

## CHAPTER XII

1873-1887

Whereupon the child said : Verily I am the servant of God ; he hath given me the book of the gospel and hath appointed me a prophet. And he hath made me blessed, wheresoever I shall be ; and hath commanded me to observe prayer and to give alms, so long as I shall live ; and he hath made me dutiful towards my mother and hath not made me proud or unhappy. And Peace be on me the day whereon I was born, and the day whereon I die, and the day whereon I shall be raised to life. This was Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Word of truth concerning whom they doubt.

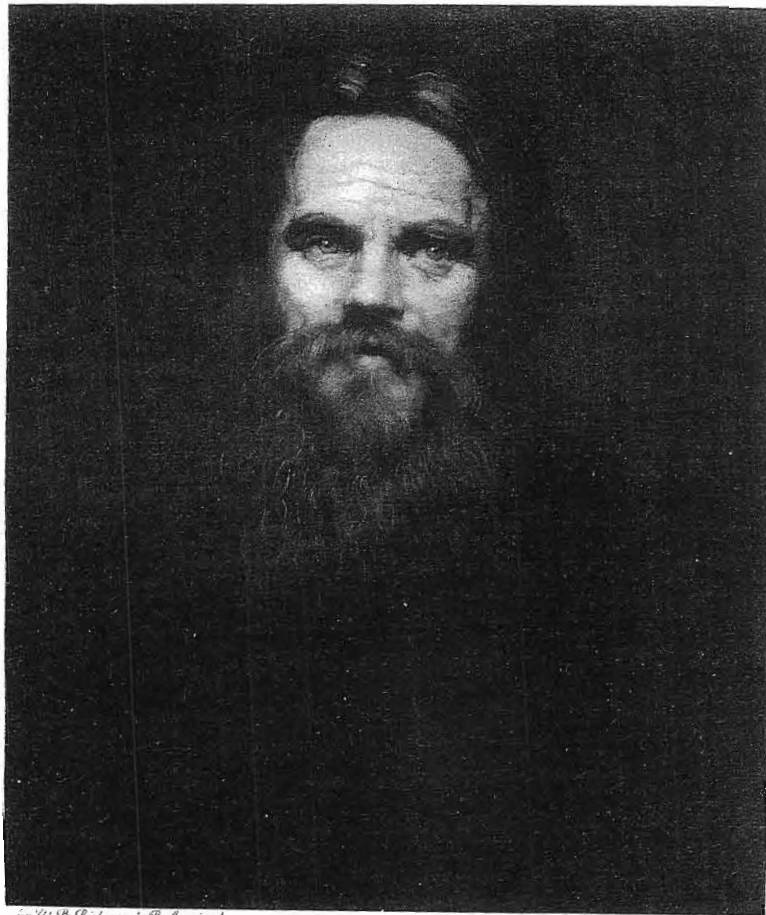
*The Koran.*

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.—ST. MATTHEW.

THE Franco-German war had brought many French artists to England, some of whom had returned to Paris, while others remained here. One evening at a small bachelors' gathering at Millais' studio, a foreigner, being told that I had just returned from Jerusalem, asked if I were Holman Hunt, the painter of "The Finding of Christ in the Temple," which he had lately seen in Mr. Charles Mathews' collection. He said that he had admired it and my principle of work so much that he had resolved some day to go to the East and paint on the same system. I then learnt that this artist was young "Tissot."

I stayed a time in London to paint a few family portraits, and while preparing for the exhibition of my picture I frequently saw my friend Charles Collins. He was much debilitated in health, sad, but always philosophical, yet as perplexed as ever to make up his mind

as to which of any two courses he should adopt. One morning he, in the company of Millais, came over to me while I was at work ; he was more feeble in his gait than had become habitual with him. I went out with him and Millais to the landing, and stood watching them as they descended. It was the last time I was ever to see him alive, for in a few days I was standing by his bedside

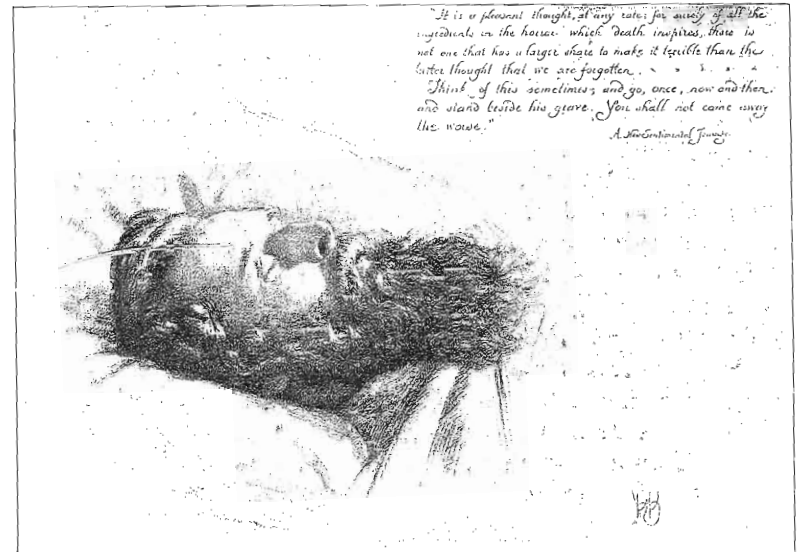


W. R. Richmond, R.A., pinxit

Juan E. G. Engraving Co. Sc.

