

CHAPTER XIV

1889-1896

Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces.

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me ; all are departed ;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

C. LAMB.

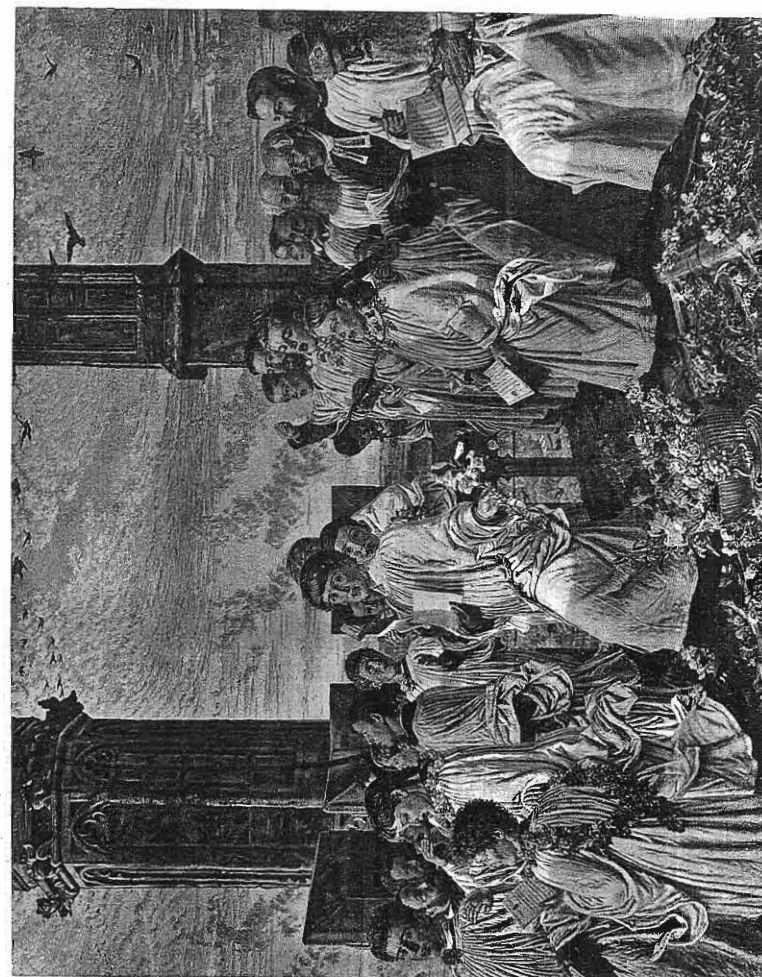
A Parsee could never be present at the rising of the sun without bowing himself in worship.—“CAMA,” *an Indian Parsee*.

“I am afraid, my Lord,” Constable said, “the judgment of a painter is of very little value in an auction room ; for *we* only know good pictures from bad ones. We know nothing of their pedigrees, of their market value, or how far certain masters are in fashion.”—C. R. LESLIE.

I now used the leisurely opportunity which the postponement of further travel gave me to paint in oil, with extended confines, the design of “The Lady of Shalott,” as it had appeared in the Tennyson illustrated volume. I allowed increased space above the head and at the sides of the composition, which gave room for new inventions to make manifest the significance of the subject. I had advanced far with this work when the spring season reminded me that the date was near for reconsidering a subject long in my mind, which my Eastern expeditions

had hitherto hindered me from taking in hand. This subject was the ceremony of May morning, Magdalen Tower, Oxford, at sunrise, when the choristers, in perpetuation of a service which is a survival of primitive sun-worship,—perhaps Druidical,—sing a hymn as the sun appears above the horizon. On the morning I ascended the Tower, making observations and sketches, and a few days later I returned to settle to work. For several weeks I mounted to the Tower roof about four in the morning with my small canvas to watch for the first rays of the rising sun, and to choose the sky which was most suitable for the subject. When all was settled I repeated the composition upon a larger canvas, the President obligingly placing at my disposal a studio in the new buildings of the College.

It was a singular pleasure to me that the Rev. Dr. Bloxam, the nephew of Sir Thomas Lawrence, who had been active in saving the beautiful rite from extinction, was still alive, and that I was able to introduce him into the picture. It was exhibited in 1891, and the reproduction was made by the Berlin Photogravure Company. This, while perfect in details, was, as the reproduction of "The Innocents" had been, very troublesome in needing work to make the general effect true. It was while finishing this painting at Oxford that I had the last opportunities of meeting my very dear old friend Mrs. Combe. She expressed her regret that she had on the impulse of the moment separated "The Light of the World" from the other pictures which, excepting the portrait of Canon Jenkins to be given to Jesus College, her husband had always destined for the Taylor Building; she assured me she had made provision towards building a chapel expressly for my picture of "The Light of the World" at Keble College, which hitherto had been ill placed, and that the picture would be certain to be treated with due regard under the protection of Mr. Wilson, the new warden. When I was in London with the Magdalen Tower picture already done and exhibited, I was grieved



J. B. Wilson, 1891, p. 10.

May Morning on Magdalen Tower.

BETHNAL
GREEN
MUSEUM.

