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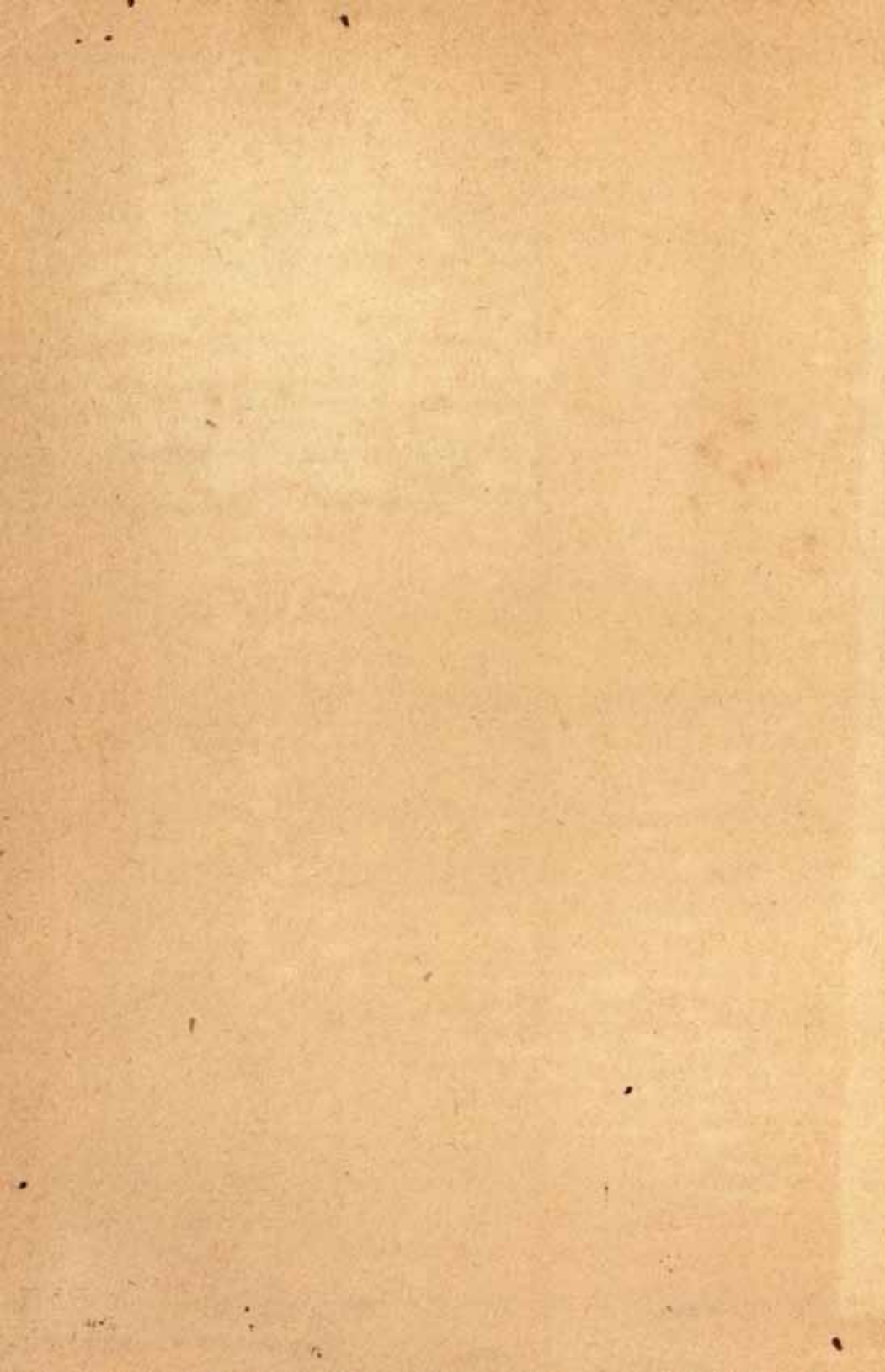
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# ASPECTS OF BRITISH ART

INTRODUCTION BY MICHAEL AYRTON

EDITED BY W. J. TURNER

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ASPECTS  
OF  
BRITISH ART

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INTRODUCTION

WE have not been lucky in the history of our visual arts. Circumstances have several times combined to undermine our progress and distort our larger traditions from their natural mould. If no more frequently than in other European countries we have been ruled by iconoclasts and bigots, the earnest promotion by these English rulers of their own financial, physical or spiritual gains would seem to have played more havoc with art in England than across the Channel. Our two civil wars destroyed much, the Black Death ended our first great period and our industrial development withered our second. The natural progress of British art has frequently been warped and obscured and it is remarkable that with so sporadic a record of acknowledged artistic success we should have contrived to maintain any genuine continuity. For even if the scale of our achievement is not the very highest, we in this supposedly artless land can show a real tradition.

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As each one of these six volumes was separately published, each author must have felt, as I did about my own, that perhaps he had unfairly neglected such and such an artist or, in his limited space, he had concentrated so much on one period that the preceding one has had less than justice done to it. But each author must now feel as I do, a measure of relief, since where he was forced by lack of space to neglect some aspect of his subject, one of the other five has inevitably dealt more fully with it from another angle. The dovetailing seems to me happily complete and very few British artists at least of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are unjustly neglected. If at times the overlapping is considerable, it forms no more than a just consensus of opinion, building our greatest to their rightful heights with the accord of several voices. Gainsborough must inevitably figure as a portrait painter, a romantic, a draughtsman and a watercolourist. Hogarth as a cartoonist, a draughtsman and a portraitist. Rowlandson, Constable, Turner, and many others must inevitably take their several places in the several books which make up this omnibus.

Unfortunately this lack of space must have prevented some of us from delving far back into history and thus our medieval arts do not figure in these volumes to the extent they might, for if the popular notion that British art came suddenly into existence in the eighteenth century may well apply to the mastery of oil painting, whether in sporting pictures or portraiture, at least the arts of drawing, watercolour, romantic art, and even a kind of cartooning had been flourishing here centuries before 1700. But perhaps British Manuscript Decoration and Illumination should have a book to itself.

Of the six separate essays which form this book, two concern the practice of specific media. The practice of drawing and its near development watercolour, these two forms of expression are perhaps the most personal and typical of British art, for our longest tradition lies in the intimate poetry of line and wash rather than in the grandiloquence of great formal compositions in oil paint. "British Fresco" or "British Oil Painting" would scarcely have the same significance as these two, for so little of the former now exists in anything approaching the original state and there is little particularly native in our practice of the latter except perhaps in the hands of Gainsborough, Constable and Turner. Even then it is the vision more than the technical use of the medium which makes their oil painting so important.

Portrait Painters, Cartoonists and Sporting Pictures imply a description of specific ways of earning a living in the visual arts. These specialised forms exist in every country, but there is something regrettably English in the practice of *type-casting* an artist so that society can pigeon-hole him to its satisfaction. "Oh, so you are an artist, and what, pray, do you paint?" How often that polite question draws a resigned sigh from the painter and how often he wishes he could answer in a word. But the question is a very





THE SPIRIT OF GOD  
Wash drawing by George Romney, 1734-1802

English one and implies that a specialised label should be instantly forthcoming. Poor Gainsborough was forced to say "portraits" for economic reasons when he really wished to say "landscapes." Can anyone imagine Leonardo da Vinci's answer?

The most general essay is John Piper's *British Romantic Artists* and within that bracket come so many that one is hard put to it to think who, other than Reynolds, could be included in a hypothetical companion volume of "British Classical Artists." Few British artists ever put a formal preoccupation before an emotional one except perhaps in the form of a horse, and even the great Stubbs, that most careful delineator of the noble animal, placed his aristocratic model against a landscape as romantic as a Géricault. It is not surprising that Mr. Piper was forced to start with Richard Wilson and neglect such earlier romantics as Nicholas Hillyarde in his all too short fourteen thousand words. Even Hogarth, who may not come exactly within Mr. Piper's interpretation of the word, is more romantic than classical as his few and painful excursions in the *noble manner* make very clear. Mr. Piper rightly says that Romantic Art deals with the particular. Mr. Paris writes of our national genius for the thin small scale of watercolour: I maintain that our true line is the drawn one and what is



more particular than a sporting picture, what more limited in medium or more linear in approach than the cartoon? Here then either by accident or design is a very complete picture of our native gifts and limitations.

John Russell and H. J. Paris both outline the historical development of their subjects with scholarly clarity and with as little prejudice as befits the detached historian. It is only when our own contemporaries are reached that Mr. Russell indulges in special pleading for one particular approach to the art of the portrait. If Mr. Paris maps the safe ground of the great in his study of earlier centuries he is scarcely to be blamed, considering the number of great watercolourists England has produced and the slimness of his volume. When he views the watercolours of to-day he departs little from well trodden paths, giving credit where credit is given, but he holds out great hopes for the future.

Mr. Piper and Mr. Low are not historians but practitioners. What they lose on the gentle swings of professorial objectivity they gain on the glittering roundabout of personal enthusiasm and intimate knowledge of the practice of romantic painting in Mr. Piper's case, and cartooning in Mr. Low's. They are both full of prejudice which gives to both their books a special fire. I like to hope that my own contribution, being by another if less celebrated practitioner, will also slip into this latter category, for if it lacks anything it is not special pleading.

The ferocity of Gillray, the poetry of Palmer, the lyrical dignity of Gainsborough, the magnificent exactness of Stubbs, Cotman's sensitivity, Cozens's invention, and Blake's supernormality are among the components of British art. All these things grow from the fertile soil of our medieval forebears, from an era when British art was one of the glories of Christendom.

It is sadly true that in our subsequent history we have frequently been too willing to acknowledge the superiority of foreign artists at the expense of our own, for contrary to the nineteenth-century conception of the Englishman as John Bull, few connoisseurs have been less insular than English ones. There have been barren decades in British art and not even the most enthusiastic Anglophile would dispute the fact that we have never risen to the level of Renaissance Italy or produced an equal to the supreme genius of a Rembrandt. On the other hand we have sustained a high level over longer periods than any nation in the world with the exception of France. For many years a comparison between those symbols of the lowest common denominator, the Paris Salon and the Royal Academy, has instantly revealed the general superiority of the British body. This seems to me a significant and generally neglected fact well worth taking into account in assessing the value of British art within the European framework. If the illustrations contained in this volume seldom reproduce a supreme masterpiece and if between 946 and 1946 there has been a moribund century or two, at the very least there has been an astonishingly high general level during many hundreds of that thousand years. The

juxtaposed aspects of British art published in these six essays and their illustrations will, it is to be hoped, rouse many from the tolerant disdain with which, hat in hand, the British have patronised their own art in the presence of their great European neighbours. We have a unique tradition which this volume cannot fail to indicate.

