CHAPTER XI

1851

Men do not throw stones at trees which do not bear fruit.
Arabic Proverb.

WHEN we had again got into harness for our work in the country, we were delighted by the visit of Richard and Henry Doyle. We showed them the originals of our landscapes, we walked about the lovely meads, and returned to a repast at our farm. Among the matters of interest they retailed was a story of Thackeray being in the smoking-room of his club when the first few numbers of *Vanity Fair* were appearing. His friends warmly expressed their delight at the excellence of the story and its surpassing treatment. Thackeray mysteriously treated the encomiums with only the ejaculation, "Ah, ah, ah!" shrugging his shoulders the while, so that the company concluded that he did not think them sincere. This led them to express their laudation with greater fervour, at which Thackeray exclaimed, "I wish to goodness the Public would find it out, for there are only 500 copies sold yet." Very soon afterwards the world became converted, and the publisher had to satisfy all English readers, not only at home, but those also over the world beyond the seas.

While Millais and I had been conferring about systems of painting, we had dwelt much upon the great value of a plan we had both independently adopted of painting over

a ground of wet white, which gave special delicacy of coloration and tone. Millais in earlier works had relied upon the system to produce the effect of sunlight on flesh and brilliantly lit drapery. The head of the boy in "The Woodman's Daughter" may be taken as example of what my friend had done before. I, quite independently, had relied on this novel system, extending it from small to larger parts of my work. The heads of Valentine and of Proteus, the hands of these figures, and the brighter costumes in the same painting had been executed in this way. In earlier pictures the method had been adopted by me to less extent. In the country we had used it, so far, mainly for blossoms of flowers, for which it was singularly valuable.

The process may be described thus. Select a prepared ground originally for its brightness, and renovate it, if necessary, with fresh white when first it comes into the studio, white to be mixed with a very little amber or copal varnish. Let this last coat become of a thoroughly stone-like hardness. Upon this surface, complete with exactness the outline of the part in hand. On the morning for the painting, with fresh white (from which all superfluous oil has been extracted by means of absorbent paper, and to which again a small drop of varnish has been added) spread a further coat very evenly with a palette knife over the part for the day's work, of such consistency that the drawing should faintly show through. In some cases the thickened white may be applied to the forms needing brilliancy with a brush, by the aid of rectified spirits. Over this wet ground, the colour (transparent and semi-transparent) should be laid with light sable brushes, and the touches must be made so tenderly that the ground below shall not be worked up, yet so far enticed to blend with the superimposed tints as to correct the qualities of thinness and staininess, which over a dry ground transparent colours used would inevitably exhibit. Painting of this kind cannot be retouched except with an entire loss of

luminosity. Millais proposed that we should keep this as a precious secret to ourselves.

Ford Madox Brown's manner of work, as I have said, was continually undergoing change. He had, when we first knew him, left behind him the example of Baron Wappers, and gradually, step by step, abandoned the practice of the modern German masters, taking to a closer following of natural composition and intense study of out-of-door effect. In his then more sympathetic mood towards us he was at small pains to conceal the source of this influence. The tracing of Brown's early stages of work will always be the more difficult by reason of the habit he continually indulged of repainting and changing the original character of his design, in part and in whole. He never did this without improvement, nor without giving greater resemblance to our manner of work. With all such changes, however, we can point to his best known pictures to prove the stages of his conversion.

This new influence may be distinctly traced through all the changes made by later painting. The picture of "Pretty Baa Lambs," painted by Brown in summer of 1851, was strictly the first figure picture he had done in the open air; this was two years after my Christian and Druid picture and my exhibition of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," and one year after Millais exhibited "The Woodman's Daughter," all three pictures painted with unprecedented care for their landscapes, with the sky serving as the ceiling of our studio.

Brown's little painting called "Waiting," remarkable for its refined pencilling, was also begun in 1850, although not finished till 1854;[1] these works represented the stage he had reached when he, with William Rossetti, visited us at Worcester Park Farm in the autumn of 1851, before Millais or I had seen the work he was then engaged upon. Wet weather kept us much indoors. After showing our pictures to the visitors, Millais in-

[1] See Hueffer's *Life of Ford Madox Brown*.

creased his intimacy with Brown by a warm conversation on music, illustrated by the humming and whistling of airs by both. Turning to matters of interest in our own art when Brown cordially complimented us upon the purity and brilliancy of our pictures in the Exhibition,[1] Millais, with impulsive forgetfulness of the determination to keep our secret process to ourselves, burst out, "How do you think Hunt and I paint flesh and brilliant passages in our pictures?" And when Brown showed curiosity to know more he detailed the whole process.

Brown expressed unbounded astonishment and pressed to master exact particulars. When this was done in detail, he became enthusiastic, and with bated breath enlarged on the mystery as nothing less than the secret of the old masters, who thus secured the transparency and solidity together which they had valued so much in fresco, the wet white half dry forming an equivalent to the moist intonaco grounds upon which the master had to do his painting of that day while the surface was still humid. The practical effect of this communication upon Brown will be traced at a later date.

In the pen and ink sketch by Millais[2] of "The Varnishing Morning" at the Academy in 1851 will be seen the figure holding a paint-box behind him, with the expression of half-conversion on his face and pose evident, notwithstanding the attempt being made by the others to stir him up to the general fury. This revelation of the temper which Brown was indulging towards our school in May of that year furnishes a link in the evidence of our relative positions at the time.

The first Conversazione ever held by the Royal Academy was assembled this year; it was an experiment; we as exhibitors were invited, and as we had not left our posts before, we felt justified in spending the evening in town. Some of the members then made a point of seeking us out, professing admiration for our past work,

[1] *Life of Ford Madox Brown* (Hueffer), p. 77.
[2] Page 250.