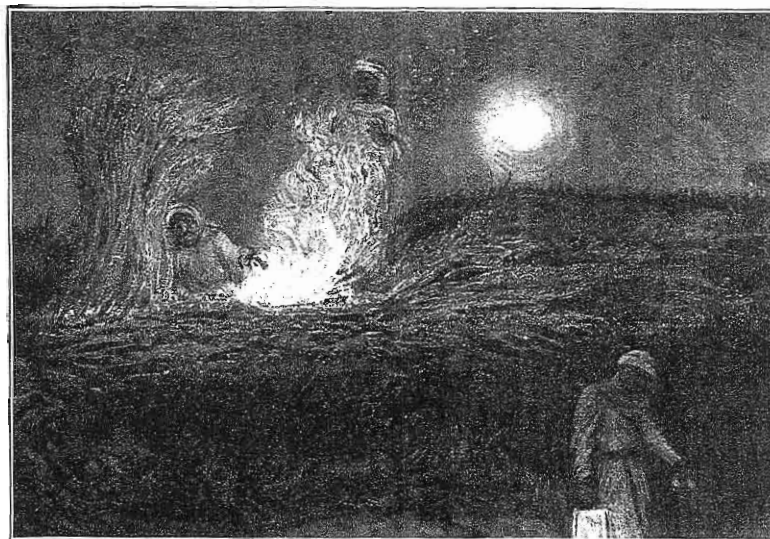


STUDY FOR "THE VISION OF THE SHEPHERDS."

to hear that this saint-like mother of all the poor in her districts at Oxford had been called away from them. Her retained collection of pictures was accepted on certain conditions by the Committee of the Taylor Building, where they now form part of that interesting gallery.

In the autumn of 1892 my wife and I travelled in Italy and Greece, in which latter country, after our visit to Athens and Olympia, I regretted more than ever that in 1856 the steamer on which I embarked at Constantinople for the Piræus had broken down in the Dardanelles, and that thus I had then been prevented from visiting the land of the demigods. Returned to Naples we took ship to Alexandria, and thence journeyed to Cairo, which I found, after an absence of thirty-nine years, so changed that in the morning, on sallying forth into the *Usbequieh*, I should have been unable to guess that it was part of the same Cairo that I had known. After a few visits to the wonderful Museum and surrounding places of interest, we went up the Nile as far as Philæ, revelling in the inexhaustible glories of the temples on its banks. At the end of March we made our way to Jaffa, and soon found ourselves once more at the spring source of Christendom. When in 1854 I approached Jerusalem every feature in its place was historic; there was no house outside the city, but now the whole plateau from the ridge where formerly Jerusalem first came in sight was covered with an assortment of stone houses and cabins of every variety of ugliness, villas with verandah blinds and chimney pots, sheds of corrugated iron and factory chimneys. All the dear old windmills had disappeared or were in ruins, and it was with difficulty that we could recognise our own house. This being dilapidated, we took up our abode at the hotel. I had undertaken to make designs for Sir Edwin Arnold's poem, "The Light of the World," and this necessitated many excursions to collect matter. While progressing with this task the Greek Easter was at hand, and I felt it would be a pity if I, who had seen the wild ceremony of the miracle of the Holy Fire so often, and

knew the difference between the accidental episodes which occur, and those which are fundamental, should not take the opportunity of perpetuating for future generations the astounding scene which many writers have so vividly described. I obtained a position in the gallery with the point of sight most commending itself for the picture, and there adding to a store of sketches made on previous



W. H. H.

THE NILE POSTMAN.

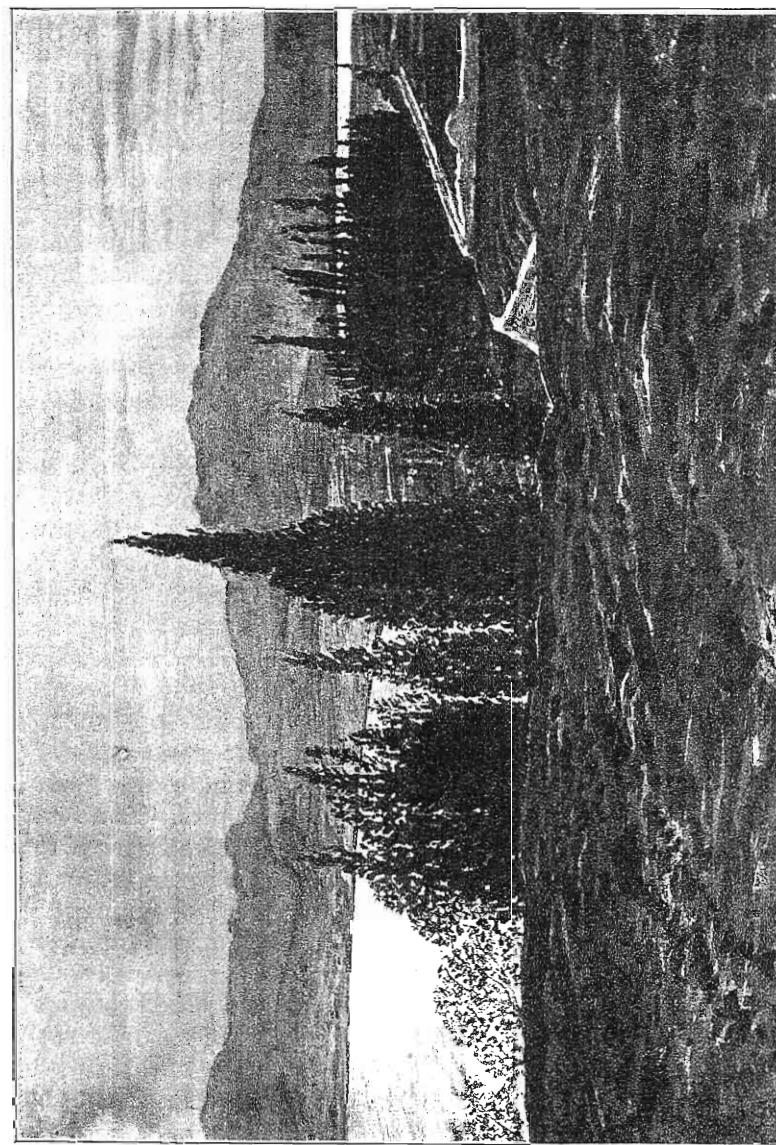
occasions, I drew rapid mementoes of the moving mass, and employed the remainder of my time in Jerusalem advancing this picture on canvas. In the end we packed up such furniture as moth and thieves had kindly left us in our house, and abandoned it and Syria for ever.