MICHAEL AYRTON



DR. MISAUBIN AND DR. WARD  
Pen, pencil and wash drawing  
by William Hogarth, 1697-1764





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BRITISH  
DRAWINGS

*BY*

MICHAEL AYRTON

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ARGUMENT

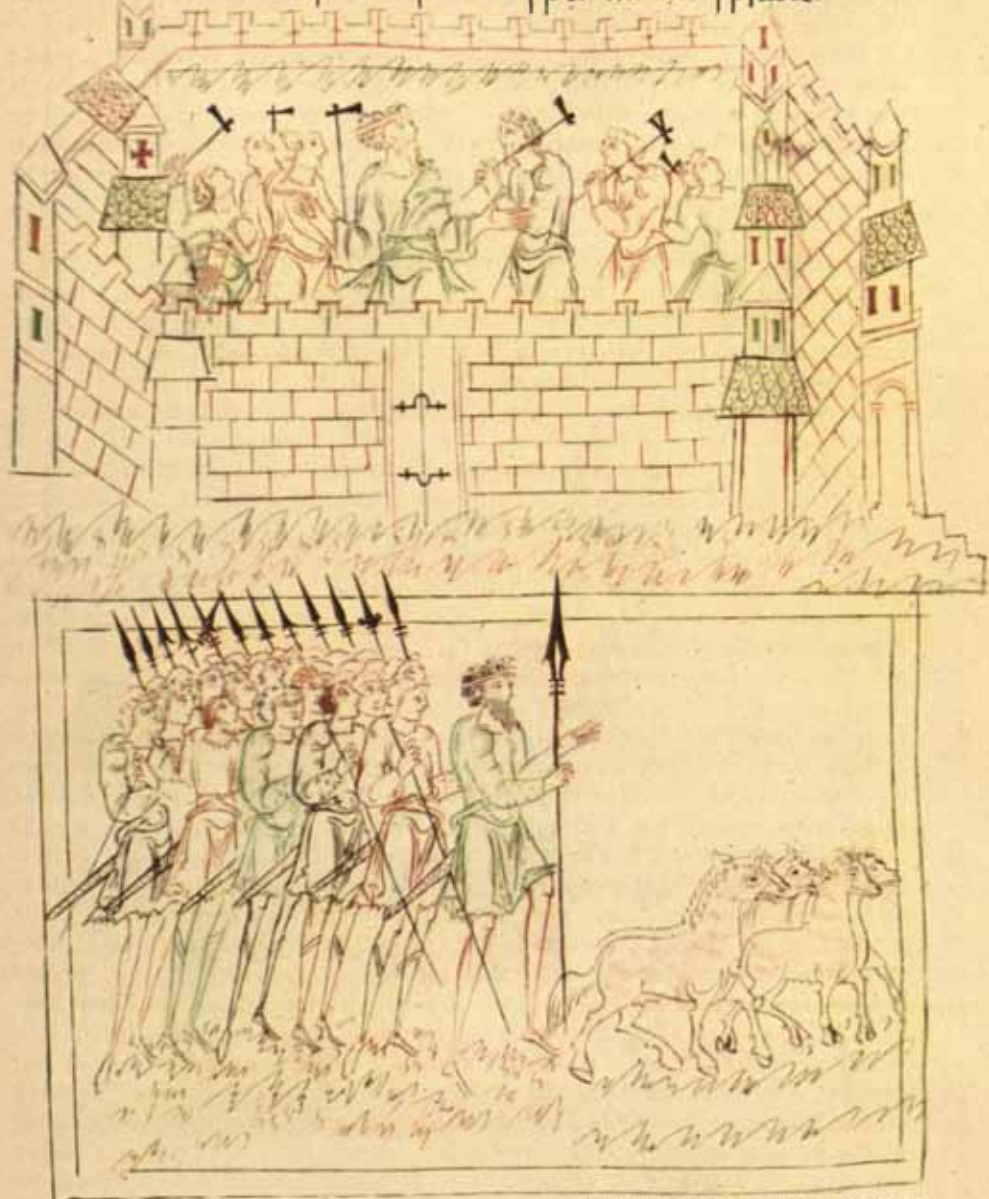
THE vexed question of the merits and demerits of nationalism in art is forced upon anyone who writes specifically, as this book requires, on the product of a single nation. There is a case to be made against conscious nationalism, on the grounds that it leads to parochialism and that such a conception is in any case spurious, art being on a plane above the politics which the word "nationalism" seems to imply. My own view is that the value of nationalism stands in direct ratio to the strength of a culture at a given time. The power to benefit from outside influence is in fact commensurate with the ability to refrain from being totally dominated by it. When the creative state of a nation is low but gradually improving, consciousness of, and pride in, a native tradition is valuable. Equally when a culture is in the ascendant, the participants therein can afford to welcome foreign influence and gain from it. The fact that a national tradition has existed and been of great importance during certain of the periods covered by this book, is obvious ; that there is a continuity

in the progression of British art, and in particular drawing, I hope to show. Its value is a matter of opinion.

This continuity is perhaps not easy to follow, nor is it uninterrupted ; during one long period badly so : but unlike that of nations whose flame has been far brighter, this island's flickering torch has continued to burn spasmodically for a thousand years. Italy produced a gigantic succession of masters between Giotto and the death of Titian and then surrendered to a subsequent, almost unrelieved, triviality ; the great Gothic art of Flanders died out ; Holland, during the century of her maritime power, produced a school, of which Rembrandt is the culmination, which exercised an enormous influence long after the source had dried up ; and so on. Great Britain has produced no Michelangelo, no Van Eyck and no Rembrandt ; but neither have we ceased to be creative nor do we show any signs of ceasing to be. Perhaps this is because the culmination has not yet been reached. At certain times, circumstances and the domination of particular foreign influences have come so near to smothering native talent as to create every appearance of a desert left barren by mighty conquerors, but the essential qualities have somehow survived, more often in drawing than in other forms of expression. The native qualities themselves, the varying influences brought to bear upon them over a period of one thousand years and the value of British drawing in relation to the European tradition—the value in short of a national culture—form the argument of this essay. The exchange value of a culture is the true coin of "internationalism" in art, for it is by the exchange of cultures between nations that art becomes international. I have therefore included among the reproductions practically no "foreigners working in England" as the British Museum Catalogue defines them, for they usually appeared in their might at times when we were least calculated to benefit from them. Fuseli is an exception because, in my view, Fuseli was *plus royaliste que le roi*, an English artist. He was an interesting if minor practitioner, and he very fully assimilated the British idiom of his time, which could not have been said, for instance, of Holbein or Kneller. The choice of reproductions is inevitably a personal one, sadly limited by the size of the volume, and will probably be unpopular. I have endeavoured to include a reasonable number of drawings by the greatest of our painters and a certain number by artists whose drawings I feel have been unjustly neglected. I have also given considerable space to illustrations from pre-sixteenth century manuscripts on the grounds that one of our greatest contributions to European art was made in this form of drawing and in that age. I have tried to reproduce examples of as many as possible of the various media—chalk, pencil, pen, wash, etc.—which come within the scope of drawing *per se* as opposed to the other vehicles of visual expression. Those artists whose drawing is only relevant to their work in oil or watercolour *painting* (as opposed to the tinted drawing) such as Turner and the Norwich school of landscape painters, I have sacrificed, admirable



mīttō tobnæd þunh luf mīhta ꝥꝥed monna ꝥꝥuece



*By courtesy of the Curators of the Bodleian Library*

NIMROD SENDING OUT HIS PRINCES FROM BABYLON  
&

NIMROD AS A MIGHTY HUNTER

Drawing in three inks on vellum, c.1000 A.D.

From the Paraphrase of Genesis. MS. Junius 11 in the Bodleian Library





*By courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum*

“THE INDUSTRIOUS APPRENTICE PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN”

Pen and wash sketch by William Hogarth for the engraved series *Industry and Idleness* published 1747

though their topographical drawings are, to others such as Francis Barlow, Alexander Cozens and Charles Keene whose drawings are their finest work, since this book is primarily concerned with draughtsmen rather than with painters. At the same time I have, I hope, reproduced a sufficient number of "painters' drawings" to give an indication of this essential aspect of the practice of drawing. Topographical drawings deserve a volume to themselves and I can only plead lack of space if they are ill represented in this one. Apart from drawings made for purposes of study and in preparation for work in other media, there have been a large number of drawings made for the sake of drawing, as being the form of expression most suited to the particular conception. In my opinion the continuity to which I have referred is more easily traceable in the use of the intimate medium of drawing than in painting or any other means of pictorial expression. Furthermore this country's pictorial genius has always been primarily a genius for drawing.



THREE FIGURES

Brush point sketch by Thomas Gainsborough, 1727-1788

## ASCENDANCY

**B** RITISH drawing as such may be said to start in the tenth century, following the decay of the Carolingian Empire, and the chaos resulting from its collapse. Prior to this, and indeed prior to the empire of Charlemagne itself, masterpieces of illumination had been created in Ireland and Northumbria of which the Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels are probably the most famous extant examples. In these books the Celtic gift for abstract designs and ornament is seen in its most highly developed form, but this aspect of art does not come within the immediate scope of this book, though the enduring influence of Celtic pattern-making runs through the succeeding centuries. Towards the end



of the Carolingian epoch the Danish invaders of England demolished a large proportion of pre-ninth century manuscripts and contemporary work ceased. That much was destroyed, is recorded by King Alfred who "saw, before it was ravaged and burnt, how the churches throughout the whole of England stood filled with treasures and books." To all intents and purposes, this essay in history begins with our recovery from this period of devastation.

Charlemagne was dead and his empire speedily disintegrated. In the general shake-up naturally following upon the collapse of the centralised government, separate imperialist states were established throughout Europe which eventually gave birth to distinct and independent cultures, but it was an energetic and international programme of monastic reform, as part of a period of reorganisation and reconstruction not entirely dissimilar to the present one, which was directly responsible for the maintenance of a European tradition, and incidentally led to the rebirth of British art. Why the splendid phenomenon of the "Winchester School" sprang into existence so suddenly and in such a degree of apparent maturity is not known, nor indeed is it quite certain in what parts of England the Winchester School originated, but within a few years of St. Dunstan being made Archbishop of Canterbury and St. Æthelwold Bishop of Winchester, there existed at Winchester a style of drawing which was both original and highly evolved. The basis of this style is traceable to Carolingian models and also owed a good deal to the insular tradition of Northumbrian ornament, which had been continued and indeed closely followed by the Franco-Saxon school throughout the Carolingian era, but the detail, the extraordinary nervous vitality and linear freedom of the Winchester drawings was something entirely new. By the eleventh century this renaissance had spread to include Canterbury and Bury St. Edmunds as centres of production, and it is from a manuscript, probably of Canterbury, that the first colour plate of the present volume is taken. This manuscript, called the *Cædmon*, and written in Anglo-Saxon, contains illustrated poems on biblical themes. The present illustration is thought by one authority to represent "Nimrod sending out his princes to enlarge his boundaries" and "Nimrod as a mighty hunter before the Lord." Another equally learned scholar considers it to be "Cush or his son ruling his tribe" and "The Hebrews departing with their cattle." The reader may take his choice but for my part, I favour Nimrod. What is of greater interest is the vigorous lyricism of the drawings themselves which could hardly be more remote from the monumental rigidity of the Byzantine mode current in Southern Europe, nor from the grandiose stolidity of Ottonian art, then at its height in Germany. The drawings of this and the succeeding two centuries, with their precise, rhythmic use of line, line that spurts and darts like a bird, are the touchstone of British drawing. The same poetic qualities, the same rhythmic preoccupations, appear over and over again in our subsequent history.





