CHAPTER III

In the year 1822 Constable wrote, "The Art will go out, there will be no genuine painting in England in thirty years." And it is remarkable that within a few months of the date thus specified Turner should have died, almost literally fulfilling, as some of his admirers may think, Constable's prophecy.—*Autobiography of Charles Robert Leslie, R.A.*

Since virtuous superstructions have commonly generous foundations, dive into thy intentions and early discover what nature bids thee be, or tells thee what thou mayst be.—Sir Thomas Browne.

For over a year the British Museum had been my main school for drawing, and in the Academy vacation it was so still. In the old days of apprenticeship there was ever the watchful master at hand to save the boy from the penalty of rash judgment, and to give him the results of a wisdom which nothing but a lifetime of experience can furnish. In retrospect, the substitution for it of the self-guided system shows much to deplore; and I certainly did not escape evils from misdirected impulse any more than those arising from my late start in studentship, or the limitation of my time for drawing. But it was a compensation to find examples of strenuous effort in other students. Some would bring anatomical studies done from the subject elsewhere, others produce designs of the most ambitious character with the assurance that these would be painted for the next year's exhibition; our too sanguine belief that these, when presented to the public, would certainly eclipse all of similar nature that had

appeared before, did us no harm. We early organised a designing club, which at least put our original faculties to the test. Sometimes one of the older generation appeared there, Mr. Hemmings, for example, with specimens of his reproductions of the friezes of the Parthenon, or Mr. Corbould with plates from drawings done by him from the pediment figures, and these old artists talked to their friends loudly enough for the student to profit by the information passing between them. Two models of the Parthenon were being made, one as it was when in perfect condition, another as it is now. However unequal to the exactness of modern elucidations these were, they were highly explanatory to the uninitiated. Occasionally the officials entered with visitors of State. H.R.H. Prince Albert was once the august and honoured guest; on another day Samuel Rogers was making an inspection of some new acquisitions, and again Sir Charles Fellowes was the attended stranger. And on every such occasion there was matter of importance communicated, more or less audible to all in the room. Had we known them, doubtless among the throng we should have recognised most of the great men who in that decade were working in large and small ways to clear darkness from the world; no place could be more certain to attract lovers of knowledge than the British Museum. It should be noted here that at the time I speak of, no gallery in the Museum on public days could be seen with less than thirty or forty visitors interested in the collection. In these days I note greatly diminished attendance and less interest in the visitors at that Museum; and also at the South Kensington collections the scantiness and listlessness of the public is disappointing, so that the question as to the truth of the "better education of the masses" can but rise to mind. Sixty years ago working men read the *Penny Magazine* and the *Saturday Magazine*, and one or two other journals, issued for the diffusion of useful knowledge. What do they read now? It gave me pleasure once when an old gentleman stopped and examined my drawing, making encouraging observations on it as he gave me advice; and when he had gone I found out from an attendant, to whom he spoke in passing, that he was Thomas Phillips, the portrait painter, who, as I knew, had looked on the faces of Blake, Napoleon Bonaparte, Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and many other of the men whose exploits made up the history of the last generation. (His son, Henry Phillips, was my good friend, ten years later, and I was proud to tell him of the attention which his father had given me.) Sometimes students came to put in practice their first instructions in oil painting received from a known master. The father of one of these had as a painter stored up useful knowledge of the preparations of grounds and the methods of Gainsborough which he had derived from this great master himself, and the son showed us examples of his own done in obedience to the tradition. They were studies on a tempera ground commenced and carried far in water colours, and finished in oil. An old gentleman who came to delight his heart with his youthful studies whenever the occupation of portrait painting allowed him, took me much into his confidence, telling me that he made a living going from village inn to town and city hostel with specimens of his skill in his paint box, which he exhibited on his arrival, and so obtained employment enough for a week, a month, or even more; he let me into the secret of finding panels well seasoned and sound at old coach brokers. He instructed me which kind to choose, and how, when a panel was good otherwise, to correct an undesirable warp, and how to clean off black japan and varnish; secrets all of which were of great value to me. I mention these facts to show how the want of a master could be made up in some sort to a youth studying in public galleries, when the traditions of preparatory work had not altogether been lost.

Armstead was then a fellow-student. He was perhaps the only young sculptor who thoroughly practised drawing on the flat, and all his lifetime the gain to him

has been manifest. I hope it is no betrayal of school secrets to say that on one occasion for some informality (at Somerset House, I think) he was suspended from studentship for a short time. The Print Room was in the interval his harbour of refuge, and he executed here with characteristic energy a careful copy of Marc Antonio's engraving from M. Angelo's composition of "The Battle of Pisa," representing the soldiers, after bathing, dressing hastily at the approach of the enemy.

Amongst the students, examples of early failure were frequent, as in the case of a senior who came one morning and offered his drawing board for sale at a very reduced price, declaring that he had found out too late the miserable chances of the profession, and was determined to waste no more precious time upon it. He was not by any means the only one who repented of his devotion to art. Many turned their steps towards photography and business connected therewith, and thus found a much more tranquil career and ofttimes ampler fortune. Somewhat later, I chanced to run against a dandy fellow-student whom I had not seen for several months. When I asked what had kept him away from his accustomed haunts so long, he announced that he had finally given up painting; he could endure it no longer, "because carrying a paint box revealed to all the world that you were only a poor devil of an artist." Others, electing between dandyism and art in favour of the latter, were not, alas! acknowledged by her. Their rejection did not always result from glaring indolence, but they were not sufficiently passionate seekers after their chosen mistress. When school hours ended, they were like men let out of office resting from a burdensome task. The real aspirant should from the first be on his guard against the companionship of such deluded idlers.

