

CHAPTER XVI

RETROSPECT

There is a haughty courage, an elevation of thought, a greatness of taste, a love of liberty, a simplicity and honesty amongst us, which we inherit from our ancestors, and which belong to us as Englishmen; . . . I will only instance Shakespeare and Milton, the one for dramatic, the other for epic poetry, and leave them to seat themselves at the table of fame amongst the most illustrious of the ancients. A time may come when the future writers may be able to add the name of an English painter.—JONATHAN RICHARDSON, 1792, p. 92.

Alas, it is not with the weapons of argument, but with those of jealousy and abuse that the battle is fought, when any contest arises about poetry.—ERASMUS.

. . . That pioneer their kind,
And break a pathway to those unknown realms,
That in the earth's broad shadow lie enthralled;

It is God's day, it is Columbus's.
A lavish day! One day, with life and heart,
Is more than time enough to find a world.

J. RUSSELL LOWELL.

IN the *Contemporary Review* it was needful to show that beyond Millais, Rossetti, Woolner, and myself, the others did not demand mention. But by way of saving the susceptibility of the lapsed members, I dwelt upon the case of Collinson, who, although a practical painter, could be cited as one not of a nature to enter into our fight. These sleeping brothers still continue, however, to cry out "We are seven!"

Nurses look forward to the time when infants begin "to take notice," some infants there are who go beyond

the stage of babyhood without developing this instinct, some indeed (otherwise of great ability) go through life without the power of observation, in fact men, with a consuming faith that they have nothing to learn, never acquire this useful faculty. Yet it may be seen that many such collect the records of others, handing them on, perhaps unconsciously, as observations of their own. Only thus can we explain the errata of the voluble novices of our Brotherhood.

I am now bound to examine salient examples of their misinterpretation of P.R.B. purpose. W. M. Rossetti writes:—"One of the original drawings and slight paintings done under Brown's eye by D. G. Rossetti early in 1848, and already referred to as a drawing of a long narrow shape, in body colour barely a little tinted, with a plain gilt ground; it represents a young woman, auburn-haired, standing with joined hands. The face seems to be a reminiscence of Christina Rossetti, but the nose is unduly long: the drapery is delicately felt and done, and the whole thing has a forecast of the Pre-Raphaelite manner." This study, like the copy he did under Brown's direction, was of the true German revivalist style, one of the mannerisms which Millais and I had set ourselves directly to oppose. William Rossetti goes on:—"Hunt's picture as yet had no distinctly Pre-Raphaelite quality. Millais' were quite in the contrary line." He should have added to his true judgment on the past that Hunt, however much he may be thought wanting in this respect, never did at any later time work in this spirit—neither did Millais, as any discriminating person must see.

In his words above, W. M. Rossetti gives evidence of the erroneous idea of the Pre-Raphaelite purpose, and that he still retains this perverted notion. According to him our discovery was of a road already traversed by certain affected Germans, and among English with different lines of divergences, by Herbert, Maclise, Dyce, and others. Pioneers do not find lodgings already prepared for them! That he cannot assign our work to any established school

is proof that we were not wayfarers lodging at an inn, but explorers of the unknown.

Thus true P.R.B.-ism was not recognised by him from the first, and a surreptitious bantling was honoured in its place. So far for the fact alone, the inference from which is that his testimony of the influence of one member of the brotherhood upon another loses all value.

The same old comrade makes an amusing claim for Mr. F. G. Stephens' right to full membership when he says, "Mr. Stephens had a great liking for the early schools of Art, Italian and other. Possibly his knowledge of the Italian schools exceeded that of any other P.R.B., and so far he might reasonably be called a Pre-Raphaelite." Certainly Mr. Stephens always seconded the movement for modern Gothic, and accordingly sympathised with Rossetti's revivalism, and encouraged the unobservant to be blind to the constant negation of mediævalism in every point of our work.

Millais and I regarded contemporary Gothicism as a deadly blight upon the fair blossom of advancing taste, seeing it was causing destruction to edifices of vital beauty and past history, while to the artist it was paralysing all inventive genius. These two "fellow-members" were, in fact, from the first noisily contentious for their own prejudices, and, at the same time, stirred up needless strife against the true cause and ourselves. It is impossible to exaggerate the injury thus suffered. The resolve of Millais and myself in 1848 to join in the search for new possibilities in art was of a strictly peaceful nature, and if we decided upon a monogram on our pictures as a mark of union, it was only as a bond to one another; we had no pictures ready for such distinctive sign until the formation of the Brotherhood, which necessitated addition of the third letter of our fateful cabalistic sign. Our new ideals, although distinct, were not intended as an inimical affront to existent artists; we tacitly pleaded with our elders for toleration of our new experiment; in truth we were possessed with a sense of indebtedness to the

Academy at large, and reverence for certain of its members. That many of the original provisions of the Royal Academy foundation needed serious rectification was not at that time our business. Until the meaning of our innocent monogram was revealed, and contemptuous epithets were levelled by our new members at the established dignitaries of our profession, no serious sign of hostility appeared against us; in fact, as I have instanced, I met with much friendly appreciation among the heads of the profession, and it is possible that we might have won general welcome among the authorities of the time, and from the outside public, had we pursued our original purpose quietly. It is stultifying in writing a history of Pre-Raphaelitism to be compelled to avow that our impulsively formed Brotherhood was a tragic failure almost from the beginning, and that we became the victims of the indiscretions of our allies. Youthful hope at first prevented us from being oppressed by the thought of the enduring character of the penalty incurred, and we fought still for the precious kernel of our broken shell; but our professed coadjutors kept alive the strife, and those assailed looked upon us as the promoters of strife. Many of the Academicians who had been distinctly friendly towards us as young exhibitors were now persuaded that we entertained contempt and hostility towards the whole of their Body.