*W. Holman Hunt.*

*From a photograph of the picture at Beaver Lodge, by F. Hollyer.*



W. H. H.

CHARLES A. COLLINS.

drawing his portrait as he lay dead. This I gave to his brother Wilkie, who in the end left it to me. On his bed lay the canvas, taken off the strainer, with the admirably executed background painted at Worcester Park Farm. For the last few years he had not touched a brush, being entirely disenchanted with the pursuit of painting ; yet his delicacy of handling and his rendering of tone and tint had been exquisite. Certain errors of proportion marred his picture "Convent Thoughts," or it would have been a typical work of unforgettable account despite its

puerile leading idea. At the time of the vacancy in our Brotherhood occasioned by the retirement of Collinson, I judged him to be the strongest candidate as to workmanship, and certainly he could well have held the field for us had he done himself justice in design and possessed courage to keep to his purpose. In his last artistic struggle Collins continually lost heart when any painting had progressed half-way towards completion, abandoning it for a new subject, and this vacillation he indulged until he had a dozen or more relinquished canvases on hand never to be completed. Of late years he had taken to writing, writing a *New Sentimental Journey* and *A Cruise upon Wheels*.

Brown at this time had met with some comparative success, and had removed to Fitzroy Square, where he at times gave receptions, brilliant in the celebrity of the guests, and cordial in hospitality of the host and hostess proud in the high reputation of their friends. Brown was able in the new home to show several of his large works, which thus found purchasers. Perhaps it was his French spirit of comradeship, or his sympathy for all revolutionists, that had made him follow with great concern the fortunes of the Communists in Paris. When they were driven out, hearing of a refugee in London, he invited him, his wife, and his son to take up their quarters in his home; accordingly the three formed part of the circle, and Brown organised lectures and sold tickets to individuals of advanced ideas eager to applaud the leader in the last Parisian revolt. A mild-mannered gentleman he seemed to be, while he explained the exalted hopes of his party's aspirations, the son was disposed to put the parental free ideas into practice in daily life; and acting contrary to the interests of the father, provoked his wrath, who with oaths declared that he would make the son see that he would have no "confounded communism" in his own home. Brown was at this time painting "Don Juan," and his son Oliver was fast proving his capacity both as painter and author.



Charles Collins.

CONVENT THOUGHTS.

(See pages 251 and 294, volume i.)

I soon became ready to start again for the East! As this record purports to give the experience of living artists which should be of value to succeeding painters, I am impelled to give more exact particulars than otherwise I should do of the ill consequences of neglect of a standing rule for travellers departing for a spell of work in uncivilised regions. All materials necessary to the task should be dispatched before one leaves home, or taken under one's own guardianship. I had packed my painting materials in three cases of size and shape suitable for the back of mule or camel in Palestine. Each was screwed down perfectly, addressed with the name of agents and route. I had arranged with a London firm to call for them on the morning of my departure. The van had not arrived when I started, but this did not seem to be a serious matter, as my landlord could be trusted to obey my instructions. The few hours of delay were, however, pregnant with evil consequences, for they frustrated all my thought-out arrangements.

I went to Neufchâtel to be married to the sister of my first wife, my early friend Mrs. Craik escorting her thither; from that place we travelled *via* Venice down the Adriatic to Alexandria, meeting my son, now nine years of age, *en route*. I went across the Continent, spending a little time in Switzerland, Verona, and Venice, and so departed down the Adriatic for Alexandria and Jaffa. On landing, I made it my first business to apply to the native agent for my three cases, which to my astonishment had not arrived. Leaving instructions that he should on their arrival telegraph to me, I went up to Jerusalem. Rumours of impending war between Russia and Turkey began to thunder amongst the people of the country, and the angry feelings engendered among the Moslems crippled my choice of action. The landlord of my house "Dar Berruk Dar" had spent nothing on repairs, consequently rain, moth, and rust had devastated the place and made it uninhabitable; all my artistic materials were seriously damaged, so that I had no supplies in reserve for

work. The study for "The Triumph of the Innocents," having been packed away, had alone escaped injury. I had left Jerusalem on the last occasion with the thought that my absence would be but for a few months; nearly three years, however, had passed, and now I was driven to abandon my ghostly tenement and to take up quarters at an hotel until a house outside the town should be ready for



W. H. H.

MY WIFE, EDITH HOLMAN HUNT.

us. Having suffered from want of space and light while painting previous pictures, I bought a piece of ground to build a house thereon, with a large studio suitable for several compositions which I proposed to paint. The subject, "The Flight into Egypt," it may be remembered, I had chosen as one of those for the decoration of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels at Cambridge, and had abandoned it on discovering that the idea of the service of angels had already been often treated by old masters.

On my return to England in 1856 after my first journey, my friend George Grove had asked me many questions about Syria, and with his usual energy soon afterwards he paid a hasty visit to Jerusalem, and on his return he instigated the establishment of the Palestine

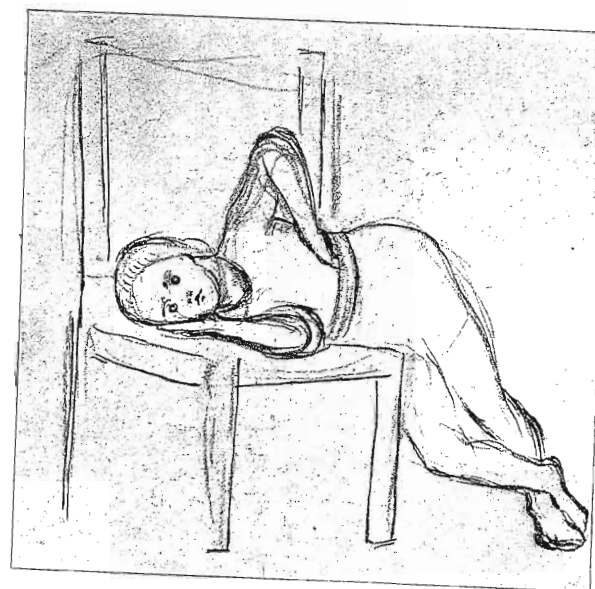


W. H. H.

SKETCH MADE IN SYNAGOGUE.