In every assembly of art students the self-satisfied devotee is always liberally represented; he is generally distinguishable by a more artistic mien and dress than his fellows display, and he makes a loud profession of familiarity with the abstruse questions of his art. For a month his drawing is daily set upon its stand to be abandoned till the hour arrives for putting it away. For the passing day such beings may be amusing enough, but the young artist will be wise to recognise that his idling compeer is not an artist by nature, and will never understand more than the slang and cant of the pursuit, being only destined to be one of the many parasites who in ever-increasing proportion cling about art and obstruct its honest progress.

In the forties there was no systematic education to be obtained from the leaders of art; the best of them had had a hard struggle to keep their art and themselves alive during the days of poverty that followed the Napoleonic wars. Of these the bravest and yet the most unfortunate was Haydon, who, beginning without a master, and with paternal aid continuing only for a few seasons, devoted himself to the "grand style." It was not long before he was crippled by heavy debts, by the seizure of his works, and by all the harassing consequences of unsubmissive poverty, so that opportunity for leisurely consideration of his primal deficiencies never came to him. The grandeur which he aimed at needed the breath of grace and beauty to sanctify its force; the sensuousness which impels Nature's interpreters to combine the stray riches of her hues into concord and sweetness was never his to control the manly and ambitious designs he executed. With small and ill-lit studios, and without means to pay models, he could never do justice to his intellectual conceptions. It was probably because he felt the loss consequent upon having no master himself that he gathered about him a school. He was a profound anatomist, with advanced theories of comparison of lower and higher forms of life, and in all respects must have been a fascinating teacher; he bore his troubles with abounding spirit until he imagined there could be no hope while he lived, either for his art or family. He committed suicide in 1844, the first year after I had embarked as an artist, and the gloom of his failure increased the anxiety of all the friends of young painters. This artist was the last who tried to revive the old masters' system of teaching, yet those who had become famous under his instruction did so in ways as different from his own as could well be conceived.[1]

It is to his courageous pen that England owes the retention in our country of the once-despised Elgin marbles. It was owing to his energetic pleading that the Government of the day invited British artists to compete for employment in the decoration of the Houses of Parliament. It was he who originated the idea of the establishment of Schools of Design to improve the deteriorated taste of our manufactures; yet he received no sort of recompense or honorarium, although rewards were given to his adversaries. His first literary biographer, Tom Taylor, justified his own name on the title-page almost exclusively by a summary of the artist's character in which are these words:—"Haydon was self-willed to obstinacy. He rarely asked advice, and never took it unless it approved itself to him, without reference to the sagacity or information of the adviser. He was indefatigable in labour during his periods of application, but he *was often diverted from his art by professional polemics*, by fits of reading, and by moods of discomfort and disgust." With his wasted blood, let all such bitter condemnation be lost in mother earth, and let us do honour to his perennial worth.

Tom Taylor was too narrow-sided to take in the large proportions of Haydon. His full stature can only be seen in the diary of the painter, edited by his son.

But it behoves us now to consider the general state of

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[1] His son, on reading my remarks in the *Contemporary Review*, wrote assuring me that Haydon used the living model to the last. I could not doubt Haydon's use of all available means to give truth to his work. I saw him come to the British Museum to draw from the bust of Nero, and later I examined the pictures in the room where he died, and I could see that the same firm spirit which actuated him at first had to the last stirred him to study his forms from Nature. Yet in that little front room with heroic canvases in hand, how confined in every way had been the great soul!

British art in the late forties. Landscape till quite recently had been almost the only branch of painting, in addition to portraiture, which had obtained patronage in England, and the pursuit of open-air nature had forced artists to depart from the conventionalism of the system which allowed only a small proportion of light to have place on the general surface of what otherwise was only partially modified darkness.

The example which these landscapists then set, gradually encouraged in a few of the boldest figure painters the desire for more daylight effect in their paintings. It was thus, perhaps, that the English School was led to differentiate itself timidly, but yet recognisably, from the schools which had not been attracted by Nature to her teaching. Still, cases of daylight effect in subject paintings, not sophisticated to Academy rule, were very rare, and attempts at sunlight effects, except in inconsistent manner, might be looked for altogether in vain.

I was still searching for a perfect guide. Though I looked upon many artists with boundless wonder and admiration, and never dared to measure myself prospectively with the least of them, yet I could see no one who stirred my complete sympathy in a manner that led me to covet his tutelage. The greater number were trite and affected; their most frequent offence in my eyes was the substitution of inane prettiness for beauty, and the want of vigorous health in the type of it. Pictured waxworks playing the part of human beings provoked me, and hackneyed conventionality often turned me from masters whose powers I valued otherwise. What I sought was the power of undying appeal to the hearts of living men. Much of the favourite art left the inner self untouched.

I was one of the public in admiration of Landseer's facility, but as an aspiring artist my feeling towards him was very reserved. He ofttimes did works of real point and poetry. His picture of "Peace" must never be forgotten; but in his ordinary works the glossy coats of

his animals do not atone for the want of action, nor for the absence of firm structure. His delight in the creatures of the field, which made him so popular with the sporting world, was seldom animated by the daring and wild adventure of the chase; it was oftener that of the stealthy lier in wait to slay.