GUTHLAC AT THE MOUTH OF HELL

Coloured line drawing from the *Life of St. Guthlac of Croyland*. Late twelfth century

The lively condition of British art in the eleventh century was such that the arrival, following "the Conquest," of Norman scribes and monks, bringing with them their sumptuous French manner of illumination, merely added weight and strength to the existing convention without materially altering the original linear manner already being employed. The famous masterpiece of the period, the "Winchester Bible," contains superb examples of the marriage of the two schools and also is an instance of the astonishing ability with which several artists of unified purpose could, over a considerable number of years, combine their individual styles to produce a single great work of art. The major continental innovation of the twelfth century,



the "Albani Psalter" style, produced a strong Anglo-Romanesque synthesis which checked the affectation towards which the Anglo-Saxon manner had been tending, without substantially changing the method of outline drawing employed. Towards the end of the twelfth century, a new form of illustrated book came into vogue, derived mainly from the "*Etymologiae*" of *Isidore of Seville*. This was the Bestiary, virtually an English invention, in which fabulous creatures and familiar animals were portrayed indulging in various probable and improbable activities. This form of popular illustration presaged a long tradition of artists specialising in drawings of animals and birds, which has continued in its course to the present day. At much the same time, the easily portable illustrated Psalter became popular, a fashion which was to last until the end of the fourteenth century, and such Psalters were exported in sufficient numbers to spread the influence of the British school throughout France and much of Europe. By the thirteenth century, the rich but heavy Anglo-Norman manner had gradually given way to a revival of the linear delicacy found in Anglo-Saxon drawings, the earliest separate "Books of Hours" were produced, and these were followed by a long series of illustrated Apocalypses and histories. It is in this period that individual artists begin to be known by name; William de Brailes contrived to sign a Psalter, and the celebrated Matthew Paris, historiographer to the Abbey of St. Albans, friend of Henry III, diplomat, gold engraver, author, cartographer and draughtsman, achieved personal fame. A fair number of Matthew Paris's drawings has survived, though no signed ones, and even a certain amount of his personal history is known to us. It is recorded that he was "a religious monk," very highly esteemed at St. Albans, and that he undertook an unusual mission to Norway for the King and left his influence as an artist behind him there. His principal surviving drawings are in his *Historia Maior* now at Cambridge, in another history now in the British Museum and in his *Romance of the Two Offas*. He left a considerable school behind him when he died in 1259, whose work is not easy to distinguish from his own.

The reputation of British drawing and illumination was now of European stature, British illustrated books were in the hands of the courts of most of Europe and Englishmen were working in Paris, creating the Anglo-French school of painting which was eventually to dominate Northern Europe. Near the end of the thirteenth century the centre of productivity had moved to Peterborough, where the artists themselves had ceased to be monastic and were chiefly professional laymen. Humorous decoration is a feature of the East Anglian School; on the borders of sacred pages, fabulous beasts in combat with zoomorphs, which foreshadow the demonologies of Jerome Bosch, are gaily combined with pastoral scenes from everyday life; familiar domestic animals in the tradition of the earlier Bestiaries.

In 1348 production seems to have ceased abruptly for twenty years. The reasons for this are unknown, though possibly the Black Death



THREE APOSTLES SEATED: PAGE FROM A SKETCHBOOK IN THE PEPSYIAN LIBRARY  
Metal point and brush drawing of the late fourteenth century

was responsible, but from henceforward there is a general decline in the excellence of British work which corresponds with the rise of France to supremacy in the field of illumination. A revival took place during the second part of the fourteenth century chiefly as a result of the patronage of the Bohun family, five of whose commissioned books have come down to us, and there are a few missals and lectionaries of the period, which are of more than historical interest. One of these latter (Harley MS. 7026), illustrated under the direction of one John Syfrewas, contains one of the earliest known examples of genuine portraiture in this country; a deliberate attempt at the likeness of John, 5th Lord Loval. Earlier drawings are concerned with idealised generalisations, rather than with individual portraits, since the status of a rank in medieval times was considered more important artistically than the holder of it. The supposed self-portrait of de Brailes in the Last Judgement leaf of a Psalter (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) is an idealised figure who is being rescued from damnation by St. Michael. The figure holds a scroll inscribed "W. de Brail me f(e)cit."

One of the most interesting survivals of late fourteenth century drawing is the volume, now in the Pepysian Library at Cambridge, called "The



Monk's Draw : Book." This medieval sketch book contains, as the work of several, probably secular, hands, a variety of figure and animal drawings, some of which are charming, some extremely clumsy. These were possibly prepared as studies for manuscript illustration, sculpture, or the form of embroidery known as "Opus Anglicanum" which was justly famed throughout Europe. But the rot had set in. During the fifteenth century France was producing such masterpieces as *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*; the *Hours of Elizabeth the Quene*, England's finest fifteenth century achievement, cannot be said to rival it. British art was in decline and though a few charming drawings were made by Englishmen at the time, notably by John Rows in his history of the Earls of Warwick called the "Warwick Roll," French and Flemish artists were being imported into England in large numbers and were doing better work than our own. Unlike the period following the Norman Conquest, there was no strength left in British art to assimilate and transpose the powerful influence. For reasons never satisfactorily established, perhaps the anarchy of the Wars of the Roses, perhaps the renewed Black Death, or possibly the inevitable cyclical decline of national artistic virility, the fifteenth century saw the end of this great phase of British drawing. We were not to rise again to a position of international repute for three hundred years.

I would like to digress here to comment upon the actual media in which the drawings, so far discussed, were executed. Fine vellum was the usual surface, for though paper had been made in Spain since the eleventh century and was in use in several parts of Europe from then on, there is no record of its manufacture in England before the fifteenth century. Wynkyn de Worde was the first to mention an English paper mill in his edition of *De Proprietatibus Rerum* printed c. 1495. Vellum was in any case a finer surface for delicate drawing. The methods employed in working on vellum allowed some variation. The Norman scribes had imported the heavy body colour in which the subsequent illuminations were frequently worked, but before this, pure line drawings in several colours, made with reed or quill pens and sometimes shaded with the point of a brush, had been deemed complete illustrations in themselves, as in the *Cædmon MS.* The twelfth century Winchester Bible contains examples of several different techniques. Those which concern us in this book, the line drawings, were usually made in chalk or in lead point, an earlier and more difficult tool than its later development, the pencil. The variation in the method employed depended on whether the design was intended to be heavily over-painted, in which case it was left as an exceedingly delicate indication. Alternatively, if the intention was merely to wash transparent colour over drawn line, as in those by the "Master of the Apocrypha Drawings," the point was used precisely and pressed heavily. A quite remarkable number of drawings in medieval manuscripts were left uncoloured, in their original state as line drawings.



COURT LADY  
Pen drawing by Nicholas Hillyarde, c. 1547-1619

### THE DESERT

**I**T has never been possible to establish any very definite reason for the rise and fall of artistic temperatures, but economic and religious circumstances doubtless play their part. The Dissolution of the Monasteries, which had for so long been the patron of our arts, and the visual philistinism of the new king, who systematically destroyed most of the