Exploration Society for surveying land and making excavations. Officers of the Royal Engineers were appointed to engage in this object. Sir Charles Wilson began investigations, and Sir Charles Warren was just concluding his explorations when I arrived on the second occasion. Lieutenant Conder had been active since then, and Lieutenant Kitchener had taken his place, and was completing the survey. In a few months

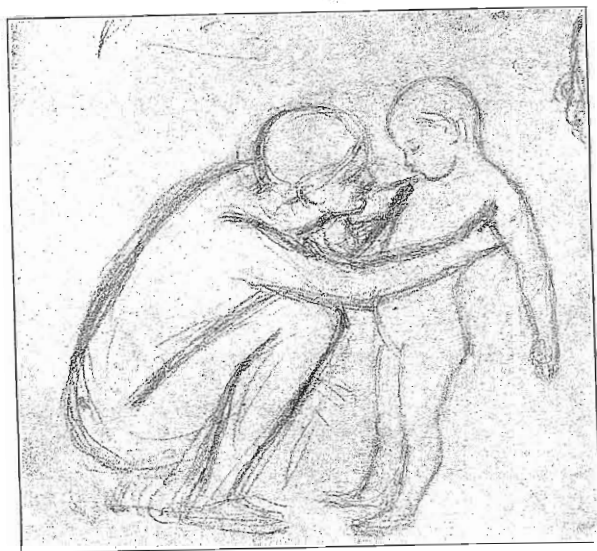
Kitchener appeared at Jerusalem, and remained encamped for a while, concluding his task ere departure. We thus had many opportunities of talking together about the future military prospects of Syria, which confirmed my idea that, after all, the Jews must be restored to their ancient land. I will not make my now distinguished friend, Viscount Kitchener, responsible for the con-



FROM SKETCH-BOOK.

clusions which I formed upon the rival ambition of the European Powers as it affects this question; he certainly strengthened my opinion that any politico-military attempt of a European power to take Palestine for itself would result in its being broken to pieces. None but a people sustained by mutual consent, such as the Turks happen to be at present, and such as the Jews might be, could be left in peace. Seeing that every day there was the uncertainty as to what the result

of the new quarrel between Russia and Turkey would be, the topic of the future of Palestine was pertinent. Sometimes the indignation in the Moslem mind, excited by inflammatory newspapers read in the market-places, became alarming to Christians. Unfortunately, during each of my sojourns in this country a terrible war had broken out that had occasioned unusual difficulties to Europeans living there.



FROM SKETCH-BOOK.

With every mail inquiry about my missing cases at Jaffa proved to be in vain, and my letters from England brought me only bewildering responses to my questions. When it occurred to me that there was no sure hope of recovering them, I was disposed to go to Alexandria, or perhaps even to Naples, for fresh materials, but whisperings of an intended massacre of the Christians, when the Moslems were assured that the English were no longer going to help them against Russia, were too

loud to permit me to leave my family unguarded. The baby models used in my preparations were fast growing out of their outlines. I was driven, therefore, of necessity to search in the bazaar for the best linen to be found there. I put to the test a portion of linen on which to paint my picture entitled "The Ship." I had made elaborate sketches on board the P. and O. boat on our way from Venice, seeing that the man at the wheel still guided the vessel from the stern, and thus I was able to illustrate Tennyson's quatrain—

I hear the noise about thy keel,  
I hear the bell struck in the night,  
I see the cabin window bright,  
I see the sailor at the wheel!

The linen was amply stout for this small picture, and I was therefore persuaded to trust my chances to it for the larger painting. But when pulling the cloth tight over the large framework it rent at the edge, so that I had to stop short of the usual tension, and to be satisfied with a smaller degree of tautness. The cakes of flake white purchased in the bazaar, owing to the great strength of acid used in its manufacture, needed abundant washing. With the residuum I made a ground which in itself was most pleasant to paint upon. The figures of little children which I first painted were mainly near the boundary line of the cloth; the thready texture at once occasioned me great increase of labour, still while my painting was confined to these parts I was not so far discouraged as to think my task impracticable.

When the spring had enriched the land with verdure, I made an expedition down to Philistia towards the south to gain the further features for the landscape which I had not been able to secure when there before. Just as I was setting out I received a telegram from the agent at Jaffa, to state that not three cases of the dimensions I had expected, but one of enormous size, had been deposited on the quay, and could be moved no farther. I directed my muleteer and tent servant to await me next day at a



trysting-place on the Jaffa road, and started before dawn for the seaport. When I arrived there, the mammoth case lay with its bulging lid, and hinges and lock, the latter fit only for a schoolboy's box; the key had not come with it. Through the warping space between the cover and sides the Jaffa mudlarks had been thrusting their hands, appropriating any articles that came within their grasp. On the lid being prised open it turned out that



MY SON CYRIL.

my three poor cases lay within. It was a mockery to see them each properly addressed and ready for travel, buried in their gigantic coffin. They had now to be exhumed, and were sent up separately to Jerusalem. From the day of my departure from London to the time of the arrival of the case at Jaffa, five months had elapsed instead of a fortnight, the time which the carriage should have occupied. I was now free to meet my servants, who were at the place appointed on the Jaffa road. We turned thence to the south, and came upon an undulating country intersected by deep