Etty, after twenty years of failure and irrepressible effort, had in his full prime become the rage. His "Syrens," "Holofernes," and the diploma picture will always justify his great reputation; but in my youth he had lost the robustness he once had, and at last he composed classic subjects with the tawdry taste of a paper-hanger. He retained a consummate mastery over brush and paint, with a richness of tints and tones that ranked him among the famed colourists of the world; but the paintings of his advanced age cloyed the taste by their sweetness, and his forms bore evidence of being copied with little fastidiousness from town models, distorted by the modiste's art. It was natural at first to look to Mulready as a master who would be a safe example, for to the last he was most painstaking and student-like. He was ever striving to reach finer perfection, as for example in his "Bathers," but his drawing was without any large line; he was cramped by a taste for Dresden-china prettiness, and the uncourageous desire—then well-nigh universal—to win applause for beauty by avoidance in his drawing of that fulness of form which with perfect balance justifies itself. It was the equality of empty scales. Maclise was a facile draughtsman, and a genius with a sterling power of invention; but a Milesian instinct for glamour and melodramatic parade seldom allowed him freedom to appear at his best, as he did later so triumphantly in his picture of "Waterloo."

Leslie, in the front rank of subject painters, was to me the most thoroughly inspired by the breath of Nature. His sweet simplicity, the taste for restrained colour, and the power of unaffected expression, placed him on the level of the great; but he had developed out of amateur training, and was a *painter* only, not an all-round artist; he saw things only from one side, not as though he could model them. The insufficiency of his early teaching was evident in a flatness of detail which would not have sufficed for large work: the two scales of work need independent apprenticeship. William Collins at the last did some admirable pictures, with rustic, Crabbe-like realism; but he had become a figure painter gradually rather than by primal intent, his men and women having been originally but accessories in landscape, and life sufficed not for his fuller aims. William Dyce was the most profoundly trained and cultured of all the painters of the time. He had for several years been driven from the profession altogether by the critics, and had to be searched for at the advice of the painter Cornelius, who had known him in Rome, the German master giving testimony to the Englishman's powers when — to the lasting honour of his nation—he, the German, declined to accept the proposed commission to paint the Houses of Parliament (which, with true British prejudice, he alone was thought worthy to execute), saying, "You have an artist in England equal to any known to me." Dyce, when too late to find a fair field for his genius, had thus recommenced his career. He was elected a member of the Royal Academy so suddenly that the outside world said it was "by command." Had he had a better chance, he might have influenced the English School more than he did, for although he saw Nature mainly through the eyes of the quattrocentists, he was not, as many modern painters have been, a mere plagiarist of their postures and expressions: in his works could always be seen some sweet trait from the freshness of the passing day over and above the culture of the great masters whose living representative he made himself. The pity was that these inspirations from Nature were too often affected by German revivalism.

Turner was rapidly sinking like a glorious sun in clouds of night that could not yet obscure his brightness, but rather increased his magnificence. The works of his meridian day were then shut up in their possessors' galleries, unknown to us younger men. George Harvey each year sent from Edinburgh a painting remarkable for manly character. "Reading the Bible in Old St. Paul's" was a sterling example of his genius, if the fine workmanship in form and colour could reconcile the eye to the asphaltum gloss.

I cannot here pass over Herbert, who had exhibited a few years earlier his manly picture of "The Brides of Venice," and later a naïve and excellent, although slight, picture of "St. Gregory." George Richmond was then producing only excellent chalk and water-colour drawings. Except those younger contributors who employed themselves on subjects of a light and theatrical character, I cannot think of any others who could have been regarded as possible leaders for the student. Many of the Royal Academy Associates of the time have now fallen into unmerited disregard, although their ingenuity in invention will not fail to be observed and appreciated when some of the travesties of art at present in vogue have been condemned as wearisome folly. Ward's picture of "Dr. Johnson waiting in Lord Chesterfield's Ante-room" is marked by these qualities of good common-sense. The fault that we found in this younger school was that every scene was planned as for the stage, with second-rate actors to play the parts, striving to look not like sober live men, but pageant statues of waxwork. Knights were frowning and staring as none but hired supernumeraries could stare; the pious had vitreous tears on their reverential cheeks; innkeepers were ever round and red-faced; peasants had complexions of dainty pink; shepherdesses were facsimiled from Dresden-china toys; homely couples were ever reading a Family Bible to a circle of most exemplary children; all alike from king to plebeian were arrayed in clothes fresh from the bandbox. With this artificiality, the drawing was often of a pattern that left anatomy and the science of perspective but poorly demonstrated.

Augustus Egg, although of this school, was of robuster mind, in being more frankly historic than the rank and file of the younger generation. He had sterling invention and remarkable power of dignified colour; the individuality he imparted to his heads, to those of females particularly, was not usual then, if indeed it is now. Frith, an exception to this band in still being with us, may be noted as having already made his mark.

Many of the full members of the Academy, being engaged on frescoes in the Houses of Parliament, had then disappeared from the annual exhibitions: among these were Maclise, Cope, Herbert, and in time Dyce, besides certain new members. I had no acquaintance with any of the greater or the lesser men, except that one-sided knowledge of the professors contracted in the Life School.