Ford Madox Brown. WAITING.

with interest in our present pursuit, and asked us to visit them on our return to town. This compliment was repeated later in the year, and the hospitality exercised was highly esteemed by me for the opportunity it gave me of extending my acquaintance with men of mark in letters and art.

Going down on the morrow of the Conversazione by an early train, we hurried from the Malden station, and separated for our respective *al fresco* studios. Getting over the stile in the field leading to the shed where my canvas case was stored, I looked up, to discover that two powder-mill houses contiguous and several tree-tops had disappeared, leaving a large blank sky; it proved that there had been a "blow-up" during the night. Fortunately, on that occasion no one was hurt, and my belongings in the outhouse had also altogether escaped injury.

At the beginning of August we had again to return to town for a few days, to receive our works back from the Exhibition. Millais had but little to do beyond distributing his pictures to their respective owners, but my "Valentine rescuing Sylvia from Proteus" needed steady repainting of a few parts, and for this I had to keep very close to my easel, often wishing for more leisure to perfect the portions of the design which had suffered by my money difficulties in the weeks preceding the sending-in day. Having completed all according to my best opportunities, I dispatched the picture to the Liverpool Exhibition. While thus occupied, I encountered my friends, both those who were nominal P.R.B.'s and those outside who were *de facto* more seriously in sympathy with us, because, practising and using pencils and paint brushes every day, they were more interested than the others could be in learning what Millais and I were doing in the country. With our town work completed we were glad to return to our pastoral life, and we then continued steadily at our landscapes for the succeeding months.

When the Liverpool Exhibition opened I almost daily received anonymous letters and newspapers from the Mersey city with every variety of abuse of my picture, both in prose and doggerel. There happened to be a painter employed in Liverpool at the time who was the son of a diplomaed celebrity, and delivered lectures on the infamies of our heretical sect; his paintings were so patently incompetent that we concluded he must be a supremely entertaining lecturer, since it was said he drew large audiences. His denunciations of my unfortunate work were sent to me, with the assurance that the diatribes were largely appreciated in the town. The whole attack was a bear-baiting in which I had to play the diverting part of poor Bruin; and whether the baited be Ursa Major or Ursa Minor, he is not unnaturally liable to irritation if the game be long continued, and to make a blind rush at the onlookers. I became, perhaps, unreasonably so when I arrived at the conclusion that the Council of the Institute of Liverpool countenanced my assailants. I took Millais into my confidence, and declared that I would not allow any one to assume that before the Exhibition I had become broken spirited by the attack upon me. It had been announced that a fifty pound prize would be awarded at the opening of the Exhibition to the most approved painting. This had not been allotted, although several weeks had elapsed since the day fixed for the decision. I had never entertained an idea of the award being made to my much abused performance, but I determined to write to the Committee stating that I had sent my picture trusting to an announcement that the prize would be awarded on the opening day to the best contribution, and that as many weeks had gone by since the date fixed, I had to beg the favour of information why I had not received notice of the prize being given to me! That evening, happily, absorbing designing work and a book kept me too late to carry this audacious extravagance into effect.

The next morning I was painting near the house when

Millais came over calling out, "Another letter from Liverpool." It boasted an imposing official seal. Millais was all impatient, and I opened it to find that the Council at a deferred sitting had awarded to me the prize. We there and then gave three heartfelt cheers for the Council of Liverpool.

This award was greatly encouraging, not to me alone, but to the whole of our circle. It turned out that Mr. John Miller, the head of the Liverpool Council, was a passionate lover of art, some equally independent and enthusiastic artists and amateurs being with him. The storm, with all its noise, was directed at them in the hope of turning their minds from a suspected partiality for my work. It was strange that this favourable testimony to its character did not impress any purchaser who had seen the picture but a Mr. M'Cracken of Belfast, who had never seen it. He was not a rich man; no rich person had the independent judgment to buy pictures from me. He told me of pictures he already possessed, saying that he hoped soon to get to Liverpool to judge of mine, so notorious as an apple of discord amongst amateurs. He was an incessant correspondent, and towards the end of the Exhibition wrote that he regretted his business had not yet afforded him leisure to cross over from Ireland. Would I take part of the price (two hundred pounds) in pictures? he asked. Eventually I agreed to accept a landscape by young Danby in part payment, and the money to be paid by monthly instalments of ten pounds. When the dates for payment were at hand a letter invariably arrived proposing to give, instead of cash, further paintings, but these torments arose at a later date.

Millais had now completed his background of "Ophelia," and brought it up to the house, and I had so far advanced my landscape for "The Hireling Shepherd" that there were only two or three sheep to be added, and these could be more conveniently painted near our farm home.

Millais set to work on a canvas to paint a garden wall in illustration of Tennyson's lines, "Circumstance," "Two Lovers whispering by a Garden Wall." I wished it had been a better subject, but his reply to my comment was that it was too late in the year to undertake anything but a

J. E. Millais.

TWO LOVERS WHISPERING BY A GARDEN WALL.

make-weight second picture, relying on the "Ophelia" for the advancement of his reputation.