On my return I devoted myself afresh to the picture of "The Lady of Shalott," which, although hindered from time to time, was now much advanced, and alternately I worked at "The Holy Fire" picture, for which I was glad to get Oriental sitters by the help of the manager of the

Asiatic Home at Limehouse and elsewhere. Whilst I was painting "The Holy Fire," Mr. J. T. Middlemore purchased my second canvas of "The Triumph of the Innocents," the first finished of the two pictures, and larger than the other by some inches. It has differences also in form and colour. My water-colour drawing of "Christ with the Rabbis in the Temple School" also then became his property. The first he destined for the permanent Gallery at Birmingham on certain conditions not yet fulfilled. His private collection contains some smaller pictures of mine, including the replica of "The Shadow of Death" made by me for the engraver's use.

Millais had written to me about the year 1870 when I was in Jerusalem, that the "first volume of our lives" had closed, and was sealed up, and that now "the second volume was fast advancing"; at the period I have now reached the third volume was drawing nigh to completion. The ever-pleasant, good-hearted artist and man of letters, W. B. Scott, had been taken ill at Penkhill Castle, and had gradually grown weaker till he died, 22nd November 1890.

But to return to surviving friends and interests. A banquet was given to art and literature by the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House; Millais, representing Sir F. Leighton, was seated at the high table next to the host, and Madox Brown was exactly on the opposite side of the table, facing Millais and a bevy of other Academicians. There were many vacant places between him and me, and I asked him to come and take the chair next to me, explaining that he would meet friends whose conversation would interest him. "Thank you," he said, "I would rather sit here." I left him alone, severely frowning at his diplomaed brothers of the brush, where he remained all the evening, silent. A mutual friend told me that Brown had said he wished particularly to draw the attention of the Academicians to the fact, that although he was not a member of the Academy, he had been conspicuously honoured by the civic authorities with a central



W. H. H.

CORFU.

place at the high table. It is possible that many of the Academicians went home without benefiting by the reproof that dear old "Bruno" felt to be so necessary for them. He had now lived beyond the full term of threescore years and ten, and his days had become sad. His only son Oliver, a youth of great promise both as painter and writer, had died, and this bitterness was followed soon after by the death of his wife. While still struggling manfully with ever-continuing money difficulties, he could not repress complaint to a friend at his evil fortune. His health was fast failing, and he was seven hundred pounds in debt, which was indeed a disgrace to his country. The profession of an artist is an expensive one; a writer needs but his pens, ink and paper with a little space to write in, but an artist must have large rooms with many appliances, as necessary to him as scaffolding to a builder in his operations. He must have money at all stages of figure subjects to pay models and to buy materials; during the probationary period of his career he may bear many discomforts with patience, but when he has the full responsibilities of life, he must have the opportunity of repose away from sight of his work, that he may not miss refreshment of mind and body. Brown had always been most studious, industrious, and frugal, and had produced many noble works of which the country must eventually be proud; yet here he was in his last years suffering in mind as though he had been a profitless ne'er-do-well. A few of his friends met together and agreed to raise a subscription to purchase some of his works without his knowledge, and the contributions had accumulated although without public appeal to a sum handsomely covering his liabilities. Unfortunately, just as all was prepared for approaching him, a newspaper stated the fact in its gossip column, which Brown saw. He was inflamed to great anger, and went off to Frederick Shields, who was acting as secretary to the fund, and expressed his indignation at the insult that had been done him; he denounced it as an attempt to impose charity upon him

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writers, but had never yet been painted ; its dramatic, historic, and picturesque importance (which last it is now fast losing owing to the growing adoption of European costume) strongly recommended it to me for artistic representation, and every year the survival of the early record must be more valued. I exhibited this picture at the New Gallery, and afterwards lent it to Liverpool ; I then determined to retain it in my own house as being of a subject understood in its importance only by the few.

