conduct of Proteus throughout the previous scenes will, I think, be disposed to consider that the error lies more in Shakespeare's nomenclature than in Mr. Hunt's ideal. . . . And so I wish them *all*, heartily, good speed, believing, in sincerity, that if they temper the courage and energy which they have shown in the adoption of their system with patience and discretion in framing it, and if they do not suffer themselves to be driven by harsh or careless criticism into rejection of the ordinary means of obtaining influence over the minds of others, they may, as they gain experience, lay in our England the foundations of a school of Art nobler than the world has seen for three hundred years."

Ruskin's letter detected a weak point in my picture ; Sylvia's head had suffered most from the Warwick torment. I afterwards rectified this important centre of the work. As a connecting link in the generous feeling of Madox Brown towards ourselves at this period, I must direct attention to a letter written by him to Mr. Lowes Dickenson in May, which appears in Mr. Hueffer's *Life of F. Madox Brown*.¹

¹ "As to the pure white ground, you had better adopt that at once, as I can assure you you will be forced to do so ultimately, for Hunt and Millais, whose works already kill everything in the exhibition for brilliancy, will in a few years force every one who will not drop behind them to use their methods. *Apropos* of these young men, you must be strangely puzzled to know what to think of them if you see many of the English papers on the present exhibition. For the amount of abuse that has been lavished on them has been such as to impart dignity to a name which used to be looked on more as a subject of mirth than anything else. You will remember that with all of us, whatever used to be thought of Rossetti's, Hunt's, and Millais' talents, the words Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, or the letters P.R.B., used to be looked upon as the childish or ridiculous part of the business. But now, I can assure you, that I pronounce the words without hesitation as an ordinary term in the everyday of art. The term will now remain with them, and, in the course of time, gain a dignity which cannot fail to attach to whatever is connected with what they do. For my own opinion, I think Millais' pictures, as small pictures, more wonderful than any I have yet seen, and Hunt's picture is a truly noble one. This is my sincere opinion. I also know that Mulready, Maclise, and Dyce think most highly of them ; so that, after these opinions, backed by old Linnell, who told Anthony that he thought them the finest pictures in the Academy, I cannot put much reliance on the invectives of Frith and such a lot. As to newspapers, you know how much we value them, but I think I see more than usual spleen in their effusions, and I have no doubt but that Stone and Hart, and other disgusting muffs of influence, are at the bottom of it. I have just heard from Marshall that Ruskin has written a letter to *The Times* in defence of them."—Chap. v. p. 77.



John Everett Millais

Valentine & Sylvia

John Everett Millais

After leaving a sufficient interval to follow Ruskin's last letter in *The Times* to make sure that we should not be influencing in any degree or manner the judgment of the writer, Millais and I posted a joint letter to thank him for his championship. The address at Gower Street was given in the letter, and the next day John Ruskin and his wife drove to the house, they saw my friend, and after a mutually appreciated interview carried him off to their home at Camberwell and induced him to stay with them for a week.

Ruskin and his guest had their views about particular examples of art, in which they did not always concur, but they did not the less become friends; some of Turner's work Millais especially refused to approve. The pen and ink designs of modern episodes which my companion had made were highly appreciated by both Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin, and Millais' exuberant interest in human experience, as well as his child-like impulsiveness in conversation, made him in a few days like an intimate of many years' duration. While my friend was there, the literary circle were in a flutter about the success of Mr. Donovan, a phrenologist practising in King William Street, Strand. Tennyson, who had walked into the oracle's temple quite unknown to the High Priest of Craniology, was, after attentive examination, declared to possess powers that ought to make him the greatest poet of the age. Ruskin (weighing the suggestion that perhaps the poet was already known to the phrenologist, or that the visitor had revealed his passion for poesy by display of interest in the plaster casts of eminent men adorning the shelves of the sanctum) proposed that Millais, not being widely known in person, would be an excellent test of the Professor's ability, but my friend flatly refused to spend any of his few guineas upon the experiment. Ruskin, however, urged that it would be for *his* own particular satisfaction, and asked to pay the fee. In the end Millais yielded; and the next morning sallied out, dressed as usual in the most correct style, neatly folded umbrella in hand. As he

entered the establishment the phrenologist himself was busy dusting the effigies of distinguished criminals, and of less brutal disturbers of the public peace.