When he had painted some of the ivied wall for his picture, one night he said to me, "I have received a letter from a Mrs. Drury who lives at Thames Ditton, and disputes the will of queer old Drury with whom I used

to stay at Shotover, you remember? And I propose walking over there to understand what she wants of me. What do you say, old Cockalorum, to coming too? You have got on far enough with your picture to feel comfortable about it, and I am sure you deserve a rest from your sheep. Come, like a good fellow, and walk over with me to-morrow; it will be a rest for both of us, for we've each been working deuced hard." I agreed, and we started immediately after luncheon. We passed over fresh fields with beautiful trees that had not yet a tinge of autumnal sadness in them, and so into the Kingston Road, where still were hundreds of delights to our appreciative senses. He talked of the feminine beauty most enchanting to his eyes, and, growing enthusiastic, he traced with the point of his stick a beautiful profile with a *retroussé* nose and other features harmonising, of a type the exact opposite to his own. When I had traced my counter ideal he exclaimed, "Why, I say, that's a portrait of my pretty cousin!" "Ah, then you have sadly neglected your duty in not giving me the advantage of meeting her," was my reply. "Give me for my adoration a stately Rachel or Rebecca, and I will try to charm her by laying all my extensive fortune at her feet. Item, one finished picture much abused, one unfinished from *Measure for Measure*, already paid for and the money spent, a third representing several acres of land, arable, grazing and corn-field divided by ditch, hedge, and tree fence, a clear sky with clouds, and a white space for the shepherd and shepherdess, and my queen shall claim the whole domain as her marriage portion. I can count out no more than these to her except the fancies still hidden in my brain. If you by chance meet my love, tell her that I lay my heart whole in her hand." "Now this is a good opportunity," said Millais; "tell me what you mean by saying that pictures should never deal with the meetings of lovers if they are only lovers."

"Because," I returned, "when I go to meet my beloved Rebecca or Rachel I shall not invite you to look on, and

you will not require my presence when you go to make love to your graceful charmer—

> "Close in a bower of amaranth and musk,
> Unseen of any, free from whispering tale;
> Ah, better had it been for ever so,
> Than picture-gazer should call out 'Hullo!'

Seriously, I don't think that lovers should be pryed upon by painters. Pictures of them always appear to me to be intrusive. Selfishness, Love's cousin, has its proper place in life, and does not invite outside interest. Lovers appeal alone to Heaven as witness of their sacred pledges; a word poet may dwell upon their meetings as links in the chain of their story, and so pass on, but not so we. In the subject you talked of, for which you have begun your background, Tennyson in the poem makes it merely a step in the progress of two honest lives; your illustration of 'Two Lovers whispering by a Garden Wall' would have neither prelude nor sequel in the drama of life. It may be a crotchet of mine, but I have none but passing interest in pictures of lovers when they are merely this with no external interest, and, good gracious! how they crowd on us on May Monday. If they are badly done I despise them, and if they are well done I feel that I ought not to be there. In your hand I know the subject will be treated with a manly vigour that will elevate it, but I should have liked you to be engaged on a picture with the *dramatis personæ* actuated by generous thought of a larger world. I think lovers with only personal interest should not be represented for public attention, even when they are not (as often they are) of sickly sentiment, but as far as my judgment affects your subject, regard it only as a whim of mine."

"I understand your position now," said Millais, "and I quite agree with you about maudlin sentiment. I feel some force about the difference in the treatment of poets and artists, but I have my design finished, and the background of it advanced, and what remains will give me as much work as I can do before the end of the season;

we've more than enough difficulty in fighting for our manner of work, without assailing our enemies at present with theories of 'the higher purpose of art.'"

When I had repeated my assurance of confidence that he would not fail to make a delightful picture of the subject, we turned to other matters of converse. Suddenly my companion's attention was arrested; he turned round and directed his face to another point of the compass; inhaling the perfumes of the soft wind, he exclaimed, "Is there any sensation more delicious than that awakened by the odour of burning leaves? To me nothing brings back sweeter memories of the days that are gone; it is the incense offered by departing summer to the sky, and it brings one a happy conviction that Time puts a peaceful seal on all that has gone."

We turned to other matters, when Millais checked our pace and looked intently at a constable who had marched past us. "Whatever is it that makes you have such a sudden and absorbing interest in the policeman? He won't do for your lover," said I.

"Look at him," said Millais; "could any one regard him as a boy; he's a man, and yet probably he is not older than you; and whatever you think of yourself, I can tell you you only appear like a lad; and as for me, I know I look like a child; in fact, the critics, you know, always write of us as 'juveniles.' Why does that man look so adult? I'm not sure, if you could dress as a policeman, that any one would treat you with respect such as he could inspire; it's a mystery to me," and, turning his back to me, he said, "Does my hair hide the nape of my neck?"

"Yes," I replied.

"That's it," he said seriously; "that man has the nape of his neck clear, and it helps to make him look so sedate and respectable. I'll have my hair cut short directly I get to town," and after I had laughed at him, he resumed his talk about old Mr. Drury.

On nearing Thames Ditton we looked at our watches,

and Millais said, "I hope this lady will give us tea. Old Drury was extremely strange in manner, but very kind to me, and all the more entertaining from his strangeness. He died a short time ago, and his estate is in dispute. I don't know what this woman is aiming at, but she wants to ask me some questions, and we shall see." Soon we found the house, and were received with great eagerness and with gentle thanks to Millais for his visit. The lady had wished so much to have some information from him about her singular relative, who had kept himself so strangely secluded from the family, but who had been so well known to Mr. Millais. While she talked the maids prepared the tea-table, and to our bewilderment carried in a child's chair with its occupant, whose strange appearance could not but arrest our attention. He was no bigger than a boy of four, but his face and figure marked him as stunted and deformed; it was impossible to make any guess as to his age. When we had seated ourselves the lady said, "I beg to introduce my son, for whom I desire to win your good grace; he is now past twenty-one." The poor victim muttered and looked at her helplessly; it was a painful moment, and the mother explained that he, if Mr. Drury's will could be put aside, was the heir to the estate. She then went on: "You, Mr. Millais, must have observed how very erratic and disturbed Mr. Drury's mind was. We hope to establish that he was of unsound mind, and trust that you will be able to support our contention." The effect of this appeal upon Millais was magical. All that childish simplicity that came at times upon him was dispelled. "Mrs. Drury," he said in an unwavering tone, "I must not encourage you to think that I can support the allegation that Mr. Drury was not of sound mind. He was eccentric most undoubtedly, and he obeyed independent impulses. His invitation to me, a stranger, when I was fishing in his ponds, to come and stay with him, illustrated this. Men may be very eccentric without being at all out of their mind, and I am sure

that Mr. Drury was one of these." A damp fell on the party, and we talked of other things, but hastened our departure. When we had got into the road a few paces off, Millais broke silence, saying, "That was, I think, the most piteous trial I have ever had, the interview, with that poor miserable before us; when Mrs. Drury spoke, I felt that unless I broke off from all entanglement of the desire to be agreeable, I should not be able to be honest, and I had to blurt out the truth that was a ruin to all her hopes. Come along; I can't walk slowly; let us run." So we hastened homewards. To close this subject I may say that eventually, when the painful question was tried at Oxford, Millais gave evidence so clearly that the judge complimented him on the convincing character of his testimony.