On the 23rd January 1896, Lord Leighton died after acute suffering. I have already paid my tribute to his extraordinary genius. All the world testifies to the brilliancy of his qualities, both artistic and social. Sir John Everett Millais was elected as President to the vacant chair on the 20th February 1896 ; unhappily he was already smitten in health, and it was difficult to believe, as some of his doctors advised, that his illness was but a transient one. He clung to hope, and went on working steadily to the last. Although he and I had of late been moved by different ambitions since the days of our youthful friendship, we had always been able to confide so thoroughly in one another, that our affection could well afford the strain of differing views, and in fact these often made it the greater. The truth of his doomed condition, at first resolutely ignored, came very suddenly to him, and then day by day he stepped down into the grave, but never lost his composure or noble personality. When all were afflicted to hear that he was reduced to speechlessness, few could be admitted to have interview with him. The Princess Louise was amongst those who entered to mark their esteem for the dying President ; when the visit was brought to an end, Her Royal Highness asked if it were possible to do anything that would give him comfort. He thereupon beckoned for the slate, and spurred by the chivalric feeling towards the wife whom he had championed throughout his life, whose history had been too generally misunderstood, he pencilled in clear, unwavering writing, "I wish Her Majesty the Queen would

see my wife." The Princess was a gracious agent, and Queen Victoria's womanly heart was touched by the message ; on the following morning Lady Millais was summoned to Windsor. He lived only a few days more to feel the gratification of this recognition. According to his direction I took my allotted place as pall-bearer when his body was received and lowered into the tomb in St. Paul's Cathedral on the 13th August 1896.

On October the 3rd of the same year died that noble designer and poet, William Morris. Although he had been an off-shoot from our original energy, and had become a most sturdy and valued friend, his artistic activity was only indirectly prompted by Millais and myself, the immediate impetus having come through Rossetti after he had separated himself from us. This reference to Morris makes it fitting that I should again allude to his remarkable companion, Edward Burne-Jones, whose original impulse to the professional practice of art also emanated from Gabriel. I am induced to claim Burne-Jones' strenuousness in the rendering of his designs as the outcome, though at second hand, of my teaching of Rossetti ; perhaps this helped to induce more than casual observers to confuse him with the original Pre-Raphaelites. His special manner, however it will already have been understood, was not in accordance with our first purpose. Burne-Jones' work so admirably fulfilled his aim that all were justified in regarding it as the perfection of the modern quattrocentists' school of art, but his nature as revealed in his art would give the world only a limited appreciation of his personal spirit. He was a man of exquisite wit and humour, enjoying an unsurpassed sense of the ridiculous. He superadded to Rossetti's earlier spirit a certain classicism of style in the posing and drawing of the human figure. This last character was mainly encouraged by the influence of Watts. Gabriel was alone in his cultivation of the sensuous air, reflected from examples of later Italian masters, an air which was justified to many by its consummate character, so that his

prestige still held the field, and he was accepted as leader in the Dantesque spirit of sadness, never breaking into cheering strain.

Certain generous friends in 1900 subscribed to have my portrait painted by Sir William Richmond, R.A., who, by acceptance of the commission, became the largest contributor. They presented me with this, together with an illustrated address written by Leslie Stephen, and a piece of plate bearing a generous inscription, both of which gratified me deeply.

The Times, in reference to this tribute, published a leading article acknowledging my claim to the honour done me. It was the same liberal spirit in which it had admitted Ruskin's defence of us in 1851, and my pleadings against the denunciation of Woolner by Jacob Omnium.

Among the distinguished artists who have acknowledged the direct influence of Pre-Raphaelitism upon them, Sir William Richmond avows its benefit at an early period.¹ G. F. Watts expressed recognition of the value of our reform in his evidence before the Royal Commission in 1863,² and, as remarked already, he testified to his sympathy with our principles in the manner of the portraits exhibited in 1859 under the name of F. W. George, as well as in many private and appreciative confidences to myself. As a final reminiscence of this great artist I have to add that in his later days he had built himself a country house and studio near Guildford. He named it "Limner's Lease." Till the spring of 1904 his gallery in Kensington was open to the public on stated days, but recently he had carried out a purpose of sending the greater number of the works to his country house, where he had built a large gallery for the satisfaction of all comers from neighbouring towns. Only a few paintings remained at Little Holland House, Melbury Road.

¹ "Ruskin as I Knew Him," by Sir William Richmond, in *St. George*.

² "The only definite reform movement (which the Pre-Raphaelite school may be called) was certainly not stimulated by the Royal Academy, and even met with opposition from it."

One morning when I called I found that house in *impromptu* festal state, for the rustic workers in wood-carving and pottery who had been trained in the school founded by Mrs. Watts had come to London to see the exhibitions, and the guests were just sitting down in the dismantled gallery to a substantial repast. After exchanging some words with the young men and lads, as I left the studio I fondly glanced at the beautiful picture of "Echo" still upon the wall, which at the Westminster Hall competition was the first of Watts' paintings I had ever seen. I ascended with the host to the room where the family meal was laid. He was quite his own gentle and eager self in all but a slight deafness left in spite of benefit conferred by an electric treatment. He expressed his great desire for the success of the craft industry, whose workers I had just seen, and whose character he highly approved. He regarded the effort as a means in one small degree to stem the tide of idleness, of want of pride in work, and indeed, of that combination among workmen to avoid the full amount of application which honest pride required of them in the execution of their daily tasks, and which would be in the long run profitable to themselves. He avowed that he was depressed at the prospect to our country, and indeed to the world at large, by the inordinate indulgence of all classes in idle pleasure, which led men to schemes for acquiring money with indifference as to who might be ruined in the struggle; he deplored the indulgence in gambling of every kind, so rife from high to low, as leading to degraded ideas of honour which could only disintegrate any nation. "We see," he said, "with what avidity people rush to races of all sorts. In the morning the roads are crowded with men who ought to be at their work, all striving to arrive first at the place of contest, not for interest in the healthy competition itself, but for the sake of betting recorded in their books as they go along. Even little messenger boys in the street can be seen writing down their stakes, and snatching in the afternoon at the first halfpenny paper