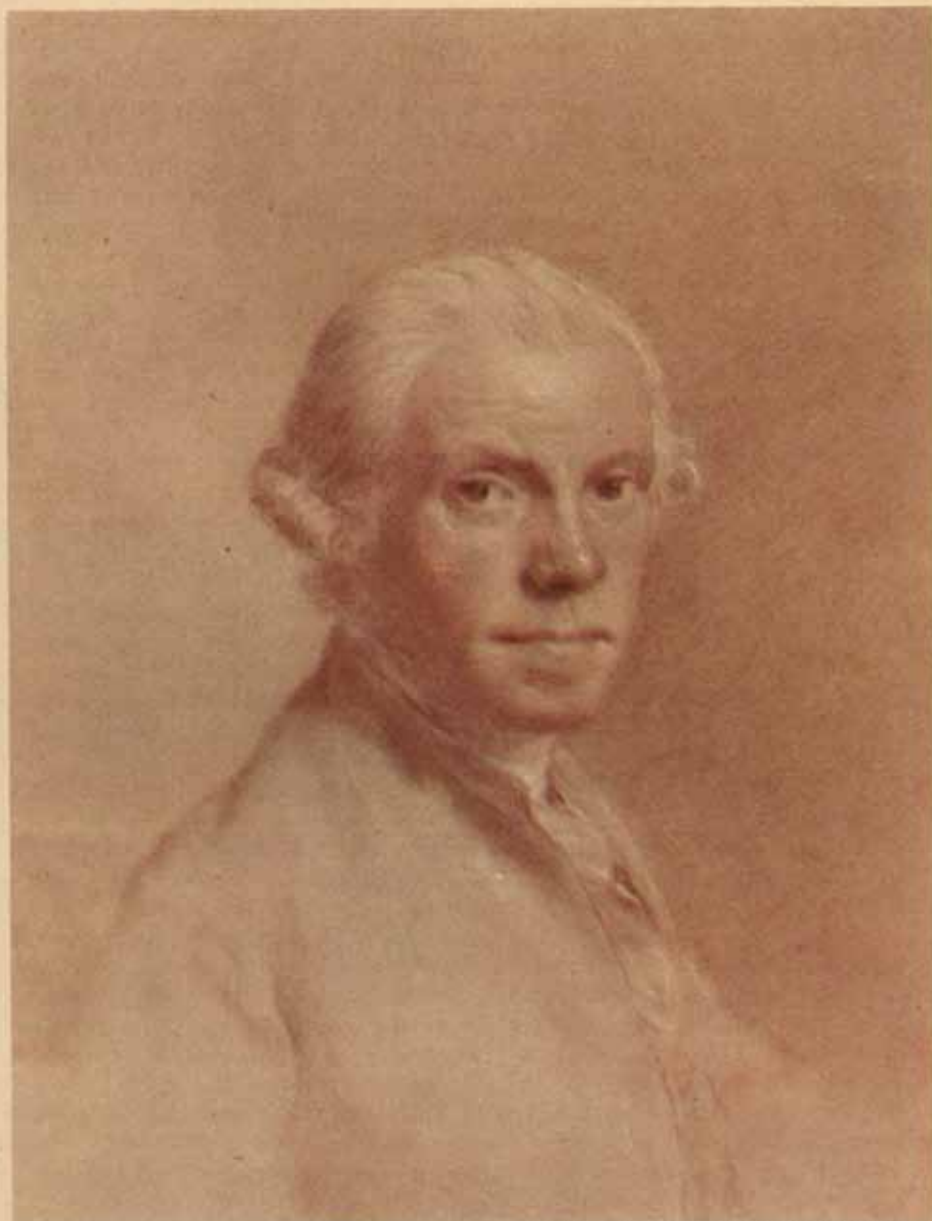
medieval works of art he laid his hands on, did in effect administer the *coup de grâce* to the already feeble body of British art, but to all intents and purposes the patient was already beyond hope before any of these contingencies arose. The establishment of the Church of England as part of the Reformation, effectively prevented our taking any part in the evolution of the Baroque which was essentially a Catholic phenomenon and part of the Roman reply to the Lutheran heresy, but it will remain an open question whether anything but the most sedulous nursing of the native tradition following the accession of Henry VIII would have kept the thing alive. Needless to say, not only did this fail to occur but the arrival on the English scene of Hans Holbein the younger as court painter was a final blow. Remarkable though Holbein's own drawings were, his followers were few and his influence was negative mainly because his methods were archaic even in his own day. For nearly a century there are no British drawings of the slightest interest by English followers of Holbein. It might reasonably have been suggested at the time that the native tradition was extinct; as dead in fact as Charlemagne. This gloomy situation continued unrelieved. Flemish portrait painters such as Antonio Moro were well received, but the domestic product was treated with scorn. That no one called Smith, Brown or Bossam had the slightest chance of earning a living is made abundantly clear in the following quotation from *A Treatise concerning the Art of Limning* by the miniaturist, or 'limner,' Nicholas Hillyarde. "The most rare English drawer," says he, "of English story works in black and white, John Bossam for one of his skill worthy to have been Sergant Painter to any King or Emperour, whose work in that kind are comparable with the best whatsoever in cloathe in distemper cullors for white or black; who being very poore and belyke wanting to by faier cullors, wrought therefore for the most part in white and black and growing yet poorer by charge of children etc., gave painting cleane over." The wretched and talented Bossam, none of whose work survives, became a "reading minister" for his living. "He was" Hillyarde continues "only unfortunate because he was English born, for even the strangers would otherwise have set him upp." The italics are mine and are made with considerable bitterness. The Elizabethan dilettantes' belief in the inevitable superiority of continental art bears a striking resemblance to our own day and age. "Our courtiers and great personages," wrote Henry Peacham (*Graphice* 1606), "must seeke farre and neere for some Dutchman or Italian to draw their pictures and invent their deuices, our Englishmen being held for Vaunients" (good-for-nothings). Peacham probably knew what he was talking about for he was a draughtsman himself in addition to his journalistic activities. Hillyarde was lucky in that he died in only comparative poverty, and lived tolerably well as Limner to Queen Elizabeth, though "brought into great extremes" in 1599. Two drawings by him exist, apart from his exquisite miniatures in opaque water colours. One of these drawings is his design in



LANDSCAPE WITH CASTLE

Chalk drawing heightened with white on blue paper by Thomas Gainsborough, 1727-1788

*By courtesy of Messrs. Roland, Brouse & Delbance*



*By courtesy of the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery*

SELF-PORTRAIT

Red chalk drawing by Allan Ramsay, 1776



pen over black chalk, for the Queen's Great Seal ; the other, a delicate pen drawing of a court lady, is reproduced here.

There is a much larger body of drawings by Hillyarde's pupil, Isaac Oliver, a fair number of brush drawings in black and white on coloured paper, some elegant portraits and a few lively caricatures. Oliver was French and Huguenot by birth but came to England as a young child, and spent his life here, for which reason he may be considered a British draughtsman, in that he was not simply a visitor, with a made reputation, come for pickings.

Nicholas Hillyarde himself was influenced by Holbein's miniatures and is the solitary important exception to that master's otherwise negative legacy. He was also a passionate admirer of the Italians and of Albert Dürer's drawings, but his quality is essentially native to this island in an age otherwise conspicuously barren as far as the pictorial is concerned. His exquisitely lyrical talent is the only visual equivalent of the poetic gifts of his literary contemporaries, and he is perhaps the only great English artist of Tudor and Stuart times. Whatever others there might have been were probably forced into other walks of life ("unfortunate because English born") before they had the opportunity to prove their worth. Only one other artist of the times, though certainly not a great one, is worthy of mention: John White, who combined the somewhat arduous activity of governing Raleigh's "second colonie" of Virginia, with drawing, and painting in water colours. He is seen at his best in his drawings of reptiles and animals, but his figure drawings are full of vigour if rather unskilful. What work of White's survives, is in the form of an album, recording his sojourn in America, and is now in the British Museum.

The Jacobean period has little to recommend it and in the reign of Charles I, like that of Henry VIII, Great Britain was, artistically, simply an "occupied country," though it must be said that Charles, unlike Henry, was a man of taste. Foreign artists completely dominated portraiture, which continued to be the major pictorial activity. Rubens visited England at the King's invitation and Van Dyck, his pupil, who was a visitor in 1620, returned and settled here as court painter in 1635 to become, not unnaturally, the most admired master draughtsman in the country. What English followers he had were, for the most part, *pasticheurs* of very little merit. Samuel Cooper is of more interest than his contemporaries, for it was Cooper who, allowing for the change of style relevant to his time, carried on the miniaturist tradition of Hillyarde with something like the same excellence. His drawings are very rare.

The English master draughtsman who really dominates the domestic scene after Hillyarde's death is Inigo Jones, the architect and stage designer. Jones studied landscape painting in Italy, turned to architecture and, between 1605 and 1640, produced a stream of designs for costumes, scenery and stage machinery for masques and operas, in addition to his architectural





CARICATURE

Pen drawing by Isaac Oliver, 1556-1617

achievements as "Master of the King's Worke." It cannot be pretended that Jones was an obviously English artist in manner, since the influence of Italy was always foremost in his work, but his drawings have a spontaneity which far removes them from the general run of contemporary British work. His virtue in all his activities lay in his ability to adapt foreign, particularly Palladian, idioms to English usage. His drawings are mostly in pen and wash.

Peter Lely, who had arrived in the year of Van Dyck's death, succeeded his countryman as the fashionable portraitist of the next forty years, produced a monotonous series of third-rate portrait drawings, which became steadily worse, and an equally monotonous set of followers, of whom John Greenhill was the most sensitive and able.

The Commonwealth, as everyone knows, was more concerned with destroying graven images than with encouraging the creation of such baubles as drawings. The Ironsides went into battle with bible and sword and, during interim periods, passed happy hours burning early illustrated editions of the former and slashing the supreme achievement of medieval wall painting with the latter. On the whole I imagine, they completed Henry VIII's task of nation-wide vandalism to their own satisfaction. Iconophobia is a disease to which England has been tragically subject at intervals. During the Commonwealth, however, mediocre portrait drawing continued, there being no grounds for theological dispute over sternly dull portrayals of puritans, and by the Restoration a larger number of British artists appear to have been in practice, among whom John Riley was the most talented painter. Topographical drawing had been introduced by the Bohemian, Wenzel Hollar, and was in some demand. Hollar's friend, Francis Place, the first Englishman to employ mezzotint in engraving, is one of the earliest, and by no means the least, of a long line of English topographical draughtsmen, but it was another friend of Hollar and also of Place whose work is the best indication of the survival of the indigenous tradition at this period. This was Francis Barlow, the bird and animal draughtsman, who followed the special tradition which, originating in "the Bestiary," had managed to survive in the applied arts of embroidery, masonry and ceramic, while the fine arts lay dormant. Barlow's drawings,



particularly of birds, bear a striking resemblance to thirteenth century marginalia without being in the least archaic. He drew and engraved most of the rural activities connected with animals and his illustrations for Aesop's *Fables* are justly celebrated. The drawing here reproduced is a good example of his fresh, pastoral style. Meanwhile in portraiture Lely and the unsuccessful but gifted Riley were to some extent overshadowed by the arrival in England of an even more tedious figure, Gottfried Kneller, whose vogue was to last, as a result of his business acumen, until his death in the year of Joshua Reynolds' birth.



HEAD OF A BOY

Pen drawing by Inigo Jones, 1573-1652

For all the continued supremacy of the visitors from abroad, an increasing number of British artists are in evidence, most of them either miniaturists or portrait draughtsmen. Greenhill, Loggan, Faithorne, Thrumton, Forster, Lutterel, Robert White, Mary Beale and her son Charles were all contriving to earn their daily bread. Whilst their individual works are not very impressive, they were all tolerably proficient and may at all events be given the credit for being part of the soil in which the eighteenth century flowers were to take root.

On paper of various colours, the principal media in which these portraitists worked were red and black chalk, and plumbago—a form of graphite pencil very similar to the modern article. Graphite was known as early as the sixteenth century but did not come into very general use, except in this isolated period, until the early nineteenth century when Brockendon's method of compressing powdered black lead produced the pencil as we know it. The principal form these drawings took was studies for painting, and the facsimile engravings which were now finding a fair market. Highly finished chalk and plumbago portraits were sold independently to those who could not afford, or did not want, oil paintings. The drawings of Barlow and those of the early topographers are principally in bistre, a brown ink prepared from beechwood soot, worked in pen and wash. The word "sepia" now generally applied to early drawings of a brownish hue is a misnomer. Sepia, the dye of the cuttlefish, does not seem to have been



used before the eighteenth century. The brown colour of many early drawings is due either to bistre or to the fading of iron gall ink which would have been black when originally applied. Pastel colours had been introduced from France before the Restoration and were used in Riley's time. According to Horace Walpole, one Edmund Ashfield had considerably increased the colour range of the medium during the latter half of the century, and Evelyn the diarist speaks of portraits of his cousin's children "all painted in one piece, very well, by Mr. Luttrell in crayon on copper" (4.8.1694).

## RESURRECTION

THE very early years of the eighteenth century were of that darkness popularly supposed to precede the dawn, and a Stygian gloom it was. Jones was dead and Barlow died in 1702. The portraitists are represented by the secondary gifts of the Richardsons, father and son. Jonathan Richardson, the elder, had been a pupil of Riley, and being talented, had succeeded Kneller as the fashionable purveyor of the aristocratic visage. A solitary British exponent of the late Baroque, Sir James Thornhill, was much in demand as a decorator, particularly of ceilings in great country houses and public buildings. Thornhill drew in the florid, somewhat grandiose manner of Tiepolo and the late Venetians. Usually a second-rate performer, there is a certain dash and brilliance in the best of his drawings. His work is almost always in direct relation to architecture and is at least exceedingly accomplished. Pen, wash and chalk were not unnaturally the media he employed.