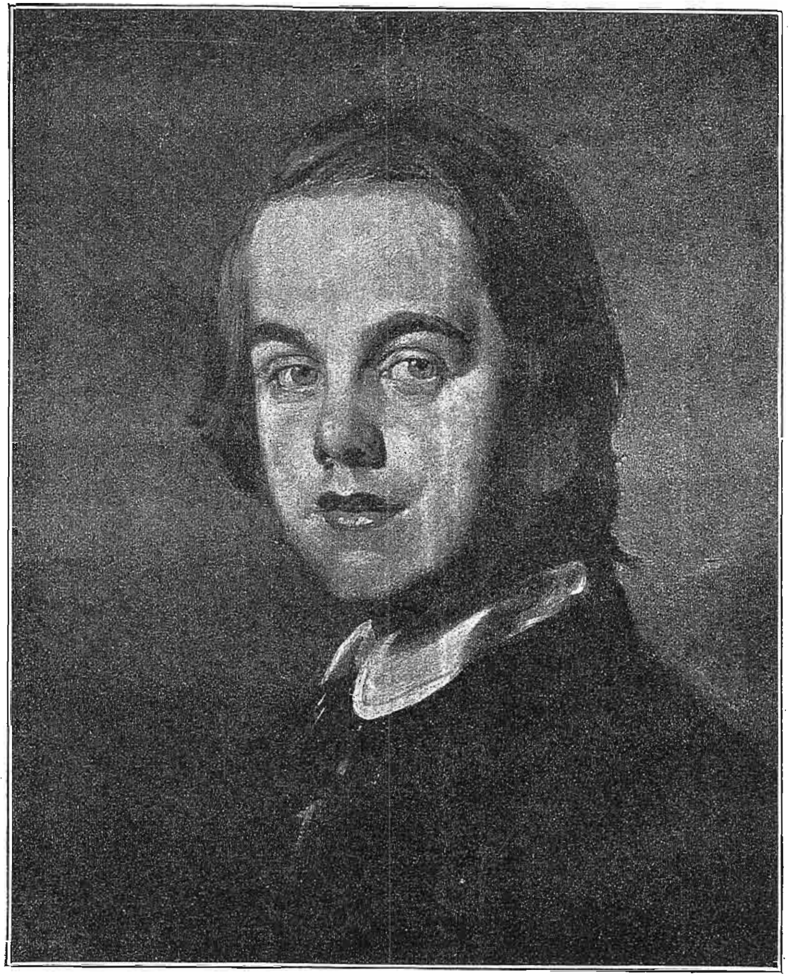
The majority of my compeers and immediate elders were worshippers of Etty, and inquired not at all of the beginning of his greatness, nor indeed of its noonday, but strove to emulate the looser design and execution which he cultivated at the end of his career. Some followed other masters, but it amused me to observe that all alike adduced Pheidias and Raphael as the prophets to sanctify their course, and all revolted at any suggestion that the solid ground beneath their feet was the foundation on which sincere workers must stand. There was then no suspicion among many artists, any more than with the public, that Guido, Giulio Romano, Baroccio, Guercino, Murillo, Le Brun, and others of the same flock were birds of a different feather to Jove's bird, so that the name of the princely Urbinite was made to cover all conventional art. We knew less of Michael Angelo in England then than now, when we have the Sixtine Chapel and the Medici tombs photographed, while Tintoretto in his might was not known at all. Della Robbia, Donatello, Luini, and Angelico were mere names in books or, at the most, to be seen in the Print Room. In their places the decadents were honoured in all the painting schools, and sober discussion seemed unprofitable. When I put down my brush, which was not often, and was assailed for my opinions as monstrous, I preferred to joke, and to accept the railing accusation of "flat blasphemy," until my outspoken irreverence towards the reigning gods became a byeword; though some students had no great faith in my seriousness when I said that Murillo's admired "Holy Family" in the National Gallery was vapid, and that in copying Guido's "Magdalen" one must in some degree mend the false drawing.

Altogether it was evident that I had to be my own master, getting dumb direction from the great of other ages, and correction of defects in my daily work from intelligent elder fellow-students and the paternal-minded Keeper of the Academy, Mr. George Jones, who was always eager to give extra attention to persevering students.

These confessions give my estimate of art instruction in England at the date when I was a student at the Academy, the National Gallery, and the British Museum and Institution. The first surprising illumination which I received, and one, moreover, which in some ways determined a great change in the course of my artistic life, came about in this wise. While engaged in copying "The Blind Fiddler," a visitor looking over me said that Wilkie painted it without any dead colouring, finishing each bit thoroughly in the day. The speaker was Claude Lorraine Nursey, some years afterwards master of the School of Design at Norwich; he had been Wilkie's pupil, and had been taught his then singular practice, which he exemplified later by showing me his own work. I tried the method, and I now looked at all paintings with the question whether they had been so executed. I began to trace the purity of work in the quattrocentists to the drilling of undeviating manipulation with which fresco-painting had furnished them, and I tried to put aside the loose, irresponsible handling to which I had been trained, and which was nearly universal at the time, and to adopt the practice which excused no false touch. I was not able to succeed completely in all parts of my work, but the taste for clear forms and tints, and for clean handling, grew in me; while at the same time I wished to guard myself against a slavish imitation of the quattrocentists, which was then becoming a seductive snare to certain English painters. Notwithstanding that I was out of sympathy with the fashion then raging in England for making facsimiles of ancient Gothic architecture, yet the unaffected work which I saw in Francia, Ludovico Mazzolini, and their schools, also the newly acquired Van Eyck (then in its dignified ebony frame), became dear to me, as examples of painting most profitable for youthful emulation. In the effort to express my own conceptions, I attempted humble subject pictures, and sent them to the Exhibitions, where at times they gained admittance. They were honest, though bungling, examples of my advancing aims. Frequently these were better before receiving the final toning glazes, the adding of which it took long to abjure, the authority for thus finishing a painting being universal with all my immediate elders. While in the mood for battling with myself, careful observation and the reading of Lanzi were convincing me that all the great Italian artists, including the cinquecentists, had grown in a training of patient self-restraint, imposed by masters who had never indulged their hands in uncertainty and dash, and that the wise and enthusiastic pupils had delighted in the devotion of humility till far on in their maturity. The dandelion clock in the "St. Catherine" by Raphael, and the flowers—notably the purple flags—in the "Bacchus and Ariadne" of Titian, were edifying examples of this spirit in the great masters, wilfully overlooked by modern students.