Patmore when visiting us suggested the value of a diary. Millais was thus induced to commence his naïve and graphic records of our life at the farm which his son has given to the world.

My "Valentine" was still unsold, and I did not feel easy under my increasing debt, so that when I heard of the post of draughtsman to the Mosul exploration under Layard being vacant, I applied to Sir R. Westmacott, in whose hands the appointment rested. He replied that had I not been one day too late he would have given it to me.

The season was now already advanced autumn, and our evenings after dinner were cosy and pleasant; one we spent in sitting in judgment on the Thirty-nine Articles; on another we read the pamphlet on Pre-Raphaelitism by a Rev. Mr. Young; on another Ruskin's *Retort*. We always enjoyed the wholesome fare provided by the capable farmer's wife. Blackberry pudding was hugely in favour with Millais, and on one occasion he ridiculed Charley Collins for refusing the dainty dish, taking the despised portion in addition to his own, so that the pudding when it returned to the kitchen bore no trace of want of appreciation. On our return to the sitting-room he bantered our abstemious friend on his self-denial,

saying, "You know you like blackberry pudding as much as I do, and it is this preposterous rule of supererogation which you have adopted in your high-churchism which made you go without it. I have no doubt you will think it necessary to have a scourge and take the discipline for having had any dinner at all." He was so persistent in his attacks on poor Charley, and his appeals to me to second him, that when these became troublesome I turned away from the fire and took up a recently commenced design at a side table. Millais continued his sarcasm until Collins somewhat prematurely took his candle and wished us good-night. When he had gone Millais turned to me and said, "Why didn't you pitch into him? We must cure him of this monkish nonsense. You scarcely helped me at all. It is doing him a deal of harm, taking away the little strength of will he has." He then came over to me, and, laying his hand on my shoulder, exclaimed, "I say, whatever is that you are doing?" I replied, "I was on the point of explaining to you; there is a text in Revelation, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.' Nothing is said about the night, but I wish to accentuate the point of its meaning by making it the time of darkness, and that brings us to the need of the lantern in Christ's hand, He being the Bearer of the light to the sinner within, if he will awaken. I shall have a door choked up with weeds, to show that it has not been opened for a long time, and in the background there will be an orchard. (I can paint it from the one at the side of this house.)"

"What a noble subject!" he cried. "But what is this small sketch at the side?"

"It is one," I said, "that I want to talk to you about as an example of what I meant by having an interest beyond that of the initial one, when lovers are the theme of the design. You see the interest of the York and Lancaster wars has never been drawn upon by painters, and it ought to be engrossing. My design is to represent two lovers, the lady being the daughter of a Lancastrian.

They are seated on her father's castle walls; her dress will be white with red roses all over it. He will be a Yorkist, with a jacket of red with white roses embossed upon it; the castle walls will have shields in the entablatures with red roses painted upon them, to make the spectator more sure that she belongs to the castle and that he is a stranger. I shall make him booted and spurred, and the rope ladder by which he has ascended will be attached to the castellated parapet. I shall make him urging her to flee with him, and her sense of duty to her family raises the struggle in her mind as to which impulse she shall obey."

"What a splendid idea!" said he; "it will just do for the lovers in my picture. I will paint him a Yorkist, dressed as you say, and her a Lancastrian; it will do splendidly."

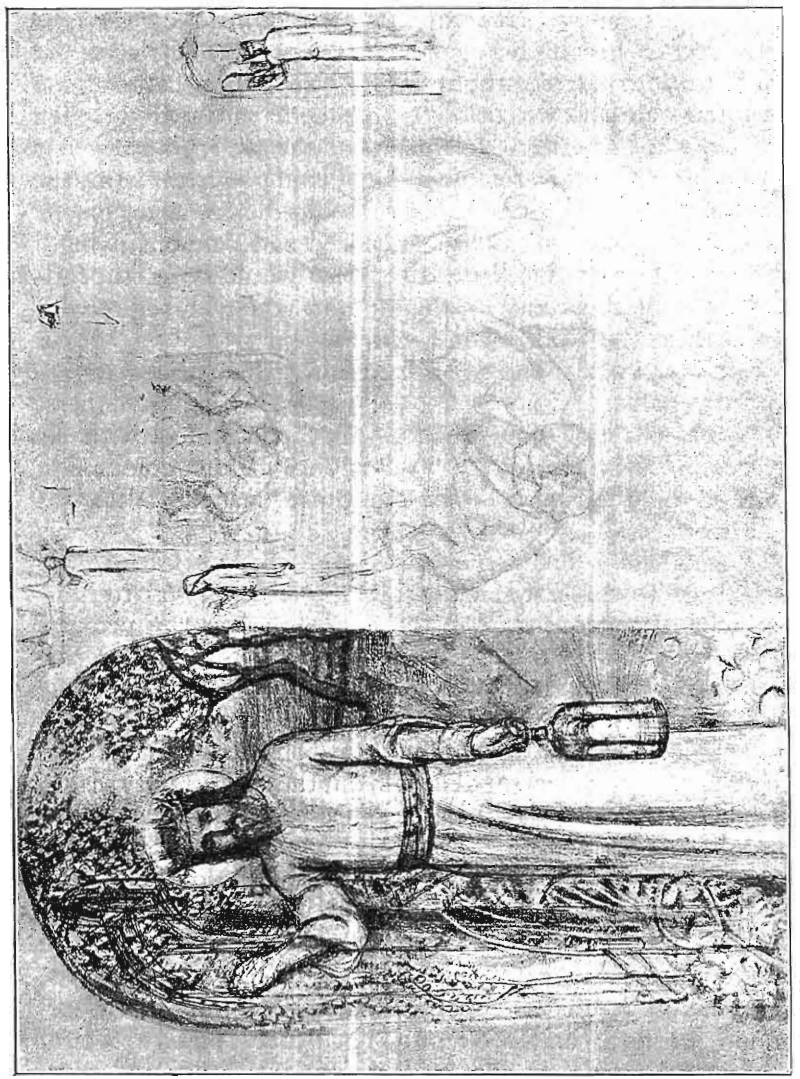
"But," I rejoined, "you can't do that; the subject would be spoilt; you have no castle ramparts, nor view of the distant country to which he is pointing, and the purpose would fail to explain itself."