"I have come to have my bumps examined," said Millais.

"Certainly, sir," replied Mr. Donovan. "You shall not be delayed more than a few minutes by my present task, which I cannot trust another to perform. Excuse me, you will perceive that these heads are almost unique; they could not be replaced. Here, for instance, is the mask taken from life of Oliver Cromwell; that is Henry VII., from his tomb; that is Lord Bacon; you see the great depth of his skull. We have all kinds, you will find. That head is from the notorious murderer Greenacre, while here we have John Keats, and at the side Daniel Maclise."

"All murderers, I assume," said Millais.

"Oh dear no, sir. Keats was a poet, and Maclise is a celebrated artist still living, greatly admired in his work, although otherwise not quite exemplary, you understand! All denoted by the form of his head, sir."

"Poor fellows," said the imperturbable visitor, and pointing with his umbrella, "Who may that old lady be?"

"Which, sir? That? Why, that is Dante Alighieri, the great Italian poet."

"Not of a very cheery sort, I should imagine."

"No, sir, not often gay, it is true; but now I rejoice to say," tucking up his wristbands, "I am quite prepared to examine your developments, and pronounce on your natural qualities."

As the Professor with his investigating fingers searched about the *cockatoo tuft* of his patient's cranium he made encouraging comments—"Not bad, not bad at all; good indeed," he murmured; "the perceptive faculties decidedly well formed, the reflective faculties also very fair, Comparison good, Benevolence well built up, and Veneration quite normal, Weight and Numbers both well up to the mark, Animal faculties amply balanced, the Business organs,

in fact, beyond the average. Well, sir, coming to a conclusion, I may distinctly congratulate you upon the possession of very excellent practical qualities. You may trust to your business-like powers; they should be a good security to you; much more profitable than the poetic faculties, which many aspire to gain honour by, but which often bring unhappiness in their train."

"But what are you driving at?" said the client.

"I'll explain, sir," said Mr. Donovan. "Many young gentlemen on leaving college, and indeed before, often wish to be guided as to the career they should pursue; you possibly wish for such direction. Now I feel grave responsibility with youthful visitors like yourself, and I must be very candid; in a business career I feel strongly you have all the organs to secure you success; you should rise to great prosperity. On the other hand, there are pursuits in which encouragement from me would be misleading, for in them there would be no prospect of your rising; in the Church, for example, although you have religious instincts; and at the Bar, I give you caution, you would fail, for you have not the power of eloquence; and in Poetry, Literature, or in Painting, Sculpture, or Architecture you would be fighting against fate."

"But I do draw a little," said the amused incognito.

"Possibly it may be a pleasant accomplishment as an amateur, but you have no organ of form, none of colour, and you are deficient in ideality; for the guinea fee, however, I must apprise you that a paper will be drawn up and all your developments scientifically balanced one with the other; in the concluding remarks the general suggestions of our examination will be carefully balanced, and this may be studied much more advantageously at leisure than any words I might impulsively use now could be. If you will kindly furnish me with your name and address, I will undertake to deliver this to-morrow morning."

"Oh!" said Millais, "I won't trouble you. I shall be passing here to-morrow at the same time, and I will call for it."

On the morrow Millais presented himself at the shop; all was ready, and the paper, folded up, was handed over to him by the phrenologist.

The recipient made a show of opening it. "Pardon me, sir," said the master, "to perform my duty justly, I have had to draw attention to personal characteristics which should only be studied in private and with deliberation. I would rather, therefore, that you deferred reading it until you return home in quiet."

Millais put the paper deep into his pocket.

"Now I have one favour to beg," said Mr. Donovan. "I keep in this book, you will see, a list of all my clients, with their addresses; it is an interesting and valuable record, and I should be glad that you should write your name and address in it."

"Certainly," said Millais, and he took the pen and wrote "John Everett Millais, 83 Gower Street."

The Professor turned the book towards him and read with undisguised attention. "Tell me, sir, are you the son of the artist who painted a picture which attracted great attention last year, and of another this year which has excited violent discussion?"

"Oh no," said Millais.

"Perhaps you are his brother, sir?"

"No," said the young client, "I am the painter himself."