Dulwich Gallery was one of my haunts. There I observed that an early portrait of his mother by Rubens had surprisingly the characteristics of care and humility; and a portrait of a man with a stubbly white beard by Holbein fascinated me with its delicate painting. It is now over half a century since I first saw these, but more notable

examples of early practice have confirmed the conclusions they forced upon me, that in art, as in other pursuits, it is a loss in the end both for schools and for individuals to begin as masters. My business was, however, only for



W. HOLMAN HUNT, BY HIMSELF (AGED 17).

myself. I had to find out a path for my own feet, and for mine only. By nature and the encouragement of my early painting-master, slovenliness was my besetting sin, and I was too impatient for result. To root out off-handedness is not to be done at one stroke. Once having decided what was my danger, I had continuing proofs of the need of self-restraint. What might even be profitable as a course for other students was forbidden to me; I sought in every direction for further guidance, and left others to follow their own light.

This was the state of my mind in the full height of my studentship days, when I had somehow or other to support myself by my brush in the intervals of regular study.

Rossetti had entered the Academy as a probationer about the same time as myself, but I did not know of him till later, for going abroad for a few months, he did not complete his three probationary drawings in the term allowed. He gained special permission to continue this task in the next season, and with this further term the finished drawings were approved.

Millais, after some interval, came again to the Antique School to make his drawings for the Life. The story told by himself of his purchasing biscuits and buns for the lunch of other students, and thus getting his own free, was only incidental to his first days at the Academy School, when he was still a child. He was now nearly sixteen, and although impulsive in character, was by no means inclined to disregard the dignity of his full estate.

The Antique School had no seneschal as it now has to suppress the eccentric impulses of the students, which were unbridled except for the half-hour when the Keeper made his rounds. Millais was still about the youngest in the school, although the first in honours. During the day he frequently made hurried but very clever sketches of grooms, jockeys, farmers, horses, and animals of all kinds, and incidents yet vivid in his mind of the country place where he had been staying. He kept up a lively accompaniment to this exuberant performance with the pencil, by reproducing with his voice all the chatter and clatter of the various creatures of the stables, the farmyard, and the racing paddock. The sketches were waited for by a surrounding appreciative throng, and carried off by the most persistent. The etiquette of schoolboys forbade my claiming his acquaintance, but when he met me he exclaimed, "I told you so. I knew you'd soon be in," and so we came to be on saluting terms. After this, he encountered me one day in the schools, and pointing with his finger in child-like suddenness, he cried out, "You've had your hair cut." The fact was obvious enough, but I had wished it to escape remark. My natural rejoinder was that I had not lost so much hair as some students had; for all his handsome curls had been cut away, and he appeared then and thenceforth with what he called a cockatoo crop. One day he entered into conversation with a student named Ziegler and myself, and ended by asking both of us to come and see his pictures at home. When we went, other visitors happened to be present, and after ten minutes he was called away, so that we saw his pictures and his mother more than himself; he had just finished the "Baptism of Guthrun," which was still on his easel. Talking with me afterwards in the schools, he referred to a little picture of mine in the last Academy exhibition, and asked what original work I was now doing. I was about to send a picture of "Nell and her Grandfather" to the British Institution, and I undertook to show it to him the next evening. This was done, and in a lobby at the Royal Academy he was full of generous recognition, pressing me to come and see his present painting in my turn. Steadily interested in and proud of his work, he was always more eager to hear in what he could go beyond the mark reached than to be content with his present achievement, and he showed ambition for something higher than mere school reputation. Millais' parents lived in Gower Street, then numbered 83. The front door opened into a passage which went through direct to the studio, leaving the sitting-rooms on the right. A small window at the end would have looked on to grim walls and tiles, but the young artist had painted its panes with Gothic figures and patterns in imitation of stained glass, and signs of tasteful order were seen inside the painting-room. With his picture of "Pizarro" on hand, it was necessary to have a large platform placed at an angle to serve for the palanquin on which the doomed Inca was being carried, so that the model serving for the prince should lie correctly on the upset platform, and the position of Pizarro and the adjutant reaching forward from outside be characteristically posed. Notwithstanding this disturbance of symmetry, all the rest of the room was in prim order.

It was in accordance with what was afterwards designated "Millais' luck" that Mr. E. Goodall had lately returned from a visit to South America, bringing with him an artistic selection of native ornaments and garments which he had lent for the use of his young fellow-artist. All of these—feathers, beads, etc.—not in actual use on the platform were arranged about the walls as an extra decoration to the small pieces of armour and the swords, which had probably seen their last active service on the fields of Dunbar or Worcester. Over the mantelshelf was a framed portrait of his half-brother Stephen; on the shelf below stood the cast of a delicately modelled cow and calf, and at either end were casts of equally well-finished greyhounds playing together. These were covered by glass domes.

The mother, whose usual place in the studio was indicated by the presence of a lady's work-table, was in earnest conversation with the original of the aforesaid portrait and his young wife, but with a friendly salutation they considerately walked out to continue the talk elsewhere. Millais told me that his brother had resolved to go to Australia, that the debate was about the necessary arrangements; further, that his mother and father were also saddened over the coming marriage and departure of their only daughter, a handsome girl of about twenty. While we chatted he said, "I find you know some friends of my uncle; they give some nice dances, why don't you go?" I explained that for the present I left dancing to my sisters.