"Well, that is true," he added. "I'll make my man a Cavalier and my girl a Puritan, and I'll suggest that she has come to him by stealth in an old garden. That will do admirably."

"Yes," I said, "but I think the theme of the Cavalier and Roundhead has been rather worked to death in our day."

He paused a moment. "I have got it," he said,—"the Huguenots. You remember the opera? All good Catholics have to wear a badge somehow; I will write to my mother and she'll find out all about it for me at the British Museum. But here's another sketch at the back of your paper. What is that?"

"I have not worked it out yet, but I think it is a good subject. I should quote a passage out of the Proverbs, 'The meeting of a friend with his friend is sweet, but far sweeter is the meeting of a man with his wife.' I should make her in a tower with a flight of steps, such as I saw at Carisbrooke when I went that



W. H. H.
SHEET WITH FIRST SKETCH OF "LIGHT OF THE WORLD," AND DESIGN FOR YORK AND LANCASTER SUBJECT.

walking tour with Brown and Anthony. She would be working tapestry, glorifying the deeds of her husband, a Crusader; he has come up the steps unseen by her, and has caught her in his arms. A young son of five or six will be introduced, whom I have tried here as swinging on the gate; down below in the courtyard will be seen a body of soldiers, fresh from the war, boisterously saluting the old retainers and young girls. In the distance over the castle walls would be an arm of the sea, with a fleet of galleons anchored and pennons flying."

"Why, you dog," he said, "that would be as stupendous a subject as any of them; but you will begin with 'Christ at the Door,' won't you?"

"Yes, I shall send for a canvas for that immediately," I answered.

"I will tell you what I'll do," he added, with his accustomed impetuosity; "I'll at once make a companion design of the sinner with the door opened, falling at Christ's feet."

I confess I felt somewhat staggered, but I paid little attention to this last remark, because often, if left to himself, he discovered reasons for not persevering in projects that had absorbed his attention at first; but two nights later he showed me a sketch he had made of "The Repentant Sinner," and then I felt the necessity of protest.

"Sit down, my dear fellow, and consider. One strong interest in my design depends on the uncertainty as to whether the being within will respond; your picture would destroy all this. Besides, as you paint with greater facility than I do, your subject would be done first, and perhaps exhibited before mine, and thus the possible effect of Christ's appeal would be presented ere the cause of it were understood; this would be confusing, and would give the impression that I was copying your idea. In our Brotherhood each is independent; but your picture would encourage people to speak of me as your imitator. You won't mind my objecting to this. I must therefore ask you not to paint a companion picture, at least at present."

He hastily said, "My dear fellow, I see you are perfectly right; I won't attempt it."

He soon got the particulars of the Huguenot[1] from his mother and made his new design, which enabled him to decide where his inimitably painted ivy leaves and brick wall should encroach. The canvas for my new picture arrived from London, and I was able to prepare for the background. One night I went out with Millais, who carried the lantern that I might see the effect of light upon the face and figure shining from below. I drew out my figure on the canvas and settled the place of the accessories.

At this time, Collins, in his irresolute way, expressed an inclination to go one Saturday afternoon to town and spend the Sunday with his mother. It was dread of the dark path on his return at night along the lone road from Kingston station across the fields to our farm that deterred him. "Nonsense," said Millais, "what do you fear most, ghosts or foot-pads?" The other evasively replied, "Both, perhaps." "Now really, Charley, you need not worry; we will meet you as the train comes in, and walk back with you; we'll both go with you on the road at once, or the dark will overtake you before you catch the train to-night." Stopping near the station, Millais shouted out, "Good-night, old Timidity; hurry up or you'll have all Tam o' Shanter's troupe after you." And as a parting shot he added, "Give my love to Harriet, and tell her that I shall soon want her to fix the day for the wedding." Harriet was no other than Collins's mother, whom in rollicking way Millais pretended to court. The old lady, never failing in either wit or temper, took the joke in good part with an amusing retort. Charley held up his hands deprecatingly as we watched him advancing daintily one foot before the other in a straight line as though he were walking on a tight-rope. He was slight, with slender limbs, but erect in

[1] For the evolution of his father's noble picture here recorded, see Mr. J. Guille Millais' report of it in *Life of Sir J. E. Millais*, vol. i. pp. 136-141.

head and neck, and square in the shoulders; although not broad, a very proper man, having beautifully cut features, large chin, a crop of orange-coloured hair, and blue eyes that looked at a challenger without sign of quailing. "Why should he be so fearsome?" we said one to the other as he gave a final salute from the distance. "In some ways," Millais said, "the good fellow has the unflinching resolve of the conductor of a storming party. When he left Oxford he got hipped about a fancied love affair, and becoming a High Churchman, changed the subject of his picture from being an illustration of the lady in Shelley's *Sensitive Plant*,

> Who out of the cups of the heavy flowers
> Emptied the rain of the thunder showers,

to a picture of a nun with a missal in her hand, studying the significance of the passion flower, with the title 'Convent Thoughts.'[1] He can act on sudden resolve, and yet withal he is as fearful as a mouse. He ought to be made to get over such folly."