Miss Christina Rossetti's sonnet has already been quoted.¹ Samples of Mr. F. G. Stephens' criticisms and remarks when he was writing in the *Critic* we will not trouble to examine; but after his appointment on the *Athenæum* in July 1859, war was at once declared against the Royal Academy and its members. This was marked by a letter, "from a correspondent," headed "The Crimes of the Academy," which in its rhetoric was exalted at times to the finest frenzy:—

Has this wealthy and fattening body done its duty to English art? No. It has always been the patron of mediocrity and the

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enemy of genius. Are not all the deaths from suicide, starvation, or broken heart, of poor and neglected English artists of genius, ever since the presidency of Reynolds, to be laid at its door? If a corporation has no soul and no future, at least it ought to expiate the sins of its earlier days. Should not its paid functionaries, its coach-builders, and snuff-box chasers, and miniature-painters, instead of accumulating useless money unjustly got, have devoted themselves to searching everywhere for stifling and neglected genius, and when it has fallen among thieves, should it not have bound up its wounds and carried it from the roadside to the inn of charity, to the country of charter and monopoly that flows with milk and honey? No, the ghastly razor did its duty; starvation's throttling hand wreaked its malice; the terrible pistol shot pierced the young brain; the dying hand ripped the hated canvas year after year, often within a few hundred feet from where those pompous, bloated, cauliflower-wigged mediocrities called R.A.'s sat at their groaning tables. Slandering the absent, slaving the present, and believing themselves the be-all and end-all of Art. Is there one instance where the Academy had held out its hand to the poor sinner, sinking, worn out with the long buffeting in the Black Sea? Did those silver buckled feet ever mount the greasy steps to a poor man's garret? Did those gilded coaches of your Mosers and Wiltons, your — and —, ever stop to take up the Lazarus of art as he lay at their gate full of sores? Never, because rich mediocrity in place and power always did and always will hate and detest the very name of originality, novelty, and genius.

I will now stop to analyse how this great, brainless, ruthless Body was scarcely in being before it began to crush Barry, to insult Reynolds, to despise Wilson. We all know how it neglected Blake, hated Haydon, and let poor Morland die in a sponging-house; shall these crimes be, and yet no vengeance, no sentence of condemnation on a body which has kept art in chains now so large a part of a century?

Let us take a few of the less well-known crimes of the Academy, crimes of omission—the crimes of commission would fill an encyclopædia.

First the case of Toms, Reynolds' assistant . . . etc., etc.

This letter left us all open to suspicion as to its authorship. Following this there appeared attacks on members' pictures which far exceeded the bounds of critical convention. These can be found if needed by

the inquisitive. A few extracts from a "gossip" column will sufficiently illustrate the humour of the writer.

In July 1859 appeared :—

In Maclise we still see the result of colourless chalk drawing, and the results of gold medal draughtsmanship.

In a book on *Living Painters*, by a writer unknown to us, the following encomium on my "Claudio and Isabella" was found :—

His back is towards the prison window, and out in the summer light there are flowers and life. His guitar, with its scarlet ribbon, hangs in the sunshine. The face is turned towards you—and such a face! He is young, and loves the world; his mouth is the mouth for love, and a brow, a brow for pleasure garlands; and that whole face tells us of weakness and self-love. He is blind to those sweet, stern eyes that gaze into his very soul, and see the craven fear that cowers there. To him death is the fearful thing—to her it is the shamed life that alone has terror. How in his bewildered fearfulness he fingers the chain that fetters him to the wall! To loosen that at any price—anyhow to get away from that. The colour is glorious, so fine that the poor frames that neighbour it seem to enclose mud by comparison.

Considering all the conditions of Mr. Stephens' relations to us, and the well-nigh general hostility of the Press towards Pre-Raphaelite works, it might have been reasonable to pass over this stranger's opinion in silence, had his superior judgment prevented him from endorsing it, but his *sense of duty to the public* prompted him to issue a review of the book as follows :—

Mr. W. Hunt's "Claudio and Isabella," a beautiful but affected picture, and verging, as serious men's works are apt to do, on the ludicrous. . . . The antiquarianism in this picture, drawn from a painful and jarring play, was not thoroughly assimilated, and there was just a suspicion of the fancy ball, the station house, and a broken shin about the whole thing.

Writing of a double vacancy in the Royal Academy the same writer says :—

Will jealousy of the Pre-Raphaelites exclude Holman Hunt? We shall see.

Had he really understood our purposes, he would have been cognisant of my determination never again to compete unless the Academy were radically reformed.

Later, in the *Athenæum*, he says :—

But how could the Academy that insulted dead Reynolds, that would let Barry and Wilson starve, that drove Haydon to desperation, whose annals are annals of shame and neglect, discover the merits of poor Nasmyth?

And again :—

Why should art be managed in the dark, while science and literature are content to be conducted in broad day?

When Maclise had completed his cartoon of "Blucher meeting Wellington on the Field of Waterloo," artists of all classes determined to testify their recognition of its singular masterliness by presenting to him a gold porte-crayon, together with a simple expression of their regard for the excellence of the work. On August 6, 1859, the following appeared in the *Athenæum* :—

The gentlemen who have presented a tiny testimonial to Mr. Maclise desire us to say that the testimonial is not a "pencil-case," but a "porte-crayon." We have no objection if they think porte-crayon better English. Authors of dictionaries translate porte-crayon into pencil-case, and pencil-case into porte-crayon. We are also requested to state that the expression of good-will to Mr. Maclise was not confined to Royal Academicians. The pencil-case (we must be excused for writing English) was accompanied by a round robin of congratulatory names, including those of nearly all the men in or out of the Academy eminent in art.