The dawn however was breaking in no uncertain fashion. In 1697, William Hogarth, who is generally supposed to be the father of all British art, but who actually was the symbol of its reawakening rather than its birth, was born in London, and within twenty years Scotland had produced Allan Ramsay, and Wales, Richard Wilson. The century following these events is generally considered the great period of British painting and it is certainly one of the two peaks of our achievement in drawing. The thin trickle of the preceding two hundred years from the magnificent, if cloudy, sources of the Gothic period now widens into a river, comprising three main streams which, though superficially different, in essence show the same virtues as the source. The poetic vision of the tenth and eleventh centuries is reasserted in the drawings of Gainsborough, Alexander Cozens and Richard Wilson, though the form has become principally landscape immediately subject to Italian, Dutch and French influences. The linear vitality and freedom of the early Winchester school re-emerges in the hands of Hogarth and Rowlandson while the mystical imagination of the Gothic draughtsmen reappears in the work of Blake and his circle. Hogarth's direct



MAN WITH A DOG

Pen drawing by Francis Barlow, c. 1626-1702

derivations as a draughtsman are not easy to place; his method of using the pen was with a loose, spontaneous and even wavering line; the result being then rapidly washed over with tone in brush. In manner his drawings are rather Italianate, presumably as a result of his training under his future father-in-law, Thornhill, and he must have seen, in the collection of Dr. Richard Mead, the drawings and paintings of Antoine Watteau, the greatest continental visitor since Rubens. There is a direct historical link between Watteau and Hogarth, in the person of a dubious medical practitioner, a Dr. Misaubin, whom Watteau drew when he was in London in 1719 (engraved by Arthur Pond) and whom Hogarth pilloried in "*Marriage à la mode*" and also in another small drawing. But Hogarth's drawings, if they have something in common with Tiepolo's caricatures and occasionally a Watteauesque elegance, have also a burly shrewdness and freedom which are his own. He had no great admiration for the Dutch, and indeed he caricatured what he called the "vulgar" Dutch fashion in "Paul before Felix," an engraving "designed and scratched in the true Dutch taste," a mockery of



Steen, Ostade and Rembrandt but also of his own failure to achieve "the grand manner." Nevertheless if a parallel is to be found for Hogarth as a draughtsman it is in the work of such "vulgar" artists as Pieter Breughel the elder and the Dutch engravers. Most of Hogarth's extant drawings are rapid notes for engravings (like the colour plate) but there are also some portrait drawings such as the famous pencil and wash study of Lord Lovat, before his execution for treason, in the Pierpont Morgan Library. In Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*, the textbook he wrote "with a view to fixing the fluctuating ideas of taste," which was so scorned in his own day and is of so much interest in ours, he explains the mysterious winding line drawn on the palette in his famous self-portrait. It is the "line of beauty," the curve which he considered should be present in all good art. Whatever may have been thought by his contemporaries of the line itself, Hogarth, in his pre-occupation with it, follows in the long, indigenous tradition. The main stream to which Hogarth belongs as a draughtsman is the popular form of drawing which runs from the humorous and satirical marginalia of the Peterborough manuscripts, and includes Rowlandson, Gillray, Cruikshank, Keene, and a host of lesser figures—by no means the very least of which is our own contemporary, the cartoonist "Giles"—whose mode of existence depends on the cheap engraving and whose concern is the everyday trials of the common man and the bitter comedies of "high life." Every nation and occasion produces this form of social comment in one way or another and it is perhaps the most obviously "national" form of drawing. Hogarth's significance in the history of art is to be found in his attitude to daily life—he was (as R. H. Wilenski says in his *English Painting*) "a man with the social conscience which the English nation was about to develop more and more."

Allan Ramsay is a complete contrast. As a man, he was a gentle, courtly individual, more interested in a pleasant and intellectual life than in his art; as a draughtsman, in his use of chalk, he bears a greater resemblance to Gainsborough than to his own immediate contemporaries. What he had was great delicacy of perception, an unusual attribute among British artists of his day, and a poetic sensitivity which gave his portrait drawings much grace. His drawings, like certain of Gainsborough's, recall Watteau, whose work Ramsay would have seen at Dr. Mead's. There is no doubt that Watteau was the most beneficial foreign influence, as far as figure drawing is concerned, on the British art of this period; that his influence was undoubtedly a good one, was in no small measure due to our rejuvenated ability to accept and benefit from it. A decade earlier, we might well have suffered from it.

As a profession, portraiture remained the staple provider. The British nobleman, as the eighteenth century progressed, gradually took to employing his own countrymen to immortalise his features, but he was more dilatory in encouraging native landscape painting. He preferred, or it was fashionable, to own landscapes in the Roman manner by Claude rather than those





DESIGN FOR A CEILING

Pen and wash drawing by Sir James Thornhill, 1675-1734

of Richard Wilson which were not entirely dissimilar, but Wilson was of a prickly disposition and had undoubted originality which motivated against his success. To quote R. H. Wilenski again, Wilson "was never content to be a *pasticheur* but tended to break the mould of the [Italian] tradition by a more naturalistic and romantic approach." This tendency is remarkable

even earlier in his drawings than in his oil paintings. His drawings are principally in black chalk on tinted paper, of a greater freedom and less sharply defined than those of either Claude or Gaspar Poussin. The natural lyricism of his landscape conception was not at home with the rigorous conventions of the classical style and in this he preceded Gainsborough and Constable, the most lyrical of all our landscape painters. Wilson himself studied in Italy and, except in his late work, the Italian influence is usually present in some degree, but he was the first to cast off the complete domination of continental methods of landscape practice.

British landscape drawing absorbed, and turned to its own particular use, a combination of the Flemish topographical tradition, the French or Franco-Italian conception of the classical-sublime landscape and the Dutch conception of the picturesque landscape. This latter was more congenial to those who followed Wilson than the hidebound formulae of the classical and sublime. It was concerned with the particulars of nature rather than the generalities of art. It was romantic, and the romantic is our natural element in landscape. Alexander Cozens was also trained in Italy and also reacted against classicism. Unlike Wilson, far and away the most important of Cozens' works are his drawings, and particularly his wash drawings. He made curiously dry topographical studies of Italian scenes in pen, but he also devised a method of splashing bistre wash on to paper, more or less arbitrarily, and selecting forms and combinations from the blots, which he would then work up with a brush into landscapes of a sombre and powerful kind. Alexander Cozens' influence is present in Turner's water colours, and Turner admits to having used his "blot method." In a sense therefore Cozens is an early forerunner of nineteenth century French Impressionism. The drawing illustrated is worked in pencil and wash over a basis of aquatint, either as the correction of a "state," or because Cozens found the texture an interesting basis for his method. In any case it is a perfect example of the romantic landscape drawing. Alexander's son, John Robert Cozens, is more famous as a watercolourist. He was not, I think, the equal of his father as a draughtsman, but at least, during his short life, he managed to pass on what he had learnt from his father and to produce drawings of considerable charm though lacking the parental imaginative power.

In one aspect of our painting, the "sporting picture," for which all too few studies remain, the maintenance of a level of accuracy in the presentation of the whole subject required a "classical" form of its own. The owner of a fine piece of eighteenth century horseflesh wanted it represented, as would his descendants to-day, with every "point" marked and hair in place. He did not want a picture of a horse, but a portrait of his own thoroughbred. George Stubbs, the greatest of those to fulfil this requirement, and one of the greatest anatomists of his age in addition, must have made literally thousands of drawings both for his pictures and for his celebrated literary "chef d'œuvre," *The Anatomy of the Horse*. When his effects were



auctioned after his death in 1806, four lots of sketchbooks were catalogued, one of which contained no less than 200 landscapes, another "12 monkeys, 14 Buffaloes Bulls and Cows, in black lead and two Tibet Bulls in black chalk." To-day the sum total of Stubbs' drawings amounts to a folio of pencil drawings in the Royal Academy, and one or two in the Picton Library, Liverpool. No others, I believe, are admitted by all the authorities. The change of fashion at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and consequent loss of interest in so eighteenth century an artist as Stubbs, was presumably the cause. As far as I know, none of his landscape drawings remain, in sad contrast to his contemporary, Thomas Gainsborough. Happily there is a very large number of Gainsborough's drawings in existence, as a result of the vogue for them that immediately followed his death. There are more extant, indeed, than by any of the artists so far discussed. The slender scope of this volume, therefore, makes it impossible to represent the development and change in Gainsborough's methods of drawing. As a portrait painter he was brilliantly gifted in catching a likeness and achieved a considerable success thereby. As a landscape draughtsman and in his casual figure studies, his work progressed from a manner derived from Van Dyck, whom he profoundly admired, to a simple, wonderfully controlled, almost impressionist method of notation in chalk and wash and charcoal heightened with white, which places him in the company of Constable as the greatest of all British landscape draughtsmen. His figure drawings suggest a comparison with Watteau, an artist whom he temperamentally resembles, in their elegance and economy of means, and early examples bear a considerable resemblance to the great Frenchman's chalk drawings as a result of the influence of Gainsborough's master, the French engraver, Hubert Gravelot, who owned some Watteau drawings which he prized above all else. There are, however, essential differences between Watteau and Gainsborough. Watteau loved the exquisitely artificial; Gainsborough disliked his portrait practice and loved natural landscape. During his life he casually gave away his drawings for, like his landscape paintings, they would not sell.

Where Gainsborough particularised, Sir Joshua Reynolds generalised. Reynolds' gifts were on a heroic scale, but linear sensitivity was not one of them. He concerned himself with being a great master and, by dint of his enormous energy, he succeeded, at least partially, in achieving his aim. As a draughtsman he has little to commend him in the comparatively few examples which survive. "The grand manner" was his goal, and drawing was not perhaps the medium most suited to this aim in the eighteenth century. The best of his drawings, most of which are in pen or pen and wash, have power and *bravura*, but Reynolds was an oil painter first and last.

With the notable exception of those already mentioned, our famous eighteenth and nineteenth century portraitists, Reynolds, Opie, Hoppner, and Lawrence, are not particularly interesting as draughtsmen, and the





LANDSCAPE WITH A DARK HILL

Aquatint worked over in pencil and wash by Alexander Cozens, d. 1786

same stricture applies to the "history painters," Benjamin West, J. S. Copley, and that great autobiographer if third-rate artist, Benjamin Robert Haydon. British portraiture irrespective of art, was, of necessity, a matter of output. Portraits were commodities in great demand and portraiture was a sound profession, where other forms of art might be dangerously unremunerative. But individual prices were not high and oil paintings were the artifacts required, so to maintain a reputation as a portraitist, the artist was required to paint away in oils most of the time available. On the whole, therefore, the portrait painter's drawings were very subsidiary productions. George Romney was an exception, for he worked very fast and painted very badly. His drawings are far more interesting than his oils. This was due to some extent to his contact with the drawings of William Blake and being deeply affected by Blake's unique vision, but Romney was making imaginative drawings before he met Blake and the influence was to some extent mutual. To this whole visionary movement, which had Blake as its greatest and, at the time, most neglected exponent, I will refer in due course.