The next afternoon, to our delight, Millais' father appeared quite early. As he desired, we took him to our places of work, and to the shelters where our progressing pictures were housed, and in every direction satisfied his pent-up curiosity, until the sun warned us to prepare our visitor with refreshment for his return. We accompanied him to Maldon station, and when the train moved away that evening, it bore a father justly happy in full proof of the promise of a son who could bear the attacks of ignorance and malice, and surmount the toils of detraction unruffled, without dread of the issue. Millais pirouetted smartly, saying, "Now, isn't that a dear old Daddy? I am sure he enjoyed his visit; come along, we have had a good stretch over the fields far and near."

On our way we overtook two graceful damsels, servants at a house where Millais visited. He at once

[1] See p. 315, vol. ii.

called my attention to the fitness of one of these for the face of Ophelia in his picture, and approached them, saying he intended to ask their mistress to allow her to sit to him. As we got near home he assured me of his conviction that we should both make a success next year, and that we could not fail to get soon appointed to do some national mural work, by which we could win the world to approval of our principles by our invention and delicacy of expression. This brought us to our home and our dinner. Soon after the meal, when Millais was lying comfortably on the sofa, I observed that it was time to start out to meet Collins, and I suggested that he should put on his boots and come at once.

But he was tired, so I started alone, he shouting after me, "I know your little game; you want to cut me out with Harriet, but I'll be even with you!"

I was impatient while the lantern was being fitted up, for it was fully late.

At first, looking from the upland across the country, the furthest horizon of the darkened earth could scarcely be distinguished from the lustreless sky, for the eyelids of that day's wakefulness had closed. My outlook was soon altered, for in a few minutes I descended into a thick plantation, where the objects commanding my sight were only those on which the spoke rays of the lantern were shed, the grass and pebbles on the road, the ferns and weeds which swept my knees, the trunks of trees and network of their overhanging branches against an indigo sky. Sometimes I stopped, not only to admire the tracery of delicate leaves, but to observe exactly how far the light I carried brought objects before me into visible being; it may have been my intrusion alone that made the birds start away from their nests with alarmed cry, or that my light revealed some nearer enemy which made the awakened guardian of a nest noisy in his alarm. My further steps led me into a path at the side of the stream. Between me and the water was a hut long since abandoned

by the powder workers. With my new picture in view I had special reasons for wishing to see the further side by night, and walked through the thick grass to explore it. On the river side was a door locked up and overgrown with tendrils of ivy, its step choked with weeds. I stood and dwelt upon the desolation of the scene, and pictured in mind the darkness of that inner chamber, barred up by man and nature alike. When I had regained the road and was making progress, a five-years-old memory of an altogether unexplained experience came into my mind.

At that date, arriving by the last train from London at the Ewell station on the other side of the village, the stationmaster shut up his office and came out with a lantern to walk home. I accompanied him, being glad of his light. When we had entered under some heavy trees I cautioned him that some white creature, probably an animal, was advancing towards us. "It will be sure to get out of our way," he said, and walked on unfalteringly. Yet I kept my eyes riveted on the approaching being. When we had come nearer I interrupted our idle chat, saying, "But it is steadily coming towards us." He turned up his gaze and was stopped by what he saw. The mysterious midnight roamer proved to be no brute, but had the semblance of a stately, tall man wrapped in white drapery round the head and down to the feet. Stopping within five paces from us, he seemed to look through me with his solemn gaze. Would he speak? I wondered. Was his ghostly clothing merely vapour? I peered at it; it seemed too solid for this, and yet not solid enough for earthly garb. We both stood paralysed and expectant. Then the figure deliberately marched to our left, making a half-circle around us, till he regained the line he had been travelling upon, and paced majestically onward.

Clutching my companion's arm I said, "What is it?" His reply was, "It's a ghost." "Let us follow it," I spoke. "I have seen it more than enough," said the stationmaster. "Lend me your lantern," I urged, "that I may pursue and examine it." But he refused. The figure was still visible

striding on in the thick darkness. Had I dared to follow it without a light, the striking of the church clock would have reminded me that I was already fully late for my uncle's demure household, and I left the mystery unsolved. At the point where our road met the village, we came upon two sober men, of whom we asked what person it was that had lately passed them. They said they had been standing there ten minutes, and nobody had gone by. Next day, and for long after, investigations were made by the stationmaster and his friends, but nothing more was heard to unravel the mystery.

Being now alone, I tried whether by any stretch of imagination I could conjure up the same appearance as I had done five years ago. No effort of mine succeeded in kindling any apparition of the kind.

Dismissing this mysterious recollection, I reached the main road, where new incidents arose in the passing of a few stragglers to their homes. The first was a solitary countryman, who returned my salutation in cheerful manner; soon I heard a hilarious party coming along from afar in a light cart who in passing joked me about Diogenes and his lantern and continued their loud chatter until, in intermittent gusts of merriment, they passed out of my hearing. Then came a husband and wife with crying children, disputing as to who had been the cause of the delay in returning home.