It will be evident from the foregoing extracts that Mr. Stephens up to this date spoke in unrestrained terms of indignation towards the Royal Academy, and especially revealed disdain for Mr. Maclise's ability. In view of this fact all artists were surprised when in the *Dublin University Review* of October 1859 a highly appreciative article on Maclise's cartoon appeared, signed F.G.S. Mr. Maclise, in recognition of its appreciative character, invited Mr. Stephens to call upon him whilst painting at the

Palace of Westminster. From that date the paper in which he was understood to write changed its tone both towards this particular artist and towards the Institution to which he belonged, until eventually the critic manifested great indignation towards any aspersions upon the Royal Academy. Whatever was his particular policy however, it will be seen that he indulged his pen without due thought of its effect upon others.

One example of this critic's ill-supported statements occurred in my own experience. In the summer of 1861 family considerations made it impossible for me to return for a long stay in Syria. On chatting with me at this time he reminded me of what I was losing in public esteem by not again appearing with an important picture. I admitted that the fact pressed upon my mind only too heavily; but I confided to him, as an old friend, a project as to a large painting for which I could find all my materials as near as the coast of Norway. My composition was to present the camp of an army of Vikings making preparations for a descent upon England. I explained to him the special points on which the interest of my treatment would depend. The main object would be to show that this was not a mere marauding expedition by havoc-dealing pirates, but that these Vikings were emigrants, proved by their use of forges to make ploughs and harrows, and other implements of agriculture, to accompany them on their journey. Also there should be marriages, I said, being celebrated between the young warriors and the brides with whom they were to depart on their expedition. These were to represent some of the happier young sons who were going to seek their fortunes, while others of them were parting with their lovers with signs of plighted troth to be redeemed later by the peace-crowning success of their expedition.

In the *Athenæum*, July 13, 1861, appeared a notice of the Trevelyan paintings by W. B. Scott, then on exhibition in London, which ended thus :—

The descent of the Danes pleases us best, not only on account of its greater fidelity to Nature and the immense variety of incident introduced as occupying the figures, but because the scene is not without humour in conception, and seems more original in its nature than any of the others. Tynemouth Rock, at the mouth of the Tyne, forms the background, hazy in the mists of a spring morning. The boats and galleys of the invaders are approaching the beach, while the first party has landed and is scrambling up the cliff laden with all the paraphernalia of a quiet party of emigrants—ploughs, gardening tools, as well as weapons in the hands of the men, an old woman laden with her cat and other valuables, the young mother with her child, the elder children with their toys. In short, it is clear the party has come to stay. Some of the men hastily erect a slight place of defence to secure the landing at the top of the cliff.

On reading this perspicuous description of the picture, little doubting that the critic had derived his facts from recent investigation, I felt mortified, suspecting that I had mistaken the remembrance of a feature in the Scott composition for my own invention. To make sure I re-inspected Scott's painting, and it proved that the invaders seen from the upper cliffs were represented half a mile away descending on the beach from their boats, where implements of agriculture, had there been any, could not have been discriminated at all. The persons in the foreground climbing up the cliff were not Vikings, but only panic-stricken Celts hurrying to make their escape without either ploughs, gardening tools, or any other agricultural implements. I pointed out the error to the critic, and the reply was that he had had no time to go to the Gallery to see Scott's pictures before writing his review, and that, having my ideas in his memory, he had forgetfully utilised them in the description of the Danish subject of the series. Thus the salient feature of my subject was forestalled, and I had no choice but to relinquish it.

Mr. Stephens, in a special number of the *Portfolio*, published a monograph upon Rossetti, in which he indulged his romancing humour, regardless of the actual

facts. Thus he speaks of the "dismal" studio in Cleveland Street with "dust" and "smoke stains." It had been whitewashed and distempered thoroughly ere our entrance; Rossetti left in seven months, and I within eleven. In this memoir Stephens introduces a



W. H. H.

D. G. ROSSETTI, 1853.

pen-and-ink sketch of Gabriel (here reproduced) with the following words:—

Still later, but of the same period, is the profile portrait of himself drawn with a pen, and here reduced from a sketch which Rossetti gave to our friend Arthur Hughes.

As a critic he ought to have seen by the style of the drawing, as well as from its being in profile with the eyes looking down, that it could not have been drawn by the artist himself. It was, in fact, a hasty scribble done by me when I, with pen in hand, sat on the opposite side of the table to my companion, and the unconsidered trifle was given by Gabriel to Alexander Monro, who afterwards presented it to Arthur Hughes.

This is a grudging reference to my tutorship of Rossetti :—

“He very soon departed from the uncompromising principles of the indomitable friend.”

Even where W. M. Rossetti does not quite coincide in the view, he always speaks in most approving manner of these “recollections” by Stephens. He accepts reminiscences which I revived in my address on the unveiling of the fountain in Cheyne Walk as originated by Stephens, unmindful of my more intimate connection with the events.

When, to show the hopelessness of counting upon indolent members, I wrote of James Collinson,¹ I hoped to escape the necessity of enlarging upon this point ; I am now driven to pursue the matter further, for the continued claim of the non-workers to have been original members has naturally disarmed scrutiny as to the accuracy of their statements, and the ponderous accumulation of fable has discouraged me till now from attempting to overturn the romances. A few additional selections from Mr. F. G. Stephens will further illustrate the playfulness of his pen. Like the “frequent visitor” to my studio when “The Two Gentlemen of Verona” was on hand, who so confidently denounced as inaccurate the swords represented, Mr. Stephens states in the *Athenæum* of March 27, 1886, as the terms on which I sold the same painting that

“It was bought for £128 and £60 in sherry.”

¹ *Contemporary Review*.