"Indeed, indeed," he said; "well then, I must ask you to let me have the paper again."

"No," said the other, "I have paid for it, and I can't have it altered."

"Yes," said Mr. Donovan, "but there are some extraordinary exceptions to the rules of our art, and you, I assure you, are one of the most remarkable, and I merely want to note it on your paper."

"I would not part with it," said Millais, "for a thousand pounds," as he walked out of the shop.

For a while Millais told this story with great relish, but when he came to reflect, as Carlyle had done, that there are many millions of people in the world, and that these

are mostly fools, his prudence counselled him to hide the paper, and enforce silence for the time on his own tongue and on those of his friends concerning the oracle's pronouncement. I give it now because the "fools" have nearly all been silenced in their noisy disparagement of Millais' wonderfully poetic and artistic powers.

Rossetti soon after paid a visit to Mr. Donovan to see certain busts of those celebrities which he did not know. "To what particular faculties," he asked of the High Priest, "do you attribute the poetic genius in Keats?"

Donovan replied, "I trace his poetic strain fundamentally to scrofula."

Rossetti laughed irreverently, and inquired further how he accounted for Dante's poetic faculty.

"To scrofula too," said Donovan, "which, provoking an irritability in the brain, infallibly produces the longing for poetic expression." And thus our knowledge of this great phrenologist came to an end.

The "Oxford Graduate's" generous championship was most gratifying to us all, but the Exhibition went by without sign of the mending of my fortune in the least degree. Delay for me would be supreme folly, so I came to an oft-debated resolution to give up the artistic career, an idea which I had already entertained but not fulfilled; earlier it would have seemed like an admitted defeat, now I could retreat like many better men, who had not found the world they desired to influence ready to listen. I had the offer of an appointment as assistant-painter to Dyce. I could have desired no better superior, but I had no inclination to follow the profession on the terms of working out the ideas of another. I preferred to give up the pursuit altogether as an impossibility for me. The question was between applying myself to a course of scholastic education, or going to my good yeoman uncle for a twelvemonth to get a knowledge of farming and cattle-breeding wherewith to emigrate to Canada or the Antipodes as a settler. In any case I should hope to make my life profitable in a career less jealous and more open

to common-sense than that of art, and I comforted my bereaved self with visions of the old settler in the decline of life having children about him, each of whom, with their mother, should be painted by his hand, the pictures to be ranged in the backwood home, and to be handed down as heirlooms in the banished family.

But my companion, Millais, would by no means take so gloomy a view of my prospects as I had done; he was sure I should succeed, and he announced that he had paid off five hundred pounds to liquidate a claim due to his parents, that he had some other money in hand, and that I should have every farthing of that if necessary, little by little, as I wanted it. I was surprised and overcome, appreciating but not tempted to accept such impetuous liberality. My reply was, "What do you suppose your father and mother would think of me?" As we parted he reminded me that I had engaged to come to him in the morning. I said, "Mind you don't say a word of what we have been speaking"; but the next day at his home, when the door was opened, the good couple burst out of the sitting-room crying, "Is that Hunt?" and saying, "Come in here! Jack has been telling us all about his plan, and he has our fullest concurrence." I had quite made up my mind not to give in, but it seemed impossible in the face of such goodness to refuse further. I am as proud now to acknowledge my indebtedness as my friend was ever shy of having his generosity published; it is a noble act of friendship to record, and was greater than than may now be readily conceived, for there was still great risk of our double defeat, and he had only in the last week or two gained freedom from personal straits himself.

Millais agreed with me that for the subject of "Ophelia in the Stream," which he had settled upon, and made a hasty sketch for, and for mine of "The Hireling Shepherd," there was good probability of finding backgrounds along the banks of the little stream taking its rise and giving its name to our favourite haunt, Ewell; accordingly we gave a day to the exploration. Descending the stream for a