recommended as giving 'All the winners.' The people thus use their School Board education for short-sighted cunning in place of profitable labour, which alone increases the wealth of a nation. Past savings, instead of being augmented, are rapidly passing from the pockets of one man to those of another, leaving the wear and tear of daily consumption ever decreasing the world's store of wealth needful for further enterprise, so that continually the number of unemployed and unemployable becomes more numerous. I have myself always been in favour of extending privileges to working men, but they are no longer working men. I know instances of many quite ridiculing the idea of taking delight in their work, and performing it gladly as they used to do. Now bricklayers and carpenters accomplish only a third of a day's work, defending their sloth with the statement that the Union would not allow them to do more." In confirmation of his view I instanced the case of a paper-hanger who, when asked in the evening why he had dawdled away his day, confessed that he could have done four times the quantity were it not for the rules forbidding him, and of a carpenter engaged on a Saturday morning in putting in a screw who, on hearing the clock strike twelve, put down his screw-driver, declaring that his time for work was up! and he should do no more, however urgent the job might be. Watts lamented these practices, supported by the excuse that they increase the demand for work, while in fact they prevent many who would give employment from putting their plans in hand. "We all know," he said, "of native products being driven out of the market by much cheaper and better work from abroad, and we learn of manufacturers removing to Belgium and Germany to escape the tyranny of idleness. I am seriously distressed about the future of England." He was told on many hands that the old-fashioned and affectionate house-servant of former days had almost disappeared, and he added: "With stories such as one I heard, of a young lady who gave up charitable work to devote herself all

day to the playing of 'Bridge,' by which she gained some hundreds increase to her family allowance, it is natural that domestic servants should also become short-sighted and irresponsible. As artists we should cut a sorry figure if we put down our brushes at any allotted hour. One lesson in our art is the example it gives of strenuous effort and perseverance; but indeed, there are now artists both in painting and sculpture, whose works at modern exhibitions make their authors appear to be actuated by the prevalent spirit of shirking their labour instead of showing sign of determination to overcome difficulties of approach to perfection. Protection may or may not be wise, I do not know, but I am sure that the real evil to England at this time is the disposition to evade labour, and, now that short-sighted selfishness is so rampant, I do not see how the evil will be eradicated. For my part it is lamentable to think that the course of folly dooms a nation, glorious as England, to decay. I do not fail to recognise that England has in previous times recovered from threatenings of disaster, but we want candid and courageous leaders to speak openly of the real danger that threatens the country."

It was an unusual thing for Watts to express himself so sadly. I had to break away abruptly, hoping that on another visit we could resume the talk with happier outlook, but in a few days he caught a chill, and grew feverish and increasingly weak, with intervals of flickering hope to his devoted household. In a glorious peace he died on the 1st July 1904.

The history of the Pre-Raphaelite reform movement has now been patiently chronicled, and I would gladly close the story, but there are some distortions of truth still left undestroyed, and these demand the franker attention, because they are direct survivals of those unfair statements which ignorantly falsified our principles in the beginning.

It has been seen that in the fifties there was a large

conversion of younger artists to our reform, and that even several equals and elders were influenced by it to some degree. It were wearisome to do more than insist upon this fact as proof that our immediate influence was at once to introduce a measure of new life into the contemporary art of our youth. Who can say to what lengths the invigorating purification might not have extended had we been allowed a reasonably fair field for our energies? The savage prejudice against our work not alone nearly destroyed ourselves, but hampered and hindered the progress of the general conversion we were attempting. As it was, we did not suffer our martyrdom in vain. Had we not continued faithful to our standard, not only should we have been proved too weak for our special effort, but artists, such as Leighton, F. Walker, Mason, and others too numerous to mention, stirred by vigorous blood and a high enthusiasm to do battle in other ways with evil fashions in vogue, would all have been in danger of defeat. The evidence of our influence upon our early converts, with the fact of the check in their discipleship received from the enemies of our school, need not here be enlarged upon, but the degree of destruction which the inimical spirit caused even at the fountain-head must not go unrecorded. When the works of Millais were collected at the Grosvenor Gallery, an ardent appreciator of his genius, Lady Constance Leslie, went early in the day to the exhibition. Ascending the stairs, she encountered the painter going out, with head bowed down. As she accosted him, and he looked up, she saw tears in his eyes. "Ah, dear Lady Constance," he said, "you see me unmanned. Well, I'm not ashamed of avowing that in looking at my earliest pictures I have been overcome with chagrin that I so far failed in my maturity to fulfil the full forecast of my youth." He had cause to feel this disappointment, but the blame can scarcely be laid at his door by any one who has traced with attention the fury directed against us. In these days, it is true, the country raises its voice aloud to declare an interest in art,

in foreign art particularly, but it fails to show any adequate idea of exalting and cherishing native art.