The reader will remember how, while engaged on the painting, Warwick mulcted me of £20, and much imperilled the finishing of my picture for exhibition, thus nearly ruining me ; many months afterwards a case of wine came to my lodgings from an anonymous donor. At first I regarded its delivery as a mistake, and left the case unopened pending inquiry. After some weeks I accepted it as a present from some unknown friend. The case proved to contain about a dozen and a half of wine. When I would hide the nakedness of the land from a guest I produced one of these, and on some of our boating excursions I took a bottle or two of champagne for the party, so the last bottle disappeared. To this day I have no knowledge of the donor ; but it has seemed possible that Warwick in some bill transactions, having to take part of the money in kind, had sent this wine to me somewhat to assuage the pricking of his benumbed conscience ; but it is quite possible that they came from a real friend. The picture by young Danby, which I received from Mr. M'Cracken, representing £60 of the price paid for my “Two Gentlemen of Verona,” remained on my hands until my departure for Syria, when Mr. Broderip took it from me at the same price. Such is the accuracy of Mr. Stephens' reminiscences. His further acquaintance with our affairs is revealed in a letter of his, published by Mr. J. G. Millais in the year 1851 :—

“Mr. Holman Hunt was surely, though slowly, following his path to fortune.”

The stories I have told of my continued impecuniosity, years after the appearance of Mr. Ruskin's letter on “The Two Gentlemen of Verona,” reveal again how Mr. Stephens writes without any understanding of the position of the real members.

It is no exaggeration to say that, owing greatly to such misleading utterances, the Pre-Raphaelite combination

brought continuing misfortune to its originators, while to its nominal members it has been a lifelong source of fortune. It is with unfeigned pain that I have been compelled in self-defence to select the foregoing examples of Stephens' observations on the subject, for I cannot forget the cordiality which once subsisted between us.

What M. de la Sizeranne had advanced about Rossetti's priority, M. Chesnau, M. Rodd, and other foreign critics had already said less elaborately, for they all relied upon the same English authorities, who, however remote from the centre, and however little they knew Dante Gabriel Rossetti (except at a time when his mind was unhinged), have founded their theories upon the unbalanced information of either F. M. Brown, W. M. Rossetti, or F. G. Stephens. Mr. Harry Quilter and Mrs. Esther Wood are also quoted by the French critic as justifying his theory. I think my investigations may undeceive even the witnesses themselves. Certainly it will convince the unprejudiced that they judged the question without full knowledge of the facts. Mr. Sharp signals himself by the statement that we were an outcome of the Puseyite movement. He continues :—

So much has been said for and against the Pre-Raphaelite movement ; it has incurred so much enmity and misrepresentation, and, moreover, as all facts concerning its origin are becoming somewhat vague and confused, I have devoted the following chapter to the consideration of it and *The Germ*. . . . Rossetti was essentially the animating or guiding member, as well as original founder. . . . It was not long after the composition of "Hand and Soul" that a meeting was held in the studio at No. 83 (*sic*) Newman Street, the outcome of which was an organised Body called the Pre-Raphaelites, and the organ thereof styled *The Germ*.

Let us sedately examine this confident statement. William Rossetti rightly says that "Hand and Soul" was completed in December 1849. Gabriel took Newman Street, October 1849, left it August 1850, so, according to Mr. Sharp's assertion, the end of December 1849

may be assumed to be the earliest possible date of the double prodigy, the birth of Pre-Raphaelitism and *The Germ*.

The early pages of this book prove that the Pre-Raphaelite principle was agreed upon in February 1848.¹ In the spring of 1848 I began "Rienzi," Millais and I commenced the Keats' designs in June or July, in August I accepted Rossetti as my pupil in Cleveland Street, in a month or so Millais and I agreed that Rossetti should join us as a Pre-Raphaelite ; and further we consented to extend the influence of our enthusiasm by adopting four prospective members, and we then called our body the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The three active members sent pictures to the next spring exhibition, that was in 1849, with P.R.B. on each picture.

The letters P.R.B. on the pictures was the public declaration of our projected reform, of course commenced several months earlier, more than a year and a half before the meeting reported by Mr. Sharp, when he declares Pre-Raphaelitism was first instituted. It is on his delusive assumptions, therefore, that Mr. Sharp relies for his declaration that Rossetti was the father and Brown the grandfather of Pre-Raphaelitism.

The character of the evidence given by both the inside and multitudinous outside writers, who have rushed forward with such eager readiness to instruct the public, can now be judged, and no one will wonder that I felt so long disinclined to cleanse out the Augean stables they had choked up. I might sum up the case more elaborately, but I think any one who really wishes to know the truth will be satisfied with the evidence I have given, and will understand finally that Pre-Raphaelitism did not begin with Madox Brown, nor with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and that it was not antiquarianism or quattrocentism in any sense, and this last is the really vital point. I have recognised that there is a snare for educated people to regard most highly that art which is an

¹ Page 81.

imitation of ancient approved examples, rather than that done with new inspiration from Nature herself, and that they are apt to underrate the discovered truths of their own time. With grateful reverence for the noble creations of previous artistic nations in all their diversity, and recognition of the value to be gained from their technical teaching, our object was to be enslaved by none, but in the fields of Nature and under the sky of Heaven frankly to picture her healthful beauty and strength. In reverting to this question, it cannot be too clearly reasserted that Pre-Raphaelitism in its purity was the frank worship of Nature, kept in check by selection and directed by the spirit of imaginative purpose. Only an inability to discern glaring differences of style, or a perverse disregard of dates, could allow contrary conclusions.

The present feeling towards art, notwithstanding the indiscriminate training of youths to the pursuit, is altogether dead to any thought of its never-ending universal preciousness, and compares most unfavourably with the desire among rulers in the past to make use of the cultivated genius of their age and country.