The eighteenth century is so crowded with talent that I must inevitably do less than justice to many admirable artists. The landscapists in water-

colour, Samuel Scott, Francis Towne, William Pars and many others, I propose to omit on the grounds that they are sufficiently served elsewhere and are neither pure draughtsmen nor great masters. Paul Sandby deserves most attention for though he never produced a masterpiece, he did produce numerous followers and some very pleasant wash drawings in the manner of Gainsborough and Richard Wilson, whom he helped when the latter was very poor. His real gift lay in his ability to record everyday life without pretension and with rare taste. The great school of English water-colour and landscape painting which culminated in Girtin, Turner, Cotman, Bonington and others, owed much to Sandby and his contemporaries.

## ASCENDANCY II

**B** RITISH drawing reaches its second ascendancy towards the end of the eighteenth century and in the first quarter of the nineteenth. For the seven years between 1757 and 1764, the greatest individual figures—Hogarth, Wilson, Gainsborough, Ramsay, Stubbs, Cozens, Blake and Rowlandson—were actually all alive at the same time. It is, for some reason or other, generally assumed that both William Blake and Thomas Rowlandson are early nineteenth century artists, but in actual fact, Blake was born in 1757 and his art is in one respect timeless, while Rowlandson was born a year earlier and his art is manifestly and splendidly temporal. Rowlandson's art stems from the popular tradition of satire and social comment which had produced Hogarth, though he was without his predecessor's morality. His drawings themselves were almost invariably made with a reed pen and wash or watercolour tint, and he never painted in oils, for all his drawings were either intended to be engraved or were set down for their own robust benefit. His production of drawings was as prodigious as his personal extravagance and he contrived to roister through his longish life without any apparent decline in his talent. The curious thing about Rowlandson is that whilst he is often "typed" as primarily a brutal caricaturist, he was really a lyrical artist full of joy, a satirist full of wit and laughter, but with very little real malice, who took life as he found it and is therefore very different from Hogarth and in no way to be confused with the bitter Gillray or the acid Cruikshank. He could produce monstrous caricatures of appalling ugliness but they have always about them the suggestion that they were merely done to annoy, like a schoolboy's drawing of "teacher"; they are rarely tragic moralities. The immense vitality, the lyrical poetry of his landscapes, the rhythmic preoccupation, the social satire, combine to make in Rowlandson a sort of catalogue of all the trends save one in British drawing. He was strangely uninfluenced by the work of his contemporaries. If he was influenced by any one artist, it was by



Gainsborough, whose landscape conventions Rowlandson adapted to his own uses.

The one quality lacking in Rowlandson, the spiritual, is amply compensated for in William Blake who, as a draughtsman, had precious little else. The vast bulk of recent literature on the subject of Blake permits me to deal fairly briefly with him here. In my own personal and probably superstitious opinion, William Blake was one of the greatest beings ever to inhabit this planet, and had the Gods granted him a pictorial ability equal to his vision we should simply not know what he was about. The Gods did not, they made of him a competent engraver and a passable draughtsman. With these inadequate tools, by the sheer power of his imagination and some gift for designing within the picture, Blake contrived to make a unique contribution to European art. It is however important to correct the very general and mistaken impression that Blake was unique in the form his work took. Imaginative or visionary art was a going concern, with a number of able practitioners involved, in the latter half of the eighteenth century. No one of them was Blake's imaginative equal; no one of them had anything approaching Blake's genius, but several of them



ENRAGED MAN

Pen drawing by Thomas Rowlandson, 1756-1827



THE ANCIENT OF DAYS  
Drawing by William Blake, 1757-1827

drew better than Blake, from a technical point of view. All of them, both his seniors and his juniors, now seem to radiate from Blake. They knew him and their work achieved life; before they knew him they were comparatively empty; after his presence faded they dried up. George Romney, twenty-three years Blake's senior, thought Blake's imaginative drawings the equal of Michelangelo's and Romney had been at the same kind of thing for some time. Henry Fuseli, sixteen years older than Blake, said he was "damned good to steal from" and Fuseli was famous and pretty well off, while Blake was considered mad and lived in poverty. The name of John Flaxman, R.A., lives on in the light cast by Blake, rather than by his own merits as a "neoclassical" sculptor and illustrator; and Blake's young disciples—Samuel Palmer, George Richmond, Edward Calvert and John Linnell—produced the work they are remembered by, in Blake's aura. When this aura faded, they were one by one swallowed up by the second Black Death, the industrial materialism of Victorian England, and were heard of no more.

Those two great complements to one another, Rowlandson and Blake, together possess all the qualities of this country's natural genius in drawing; those qualities which we first see in the Winchester Bible. When they died,



both in the same year, their most talented followers and their traditions continued for half a decade and then gradually disappeared. George Cruikshank, for example, gave up drink and declined, social satire degenerated into the gentlemanly dullness of *Punch*, while Samuel Palmer took to respectable views of Italy and his power became vitiated.

The visionary school, if such they may be called, is worth attention as a very important phenomenon in British art. Its form was classical and Italianate, based on Raphael and Michelangelo in contrast to the prevailing mode for Dutch-derived picturesque naturalism. It was closely linked to literature and, in terms of the dicta of Roger Fry, is nothing more than "literary illustration," to be denigrated as such. In terms of reality it was one of the most significant phases of English art. Most of Blake's subjects are either illustrations to the Bible, Dante, Blair or Virgil, and others, or to his own poems. Fuseli concerned himself with Milton and Shakespeare, Romney's best drawings are illustrations to *Paradise Lost*, and Flaxman and Stothard were both primarily illustrators, the former particularly of the Greek epic poets. It is perhaps significant that almost all that remains of the great medieval period are "illustrations" to sacred books, because this "illustration" is the hallmark of a very considerable section of British art. Our literature is great enough, and our visual arts need take no shame in being a counterpart. Blake was the illuminator of his own prophetic books as Matthew Paris was the illustrator of his own prose. It is time that the word "literary" was relegated to the scrap heap of outmoded critical epithets, for half Europe's masterpieces are illustrations to the Bible, or the lives of the Saints.

Henry Fuseli, apart from his affinity with, and admiration for, Blake as a visionary romantic, provides something of a link between the supernormal symbolism of the latter and the fleshly vitality of that other aspect of our art associated with Rowlandson and the caricaturists; Fuseli was much interested in contemporary costume and manners and in the life around him, albeit he lent the ladies of his choice a slightly sinister air compatible with his feeling for the "pleasing horror" admired by Burke. Most people who have written of his period have dismissed Fuseli as melodramatic to the extent of being ridiculous, and without true depth. He is held up as a pasteboard Blake, surrounded by spurious spectres and "property" blood. I must beg to disagree. At times Fuseli was inclined to push his emotions too far and his cult of the supernatural may occasionally seem exaggerated to the sceptical agnostics of to-day, but Fuseli had genuine power, morbid though it may have been, and his best work is far more than an amusing relic of his period. He saw his contemporaries clearly if theatrically, which may also be said of El Greco.

Fuseli was a Swiss who came to England when he was twenty-two and spent most of his long life here. He was a major figure of the romantic visionary school and, as I said earlier, more English than anything else,





RUTH RETURNED FROM GLEANING

Chalk and wash drawing by Samuel Palmer, exhibited 1829

except in his accent, which remained obstinately broken. He spent some time in Rome, where, apart from deciding upon the permanent spelling of his name, which had been variously "Füssli," "Fussel" and "Fusseli" until then, he met an Edinburgh man called John Brown. Brown is as anonymous as his name implies. Very little is certainly known about him, but whether he had a decided influence on Fuseli's style or vice versa, Brown produced a number of drawings, in the manner now associated with Fuseli, which are in no way inferior in quality. Both Brown and Fuseli were more concerned with the immediate and even satirical view of their fellow humans than was Blake, or the Romney of the imaginative drawings, and as such they provide something of a link with Rowlandson and those artists whose exclusive concern with everyday life makes them the reverse of Blake's coin.

The school of landscape painters who derived from Sandby, Crome and the great Thomas Girtin made their contribution essentially to water-colour and oil painting, to which their drawings are subsidiary. Turner was the culmination of this movement and Turner, though a magnificent pictorial designer, was not a draughtsman *per se*. His most interesting



drawings are his rapid notes, for which he perfected a personal technique, using a toned paper and a brisk calligraphic line. There are no less than 350 of his sketchbooks in the national collection, covering a period of fifty-nine years, from the careful topography of his youth to the graphic shorthand of his later years. But most of his drawings, as opposed to his watercolour paintings, were for his personal use and not for publication. Exciting though they are as documents of his life and approach to paintings, they are not, in themselves, particularly impressive. John Constable's are, and with him I will deal more fully, while David Cox had an uneven flair for dramatic landscape drawing, which at its best was superb, deriving from the work of Alexander Cozens.

Of the animal artists who were still following their long tradition and plying their quiet trade, two were so outstanding as draughtsmen that they require very special consideration. Of these, one was James Ward, a curiously underrated artist to-day, an example of whose landscape drawings I reproduce in colour. If this drawing fails to show the reader that Ward was a master, the loss is not Ward's. Ward lived to a very great age, and this, as is sometimes the case, was synonymous with loss of reputation, for he outlived his popularity. He was the brother-in-law of the now more celebrated George Morland, whose work was treasured by nineteenth century collectors presumably because of its sentimentality and which even now fetches high prices. Ward made his living as an animal portraitist, at which practice he is almost the equal of Stubbs. Long before 1859, when he died at the age of ninety, the market for animal pictures had changed. The public wanted the sentimental "bow-wows" and "gee-gees" of Edwin Landseer, and Ward's dramatic, picturesque landscapes with bulls fighting and storms brewing were outmoded. Ward was one of the products of Burke's "Sublime and Beautiful" which required a note of terror to heighten the sublimity. This he combined, as did the natural landscape painters like Girtin and Constable, with an admiration for Dutch painting and with a particular love for Rubens. Like Constable, Ward drew from nature and he drew from it continuously, year in and year out, all through his long life. Combined with skill, sensitivity and a deep passion, this practice makes a man a fine draughtsman. This it did for James Ward.