The picture he was now employed upon was in every respect remarkable for a young painter, looking more like the work of an artist in his prime; indeed, had he been judged by this production alone, its maturity of style might have seemed discouraging to the hope of development. Through life a happy characteristic of Millais in all his different modes of work was, that there were no disorderly scrapings and blotches about the surface such as often cause untidy painters to leave their works in unpresentable guise; parts were obviously unfinished, and others only in a stage of preparation; but all, like his room, was in perfect readiness to be shown to the chance visitor. Millais was unaffectedly eager to hear my appreciation, and led me on to the points with which he was himself best content; yet he invariably challenged candour, and ended with, "You'll see I'll make my next much better!" Tea was sent into the room, and before it was over the mother returned. I was pleased at being referred to as "the student who drew so well," and Johnnie emphasised his compliment by asking her whether he had not spoken thus of me to her before. She was dressed in black, and was of slight build for a matron; she had quick eyes, with a shrewd but happy expression; these features were surmounted by a brow of vertical build, the nose being slightly arched at the bridge. The hair was brought forward in curls kept in form by small combs at the side, as was usual at the time. She entered at once with great zest into the merits of Johnnie's picture. It was impossible for me not to regard as truly enviable the hearty pride with which Millais' work was looked upon by all the members of his family.

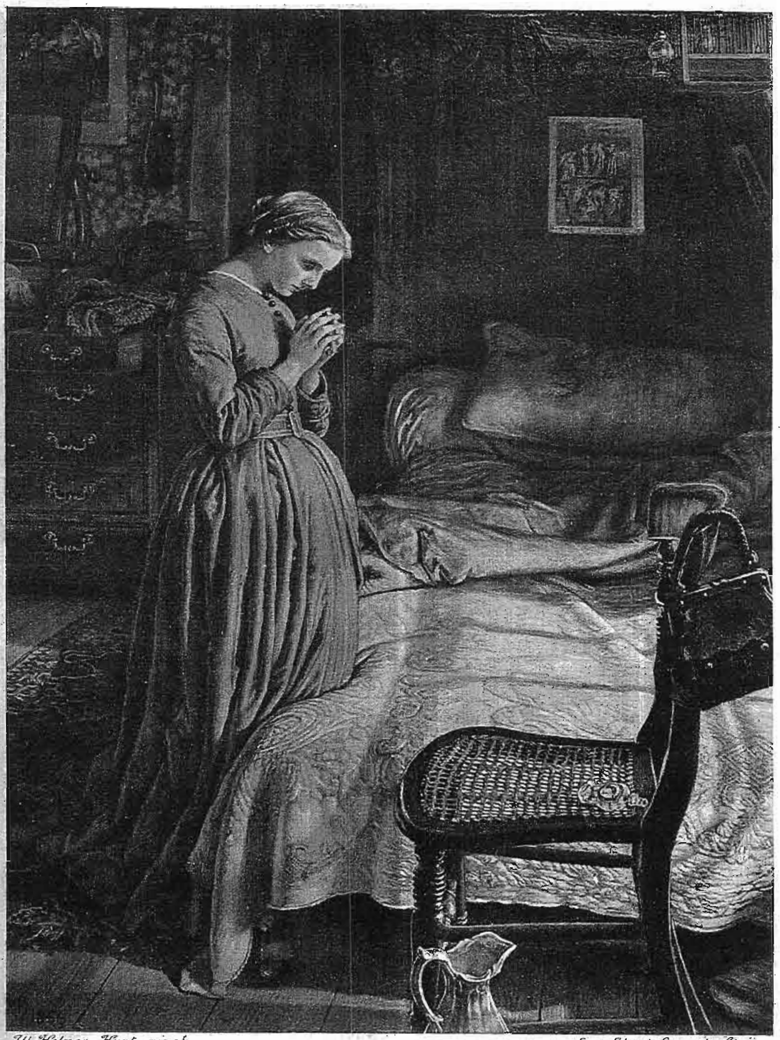
Between my portrait painting and copying at the National Gallery and the British Institution, I had managed to find time to go through my course at the Royal

Academy and get into the Life School. With this achieved I discontinued my day attendance at the Antique, only satisfying my school ambition by working each evening from the living model. One night after this change I encountered my new student-friend in the hall; he, with that fascinating mixture of child-like impulsiveness and the highest manly purpose, said:

"Look here, you know I'm painting a picture as big as Raphael's Cartoons, 9 feet one way by 16 feet the other. That's no end of a job, I can tell you. Twenty figures and more, all the size of life"; and coming close, he added confidingly, "It's 'The Widow's Mite'—it's a splendid subject, isn't it? You know there are the old frowning Pharisees, the reverential disciples, and the poor woman, giving all she's got, and of course there's the Saviour. Doesn't it afford grand opportunities? It was turned against the wall when you came last. I'm busy on it now, and am going to send it to Westminster Hall. I may get a prize; only think, the highest is £300. Are you doing anything for it? Now, you come and see me on Wednesday afternoon—mind you don't forget, Wednesday next."

At the appointed time I went. The father and mother were both present; the son came forward to receive me warmly, and turned to the elders repeating his previous compliments, and referring to my picture at the British Institution. The mother was busy with crochet work, which did not absorb all her thoughts, for she at once began telling me of "important visitors" who had come to see Johnnie's picture, and who had said it was "truly wonderful." She pointed out what had been most admired. The father I had scarcely known before. He excused himself for walking about the room putting things that had been disarranged back into their places—by which one saw how things were never allowed needlessly to remain in confusion.