One matter now calling for attention is the consequences of the abolition of the system of apprenticeship which results inevitably from the influence of public academies. In the past the artist began his training much earlier than the majority of students do in the present day. Fourteen was the age at which the youth, according to Cennino Cennini, was apprenticed to a master. For the first seven years it was his duty, while being trained in more subtle matters, to attend to the mechanical parts of the industry of the studio. Academies give no such attention to material matters, and accordingly the student of somewhat seriously advanced age cultivates the practice of art in ignorance of the nature of the materials he uses. The aspirant is naturally impatient to prove his ability in original design, and does so without thought that he is neglecting a vital branch of

his art. The result is often fatally delusive. The painter, not being properly educated in the nature of his materials, is not able to judge of and use wisely the preparations supplied to him; the artists' colourmen, on their side, prepare their wares without knowledge of the uses to which their customers will put them; each may be working inimically to the other.

The old masters collected their materials from various sources. They knew how to choose panels or canvas, and to prepare their ground either with whiting, gesso, or white lead. For pigments, they recognised the difference between various earths and paints formed by the crushing of native rock, and the juices of various plants, and their chemical properties. They were accomplished in clarifying oils and in making varnishes, and knew how to choose and prepare paper suitable for silver point and for large cartoons for their uses, and all the materials employed in their work. They despised no drudgery that would contribute to the permanence of their work, and when they had grown past the labour of the workshop, they were able to judge the nature of the articles offered to them. But the modern student, disdaining this humble branch of his art, is not prepared, on arriving at the age when he ought to have finished these preliminary exercises, to undertake material and technical preparations, as was habitual under the apprenticeship system, and to follow the traditions of masters whose successive experiences reached back to remote antiquity. To the modern practitioner, the only difference between one paint and its fellow is that one is a bright and another is a dull colour, and he knows not that certain pigments put into conjunction will vitiate each other's permanence, and that several require special treatment in their employment. It is owing to the respectability of the best artists' colourmen that under this system the evils suffered have been so far limited. Yet it is only after many years have gone by that the painter can judge of what he should have understood at the beginning of his career; and even then

there is no established opportunity for him to hand down to his successors the knowledge he has acquired. In the year 1880, feeling seriously that the evil was not only great, but that the consequences of ignorance were increasing, I applied to the Society of Arts for an opportunity to demonstrate this; I gave an address on the subject, and carried on the discussion which arose afterwards. I feel now that much good was done in convincing artists and colourmen of the danger of blind trust in the unprotected supply of the day. It transpired that the producers of colours were no longer small manufacturers superintending all their preparations personally; these had been supplanted by the proprietors of large factories, where each production goes through numerous irresponsible hands. Thus a great deal of fastidiousness in the handling of materials had been lost. A full ventilation of the subject induced retailers, accordingly, to become more cautious than they had been of recent years in receiving materials from the wholesale dealer.

Since the time I brought this question forward artists' materials certainly deserve greater confidence, and drawing paper, which had become disastrously delusive in its apparent excellence, wrecking many a beautiful drawing, has now been conspicuously improved, and is, when made by the O.W.C. Company, quite perfect. Some other supplies have also improved. Nevertheless general matters will not be perfect till artists make themselves proficient in technical mysteries. The mischief entailed by want of drilling in the nature of substances was made distressingly apparent towards the middle of last century by the breaking up of surface in many of Sir Joshua Reynolds's later pictures. This was traceable to his use of asphaltum as a ground. In the early nineteenth century time had not yet revealed the disastrous consequences of using this pernicious Dead Sea pitch, and it was almost universally employed. Many admirable works by Wilkie, Hilton, and their contemporaries, have thereby been doomed to complete destruction. In another century no one will

know what powers of delicacy in manipulation those artists had, for the bitumen, ever dilating and contracting with atmospheric changes, is tearing the paintings to pieces. Landseer's early pictures are already ruined or on their way to ruin by its use; fortunately, in the middle of his life, which was the beginning of ours, the treacherousness of this rich brown was discovered, and he and all sane men abjured it; but even now there are painters who use the injurious stuff under one name or another, "Mummy" being one; for this is a preparation from Egyptian corpses, which were saturated with this pitch. One may say, however, that when used now, it is only by painters indifferent to the permanence of their work, and such will not produce any paintings that merit preservation. I revert to this subject in the hope that the matter, as years go on, will command increasing attention. About the time of my public investigation of it, artists on the Continent were ready to recognise the importance of scrupulousness in their use of materials, for they had witnessed the ruin caused in the works of Horace Vernet, Gericault, and others from want of knowledge and attention. In Munich a society was formed, under the patronage of the king, which did me the honour of translating my pamphlet and enrolling me an honorary member.

When Millais and I were entering on our profession we were more fortunate than we knew at the time in having delicate colours, vermilions, madders, and cadmiums, prepared by George Field, an admirable chemist and manipulator of precious pigments. We used these with well-merited confidence. That ours was but a blind reliance was proved after George Field's death, when some of the vermilions supplied in imitation of his blackened after a short time; when tested these proved to have a large percentage of foreign matter in them. The excuse for this evil given by artists' colourmen was that the quicksilver mines in Austria had all been purchased by a millionaire, who had raised the price of mercury,

and that the wholesale dealer, assuming that any corresponding advance in price would reduce the demand, had concocted an imitation, which they sold to artists' colourmen, without explanation. It was this discovery that first prompted me to open up the whole question, and to show the pigments which were inimical to one another, such as vermilion and emerald green, or emerald green and cadmium. Cadmium indeed at the best is very capricious, and if trustworthy, as many good authorities declare it to be, it is only so when very exceptional care is spent on its preparation. Some specimens painted on a trial canvas in 1860, had in 1880 sunk to the colour of dirty beeswax, and some, prepared by Mr. Dawson (and therefore above suspicion as to its genuineness), soon after became greatly vitiated, while chromes put on the trial canvas in 1860 are still incomparably superior in brilliancy to cadmium, lemon, and strontian yellow of the same date. I must refer any readers interested in this matter for further particulars to the *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 1880.