Thomas Bewick's name is still famous to wood engravers, book collectors and students of fauna and wild life. His *History of British Birds* and his *British Quadrupeds* are classics in this branch of the arts. Very few of his exquisite drawings remain, though there are a number of watercolours in existence, but his powers as an engraver ably demonstrate the delicacy and minuteness of his observation. John Piper speaks of him in *British Romantic Artists* as being able to see "all human experience in a bird's nest"; and there is some truth in this, for in his tiny engravings, Bewick was a complete artist of exceptional power. His great gift was his ability to perceive essentials and to separate the object from its context



*By courtesy of Sir Edward Marsh*

THE CHIMNEY PIECE

Wash drawing by Henry Fuseli, 1741-1825





*By courtesy of Thomas Lovell, Esq.*

SNOWDON UNDER CLOUD  
Pen and wash drawing by James Ward, 1853



VIEW ON THE STOUR  
Wash drawing by John Constable, c. 1820

as a thing perfect in itself. In the nutshell, the microcosm which concerns many artists of our own day so deeply, Bewick "could count himself a king of infinite space."

John Constable, as a draughtsman, was the product of the Norwich school, of Dutch landscape painting and of Claude. He combined these derivations with a simple and passionate vision of nature which made him the greatest landscape draughtsman of his period and, with Gainsborough, the greatest exponent of the "natural picturesque" in British art. He used a somewhat similar technique to Gainsborough in his wash drawings, the vast majority of which are notations and preparations for paintings. He was forever recording the changes in nature, and in particular in the weather and the formation of clouds. Leslie, his biographer, quotes an exchange between Blake (whom he terms "the amiable but eccentric") and Constable, which at once gives the key to their two personalities. Blake, looking through one of Constable's sketchbooks, was so moved by a drawing of trees that he exclaimed, "Why this is not drawing but inspiration"; to which Constable replied, "I never knew it before; I meant it for drawing." These two seemingly incompatible spirits shared something, but to Blake all art was "inspiration," whilst Constable said that when he made a sketch from nature the first thing he tried to do was to forget that he had ever seen a



picture. Nevertheless, these apparent antitheses with which we are presented in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are not really so incompatible as they seem. These artists were all, the greatest of them, "lyrical romantics," by which is meant, men who see reality where others see pictures. No matter how different their art seems on the surface to be, Gainsborough, Blake, Rowlandson, Constable, Ward, Bewick and Turner possessed that one common quantity which is found in the work of their great ancestors, the draughtsmen of Winchester and Canterbury. Blake and Rowlandson in particular are diverse but clear instances of the British gift for linear rhythm, found in the Cædmon MS. and in the work of Matthew Paris.

Constable is the final expression in this country of the "picturesque natural" school of landscape draughtsmen. Those who followed him in this direction never achieved his stature. His direct influence on English painting and drawing is still present in the work of Philip Wilson Steer and a host of less interesting and now archaic landscapists, but it was in France, in the work of Delacroix, and more obviously in that of Courbet and his followers, that the real heritage of Constable may be seen, together with that of R. P. Bonington, who spent most of his short life there. Three hundred years before Constable's day, we had passed the flower of our culture to France, and it was to France in the 1830's that we handed the fruits of our eighteenth century renaissance. The decline in the early nineteenth century led to no such complete wilderness in the Victorian era as did its historical parallel in the reign of Henry VIII. There was no complete cessation of activity; far from it. Throughout the nineteenth century there were a number of excellent British draughtsmen, but a decline there was, as everyone knows, and if, as I believe, we may to-day be rising slowly from it to another period of ascendancy there is no evidence as yet of an artist to rank with the greatest of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century masters. In the 1820's and 30's there were draughtsmen like the Varleys and Samuel Palmer who were doing their best work and who were destined to sink into insignificance under the weight of the Victorian demand for sentiment and false naturalism, but in Palmer's youth, Blake, Constable, Turner and Rowlandson were still alive and there was still great vitality in British art. It was not until the 50's that the downhill course was truly run. Of Palmer so much has recently been written that I will not retell the tale of his shortlived period of supreme excellence. Suffice that it is Palmer, more than any other individual draughtsman, who influences the landscape drawing of the younger generation to-day. He was an artist in whose best work may be found the complete expression, in landscape, of Blake's teaching and example. Palmer's debt to Blake's woodcuts for Thornton's translation of Virgil's *Eclogues* is a case in point. Palmer was a creator of poetic landscapes ranking with those of Constable and Gainsborough, but in a completely different form.



ROCKY COAST WITH PORT  
Pen and water-colour drawing by Richard Dadd, 1861

## DECLINE AND DESERT II

THE early years of Queen Victoria's reign were years of great technical advance in the tools of the draughtsman's trade. The steel pen-nib was comparatively new and various types were being produced which had, of course, a considerable effect on the quality of line in subsequent drawings. "The metal pen," to quote Hesketh Hubbard, "made



possible a thinner, more flexible line than the reed or quill usually produced. This was not entirely beneficial, for though it made possible greater delicacy and detail, it also encouraged a spidery, wiry line that lacked decorative value." This is an understatement. Even Rossetti, the best of the Pre-Raphaelite draughtsmen, steel pen and all, had not at his command the flexibility of line to be found in the Winchester Bible, nor had Maclise's fiddling the delicacy of Hillyarde. The Victorians confused superfluity of detail with delicacy, to the lengths of that nadir of all drawing, the "stipple landscape." New papers and new tones of paper were marketed in great numbers, such as those named after Cotman, Harding and Cattermole. The lead pencil was perfected, and in fact everything possible to simplify the mechanics of drawing was made available to the aspiring student. Given



WOMAN ON A SOFA  
Pen drawing by Sir David Wilkie, 1805



SPANISH MODEL  
Pen drawing by Charles Keene, 1823-1891

the tools, they failed to do the job, though not for want of finish. The rising stars of popular esteem, destined for honours and peerages, Landseer, Leighton, Poynter, and others, managed to produce little beside abysmal sentimentalities of a high level of competence (though Landseer in particular was a gifted artist) compatible with the false values of the spurious "neo-Gothic"; a mode unrelated to our own genuine Gothic tradition. The gallant but unsuccessful Pre-Raphaelite reaction from the "neo-Gothic"





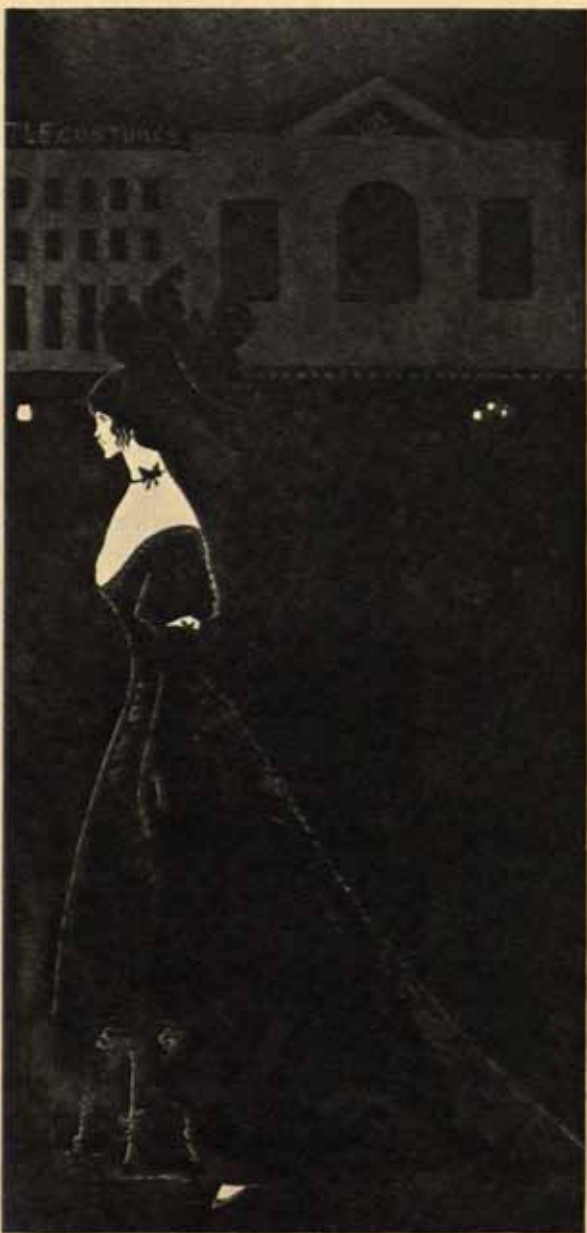
MISS FANNY CORNFORTH

Pen and wash drawing by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1828-1882

factory chimney actually did much good, doomed though even this was by false, though far less false, values, this time the understandable but fruitless archaism inherent in the title "Pre-Raphaelite." While the officials tried to bring the "Gothic" up-to-date, the Pre-Raphaelites tried to take the public back to the Gothic past. Confusion arose. One way and another, the Victorian era managed, with the best of intentions, to negate and stultify the lyrical romantic part of the indigenous expression, gifted though many of the individual protagonists were. As before, it was left in the hands of one section of the tradition to keep the torch alight. In this case it was the social commentators and the illustrators.

Before plunging into the densely populated undergrowth of Victorian draughtsmen, I should like to consider one lunatic artist and one artist whose brothers were both mad. The first is the sad figure of Richard Dadd, for so long underrated, and shortly to be so overrated. Dadd was trained at the Academy schools, and all his life practised a tight, detailed mode of expression. Had he not, as a result of a sunstroke sustained in Egypt, killed his father with a razor, he might well have continued in the fairly prosperous

and modest course of an ordinary academic artist. Instead, contingent upon his lethal pun, he was judged insane in 1843 and spent the rest of his life in Bedlam and Broadmoor where he produced a fantastic art quite unique in British drawing, executed with a miniaturist's detail which foreshadowed the technique of the Pre-Raphaelites of a decade later. Dadd, like Blake, was "eccentric," but differed not only in that his talents were less, but also in that presumably he was not "amiable." The other, John Martin, was not confined in any way, on the contrary he was a very great success. His paintings and engravings occasionally, as in his *Paradise Lost* illustrations, achieve considerable scenic magnificence by dint of his sense of scale, but his art was pure theatre and technically, though he was a fine engraver, he was rather a niggling draughtsman. Martin, like Dadd, comes as a pendant to the melodramatic aspect of the visionary school. Both of them pushed on from Fuseli, whether they knew it or not, into the hinterland of lunacy.



NIGHT PIECE

Pen and brush drawing by Aubrey Beardsley, 1872-1898



Martin was sane and an anticlimax, a *reductio ad absurdum*. Dadd was mad and achieved a curious purity as a result.