mile from its source, I soon found all the material I wanted for my landscape composition, but we looked in vain during a long tracing of the changing water, walking along beaten lanes, and jumping over ditches and ruts in turn, without lighting upon a point that would suit my companion. Many fresh hopes were shattered, until he well-nigh felt despair, but round a turn in the meadows at Cuddington we pursued the crystal driven weeds with reawakening faith, when suddenly the "Millais luck" (a phrase which became a proverb) presented him with the exact composition of arboreal and floral richness he had dreamed of, so that he pointed exultantly, saying, "Look! could anything be more perfect?" and we sat down to enjoy its loveliness, as surely as many thousand other revellers in the beauty of such scenery have since done before the finished picture. Afterwards we searched out lodgings at Surbiton, and in the evening dined at a little inn where we had in the morning ordered a repast, well earned by sundown, but which disappointed us in lacking both vegetables and fruit, because these had been sent to London. When we reached the distant station it turned out there was no train to town, so we trudged home, arriving about 2 A.M., very well satisfied with our day's work. In a few days we returned to Surbiton, provided with all painting needs, and commenced the landscapes of our pictures. Our course when established was a steady one; we started each morning after an early breakfast to our respective places of work, parting at a stile on the road, where we met again on our way home in the evening.

Millais was eager to see how I should place upon the canvas the features of the landscape I had chosen. He relinquished his work an hour earlier than usual to satisfy himself, and I was no less impatient to see the commencement of his painting, so I made a detour in my morning walk to see the beginning of the "Ophelia" background. The effect of his first square of work on the canvas was enchanting; the willow herb in flower was

to form a conspicuous part of the growth on the further bank, and he had to seize the exact season for its richest appearance, but he had to restrain his impatience at the outset in order to settle the relative force of the part actually dwelt upon, that it might unite in tone and colour with the succeeding work, just as a musical performer strings up his instrument to divide with exactness his whole gamut.

For the sake of avoiding the contamination of hue resulting from the use of palettes only partially cleansed from earlier work, we used white porcelain tablets which would betray any remains of dried paint that would otherwise infallibly work up into tints that had need to be of pristine purity. We knew how impossible it was to give the purity and variety of nature's hues if we allowed our pigments to get sullied. The inconvenient weight of porcelain palettes on one's hand induced us afterwards to use for such purposes papier-mâché.

The initial outset of Millais' work seemed so perfect in its delicate touch and fastidious hue that one almost wished it could be preserved as it was with the surrounding canvas, but often what was perfect in itself demanded sacrificing modifications for the general effect.

In walking to and fro we often discussed matters of interest belonging to our position. One of our first talks remains trenchantly marked on my mind in his reproof to me for want of practical strictness in the estimate of a fellow-student's ability. Millais' soreness with me at the consequences of this compelled a frank explanation.

"I will tell you the facts," I said, "about the failure over the copy of the portrait by Holbein at which you were so angry."

"It was enough to irritate me," said Millais; "I never felt so ashamed in my life as when the case was opened and I saw the wretched thing revealed, for the character of which I had made myself responsible. Two or three years ago either of us would have been glad to do it for the terms, fifteen guineas with the panel found, and we would have painted a thing that would scarcely have been dis-

tinguished from the original. I wrote to ask if you could find some capable copyist, and then you inquired whether I thought our old Academy intimate could be entrusted with it if you superintended the outline and showed him by painting the head how to proceed. I assumed that you thought him equal to the task. I had never seen any oil-work of his, and I wish that you had not proposed a man incapable. I concluded that you knew his level of ability."

My reply was: "I am often too foolish in putting aside doubt when a man is confident in himself; I therefore suggested him without diffidence, believing that, with supervision, such a simple task could not but be satisfactorily executed, and you agreed. I strictly performed my promise to start him, going at times to the Gallery to make sure that the outline was correct, which in a map-like way it eventually became, and then I gave up a whole day to paint the head. When I had got fully committed to the task, he went away, and I painted on hour by hour, wondering at his absence, until in the evening I had finished the head but for some possible final tonings, and not till then did our *protégé* return. When I remarked that I had come according to promise expressly to show him how to conduct the work, his rejoinder was that two couldn't work at the picture at the same time, and so he had gone and spent the day in the library. I ought at once to have said that I couldn't take any further responsibility in the matter. I confess that I was weak in not doing this. Soon he applied to me to obtain for him instalments of payment, saying that all was advancing perfectly, but that he was not yet ready for my further visits. He procrastinated until at last your letter came, requiring the picture to be finished and sent off at a fixed date to appear at some ceremony. It was impossible for me at so short a notice and so near my sending-in day to go and see whether ere it went away it required any finishing touches."