I should consider that this book would fail as a proper comment upon the state of art of our time if I did not enforce attention to these practical questions. Notwithstanding the carefully tested experiences that the old masters took such pains to transmit from generation to generation, they were not always free from a temptation to unwariness in new combinations of pigments, and changes have undoubtedly resulted. This is evident in the fact that often their foreground herbage is now of a deep brown colour, when on neighbouring objects the light is rendered so strongly as to prove that this part of the picture was also originally brightly illuminated throughout. By a course of instruction to the student such as I proposed, followed up by intelligent investigation, failures in the use of pigments should be lessened or altogether eliminated.

I must not leave this subject without drawing attention to the treatment of paintings after they have left the

artists' hands. The notion is widely spread that an oil picture will withstand any rough treatment. I have seen common dealers use saliva upon a picture to show up the darks, and rub it quite stiffly with their fingers. It is most injurious to treat paint thus, for nothing is more destructive to it. Mr. Mulready once told me that after his picture of "The Wedding Gown" had been on exhibition in South Kensington for a few years, he received notice that the surface was disfigured throughout by the appearance of numerous small white rings, an eighth of an inch or less in diameter. Examining it on the spot, he could not explain the cause of these, but when at home he discovered with a magnifying glass that they had been caused by visitors speaking in front of the work, and that unobserved globes of saliva had dissolved the integrity of the paint, contracting it, leaving white circles exposed; these he eventually repaired. Ever since this restoration the picture, being covered by a glass, has developed no such evil. This painting had evidently been executed with care, no coat of paint being plastered over another, and the layers being limited, for the sake of purity of hue, to as few as could produce the desired tint. Pictures thus conducted are of admirable permanence, as quattrocento paintings testify. But it is to be noted that all parts of such pictures as are painted with ochres and umbers may be perfectly lustrous at the beginning, and it would be unadvisable for the artist to add to the oleaginous vehicle in these clays while the picture is only surface dry. After some years the case is different. The earthy compounds will have sucked up the oil, and the dry pigment will have become again of an absorbent character. At this point the painting is in danger not only from the breath of spectators, but from injudicious treatment by well-meaning ignorants. If it has become dull in the parts that should be rich and deep, there is a great likelihood that a coat of varnish will be administered by a dealer. The effect of this is highly satisfactory at first, but as such varnish is almost certain to be either mastic or some other

spirit varnish with no oil in it, the brittle gum will enter into the dry earthy particles and contract them, so that before long minute cracks will appear all over the argillaceous browns. These, however, are not like the incurable fissures caused by asphaltum, for there is a possible permanent cure by judiciously careful treatment. Should the picture have been ignorantly varnished, the entire removal of the mastic by abrasion is necessary as a preliminary to the careful filling up of the cracks with paint; when the retouchings are perfectly dry, and are made equal with the surrounding surface, a coat of oil, or it may be of diluted medium, such as was used by the artist with his colours in painting it, should be applied. The picture might thus be restored without loss of its integrity. The intelligence of the varnisher will enable him to see that if the picture has not been varnished, and has no cracks, it may be coated at once with either oil or the varnish used by the artist diluted with oil by means of either heat, benzine, or rectified turpentine. When years have dried and hardened this coating, mastic varnish may be employed with impunity, because it will not be sucked in by the original pigment, and at a later period this may be removed or renewed. Even thus protected, it should be remembered that pictures are not made to handle or touch, for the purity of the paint will be sullied by such treatment, and particles of dirt will be driven into the interstices. It is most important to realise this truth as a guide to the officials in charge of porters employed in hanging pictures, for these latter are often, by long want of due control, too reckless in carrying works of art. Attendants at exhibitions should also be strict in preventing visitors to public galleries from touching the pictures. It may seem that painters of larger works than those to which I have alluded as needing scientific care, do not need this caution, but, in fact, the greater size of a work makes it need more knowledge and care in technical handling, and it may be added that any indications in paintings, of want of loving thought and attention, to have the material employed

well cared for, beautiful, and precious, is a sure sign by itself that the fabricator is not an artist by nature. Important as the character of the products used in art and the judicious employment of these must seem to the wise, I have known artists who declare that the ultimate stability of their works was of no concern to them. We need not consider these. Fashions do and must change in the world. Children have often an inclination to revolt against the course which their fathers pursued, and the antagonistic activity of each generation is apt to be thoughtlessly accentuated. Indeed, with the principle of forward movement admitted, rejudgment on the actual requirements of each age must be exercised. Yet enlightened adventurers will stop short when they see themselves approaching to the falsehood of extremes. The young in their daring may try new ice, but unless their lives are of no value they will not skate on it merely because their elders caution them against its fatality. National obligations require that to compete in excellence with other nations we must never abandon cardinal principles, for our art, like any other, has certain inevitable conventions, and if all arts are put aside, certain it is that the stability of the nation is doomed, and sottish barbarism will reign supreme. Our art, like other pursuits professing to refine the human mind, must be exercised with a sense of responsibility to the nation which gives it birth. The seeds of the blossom of noxious or benign growth are equally blown abroad. Evil seed will bear poisonous food, and good seed will bring forth wholesome fruit. Each human act may not, in the sight of contemporaries, gain its merited reward; the innocent, indeed, often suffer cruel misfortune, and the wicked often triumph in their wickedness. Yet when the balance of good and evil in a nation affects the whole mass, a just consequence overtakes it in a way that may be recognised as the unmistakable judgment of the gods, or in other minds the unerring sequence of a settled course. We must dread to perpetuate from the past ideas which savour either of