In England in the eighteenth century only portraitists could get a living. Wilson would have died a pauper had he not succeeded his brother in the family inheritance. Had Wilkie, Constable, Stothard, Turner, been natives of any other country, the Government would have taken some pains to gain examples of their work for the nation. While they were working, the rich men of England bought few but old pictures, and many native artists gained their bread only by restoring and repainting these. Turner, by acceptance of very modest prices to begin with, and the strictest economy in bachelor life, slowly accumulated wealth, but he is mostly known to the world by the wonderful paintings which came back from exhibitions unsold, and which were left by him to the nation. Before the end of his time, the tendency to establish facilities and rewards to tempt youths to become artists had scarcely declared itself. But the fashion of encouragement to studentship has been going on since then at a compound ratio, and by it people are induced to suppose that nothing more can be desired to establish England's repute as artistic, than this universal educational activity. The result is that many youths enter the career who by natural inclination would never have thought of it, who are in fact not endowed for the pursuit, and therefore can never win lasting distinction either for themselves or for their country, but will rather deprive better men of their just opportunities.

That Millais was at a time tempted more or less to meet the public taste, to forget his higher aspirations, and to make his Pegasus take the yoke to draw an unworthy load, has been held up to his condemnation; while during his bitter struggle, any foreign artist or other mere product of a school, who came forward with superficial proficiency was lauded and patronised out of all measure. The modern maxim that art is of no nationality and of no race, that it is, in fact, of one character and

universal, is an attempt to justify fashion. No less true statement was ever made. Art has ever been the tacit expression of a nation's character. Egyptian art exactly bespoke its nationality, the Greek genius made a new image to enshrine its own soul. Latin art, again, evolved a fresh form to express its powerful individuality; so it was with the Italians, Germans, Dutch, the ancient French, the Spanish, the English, and all other nations of the earth. French art has ever been, and must be, different in its spirit to that which has given life to English art. Certainly, while the confusion of one with the other may enchant the thoughtless by its superficial dexterity, it would develop a bastard breed of irresponsibility that would not deserve the name of art at all.

While Millais was painting those exquisite pictures "L'Enfant du Regiment," "The Blind Girl," "Ariel," and "The Fireman," for which at the most he was barely rewarded sufficiently to meet the expenses of new paintings, foreign pictures with showy attractions were hailed with laudation, which ensured their sale in England at extravagant prices. I must again call attention to the still more excessive case of contempt for native genius in the fortune, or rather misfortune, of Ford Madox Brown. When in his last days he was receiving only three hundred a year for his works in the Manchester Town Hall, and was crippled on the small pittance left after paying his expenses, the press was praising the annual commonplaces, and extolling to the skies as miraculous the very mundane productions of his unworthy compeers from abroad: the extravagant glorification, to wit, which greeted Meissonier's microscopic representation of two dull old gentlemen playing chess, or the picture representing nothing more ennobling than a sign-painter painting his board, or again, a draughtsman sketching in a barrack yard with a crowd of dull onlookers, or, as the highest flight of military interest, Napoleon on his white horse; by which the French artist was finally able to obtain from English millionaires one thousand guineas for each inch of his panel,

the while no French millionaire would buy the works of any English painter. Gustave Doré at the same time, having exhibited in London enormous drop scenes illustrating sacred story, was praised by English critics in columns of rapturous text, by which, while corrupting the taste of our nation, he became so popular that he gained a handsome fortune from England in a few years, whilst Brown was reduced to penury. What can be the wisdom in multiplying students if, when one in a thousand of these becomes a great artist, the opportunities that he ought to have for doing justice to his powers are immediately given to inferior foreign artists in preference to him, and when eventually his life is reviewed, his memory is charged with doing unworthy work, which he had no choice but to do in order to live. There need be no objection to the patronage of foreign artists of worth if their countries reciprocate the enthusiasm, or if enough patronage exists at home first to do justice to the exalted spirit in true English art. Not only is this not the case, but when evidence is given that English artists sometimes winced under the stinted encouragement of timorous buyers, their impatience under the failure of recognition is severely criticised. Burke says that in the long-run "men will do what it is to their interest to do." When all the pitfalls in the way of an ardent-minded artist have been avoided, and he has come to the front, tried and proved ready to do the country honourable service, if then he is put aside contemptuously, and the services of mere pretenders are taken in preference to his, the blind course is as detrimental to the country as to the artist. From the manner in which an artist is discussed by the elegant world, it is concluded that he can do ideal work without considering whether there is a patron waiting for it or not. The old masters, when once their abilities had been proved in early manhood, had no difficulty so great as that of deciding for what patron they should labour, whether for Pope, King, Church, monastery, municipality, or merchant prince. How enviable was their

lot! How can it be wondered at that they left so many works in comparison with modern artists? Turner never had a public commission to execute in his life, neither was Millais ever employed on any public building either by Government or by ecclesiastics. Perhaps in this connection I ought to regard it as a compliment that I also was never engaged on any public work.