"Oh," said Millais, "I could see that you had painted

the head originally and that it had been all right, but he had so worked over every part that the whole would have disgraced the merest tyro; and I had confidently promised my friends that it would be a superior copy! It was indeed a great mortification."

"Well, such experience ought to warn us against taking on trust any one who does not show examples of his ability as a painter; I was as foolishly sanguine at the formation of the Brotherhood. Last summer I invited him to stay with Rossetti and me at Sevenoaks that he should paint a background to a proposed picture of his. When he had spent many days visiting places of interest in the neighbourhood, regardless of the shortness of our stay, I undertook to stop in one morning to make a beginning on his picture. I had only commenced when he disappeared. After a couple of hours' work I went upstairs, and found him smoking with his feet on the mantelpiece; when he said it was useless waiting while I was painting on his picture, I had had enough of this attempt to help him, and went to my own painting, and nothing more was ever done to his background." Here we came to the stile, which Millais jumped over, whistling as he went.

On another occasion Millais referred to our rejection of Charles Collins, when proposed for election as a P.R.B., adding that it had cut Collins to the quick. I argued, "You can understand that the question of his rejection was affected by the present condition of the nominal Body. We two were the practical members at the beginning, and we are the only ones still, in the eyes of the general public, seeing that Rossetti has never exhibited at the Royal Academy at all."

Millais replied: "What Rossetti does at the present time I know very little about but from your report; even when I see him in town he seems little desirous to court intimacy, but I can quite believe that, as you say, the designs he does are full of excellence; his drawings were always remarkably interesting, but I want to see in them

a freshness, the sign of enjoyment of Nature direct, instead of quaintness derived from the works of past men. I hoped Pre-Raphaelitism would give him this, but I don't see much sign of it."

"I confess I do see marks of this beginning in his pen and ink and water-colour designs. Hitherto it was mainly the tangible carrying out of his ideas that gave vitality to them, but now in his invention he seems more observant of Nature. You may have felt that there was somewhat more freedom in the conception of his 'Annunciation' than in his previous picture. To me it indicated more direct inspiration from the Florentine originals instead of their modern German interpreters than before. Last year when I went to Knole I prevailed upon him to come and paint a landscape background, I hoped the study this would give him would purify his conception of conventionalism, but in a few days he proved how little patience he had for any teaching but that seasoned by previous custom. We can, however, say that his early Christian work, being more direct than that of others, is for a beginning, an allowable variation within our lines. At the best we count but three working members, Woolner at the Antipodes is lost to us, Deverell is an unknown quantity, and the others seem to think that our associating together needs only monthly meetings, and that painting has nothing to do with it, while William Rossetti has now no chance of taking to painting. On the other hand there are many young artists who in spirit aim at working out our principles. Enrolment, I maintain, has proved to be an utter delusion. You can't make any one not born an artist an enthusiastic student in any manner whatever, not even, it seems, by continually saying, 'We are seven.' Art is too tedious an employment for any not infatuated with it, yet although the P.R.B. combination fails to give strength to our movement, and in fact weakens it, owing to the unsuitability of our hastily chosen supernumeraries, yet to have had illusions may not be without profit for us if we are now cured of them.

One objection to Collins was that none of the sleeping members knew him, but they suspected he was very much of a conventional man who would be out of his element with us."

"But you see he is as good a little chap as ever lived, with no nonsense about him, except perhaps his new inclination to confession and fasting," said Millais, "yet he does not let strangers see his asceticism, which is only the result of his being hipped in love."

"Yes," I returned, "but Deverell was known to all of us. The real conclusion that I am driven to is, that we must let the nominal Body drift, and while we are working we must hope that true men will collect, and with these we may make a genuine artistic brotherhood, if discreetly chosen. Collins is happier, I think, in being left for this future combination rather than he would be in Collinson's place. His 'Berengaria'¹ and, still more, his 'Convent Thoughts,' with all their oversights, place him at once on a higher level in manipulation than other outsiders."

We often discussed such matters in the morning, on our road from Surbiton to the stile where we parted. And as Millais left me on his way to work, whistling an air according to his mood, I could trace his distance by the diminuendo of the notes, and if on my arrival at the trysting place in the evening he had not come, in a few minutes his approach was announced by the wafting of sounds graduated in crescendo as he came over the fields.