barbarism, superstition, or false sentiment, and not less be on guard against the festering vanities of our own day, which are blazoned abroad by idle-minded mockers of rectitude. All art is a branch of that spirit of appeal from the Divine to the universe which has been working ever since our kind knew the difference between good and evil, and; like the course of all awakening powers, is beset by deceiving angels, who now, as in earlier times, devise new snares to entrap the careless. In the exercise of her holy function art must sort out the good and beautiful from the base and hideous. She presents the form of a nation's spirit, exactly as the sandy atoms on a vibrating plane make a constant and distinct pattern to the sound of a given note. Every vibration will interpret with equal exactness a noble or a frivolous tone, but the particles must be uncontaminated and safe from entanglement by obstructive elements, and be sheltered from gusts of wind that would whirl the atoms out of their places. But while the temper of the people is of necessity reflected by its art, in wise hands it may be controlled to an independent course and initiate a purifying influence, and help to mould the nation's thoughts, affections, and impulses. Art may be rich and accomplished in power, and of great perfection as to technique, but delusive in sentiment, and its excellence will all the more seduce the mind of its admirers, and lead them to forget the certain consequences of unrestraint—certain, not at all the less, if the work of art be cultivated in æsthetic manipulative powers, and only base in pandering to degrading inclinations. The evil contagion of false sentiment is not rendered innocuous by cunning workmanship. Mawkish imagination will not be confined to professed art powers, but extends to the whole nation, and ends either with temporary disaster, to be recovered from only by contrition, forswearing frivolity and vice, the following of a new course, or the penalty may be utter and final catastrophe. We have seen some such ruin overtaking nations in our day, and certainly destiny's thunderbolts are not yet exhausted.



W. Holman Hunt, pinx.

Jwan. Electro Engraving Co. & Co.

Sorrow.

Twenty-five years ago I wrote in the *Nineteenth Century* that if copyright in works of art were not legally safeguarded, invention, which costs most time, would be discontinued by the painter, and he would consider only the meaningless surface of a canvas. Nothing tangible was done to protect design, and now my prophecy is verified to the full. With few exceptions, paintings are no longer strictly works of art, but only good or bad manipulation. Perhaps the admirers or elevated purpose in the latter half of the last century neglected too much the workman-like part of their ambition and provoked hasty reaction. The revulsion to materialism is a deadly sign. The artists of the new school emulate one another in the repudiation of inventive thought, and this, as it proves, encourages careless execution and neglect of fundamental form, and is allied to a system of outlawry both in purpose and method of expression such as was never before known in the history of the world. Such wildness, gloried in by labourers in what should be the most precious of human industries, stimulates a progressive lowering of the standard or personal responsibility, and must breed increased laxity of principle in social rectitude, until the example of defiant indolence imperils the whole nation. Since works done without a trace of patient study, and bearing evidence of ignorant handling of materials used in the arts, are now put forward as admirable examples of taste, we must consider what has brought about such a reversal of all the principles which developed the beauty of design. The few quotations from journalistic criticisms of the last fifty years which I have had to give heretofore will go far to prove that the influence of writers who have had no other qualification to judge of art matters than the possession of more or less literary facility, has been deterrent and even fatal to a steady advance of taste. The artist who had cultivated his abilities to the point of successful promise was generally without money at command, for the well-to-do students, as a

rule, found passing excuse for procrastination of the struggle with themselves, and therefore rarely reached full capability. The patron, although instinctively loving art, has often been only half confirmed in his personal convictions; and if, when a work had won his admiration, he read a disdainful article on the production in his favourite newspaper, he imagined that the verdict was not alone the opinion of one writer, but the voice of the whole conclave of an unprejudiced and judicious committee. So with sturdy respect for his newspaper on all questions, he put away his opened cheque-book, or used it to purchase another production praised as up to the standard of the passing day.

The verdict of the journal most in vogue was often echoed far and wide, and set the fashion of taste for more than a few seasons. Thus the artist of original work was never left undamned, nor the maker of the trite and commonplace ever left unpraised. If the directors of art taste had in our youth only appeared as unpretending mortals of cultivated education and refinement, and had modestly expressed their partialities, the result might have been of value both to artists and the public. But not satisfied to be unprejudiced observers, they stood forward as supreme masters of the innermost mysteries of art. The present effect of this influence will not be gloried in, in the future. Ah! in this usurpation of infallibility, what injury to English design have not these critics done by unfair laudations of inferior foreign art; often in truth they have made pretenders who could not win respect in their own country take possession of all the enthusiasm of English patrons, and thus gained for a few years exaggerated favour, few, but long enough to drive many much worthier British artists out of the field. How happy were the masters of old time who were allowed to develop their art faculties without such baneful interference. In view of the extent of folly to which the class of art writers to whom I have referred have gone of late, it might be salutary for future genera-

tions that some specimens of the travesty of art which they have fostered should be preserved in the cupboards of our museums, together with the opinions and names of their appreciative critics.

It is one of the great objects of this book to lead artists to see the necessity of sitting in judgment on the fashion of the day, and of throwing away that which is wanting in healthiness or in pure and high purpose. The temper of theorists has led them very generally of late to pronounce without limitation that art has no connection with morals. They forget what inspired the growing development of ancient art, or they ignore that higher requirement which civilisation has brought to us, and condemn the ancient by our standard. Some wise words of Lord Leighton are of value on this point. After conceding that "Art is wholly independent of morality," he proceeds:—

There is, nevertheless, no error deeper or more deadly than to deny that the moral complexion, the ethos, of the artist, does in truth tinge every work of his hand and fashion—in silence but with the certainty of fate—the course and current of his whole career. Believe me, whatever of dignity, whatever of strength we have within us, will display and make strong the labours of our hands; whatever littleness degrades our spirit will lessen them and drag them down; whatever noble fire is in our hearts will burn also in our work; whatever purity is ours will chasten and exalt it. For as we are, so our work is; and what we sow in our lives that beyond a doubt we shall reap, for good or for ill, in the strengthening and defacing of whatever gifts have fallen to our lot.