He was perhaps a little above five feet ten in height, and slightly inclined to burliness. The son had inherited



W. Holman Hunt. pinx^t Swan Electric Engraving C^o Sc.

Morning Prayer.

BETHNAL
GREEN
MUSEUM.

some lineaments from him, but his spirited expression came from his mother. The fresh colour and blue eyes, with an apparently unguarded manner, were all his father's; the latter's full forehead appeared rounder from an inclination to baldness already showing itself. His thorough-heartedness of interest in the passing moment dissipated all my feelings of shyness which his presence might have aroused. To make the introduction more complete, the son put one hand on his father's shoulder and the other on his mother's chair, and said:

"They both help me, I can tell you. He's really capital, and does a lot of useful things. Look what a good head he has. I have painted several of the old doctors from him. By making a little alteration in each, and putting on different kinds of beards, he does splendidly. Couldn't be better, could he? And he sits for hands and draperies too. And as for mamma, she reads to me and finds me subjects. She gets me all I want in the way of dresses, and makes them up for me, and searches out difficult questions for me at the British Museum—in the library, you know. She's very clever, I can tell you." He stooped down and rubbed his curly head against her forehead, and then patted the "old daddy," as he called him, on the back. The father was then only about forty-seven.

In the meantime the tea-tray was brought in, and while the mother prepared the meal, I was invited to look more closely at the painting. It was undoubtedly a most masterly performance for such a boy. I unreservedly expressed my admiration. The youthful painter pointed out what had taxed him most, and what he still felt were tough knots to undo; but he had a most serviceable sanguine temperament, which was never overcome and but seldom overclouded, and which would not admit a doubt of his being able to master all difficulties.

"The head of the Christ," the mother said, "every one admires. Mr. Dennis—the great connoisseur—called it admirable. You've heard of him; people call him Lorenzo di Medici, because he is so like the portrait."

Here the father joined in: "He has a broad-brimmed hat, wears his hair long, and steps in such a stately manner that he seems as though he had walked out of an old frame"; he added in laughing mood, as if in apology, "but he's a perfect gentleman."

"I was going to tell Hunt," the mother added, "that Johnnie is still tempted to work on the Saviour's head."

"I shall make it much better, you see, now," said the boy painter.

"Well, Johnnie was passing a door in Bedford Square when a gentleman was being let out. The servant was behind, and he struck Johnnie as being the very model for the head, for he is singularly handsome and superior-looking. We've seen his master and he's quite pleased; he has been to see the picture,—he asked to be allowed to come,—and the man is to sit the day after to-morrow," said the mother.

"Yes," added the boy, "it is really a lucky find. No trouble is too great to try and improve upon the Saviour's head."

Noticing my interest in a youthful head belonging to the principal group, he went on, "That's my brother Bill, you don't know him; he just suits, doesn't he? It's for St. John, the beloved disciple, and he's always made young." After further talk, he unexpectedly turned to his father and mother in pleading tone, saying, "I've been working very hard now for a long while, and I really feel thoroughly fagged; I am sure it would do me good to have a holiday, indeed it would." Then in a playfully lachrymose tone he proceeded, "You know they'll be sure to be playing cricket on Saturday at Holloway, and I should like to have a good day at it." Then he turned to me, inquiring, "Do you play cricket?" Meanwhile, his father and mother vied with one another in applauding his plan, and it was arranged that he should take the last day of the week for recreation.

When I was taking leave, Millais determined to come out with me. The old gentleman added to his pleasant "Good-bye," "You won't get into any mischief."

"Oh no, you may be sure of that," I replied, somewhat astonished.

"I only meant," he added, "that you would not go hunting cats in the Square, or anything of that kind. You know, it is not nice for young fellows like you and Johnnie to be larking about in any disorderly way."

"I quite agree," I said; "you may trust me, all the more perhaps because cats are my especial friends. I like them, and they like me."

When we had left the house, Millais wanted me to talk about his parents. "They are dear old creatures—aren't they?"

I returned, honestly, "They are particularly delightful, all the more so because I had rather expected from your name to find that your father would be a foreigner, but he's a thorough Englishman."

"Oh yes," he replied, "we belong to Jersey, where all regard themselves as more English than Englishmen are, because they are Normans pure and simple, who kept to their earlier home. My great-grandfather lost his property because at the beginning of the French Revolution he got infatuated with the principles of the Republicans and was thought to be compromised in the French attempt on the island, but the name is preserved as attached to old castles and buildings that once belonged to the family."

"Now I want to ask," I said, "did your father think that my ancestors who handed down the name of Hunt to me also gave me such a mad passion for the chase that I must follow it even though I could find nothing but straying cats to molest?"

"Oh no," he answered, "he was not thinking of the matter as connected with you at all. I'll tell you. You know Tybalt, the student at the Academy. Well, I went out with him one evening, and in the Square he set to work to entice cats, and then set upon them with a stick and stones; I did not like it. I told the old people and they were much annoyed." Variable still as a child, he burst out: "Now, I say, do you think I'm growing? I want to be tall. Daddy is a good height, isn't he? I hope I shall be as much, or more than he is." And with many assurances from me that he had plenty of time to attain full height, we parted.