After this I felt it questionable whether Charley might not have missed me going by another path; but, afar on the other side of the road, there sounded the stirring of timid feet on the grassy footway. I crossed and stood in front of the person, the shadow of the lantern hiding my face, till with uplifted hand I discovered my friend, the picture of absolute terror. "All right, Charley," I said, putting my hand upon him to give him comfort. "Oh," he gasped, "when I saw your lantern crossing the road and making for me so determinedly I gave up myself as lost, and as the light was raised its owner was still unrevealed, and I did not know you till you spoke. What I have

suffered on the road is beyond conception, and how I should get over the fields filled me with terror. How thankful I am to see you! Where's Millais?"

"His father came this afternoon, and after walking about a good deal he was too tired to come," I said. "I've enjoyed my walk."

We chatted on till Charley gained breath and composure. "Now I want you to tell me about Wilkie and the other great artists," I said, "Turner, Stodhard, Constable, Etty, and their like, whom you had, to me, the inconceivable luck of knowing in your earliest days."

"Will it seem perversity to say that I think you were more to be envied than I?" said he. "You looked upon these men as lights in a distant temple that you were striving to reach. You saw the peril of becoming one of those who faint by the way, and you were prepared to encounter obstacles; you put out all your strength to arrive at the desired goal. In doing this you were forced to tread new ground, and you acquired the habit of doing so. The difference with me was that I was already enjoying the brightness and glory of the haven where the crowned ones were resting, talking of the race they had run as only part of their youth. I was dandled on their knees. I took to drawing from mere habit, and they all applauded my efforts. I looked upon the diadem as a part of manhood that must come, and now I begin to doubt and fear the issue."

"My dear doubter and fearer," said I, "learn something from me. I have many times in my studio come to such a pass of humiliation that I have felt that there was not one thing that I had thought I could do thoroughly in which I was not altogether incapable. After I had drawn from the antique and life for years, it has seemed to me that I was so imbecile in the most elementary part of design that I have set myself to practise making horizontal, perpendicular, and oblique lines and curves of all kinds, like a beginner. It has been the same with painting. There

has on occasions appeared to me no salvation but in working in white and black; in doing this I have affected being a beginner. In our Pre-Raphaelitism there is danger in the determination to stultify one's pride for the nonce. In determining to eliminate all traditional masterliness, when we design without Nature before us, we often draw less well than we did before. However, it seems better thus to make sure of our footing in order to *sauter mieux*. This first part of our experience you are now troubled by, but you must not doubt or fear. Let us do battle, but do not let the fighting be that of a fatalist who thinks Heaven is against him."

Collins and I thus mutually philosophised until we reached the farm, where night reigned supreme, and Millais was sleeping the sleep of the just.

It was continually interesting to note the differences between my two comrades, one fated to win honours, whatever the obstructions might be; the other, spite of original gifts and of strenuous yearnings, doomed to be turned back on the threshold of success by want of courageous confidence.

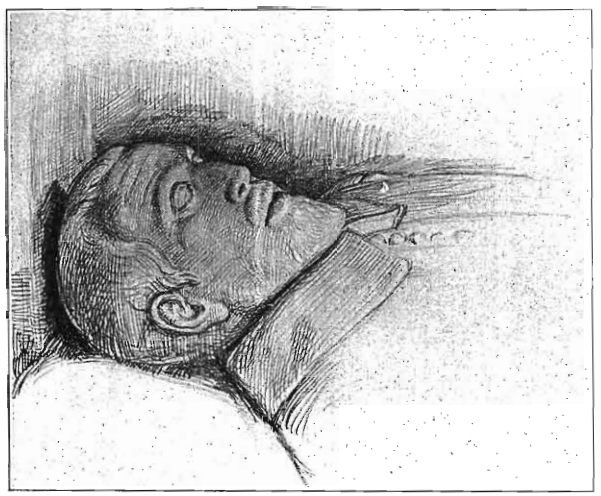
It was late in the autumn, but I had matured my preparations for "The Light of the World" enough to work in the old orchard before the leaves and fruit had altogether disappeared. To paint the picture life size, as I should have desired, would then have forbidden any hope of sale. For my protection from the cold, as far as it could be found, I had a little sentry-box built of hurdles, and I sat with my feet in a sack of straw. A lamp, which I at first tried, proved to be too strong and blinding to allow me to distinguish the subtleties of hue of the moonlit scene, and I had to be satisfied with the illumination from a common candle. I went out to my work about 9 P.M., and remained till 5 A.M. the next morning, when I retired into the house to bed till about ten, and then rose to go back to my hut and devote myself for an hour or two to the rectifying of any errors of colour, and to drawing out the work for the ensuing night. My first experience in

nocturnal labour was alarming. The handsome avenue in front of the farm was, of course, known to be haunted. I promised to be on my guard against the *shameless duchess* or any of her crew, that they should have no excuse for taking away my character. For an hour the stillness was chequered by the going in and out of farm servants, then my friends came out ere they retired to sleep and chatted with me, wrapped against the cold. Shortly after, the lights seen through the windows were extinguished one by one, and a quiet, deep sense of solitude reigned over all. The noises of life ceased save the draggling pulsation of the powder mill down in the vale below, whose measured beating timed the black night. I plied my brush busily, in turn warming my numbed fingers in my breast. About midnight I could hear that there was another noise, like the rustling of dead leaves, and that this grew more distinct, evidently coming nearer as I paused to listen, but the road trodden by the thing of night was hidden from me. Yet I could not the less certainly measure the distance of the waves of disturbed dried leaves. The steps had arrived at the face of the house, and now were turning aside to the orchard, where soon indeed I could see a hundred yards off a mysterious presence. I shouted out, "Tell me who you are." A flash of light shot across the orchard, and then with solemn step the village policeman approached. "I thought you were the ghost," I said. "Well, to tell the truth, sir, that was what I thought of you." Henceforth he was a nightly visitor, and accepted my tobacco while he chatted to me for half an hour. When I asked him whether he had seen other artists painting landscapes in the neighbourhood, his reply was, "I can't exactly say as I have at this time o' night."