W. H. H.

SILVERPOINT STUDY FOR ST. JOSEPH ("TRIUMPH OF THE INNOCENTS").

beds of mountain torrent. In the ruts where water had run the growths were luxuriant, in parts reaching to double the height of the rider's head, and near a place called Shama I settled upon a distant view of the mountains with the plain showing a water-course suitable to my subject. Near at hand I came upon the little stream-way, with the surrounding banks, and the village under a clump of fir-trees, the whole of which suited the arrangement introduced in my picture. Thus I was provided with the landscape. On my return to Jerusalem, it would have been well had I decided to relinquish the work already done on the bazaar linen, and to repeat it upon a portion of the English canvas which had at last come to hand, but this would have involved the sacrifice of some months' work, and I persuaded myself that it would be wiser to complete my picture as it stood, and that thus I should sooner get free for another design.

I had commenced the large painting with the intention of making the effect that of unchecked moonlight, as in the original study, but when the large work expanded before me I judged that in the pearly hue of the moon alone, a picture of such dimensions would be monotonous in aspect, and that a supernatural light on the ghostly infants would help to convey the impression of their celestial nature. To test the character of intensified moonlight, I used a lens on a bright night, and to my surprise found that the focus transmitted was not of silvery tone, but that of warm sunlight, and this I adopted. With such a chain of entwined children in positions impossible for babies to keep, the work demanded intense perseverance and study. While the house with the large studio being built for me by a German was still unfinished, I was not able to bring my work on the children to a complete stage. Immediately the studio was apparently ready, I took possession, glad at having for the first time a proper working room. The rains were late this year, and until these should come I had held back 200 Napoleons of the final sum to be paid to the builder, but I listened to the pleas of his friends,

and advanced the money with nothing but a renewed endorsement of his responsibility for the weather-proof character of the roof. When the rain did come the tiles and ceiling proved to be nothing but a sieve, and the water entered, leaving pools all over the floor, while my canvases could be protected only by tarpaulins; this caused much bother and delay before I could again set to work.



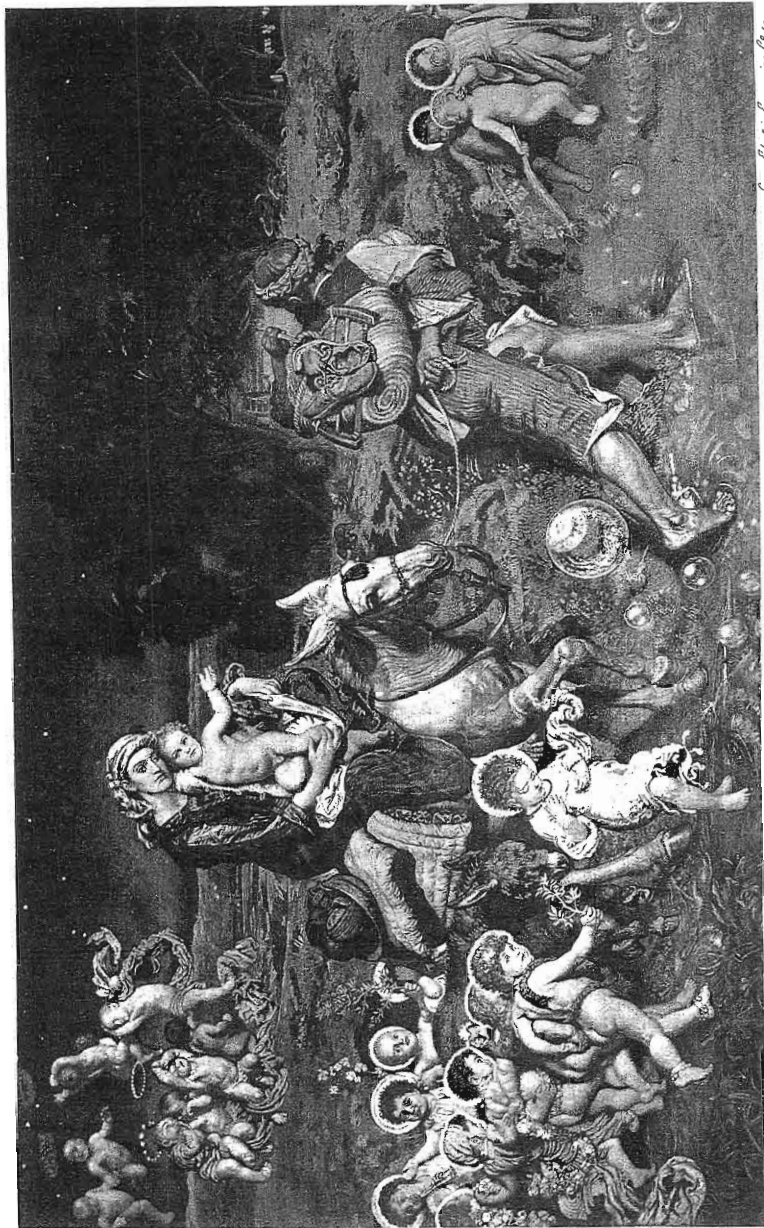
MY DAUGHTER GLADYS.