He did not now attend at the Life School at all, and, except for curiosity, he never came to the painting school. Neither did I attend this last school for practice, for I had done quite as much copying as I felt to be desirable, except for the secrets of composition—of arrangement of light and shade, and of the combination of colour as found in examples by different masters, which I endeavoured to make my own by a series of rapid sketches done without dead colour at once on a white ground. Millais never spent any time in copying old masters, yet in furnishing pictures from memory for a doll's house National Gallery, which he and his brother formed in their early teens, he had made himself practically acquainted with the characteristics of all the great painters. With the exception of one copy made from a Linnell, I doubt whether he ever set himself to imitate the masterpieces of his predecessors. He was now putting aside "The Widow's Mite," because the date for receiving works was postponed for a year.

In the meantime I was giving more attention to original work. Seeing that I had altogether burnt my boats for retreat, my family had, with kind consideration for me, removed to Holborn, where, in the upper part of a large house, I could have a room for a studio. Here I could not paint pictures of ambitious character, but I chose a subject from *Woodstock*, because it belonged to the class of pictures most popular, and so offered a fair chance of sale, as well as due exercise in serious inventiveness. When I was bringing this to an end, my father, who had not failed to realise how much at the best I was checked for want of ampler opportunities, when we were one night returning home together, referred to the matter, and explained that he had been hampered in means for the last six years by having to pay off a mortgage which he had had to contract on adding to some house property which the surplus of a legacy from his aunt would not entirely purchase. He had now, however, just redeemed the debt, and should be more at ease in the future. He mentioned the fact that I might consider in what respect he could now be most helpful to me.

This kind determination served only to prove to me his benevolent disposition, for soon afterwards one morning at breakfast I saw him open a letter, which he read and re-read, turned over and over, and with studied reserve put carefully into his pocket. It transpired that before he had purchased the houses, he had been recommended to the head clerk of a solicitor's firm, who would examine the title and prepare the deeds for the transfer of the property. It was to save the high charges of the master that my father had entrusted the work to the servant, who, it turned out, had accepted the vendor's statement that his son (to whom, when under age, the property had been left) was dead. This son proved to be living, and now, through his lawyer, claimed not only the houses, but all the back rents. When the son was reminded that his father would be heavily punished and disgraced as a consequence of the threatened litigation, the aggrieved heir—who, it was proved, had known of the fraud and received great part of the proceeds—declared that he hoped his father would be transported. After advice of various kinds from many quarters, and much consultation and frequent veering round on my father's part from one point to another, he resolved to avoid the uncertainty of the law by making a compromise which compelled him to raise a further heavy mortgage, the burden of which he had to bear for the rest of his days. This was his death stroke, although he lived for another ten years.

I did not give up original subject painting, as now a prospect of room for me in the exhibition world seemed to dawn; even though the painting of likenesses might have somewhat reduced the strain on the family purse, I painted only those portraits which came uninvited. In going on with pictures I must have appeared perverse, for so far they had been only an expense to me in materials, models, and frames, without the sign of a purchaser to reward me.

Once on my going to Millais' house, he was away, but his parents were at home. The father talked about the Academy school, and of the treatment Johnnie had formerly experienced there. "Being so very young," he said, "Johnnie became the sport of some of the rough, elder students, and he came home at times complaining and bearing marks of their coarse behaviour. They lifted him up above their heads and twirled him about, affecting to be acrobats. One brutal fellow, H—— (you must know him), carried the child up a ladder that happened to be in the school, encouraged the more by the poor little fellow's cries; and once he held him up by the ankles and marched with him head downwards around the school, his hair sweeping the ground. What could I do? It would not have done to make a scandal of it, but I told Johnnie to invite this burly fellow here to give advice on some design in hand. When he came I received him in friendly manner, and soon spoke of Johnnie's fragile form, saying that some elder students in the Academy were thoughtless about the delicacy of the young boy, that I felt sure *he* was a good, sensible fellow, but that some young men were without reflection and needed to be opposed, and that I would trust him always to protect Johnnie and save him from such horseplay. After that Johnnie was left unmolested, and we had every reason to rejoice in the effect of my appeal to H——'s better feelings." This restraint, however, was but of transient or partial value, for the man had at bottom a cruel nature. Millais with true instinct, although not at the time admitting to himself the reason, painted him in the "Isabella" picture as the brother cracking the nut, and at the same time kicking the dog.

When I went again to Gower Street, Millais was painting "Elgiva." It was a distinct advance in refinement upon his last picture, greatly, perhaps, because the subject afforded him the opportunity of painting women under conditions in which discriminating observation and delicate rendering of form could be given.

There were so many varied objects I had to keep in mind at that time, and Millais was so intent upon his work, that I scarcely saw him at all till the next season, when on meeting him he asked me to come and see a new picture he was painting. I found him nearly finished with "Elgiva," and now starting with "The Tribe of Benjamin seizing the Daughters of Shiloh," undertaken in competition for the gold medal. When I saw this picture it was already far advanced, and he was busy painting from a Jersey cousin, whose hands were appropriately sunburnt.

Our increasing intimacy induced confidential talk whenever we met; we discussed many theories of art and practice as seen both in old and modern painters, and I found him by no means bound to dogmas that gained general acceptance, but quite ready to re-examine settled views, even though they seemed to him at first above question.

At the conclusion of one of my visits to Gower Street, as a reason for deferring his coming to see my new work, I explained that I was going to spend a month in the country. "Where are you going?" his mother inquired. "To Ewell," I said. "Why, that's where Johnnie's going in the autumn," said she, surprised. I resumed my seat, and we had a talk about Captain Lemprière, Sir John Reid, Sir George Glynn, and all the notables of the place, and of the country's sweetness and charm.