I resumed my nocturnal work every full moon when people skated in the daytime in the valley two hundred feet below. After I had made my corrections in the night's work, I had still to apply myself to the sheep in my other picture. Millais continued at his ivy-clad wall,

the original of which might have been of the time of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Late in the autumn Mr. and Mrs. Combe were in town, and they came down to visit us. This was my first introduction to two of the most unpretending servants of goodness and nobility that their generation knew. They were surely "the salt of the earth" to a large circle. He was born at Leicester, and seeing the great likeness in him



W. H. H.

THOMAS COMBE MONUMENT, STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

to the monumental portrait of Shakespeare's friend Thomas Combe of Stratford-upon-Avon, I asked him later in my acquaintance if he could trace the connection, but he seemed indisposed to make a claim to this ancestor, not altogether perhaps unmindful of the raillery of the poet upon his friend's activity as a usurer.

The worthy couple saw my pictures, and from that moment declared the greatest interest in the beginning of the "Christ at the Door."

Before returning permanently from Surrey I took the

opportunity of being in town late in the year to call on R. B. Martineau, who, having heard of my success with Rossetti, had, through an old fellow-student, notified his wish to become my pupil in painting. He had already been through the schools of the Academy, gaining some honours, and wished at this point to train himself to paint subject pictures in oil. Concluding that he thought I was very prosperous, I tested him by saying that up to this present time, although I had lived more self denyingly than any lawyer's clerk would have done, I had not succeeded in paying my way, and that I was heavily in debt, with nothing but pictures as assets which nobody would buy; indeed, from all experiences I could scarcely regard painting in England as a *profession* at all, and advised, if he could reconcile himself to any other life, that he would abandon the idea of becoming an artist. But to him the lucrativeness of the pursuit was not at first a vital question, which removed the scruples I had against encouraging any one native born needing to live by his profession from becoming a painter in this country. In the end he became my pupil, and remained my close and much valued friend until his death, nearly twenty years later. I encouraged him to complete a design he had begun from *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and this he painted in my studio, while I finished "The Hireling Shepherd." He never became a facile executant, but from the first he produced admirable pictures. His greatest work was "The Last Day in the Old Home."

This visit to town only occupied me a day, and I lost no time in resuming work to finish all the details in my background. Gabriel Rossetti had not been to see us, although once or twice we had expected him. William Millais came and stayed, painting a small landscape, and Wilkie Collins also came to see us. In youth he had thought of being a painter, but had gradually drifted into literature. He was a man now, slight of build, about five feet six inches in height, with an impressive head, the cranium being noticeably more prominent on

The Hireling Shepherd.

J. E. Millais.

WILKIE COLLINS.

the right side than on the left, which inequality did not amount to a disfigurement; perhaps indeed it gave a stronger impression of intellectual power. He was redundant in pleasant temperament, his immediate concern was in his brother's recent inclination to extreme Church discipline and rigorous self-denial in matters of fasting and calendar observances, which in Wilkie's mind could only be prejudicial to health and to the due exercise of his ability. He charged us not to be too persistent in our comments upon the eccentricity, believing that, if left alone, Charley would not long persevere in his new course. Wilkie took a lively interest in our pursuits, and professed a desire to write an article on our method of work, leaving the question of the value of results entirely apart, that the public might understand our earnestness in the direct pursuit of nature, which, if not establishing the excellence of our productions, would at least be convincing proof that our untiring ambition was not to copy any mediævalists, as it was so generally said we did, but to be persistent rather in the pursuit of new truth. This intention was never acted upon.

Before we left, Millais' friends the Lemprières, Sir George Glynn, and many worthies of the neighbourhood came to visit us.

My uncle at Ewell and his admirable wife were among our visitors. They were full of deferred curiosity to see the pictures we three had been doing, and they drove over in their light chaise to luncheon; they both highly enjoyed dwelling on all the field growths of our paintings, but they caused us much laughter about a water rat which Millais had put in his "Ophelia." The creature was perfectly correct in its perspective, but in comparison with the flowers on the other side of the stream with the intervening space not painted, it appeared prodigiously large, and my uncle guessed twenty different *varmint* without hitting on the little beast it was intended to be. The painter wanted to test how far the rat was a good likeness, and would not help the critic, until my uncle gave up the question in

despair. The creature had been introduced to give the idea of a lonely peacefulness in the spot, but its presence suggested a painful idea, and though it had been exquisitely treated, eventually Millais reluctantly erased it. It was C. R. Leslie's advice which ultimately prevailed on this point when he saw the picture.

RECTORY FARM, EWELL.

With all our work done we took leave of the farm household and came up to town in December, parting from one another where the Waterloo Road and Strand met, thinking that we should often again enjoy such happy fellowship, but, alas! no two dreams are alike. Never did we live again together in such daily spirit-stirring emulation. I feel this deeply in my old age when I alone am left of the band who worked together with so much mutual love and aspiration. I have dwelt much on homely

details of the time; they carry with them a significance that no artist will deny.

Brown had now taken a studio at the back premises of a house occupied by Bailey the sculptor, with an entrance through the house and at the back; it was capacious enough for the large picture of Chaucer still in progress. We found him with the picture of "Christ washing Peter's Feet" on the easel, and he was conducting it on our plan communicated at Worcester Park Farm. The head of St. John was painted from W. M. Rossetti. My father sat for the first draft of one disciple, and I of another; but as these were in tone they were not much dependent upon the strict principle of our system, and in the end they were altogether repainted, either from other sitters or from fancy. I never understood why Brown, being the independent thinker that he was, represented Peter as a burly man of sixty, since the active career of the apostle took place after the event recorded, before his martyrdom, which occurred at least thirty years later.