One morning I heard steps on the staircase, followed by knocking on my door; when I opened it a grinning negro boy was standing there. Affecting a tone of great responsibility, he inquired whether a visit from the ladies of a neighbouring effendi would be convenient, they wanted to see the strange house. I sent back an invitation, and in a quarter of an hour I heard the shuffling sound of many feet ascending the ladder-stair to my studio. I opened the door, and encountered a party of about a dozen ladies, the elder of whom, but little above



thirty, was the chief speaker. She explained with a certain reserved dignity, that they had watched with interest the building of the house, and had wondered at the unusual size of the saloon, and the purpose for which it would be used ; they hoped I would show them what I was doing in it. I explained that I had not yet a finished picture to show them, but that they could see the sketches of different kinds which I had prepared for my future work. I conducted the group of strictly veiled ladies around the room. Etiquette required that whatever I said should be addressed to the eldest wife. The others made show of not listening, but when I had finished, the first turned and repeated my explanations, though, but for passive attention, no sign of interest did they yet exhibit. They gathered gradually together around the grotesque and stark lay-figure which I had brought to Syria this time, having found a need of it in the past when I had to paint one figure leaning against another, or when, waiting for unpunctual models, I had no choice but to paint loose draperies or headgear. There the uncouth mannikin was ! I felt the need of apologising for this unaccountable interloper. When I was trying to speak they over-ruled my excuses with exclamations of delight. Their eyes were lighted up with animation as they declared in a chorus that the image was indeed truly beautiful. "See what a lovely face she has ! What an exquisite nose ! What a beautiful little mouth ! Oh ! look at her ears, and see what long flowing hair she has." One also drew attention to the beauty of the fingers ! At this I moved some of the joints, and also bent the limbs in various ways. As the hinges groaned and squeaked, they retreated, jumping like children with delight, but quickly recovering their sobriety of demeanour, they came back in silent admiration, leaving the elder to speak. This lady, collecting her thoughts, sedately addressed me. "We all know that the 'Image' is not yet completed." Pointing at the time to the winch-holes, she proceeded, "Of course you will have to finish the figure where the skin is

BETHNAL  
GREEN  
MUSEUM.



*The Triumph of the Innocents.*

*A smaller version.*

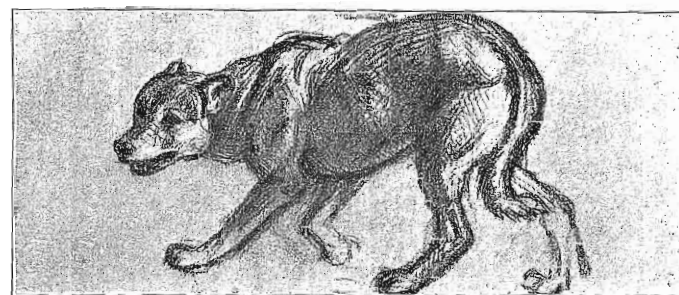
not joined together, and you will have to fix the head on, and to put a little more crimson on the lips and cheeks, but when completed it will be truly beautiful." Exhausting their interest in this big doll, they turned to the painting on the easel. After consultation, the elder exclaimed, "It looks like paper on the surface, but on the margin outside it is cloth!" Then, following the outlines drawn on the big canvas, they compared it with the small study of the picture. "Is that a man you've marked out there?" she asked. "Oh! I see a donkey! What a lot of babies, and in the middle is a woman on a donkey with a baby. What is all this, O Effendi?" I replied, "Nearly nineteen hundred years ago in Persia, certain wise men on the appearance of a great star remembered an ancient prophecy of the coming Messiah. They came to this country to find him, and naturally they went to the king, thinking it would be his son, as he was to be a Prince. Herod had to confess his ignorance, but professed to be very desirous to find the Messiah, and conjured them to go on, and let him know when they had succeeded. At Bethlehem they came upon the Babe and His mother, the 'Sit Miriam,' but learning that Herod's purpose was to kill the Prince destined to be the universal King, they went home without returning to Herod. Baffled in every way, he in time determined to kill all the children under two years of age in David's city, to make sure that his own family should not be supplanted. Joseph, being apprised of this intention, set out in the night with the young child and his mother, to escape to Egypt. This picture will represent them when they had passed over the mountain into the plain beyond, leading to Gaza." When I had finished, the duenna wife turned and repeated my description, elucidating it with, "You know El Meluk Herod was a very wicked king, and the child Jesus was the only being ever born on earth who possessed the *soul of God*."

The head lady asked about the children. I explained to her that the Mother, rejoicing at the safety of her son,

was moved to sympathy for the deaths of the poor children who were massacred in His stead, and that her love for Him caused her to see the spirits of the children, who were in their different moods, at first sorrowful, and then joyful, in the heavenly service they had entered. She repeated my monologue, word for word, and pointing to each figure, counted them up, saying, "Seventeen babies in the large picture, and several more in the small one, with the Sit Miriam, Al Issa Messiah, and Mar Jusif. This is very well," she said, "but on the day of judgment what will you do?" "Ah," I returned, "I can trust only in the mercy of the Beneficent; but why, pray, ask me that question?" She returned, "Because the souls of these beings that you have made will be required of you, and what will you say then?" My reply, justified on metaphorical principles, was, "I hope every one of them will be present to justify me." She looked bewildered, but then turned to her flock, re-echoing my assurance, saying, "Oh, if indeed you can satisfy God the Just with their souls, it will be well with you." Then, recognising that there was nothing more to see, graciously expressing their thanks, the whole troop departed. This interview gave me a higher idea of the intelligence of superior Moslem ladies than I had entertained before.