Notwithstanding Millais' occasional occupation upon unworthy themes, his fastidious eye and poetic taste were still intact, and his original conscientious sense instinctively asserted itself in work triumphant at all points, so that England had no excuse for failing to see the rareness of the glory he was prepared to achieve for her. Whenever he was engaged in painting a beautiful woman or a child's head, his best powers came into action, and no painter of any nation or time surpassed him in delicacy of expression or in variety of unaffected charm. This makes the extravagant appreciation of Meissonier the more ridiculous, for the French artist could not paint a woman at all. Millais' was the frank English beauty typified by Gainsborough, sometimes with fuller solidity of modelling, and with often the fancy of Reynolds or Romney in addition. His men's portraits at times reached in excellence the best of those by the Venetian painters, or those of the great Dutch School. It is said by mercenary arbiters of the day that his works do not maintain the highest prices at Christie's. The list of prices for various years is an interesting addition to artistic information, and must be of practical importance for picture-dealers; but surely, if works of art were so judged, their true value would finally be ruled by the purse of fashion, and high aspirations would be driven from the field; Blake at one period would have been stamped as an imbecile, and Flaxman and Stothard little better, Constable and every man of original inspiration as a perverse fool.

Fluctuations in the monetary value of pictures are but ephemeral, and do not touch their artistic value in the remotest degree. At Rogers's sale a "Madonna and Child"



W. H. H.

THE PEARL.

of a more mature period than the Madonna "di Gran Duca," and of equal beauty, was sold to Mr. Appleton, the brother-in-law of Longfellow, for £500. No connoisseur could doubt that this picture is more precious than the Ansidei Madonna, bought for £70,000. Certainly, if the possessor of Mr. Appleton's Raphael sent it into the market now, it would fetch a proportionate price. I can myself remember when Raphael's picture of "Apollo and Marsyas," now in the Louvre, was offered for sale by Morris Moore in London for £400, and for twenty years no one would believe in its value. After his death it was purchased from the widow by the French Minister of Fine Arts, and now it would fetch thousands. Examples of the blunderings of the picture market might be cited without end. Had the prevailing taste always to be deferred to, we in our early days should at once have abandoned any idea of reform in art, but instead we should have imitated Frost, Howard, or Etty, and so subscribe to the dealers' existing standard. The right use of the auction list is not to settle the real value of pictures, but the uprising or downfalling of the taste of the buyer. I am told that Millais' transcendent picture of "The Three Sisters," when last under the hammer, was knocked down for about £600, while paintings no more exquisite, and certainly not so perfect in condition, by the three great portraitists of the end of the eighteenth century, realised sums from ten to thirty thousand guineas. Time has always heretofore retrieved the fallen fortunes of supreme works. It has also sometimes pulled down meretricious paintings set in high place by a fashionable coterie. It would be unaccountable if years did not bring the price list for such pictures as that of "The Three Sisters" to accord with the valuation set by just discrimination upon all supreme works.

Many of Millais' landscapes, painted instead of ill-paid imaginative compositions, were of the highest pictorial order, and will take their places in the slow-growing general mind as among the glories of British art. In a later passage concerning particular pictures it will be proved

how triumphant in the end he emerged from the routine followed to meet vulgar taste by giving elevation to the subjects of his own choice. Ford Madox Brown's discriminating remarks upon the picture of "Lorenzo and Isabella," when he came fresh from the studio where it was standing just finished upon the easel, were so just and appreciative even as briefly reported by me, and my admiration of it expressed from time to time in the foregoing pages is so great that I need not here enlarge upon its merits, but I must dwell somewhat upon his succeeding picture of "Ferdinand lured by Ariel." We must first put ourselves back to the date when it was painted. The exhibition world was full of pictures of fairies and attendant spirits, and without exception we may see that these were all conceived as graceful human pigmies. Millais, at one burst, treated them as elfin creatures, strange shapes such as might lurk away in the shady groves and be blown about over the surface of a mere, making the wanderer wonder whether the sounds they made were anything more than the figments of his own brain. Millais' was the poetic imagination not to be passed over unnoted, although its originality was hastily taken by ordinary minds as the point on which to condemn it. The landscape of "The Woodman's Daughter," painted in 1850, might not be so conclusive in the testimony it offers of a new *evangel*, but the charms throughout the background of the "Ophelia," and the pathetic grace of the love-wrapt maiden, are enough to proclaim that not in one feature alone, but in the whole picture, a new art was born. Certain theorists say that it is not the province of art to deal with Nature in detail, that it should not realise, but only suggest. This dictum may have its honest place when referring to pictures demanding abstract treatment, but it is often made the defence for poor and empty attempts, and is sadly out of place in the judgment of Millais' treatment of the new problems which we had set ourselves to solve. The fault lies in making a canon only exceptionally justified, into