"That morality need have nothing to do with art" is to proclaim the undeniable, but the latitudinarian application of this statement is altogether false to the examples of antiquity. All art from the beginning served for the higher development of men's minds. It has ever been valued as food to sustain strength for noble resolves, not as that devoured by epicures only to surfeit the palate.

Undoubtedly the art of design often has been defiantly prostituted to immoral purpose, just as literature and poetry have at times made unlawful love and rebellion against just order seem affecting and seductive, and any penalty represented as suffered for such libertinage a matter of lachrymose sympathy; but the approval of such unwholesome pathos, the pandering to such sentiment, is the canker that must wreck all high art, and in certain course precipitate the ruin of its nation.

I will not believe that for more than a medlar season the fashion of mawkish unrestraint in vice will obtain foothold with any people trained under the pure influences of early English poetry. Let us weigh well what Chaucer says:—

But certainly no word ne wryteth he
Of thilke wikke ensample of Canace
That lovede hir owne brother sinfully;
Of swiche cursed stories I sey "fy";

or

Elles of Tyro Apollonius
Of swiche unkinde abominacions,
Ne I wol noon reherse if that I may.

In these words we have the true English ring of healthful-minded Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Milton, Steele, Addison, Pope, Johnson, Hogarth (not to come nearer to our own time), all in different tones support this tradition of denunciation of impurity in art. The argument that art communicates its special blessings in producing refinement is a sophistical defence, for sure it is that a refined profligate is worse in himself and more mischievous to others than a rude one.

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

Refinement should perfect virtue, even as polish does when laid over good workmanship, while yet it has no proper place when concealing underlying rottenness. It is on such grounds that I plead for the responsible use of all art. I am bound now to revert to the temper in

which Pre-Raphaelitism instinctively treated this question. It has been seen how in a quite child-like way we at the beginning set ourselves to illustrate themes which we conscientiously persuaded ourselves to be connected with the pathetic, the honest, the laudable, the sublime interests of humanity. When we treated of vicious power triumphant, it was to excite honest pity for the victims, and indignation towards arrogant vice. Some honest men that I have met have asked me with unaffected concern whether artists paint their subjects with full conviction, or merely as a bid for popular favour. Sincerity or insincerity of artists must of necessity reveal itself in their works. Take Millais as a fair exponent of our purpose; he only exceptionally painted so-called religious subjects, but he loved to illustrate what may justly be looked upon as holy themes. The story of Lorenzo and Isabella, considered on moral grounds, is thoroughly healthy and sound in its claim to human sympathy and interest; their affections were obnoxious to no righteous judgment, but only inimical to false pride and vanity. In his picture "L'Enfant du Regiment," the child sleeping on the warrior's tomb, contrasted with surrounding violence and bloodshed, typified the trustful peace which the building was originally destined to give. Although the work is not labelled religious, it may be regarded as a Christian homily. His "Blind Girl," moreover, is a heart-felt appeal to commiseration. "The Rescuing Fireman" provokes expansive recognition of the Divine in unpretending humanity. Rossetti's early designs were pronouncedly religious, and his design of "Found" was, in the just sense, intrinsically so. These pictures by my two companions would be enough to prove that our purpose had not only a newness in its outer form, but also took up in more extended aspiration the principle exemplifying that "Art is Love."

In fact, those who proclaim that art has no connection with morals often condemn our work on the ground of its double purpose. Still let it be said we did not label our pictures with a special appeal as "having a moral," for we

knew that a scene of beauty in itself alone gives innocent joy, with unspeakable strength of persuasion to purity and sweetness, and the painter's service in portraying it may be as exalted as that performed when the intent to teach is added thereto.

Before pronouncing the last words of this book, it is needful to declare that, notwithstanding what may seem to some inconsistent digressions, it is a history of a movement which strove to bring greater healthiness and integrity to every branch of formative art; architecture, sculpture, decorative design, and imitative painting, which are all dependent upon the use of materials for expression. In the effort to purge our art of what was in the nature of bathos, affected in sentiment and unworthy according to wholesome English tradition, we were following the example of the poets of the early Victorian age. All manly in their vindication of virtue, although some spoke in an over-feminine tone, our exemplars in letters had all been in accord to prune English imagination of unwholesome foreign precedent, tawdry glitter, and theatrical pomposity, corruptions which had descended from the attitudinisers of the two earlier reigns. The literary reformers, still declaiming in our day, had already revived the robust interest in humanity exercised by British men of genius in past centuries.

Emulation in the arts among different nationalities is a righteous contest. The literary example set could not but stimulate us, and the history of our movement may perhaps make the struggle for British restraint more than a transient legacy to artists in the future, and this raises a new matter for investigation.

The doctrine that art has no nationality is much bruited abroad and echoed by the shallow in this day. It sounds liberal and advanced, but it is altogether false to the precedents of antiquity. The art of all days, from that of the Babylonians to our own, has been characteristically national; to attempt to efface racial distinction in art would have been its destruction. In

these days there is still cardinal difference between the national sentiments of different nations, which can scarcely be confused together without injury to one or other. The technical qualities of British art have often been unfavourably contrasted with those of modern Continental schools, which have, it must be allowed, justly prided themselves on correctness of form and proportion, and thus have won from casual judgment the reputation of having the best academies for drawing. But mere exactness of proportion is of dubious account; a lay figure is perfectly proportioned, but there is no grace in its form. Sir Joshua Reynolds was not so accurate a draughtsman as David, but in grace he was as Hyperion to a drayman. Yet let us learn correctness; it will not war with beauty; were it so, Greek and Italian marble would not be exquisite; but correctness may be acquired at home. Flaxman, Dyce, and Watts developed their drawing in England, and in them never appeared impurity of taste. Students abroad run the risk of insidious corruption of idea, and lose shame at corrupted innocence.

Let no sentinel, on our confines, stand aside and allow to pass the derider of national purity, to whom the way has been barred by his great predecessors for so many centuries.