Their visit had been made during a lull in the bitterness of temper on the part of the Moslems towards the Christians, but this better feeling had probably arisen when there seemed to be a prospect that the English, if not other Christian Powers, would after all come to the Ottoman defence. After the visit of Lord Salisbury to the Sublime Porte this hope proved to be fallacious, for one heard the Arabs saying he had been sent back "with his face blackened." The rancour flamed, with fewer and shorter intervals. My wife and I profited by one of these to join travelling friends in an expedition to the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Afterwards, even on rides of ten miles out of Jerusalem, we were subjected to temporary arrest, stoppage, and insult, so we had to discontinue all excursions. When

the anxiety became acute, the British Consul told me that he was taking advantage of the return to Jaffa of a party of English officers and sailors to send his wife to the Greek convent there, and I gratefully sent my wife, with my son, my infant daughter, tutor and nurse, under the same escort to the seaport, where, as in an eagle's eyrie of the rock-built convent, they found shelter. The fanaticism never ceased, indeed it never died out until the massacre occurred two years later in Alexandria and throughout Egypt, during the rebellion which broke out under Arabi Pasha. Had not the bombardment of



FROM SKETCH-BOOK.

Alexandria occurred the murderous feeling towards Christians would probably have been indulged all over the East. In fact it was the provocation which necessitated the occupation of Egypt by the English. After the departure of my family I remained working with less anxiety in the thought of their safety, for in case of an outburst they could have escaped to a flagship that plied to and fro along the coast, and I knew that I could always join my Christian neighbours in mutual defence. The miseries caused by the conscription and the sending away of the fellahin, bound together by chains, and the consequent destitution and starvation of their wives and children, it would be out of place to attempt to describe here.

I had now progressed so far with my picture, that I

developed the central group and painted the Virgin and Child. In the middle of the picture the surface of the canvas proved to be so irregular, that although in the light suitable for the painting of the head I could regard it as passable, on putting the picture into a light to suit the general effect the inequalities in the ground entirely



Jan 1880

FROM SKETCH-BOOK.

distorted the symmetry of form. I therefore tried fresh positions, in the hope of finding other parts of the canvas more even, but there always proved to be some marring defect, until after some twenty attempts I resolved to postpone work on the two principal figures until my return to England, when I hoped the skill of a picture liner would put all right. I did not, however, come to this resolve before I had spent many a night with candle in hand, testing the surface from all points.

Even thus far I had wasted much of my best life. After two and a half years I returned to England with nothing but this partly finished picture. When I arrived in London, unpacking my painting was like the reappearance of an appalling ghost that had been laid for a time. My restorer undertook to back with a strong canvas my feeble cloth, but although the prospect at first seemed hopeful, it was only delusive, for after all, the original linen sheet retained its corrugations. Weeks grew into months, and months into years—always promising to each new effort a success which never came. It was indeed an evil time; friends naturally wondered at my postponement of invitation to come to my studio, and asked as a joke whether I had not altogether given up painting. When I tried to form a clear judgment I often persuaded myself that another fortnight might get me over the difficulty, for continually some new expedient recommended itself to me as promising.

The thought had grown of late years that independent artists needed further opportunities for exhibition than those afforded by the Royal Academy and the existing institutions.

When I was in Palestine news was brought me by some travelling friends that Sir Coutts Lindsay had built the Grosvenor Gallery. In response to his invitation I finished and forwarded the picture of "Nazareth, overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon."<sup>1</sup>

I found that among those of our party who had been pressed to contribute, Rossetti, still mindful of his indignation at the strictures of journalistic critics, had refused; and Brown, who suspected that there was some hidden design in the whole business, declined to have anything to do with it. Burne-Jones, who had only exhibited at the Old Water Colour Society, and had now retired from that body, accepted the opportunity of showing his oil paintings in public, and gained by general acclamation a crown to his hitherto private renown.

I began pictures which, unhappily, I never gained

<sup>1</sup> Now in the Taylor Buildings at Oxford.

leisure to finish, and made an etching of "The Father's Leave-taking" for the Etching Club.

On my return from Palestine, having no figure picture ready to represent my thirty months of hard labour and anxiety, I contributed to the Grosvenor Gallery the picture of "The Ship."

It was well-nigh thirty years since the conception



*Arthur Hughes.*

THE SAILOR BOY'S RETURN.

of our reform movement, and but little less since the foundation of the P.R.B. Of the latter I need not again speak as regards the full seven; but although Rossetti had long since broken his friendship with us, there was still subsisting the unforgettable link which binds each branch of the tree to the trunk. Rossetti, who never strictly adhered to the original character of our movement, had spread his interpretation of it among his

fellows and abroad, and now spoke of our combination as "the mere affectation of a parcel of boys."

Woolner, after his return from Australia in 1856, had always declared great zeal for unity with us, and desire to be remembered as one of the original brethren. He had lately found himself with an open way before him by the death of Foley and the departure of Marochetti, but to



THE FATHER'S LEAVE-TAKING.

the surprise of many of his friends he dissipated his energies in making a collection of pictures. My candidly expressed opinion as to the authenticity of certain of these finds caused a permanent rupture of my friendship with him.

Millais, from the shelter of the Royal Academy, had gained what was an advantage to his professional position, the reputation, among superficial observers, of having abjured our principles, which, seeing that the ordinary interpretation of our purpose was that it was narrow



mediævalism or Overbeckism, he could conscientiously leave uncontradicted.

Thus it transpired that I alone still declared that I worked on the simple principle of Pre-Raphaelitism, which, being the unending study of Nature, is an eternal law, and the consequence of my persistence was that I was



PORTRAIT DESIGNS.

greeted by critics with pity and derision as incorrigible and incapable of profiting by admonition.