the binding law of an Inquisition. It is not my purpose to deny that previous landscape art had been both admirable and appropriate to the end it had in view, but it had not dealt with this particular aspect of Nature, or, when it had essayed anything of the kind, it had avoided the difficulties which we grappled with and conquered. The assumption that what we did was mere prosaic imitation, within the range of common workmen, is best met by comparing our work with that of some dull imitators who were destitute of poetic discrimination. Certain examples of these attempts, prominent at the time, have now disappeared. In some later prosaic transcripts of Nature an effort was made to lead the world to think them more exact than ours, the outlines of small forms being trivially and mathematically cut out. We saw that in Nature contours are found and lost, and what in one point is trenchant, in another melts its form into dazzling light or untraceable gloom; that there is infinite delight to the mind in playing upon the changes between one extreme characteristic and another. It was in such subtle observations and renderings that Millais could afford to smile at his adverse critics when they said that the profound following out of Nature was fatal to poetry. Adherents to our reform in the true spirit and not in the dead letter have proved that poetry in painting is not destroyed by the close pursuit of Nature's beauty. My assertion that Millais' picture of "Ophelia" was the exponent of a new revelation in art is no over-statement; that it was as inexhaustible in its worth as all good art is, is also undeniable. The background of "The Huguenot" is of a much simpler kind, but let men who want to understand the truth compare the painting of the bricks and mortar of this picture with the brick wall in the picture of "The Barrack Yard" by Meissonier (who is regarded as a painter of miraculous finish), and they will soon be able to estimate the difference between the perception of infinite variety and mere regard for geometrical precision. The next picture, "The Blind Girl," may convince any one of the

painter's deep and pathetic sense, which enabled him to interpret with keen pity, direct from his own observations, the lot of those stricken ones whose deprivations rebuke our own dumbness in thanksgiving. "The Fireman" is the recognition of true heroism by an original mind, and is of no transient interest only.

Millais' nature never led him to draw inspiration from the poetic treatment of others. The charms of a scene before him overmastered for him all conditions of his subject, which he would no longer allow to burden him. For him, as he had said early in life, Nature was always so much better than anything he could substitute, that he never hesitated to follow her if the cardinal idea was not threatened by so doing. It was the abuse levelled at "Sir Isumbras" that drove him to despair of appreciation for work that made no compromise with the taste of the day. For seven or eight years he had struggled unflinchingly for his higher unalloyed purpose. Was it to be wondered at that at this point he was at times tempted to bend to the counter claim of his home interests? yet let it be remembered he was never hopelessly enthralled by the worldly meaning of duty. In his picture from Keats's poem of Madelene disrobing on the Eve of St. Agnes, the main interest to him was in the sweetness of an innocent damsel, seen only by the rays of Diana's orb piercing through the window, and contrasting with the rich gloom of a ghostly bedchamber which entangled the mind with its mysterious depths. To him propriety of costume and the feudal conditions expressed by the poet were of small account. He would have had to make research that was hateful to him for such details, and when he had acquired his authorities there would have been the toil of putting together the piecemeal parts without seeing the while the effect which they would produce. Beginning his painting with the young girl before him, there was as she stood an element of maidenly reserve that no undress of a Norman lady would have given so persuasively in his hands; and then why trouble to find out the exact

character of a Gothic sleeping couch, he argued, when a heavy four-post bedstead had enough associations of romance? One detail in the poem he did indeed put to the test was the poet's description of the colour thrown by the moonlight through the stained casement :—

As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon
Rose bloom fell on her hands together prest,
And on her silver cross, soft amethyst,
And in her hair a glory, like a Saint.

On trial he found the diverse hues transmitted by the moon were not strong enough to be distinguished, and so the painter was freed from attention to the poet's "rose bloom." The projected shadows of his square window frames were unflinchingly copied from a room at Knole, where he worked during some nights for the midnight effect, introducing, as it happened to be there, a green baize door and all the flooring of the room as he found it! This was his original instinct; let us not cavil at a picture so enthralling. His later picture, "A Scotch Idyll," will prove that to the end he never lost his inventive faculty, that indeed he was ever able to command appropriate treatment, to give enduring enchantment to a simple idea.

Of English race as he was, living in Scotland, and married to one of her daughters, he felt the settled happiness which the union of the two races had brought about. His imaginary incident is of two youthful musicians in the English army after the battle of Culloden who have drawn to their place of encampment three Highland lasses. One boy is thrilling them by the strains of his flute, and the faces of the girls, as they lie on the grass, bear the expression of being carried away by the magic of the notes. How unaffectedly he has composed the scene, and in what a transcendent manner has he caught the natural sweetness of the faces! Proudly and yet with simplicity the boy proceeds with his charming task, and the innocent damsels follow the airs with rapture,

while the spectator feels that already the evil spirit of discord between the lately contending factions has been laid at rest. This noble picture will hereafter be honoured as a national heirloom, both for its idea and for its artistic perfection. It was followed by a series of admirable portraits, Lady Campbell of the same year being one of the best, and these were continued to the end. Between these the ground was richly grown with subject pictures and landscapes, "The Ornithologist" to wit, which had its charm in beautiful figures of women and children, "The Old Garden," and, towards the close, the impressive picture, "Speak, Speak," and the martyr figure of St. Stephen, painted when the gates of darkness were well-nigh closing upon the painter.

These are but a few of the many examples claiming recognition for Millais as that of a man whose message was not one at second-hand, but direct from the Fountain of Truth. Surely it is the grimmest form of censure that would condemn an artist with such a noble claim to heroism in his youth, and such undying power of high purpose to the end, because he showed some human weakness in turning aside for a while to the only chance which his country left of gaining the means to continue his struggle. Discouraging and dangerous as the retreat might have been, it was a matter of admiration that it had no destructive force on his permanent power.