The monotony of our meals was somewhat more than we had calculated upon; we had bargained with our landlady that we should require only plain food, such as chops and potatoes for our dinner, and chops and potatoes were what we had, without variation from Monday to Monday, a diet which did not weary chance visitors. My father came one evening, and after the simple fare, when the tobacco followed, he handed the jar to Millais. "No, thank you, I don't smoke," said he.

"No!" said my father. "I have always been told by

¹ Page 272.

artists that a pipe is of incalculable comfort to the nerves, that when harassed by the difficulties of a problem it solaces them."

"That is the very reason, it seems to me, for not smoking. A man ought to get relief only by solving his problem," said Millais.

In after years Millais took passionately to smoking, and although his fastidiousness in art showed no abatement, I doubt whether had he not smoked so ardently, he might not still be amongst us to grace English art.

In a few weeks we changed our lodgings to Worcester Park Farm, a house built originally as a hunting box for one of Charles II.'s courtesans. There a glorious avenue of elms still flourished, seen for many miles as the dispersing centre and attracting point of a noisy brood of rooks, who wended their long flights to and fro in the drowsy morning and evening.

We were not allowed to go on together uninterrupted in our single-minded labours. Millais had begun in town a portrait of a lady, to be finished at future leisure; but the husband was impatient, and wrote to my companion saying the lady was now at her best in health, and that the opportunity should not be lost to complete the picture. To break away from his present task of completing the group of wild flowers, some in blossom, would entail a very serious penalty, and Millais, after grave talk with me, wrote frankly to our friend, stating his reasons for postponing his return for the present, but the reply was, that if delayed, the completion of the likeness could never be so satisfactorily performed, and the husband pressed the painter not to delay on any account to return and do what was so much desired. This strain was continued in frequent letters, till at last Millais, in no good temper, decided to depart at once. He was away for four or five days, and came back impatient to secure freshness of verdure for the remaining foliage ere the advancing season should have worked irreparable ravage. He spoke with

but stinted contentment of his forced labour in town. "On the last day," he said, "some of the colours of the picture had sunk in, and it would have been prudent to leave it for a term to get thoroughly dry; but I was not going to be subject any more to the importunities of the husband, and I slobbered it all over with varnish, notwithstanding the sure prospect of cracking; in very truth, I don't care what becomes of the picture."

When in town Millais casually encountered John Lewis, the painter of Egyptian social scenes, near Portland Place. He was of particular interest to us because he had recently declared to Leslie, in Millais' presence, that on his return to England after seven years in Egypt he had found English art in the woofullest condition, its only hope being in the reform which we were conducting, and he had told Millais to speak to me of his appreciation of my work. Millais answered all Lewis's questions about our present occupations, and assured our new champion that when he brought his work to town he hoped that he would come and see the new background he was now painting in the country. Unexpectedly, at this point, Lewis exclaimed, "I shall frankly tell you what I don't like in it." Millais said he should expect him to do so, and then Lewis, who betrayed to his companion the querulous temper he was reputed to have at times, added, "You should know that although I think your painting much better than that of most of the artists exhibiting, I am sure that oil painting could be made more delicate than either of you make it; not sufficient pains are taken to make the surface absolutely level. Why should it ever be more piled up than in water colour? But stop, I must have a cigar; come in here." Being furnished with his usual sedative, he walked on, resuming his diatribe, "I intend to take to oil colours myself, and, damme, I'll show you how it ought to be done. The illusion of all modern painting is destroyed by its inequality of surface. Hang, if this cigar won't draw," and he stopped to give it attention with his pen-

knife. "Holbein's art and Janet's paintings are as smooth as plate-glass. Why should not yours be equally even?" And then denouncing his cigar as atrocious, he went on, "Parts of your painting are level enough, I admit, but in your deep tints there is a great deal of unseemly loading." Stopping still, he then broke out into an unmodified oath, and threw the roll of tobacco into the road, adding, "Everything goes wrong to-day. Good-bye, good-bye."