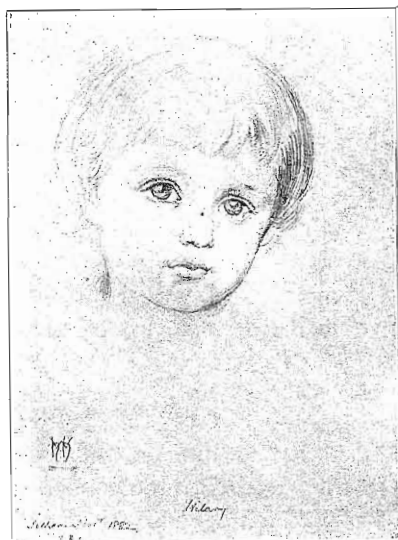
In subsequent years I sent portraits of my son Cyril and of Sir Richard Owen, with other works, to the Grosvenor Gallery.

Observing that the pastel drawing of D. G. Rossetti, now removed from its frame, was threatened with damage, and reflecting that it represented the poet-artist at an age when his earnestness was shown in his face more than

in later years, William Rossetti allowed me to make an oil-painting of this likeness of my erewhile pupil. I exhibited it at the Grosvenor Gallery, as also "Amaryllis" and "Master Hilary, the Tracer"; I also sent there two drawings of Syrian women.

At private views and on Sunday afternoons the Gallery became a famous resort of many people of mark, while the present King and Queen and other distinguished persons gave splendour to the gatherings. Browning was constantly there, being deeply interested in art, an interest which, it was said, he had shown several years before by drawing in the Schools at Rome. After the death of Mrs. Browning his devoted sister became the mistress of his house, and they made it the anxiety of their life to watch the prospects of the son. For a time all seemed uncertain about "Pen's" proclivities, but one day when I called upon the poet in Bloomfield Terrace he showed me a group of still life, composed of a human skull and accessories, which the son had spontaneously painted. The assurance that "Pen" would take to painting was a great joy to his father, and he consulted me earnestly as to the course to be followed, but on a subsequent occasion he told me that he had been advised to send him to study in Belgium. After a few seasons some examples of his son's work were seen in the Grosvenor Gallery, when the poet expressed great gratification at any recognition of their merits. By this date Browning was an honoured celebrity. Some of his original champions were confessedly displeased in that he seemed to approve the fashionable admiration of London society rather than their own, and words were wafted about expressing indifference to his later poems. Once when I was talking to the poet I chanced to mention the name of Rossetti; he suddenly flamed up, saying, "That is a man I will never forgive; he is unpardonable." I replied: "Certainly I do not wish to pose as one of his numerous idolaters, but he has this great merit in my eyes, that he was the first who introduced me to your poetry, and that

is many years ago." But Browning was still irate, declaring that he had no patience with him, and would never overlook his insolence. I did not inquire further about the exact cause of offence. It is possible that Rossetti, originally nearly as great an enthusiast for Mrs. Browning as for the poet himself, had recently uttered something derogatory to her as well as to the poet, and his



MY SON HILARY.

verdict that "Browning and poetry had parted company for ever" could scarcely have escaped the poet's ear.

While I was working on my "Innocents" picture in a Chelsea studio, my wife chanced to meet the owner of the house in Cheyne Walk in which I had painted "The Light of the World," and as she expressed her wish to visit the old studio of early days, Mr. Tylor, the proprietor (who from that day became, with his family, valued friends), arranged the visit. It was dark when we sallied forth towards the house, which happened then to be unoccupied. As we

approached the old building I looked at the blank windows with singular interest; no sign of light and life could be seen there, and all was dark and silent as we turned the corner to the side entrance. Ascending the steps, I knocked at the once familiar door. The sound could be heard reverberating through the vacant passages, but no approaching steps came in response. Thinking that



MY DAUGHTER GLADYS.

perhaps the caretaker was asleep, our friend rapped again more noisily than I had done, but we listened in vain; the only echoes spoke of deserted chambers and untrodden stairs. As a prelude to our half-formed determination to abandon further attempt, we made one final appeal with a force which resounded in the street, when suddenly a man appeared from the opposite side, who proved to be the caretaker. He said that he had not expected us so soon, and as he had not the key with him he could not open the door from outside, however, he would climb the

garden wall, and so get into the house and open it to us. We had not long to wait before we heard the noise of his movements in the room below. We could trace him ascending the stairs, followed by the hollow sound of advancing steps; the bolts were gratingly withdrawn, the key was turned, the chain disentangled and dropped. The door at last was thrown open, and the caretaker, tall and upright, stood in the void with a lantern in his left hand. I think we all looked somewhat startled at the strangeness of his appearance, for he seemed to think an apology necessary. "I could find no proper candlestick, sir," he said, "and as this old lantern happened to be handy, I thought you would rather I brought it than that you should be kept waiting; it will light you over the house." He led us up the stairs so many of my friends had ascended and descended. On the landing he turned aside into the well-remembered room of my early fortunes and misfortunes. Walking before us, he finally stood, lantern in hand, in innocent ignorance of its fitness, in the very place where my model had stood to receive the conflicting lights that expressed the meaning of my picture. After leading us through all the vacant rooms and showing us these by the light of the lantern, he went down the stairs and let us into the street, and we left, hearing him bolting and barring the door again.

In the midst of my torments with the canvas, typhoid fever assailed me, resulting from a visit to Paris, and had it not been for the unwearied, skilful, and affectionate attention of Sir William Gull, I believe the attack would have ended my days. When after ten weeks I was restored to convalescence, and was able to go to my picture, I began with fresh patience, but in a month or two I asked Millais to come and help me decide whether I should give up the subject altogether, as one which seemed as though all the devils in hell would not let me bring it to conclusion; or take up some other of my many reserved subjects, or recommence this same composition on a new canvas. He came with the best heart to advise

me. When he stood before the work he was moved, after much pondering, to say that he thought it would be most unwise to abandon the picture with so little in it still to be completed. "I can see," he said, "that at present the part



PORTRAIT DESIGN.

on which you have to paint the principal group is quite impracticable, but I know a man who would put it right and make it tight as a drum." Despite my own doubts, I slowly acquiesced, and at last agreed to try his method, and sent the canvas to a restorer once more. It came back apparently quite sound, and I began with new hope, and progressed for some time with continuing determina-

tion. At this time a member of the Royal Academy wrote a letter to *The Times*, in which he declared that the Institution was absolutely perfect in its constitution and in the exercise of its powers. The writer was one who had in 1863, ere he was a member, signed a memorial to the Royal Commissioners praying that the Body should be radically reformed. Since he and most of the other petitioners had been elected, no changes, not even those required by the Royal Commissioners, had been made. I felt that the writer's statement, for the ultimate good of art, must be controverted; I was allowed by the impartial editor to remonstrate and to propose reforms which might suit the Institution to the altered circumstances of the age; with such effect that ultimately I silenced all the defenders of the existing management. A while after this I encountered Ruskin, who asked me with great sympathy about my present labours. He came to see the picture, and I was glad to show it to him. His enthusiasm was great, and shortly afterwards he devoted to it a passage of consummate eloquence in an Oxford lecture.

Later, the defective part of my canvas proved that the wrinkled linen had been distended by the restorer over some soft composition, which gave way under the slight pressure of painting. After eight months more fruitless work, again I had to give it up. My long-continued difficulties and feverish anxiety, which caused still further diminution of my means, had made a heavy drain upon my finances; true friends, however, came to the rescue, and I was able to continue the battle against evil fate. This time I determined to recommence the design on a new and somewhat enlarged canvas; feeling the necessity of progressing apace with the second painting, and fearing that, while much remained to be done, I might grow disheartened at the amount of this repetition work in favour of some fresh subject, I toiled without intermission. At first I made quick progress, but insomnia ensued, and was not long in bringing other penalties. Walking to my studio one morning, breathlessness overtook me; I could

not understand this failure, and applied to my dear adviser, Sir William Gull, who gave me temporary relief.

I rested in Switzerland for a time before returning to my studio, where I persevered, until in the following year the long-delayed work was completed. Through the good offices of my kind friend Mr. George Lillie Craik, arrangements were made with the Fine Arts Society for the exhibition of the picture.

The passage before referred to, in one of Ruskin's lectures on *The Art of England*, which had been delivered several months before, must here be introduced to give the fullest description of the purpose I had tried to enshrine in my painting:—

“For all human loss and pain there is no comfort, no interpretation worth a thought, except only in the doctrine of the Resurrection; of which doctrine, remember, it is an immutable historical fact that all the beautiful work, and all the happy existence of mankind, hitherto, has depended on, or consisted in, the hope of it.

“The picture of which I came to-day chiefly to speak, as a symbol of that doctrine, was incomplete when I saw it, and is so still; but enough was done to constitute it the most important work of Hunt's life, as yet; and if health is granted to him for its completion, it will, both in reality and in esteem, be the greatest religious painting of our time.

“You know that in the most beautiful former conceptions of the Flight into Egypt, the Holy Family were always represented as watched over and ministered to by attendant angels. But only the safety and peace of the Divine Child and its mother are thought of. No sadness or wonder of meditation returns to the desolate homes of Bethlehem.

“But in this English picture all the story of the escape, as of the flight, is told in fulness of peace and yet of compassion. The travel is in the dead of the night, the way unseen and unknown; but, partly stooping from the starlight, and partly floating on the desert mirage, move with the Holy Family the glorified souls of the Innocents. Clear in celestial light and gathered into child-garlands of gladness, they look to the Child in whom they live, and yet for whom they die. Waters of the River of Life flow before on the sands; the Christ stretches out His arms to the nearest of them—leaning from His mother's breast.





plete the central portion of the composition, and finish it to my satisfaction. The two pictures have many differences, both in colour and form. It was an occasion of the greatest joy to me when both of them were completely finished, and I had no longer to fear the possibility of further painful surprises. The first finished picture was exhibited in Bond Street, and reproduced by photo-gravure. In this print the forms, even to their exact parts, were delightfully perfect, they could not have been better ; but the light and shade were so wanting in several particulars (which, it turned out, could not be corrected on the plate itself) that on each artist's proof it was necessary to remedy the defects by work of hand. Unspeakable was the relief when at last I could turn away from the subject and was free for other work. The next season, at the invitation of the Fine Arts Society, I gathered together all my available works. The "Rienzi,"<sup>1</sup> in consequence of the damage occasioned by the ignorant varnishing of some previous possessor, could not be included in the Exhibition until some time after the opening day, when I had repaired the defects. Beyond this, unfortunately "The Light of the World" proved to be much more injured, so that if I had not been alive to attend to it, it would have been irretrievably lost. It had been, since 1876, placed over hot-air pipes, and these had been frizzling the painting, so that parts of the surface were drawn up like little shells. This had been going on from unavoidable oversight, and had been unsuspected owing to the dark place the picture occupied. I restored the whole of the damage as it could have been done by no other person, but the complete reparation of minute defects had to be deferred until after the close of the Exhibition.

<sup>1</sup> Now the property of Thomas Clarke, Esq., of Liverpool.