After the completion of the lady's portrait by Millais, Charles Collins joined our party. He was the son of William Collins, R.A., the younger of two brothers, the elder being Wilkie, who became the novelist. Charles had, while still a child, shown a talent which had induced Sir David Wilkie, a great friend of his parents, to declare that he must be a painter. I had known him at the British Museum. He was then a remarkable looking boy with statuesquely formed features, of aquiline type, and strong blue eyes. The characteristic that marked him out to casual observers was his brilliant bushy red hair, which was not of golden splendour, but yet had an attractive beauty in it. He had also a comely figure. While still a youth he imparted to me his discomfort at the striking character of his locks, and was anxious to find out any means of lessening their vividness. As he was one of the successful students in his application for probationership at the Royal Academy when I failed, our boyhood intimacy ceased. In succeeding years he obtained places for two pictures, one of "Eve," after the manner of Frost, and another of "Ophelia" reaching up to pluck the spray of willow. Later he came under the influence of Edward Ward with a picture of "Charles II." when in exile unable to pay his reckoning at an inn. He then suddenly revolted to Pre-Raphaelitism with his picture of "Beren-garia." Changes in his views of life and art were part of a nature which yielded itself to the sway of the current, and he only ultimately found out how this had led him into unanticipated perplexities. He was now bent on painting the background of a Nativity with chestnut foliage and

arboreal richness; to paint this he joined Millais and me.

Millais and I being one day in town, and walking together in the passage from the Academy School door, we encountered Mr. C. R. Leslie. When he stopped, Millais, who had shortly before sat to him for a study



Charles Collins.

BERENGARIA RECOGNISING THE GIRDLE OF RICHARD I. OFFERED FOR SALE.

of a head, began to talk with him. Not knowing the painter, I naturally walked on, but he called me back, assuring me of his pleasure in meeting me. He was of the gentlest manner, and I observed that when he talked he looked upwards and about him, following any architectural line above his head, but he turned to me as he spoke, saying that he was sure Mrs. Leslie would be pleased if I could come to a little dance she was giving in

a few evenings, and this I appreciatingly accepted. It was a young party, full of life and spirit, but this did not prevent me from profiting by the opportunity of talking with the gracious host, whom I honoured as the painter of some of the most delightful illustrations of human innocence ever produced.

To me it was interesting that at his age, nigh sixty, when staying shortly before with his family at Hampton Court, he should have set himself to school again in making a copy, and this of life size, of the two heads of boys near the altar in Raphael's "Sacrifice at Listra." When I spoke to him of his humility in making this copy, he looked upwards, scanning the cornice of the room and nervously interlacing his fingers the while, assuring me that he felt the charm of these heads was a lesson that no artist could study too much, and, still surveying the ceiling, he told me that he had recently for his own edification been copying a whole-length portrait of Lord Cornwallis, and that if I had any interest in seeing it, he would take me at once up to his studio, where it was. It was too interesting an offer not to be accepted; he procured a candle and guided me up to his modest painting room in the back of the second floor, where I saw the copy, which it seemed to me he had made because the picture, in addition to other admirable characteristics, possessed rich chestnut and scarlet hues, such as Leslie himself rarely ventured on in his original pictures.

At this party, amongst several other artistic and literary people, I met John Lewis, who had exhibited at "The Old Water Colour Society" a large picture of the introduction of a new slave into the Harem. I also met the unique and delightful Richard Doyle, a man overflowing with witty stories but with never a word of uncharitableness, who from this time became my prized friend until his life's end. He was standing leaning against the wall, crush hat in hand, one leg crossing the other. He was still quite young, and his face spoke a happy mixture of

interest and humour. Shortly after this time he had retired from *Punch*, on account of its continued attacks upon the Papacy, for he was a brave Catholic; his designs illustrating "Ye manners and customs of ye English" had made his name a proverb throughout England, and himself a special idol of our Brotherhood. His eyes were dwelling upon every incident of the room with merry twinkle, and when in facetious talk with another an idea amused him, he bent his face down towards his chest, thus producing a rudimentary double chin, while he chuckled and held up his hat, as a lady might use a fan to hide her laughter. His brother Henry was also of the party, and both were so cordial that we did not hesitate to ask them down to Worcester Park Farm to see our advancing backgrounds.

It is to be regretted that the interest of his designs in gentle satire of the manners of the day will not be appreciated to the full in succeeding generations, from want of knowledge of the individuality of each figure in the various groups.