The social commentators who were to hold the structure of British drawing together divide into two classes, upper and lower, but mainly upper. David Wilkie, Andrew Geddes, John Tenniel, Charles Keene, John Leech, Richard Doyle, W. P. Frith, and later Aubrey Beardsley and Max Beerbohm mostly drew for the benefit of the upper classes, unlike Rowlandson and Gillray, who drew for anyone possessing a sixpence. Of these Keene, Leech, Doyle and Frith drew the lower classes for the benefit of the upper and Tenniel, Beardsley and "Max" drew the upper classes in one kind or another for the benefit of their intellectual or social peers and themselves. Wilkie was a highly talented draughtsman but a second-rank painter of what are called *genre* pictures. This means, the faithful recording, in greater or less degree, of one's immediate surroundings and acquaintances. Wilkie put down what he saw, boldly but unpretentiously, leaving behind him a pleasant and instructive record of his times, and a number of powerful drawings. W. P. Frith is also a draughtsman of this type, but coming, as he did, at a later and more desolate period, his work is crowded with pretentious sentimentalities and superfluous detail. Leech and Keene differ from Wilkie in that they were humorists and therefore had an *arrière-pensée*. Charles Keene is unquestionably the leading native draughtsman of the mid-nineteenth century, to the extent of actual greatness, but he recorded rather than created and though a master draughtsman and a sensitive artist gifted with much human understanding, he only rose above first-rate journalism in his finest work. His friend John Tenniel had less talent but a vein of delicate fantasy which makes it impossible for anyone else ever to illustrate *Alice in Wonderland*. His political cartoons are well drawn and very gentlemanly. The art of social satire became very well-mannered in Victoria's reign, as *Punch* shows only too well. It was sometimes not without wit but it was always lacking in the savage emotions of the many ferociously angry satirical draughtsmen of earlier in the century. Emotions and particularly social emotions except in support of the *status quo* were not welcome in the 60's. However, in Keene's hands, and to some extent in the others', drawing was still drawing, as Sickert was at pains to point out in our own day and as Sickert's own drawings show, in his debt to Keene. In the hands of the famous painters it was not. They drew by measurement and by preconceived rules. Whilst this respectably dreary state of affairs proceeded along the years, John Ruskin, who had championed Turner—rather to the latter's embarrassment—began to campaign with all the might of his prose for the young men who were trying to rid themselves of the spiritual grime of the Industrial Revolution. He came out hot and strong for the Pre-Raphaelites, and Ruskin, unlike our contemporary midget critics, had spirit and carried a certain amount of weight, if not as much as is generally supposed in retrospect. But in addition, Ruskin was



JOACHIM AMONG THE SHEPHERDS  
Pen and wash drawing by Stanley Spencer, 1912  
*By courtesy of the Artists and Miss Lillian Brouse*

1535





*By courtesy of the Artist and Author*

**TWO SISTERS**

Drawing in coloured chalks by Robert Colquhoun, 1945

quite a respectable draughtsman himself. The Pre-Raphaelites, among them John Everett Millais, who metamorphosed from a brilliantly talented rebel into a wealthy and reactionary dispenser of saccharine platitudes, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a fine draughtsman and a great poet, were launched as a movement and were soon set upon by the wits and social commentators—the other good draughtsmen—as suitable grist to the mill of graphic wit. Draughtsmen were at pains to eat draughtsmen. Whilst this scrimmage was going on, certain individuals were proceeding quietly with their own work. The illustrators “Phiz” (Hablot Knight Browne) and the younger Cruikshank were established and were, with younger men such as Noel Paton, G. J. Pinwell, A. B. Frost and many more, building book illustration into the one visual product of the Victorian era which had real life. The topographers Samuel Prout, George Cattermole and W. H. Bartlett were quietly continuing the slightly tedious tradition of the picturesque ruin, which dawdled on almost into the twentieth century. Several adventurous spirits had wandered into the Near, and one into the Far, East. Of these the best are John Frederick Lewis, called “Spanish Lewis,” Edward Lear, the celebrated creator of much sublime nonsense and a good deal of less celebrated but admirable straight landscape drawing in Italy, Palestine and thereabouts; and George Chinnery who really belongs to an earlier generation and who lived the greater part of his life in India and China. Lewis, who was a superb technician, spent his time in Turkey and Egypt, working in the now perfected medium of pencil of which he possessed a complete mastery, and making lithographs of a high degree of intensity. His drawings of animals make him the major figure in this field after James Ward. Lear’s lyrical gift is discernible in all his work, comic and serious, and his drawings of birds are of an exceptional quality. George Chinnery was an artist of quiet ability and very real insight, whose drawings of Chinese types are more than a valuable record of the country and the era. The divers draughtsmen, illustrators, topographers and the rest, are the real, almost the only artistic fruits of the age. Painting and sculpture were either ineffectual or deplorable, but drawing continued doggedly to keep its end up in some sort. Alfred Stevens, a grandiose practitioner in the arts of painting, architecture, sculpture and general decoration, was a carefully trained artist in all that was “traditional” in the Greco-Roman manner current in his time. The fact remains that he was a superficial and facile draughtsman of very little value to his contemporaries, though he has gained something of a reputation since, for reasons best known to the dealers.

The memory of Blake, dim but persistent, lights some aspects of the mid-nineteenth century. Rossetti was a profound admirer, Noel Paton’s masterpiece, the *Ancient Mariner* illustrations, has echoes of Blake and the Pre-Raphaelite books follow his example of individual craftsmanship in book production. Moxon’s editions of *Tennyson* and *Poets of the Nineteenth Century* with illustrations by Rossetti, Millais, the wretched Holman



Hunt, victim of a retarded development which, had he lived two hundred years, would not have prevented him from becoming a great artist, and Ford Madox Brown who, in another age, would have been one—were in their time something new and important in the craft of book production, though the editions were an expensive failure and reached only a small section of the public. The book, in the hands of the Pre-Raphaelites, may now seem over-ornamented and false in sentiment, but to William Morris, to several of the other Pre-Raphaelites, and even to the dreary Edward Burne-Jones, we owe the resurrection from long neglect of the great books and manuscripts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the attempt to recreate the book as a work of art. That Pre-Raphaelitism was an aesthetic failure based on false theorising, is acknowledged, but we owe something to individuals associated with the movement, Rossetti and Morris in particular, and in its time it was full of courage and had much that was true in its cause. That it was a flop in its unreal, quasi-medieval romanticism must be admitted, but the Pre-Raphaelites were fighting a more stubborn philistinism than England had suffered since the Commonwealth. It is not surprising therefore that they spoilt their case by overstating it.

## RESURRECTION II

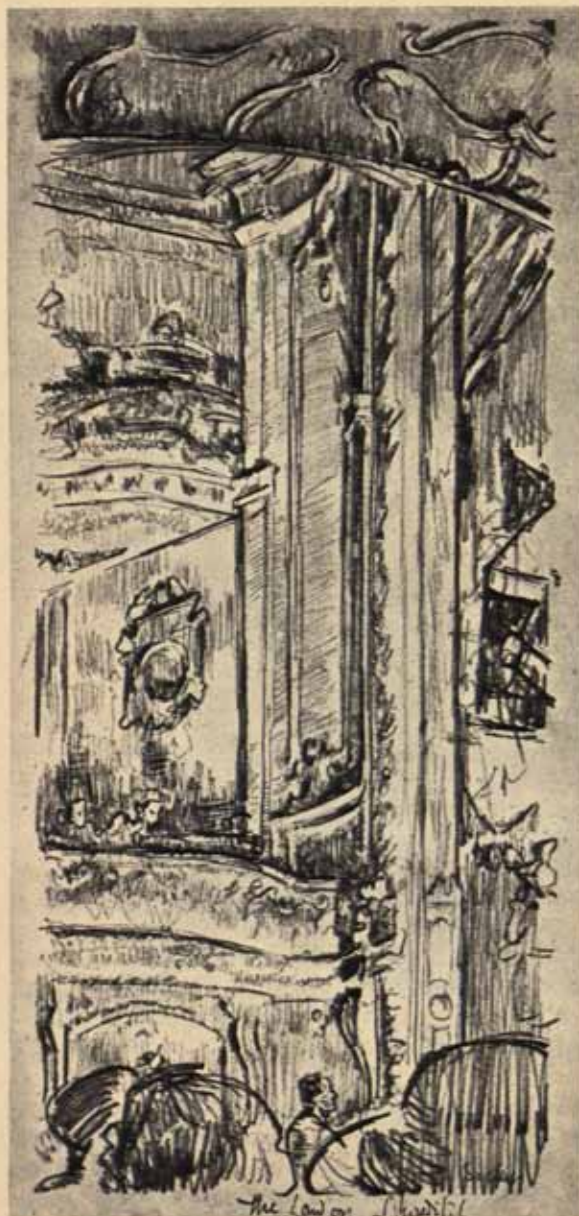
THE gift to France, made in the earlier years of the nineteenth century, began to return to this country towards the end of the 1870's, under the auspices of that arrogant and intelligent product of French Impressionism and the Japanese print, James McNeill Whistler. Whistler does not come within the scope of this book since he was an American, who drew English subjects, in a French manner, with a Japanese feeling, and withal he drew rather badly. But Whistler talked the British into a realisation of what was then going on in France, and, at the time, this was a breath of fresh air blowing through this country's stuffy, overcrowded houses and studios. In this civilising mission he was assisted by all the ignorance at George Moore's command and all the glittering, sensitive nonsense of Oscar Wilde's avid love of novelty. Three British draughtsmen rapidly, though not entirely relevantly, followed this vocal rather than graphic revolution. The first is the personification of the period in literature, that astonishing and shortlived artist, Aubrey Vincent Beardsley. Beardsley was born in 1872 and died of tuberculosis in 1898. Between 1893 and his death he produced a considerable body of highly original and artificial drawings, designed expressly for line block reproduction, which set England and most of Europe by the ears. His work was intensely literary, to the extent of being, not just illustration but an integral part of a book, as integral as the capital letters, but it was also a social comment on the appearance of one fragment of the times in which he lived. Beardsley had no particular talent as a draughtsman of form, nor any particular virtue



SEATED WOMAN  
Pen and wash drawing by Wyndham Lewis

of line, but what he did have was a wonderful sense of balancing white against black and a morbid, personal vision. His *nostalgie de la boue parfumée* was exactly suited to the jewelled escapism of the literature of his period, the transitory epoch of the "decadents." Beardsley arrived at the right moment and he knew when to leave. Max Beerbohm, who happily was much the same age then as now, is a far more skilful draughtsman than his drawings, slight, elegant satirical comments on celebrated con-





THE LONDON, SHOREDITCH  
Pencil drawing by Walter Sickert, 1860-1942

temporaries, would have one suppose. They seem intentionally ephemeral; in actual fact they are much more. The third of the draughtsmen whose work emerges from this period is Walter Richard Sickert, who combined a pastiche of Degas and Whistler in paint with a magnificent graphic gift, descending directly from Keene and as native as a London fog. Sooner or later it will transpire that Sickert's drawings were far and away the most important part of his production and then they will be seen in their true light as illustrations of a period and not only as studies for impressionist painting.

The impact of French art in the 90's and in the first ten years of the twentieth century gave birth to a lively movement associated with the Slade School and the New English Art Club which was founded, as are most of such groups, in order to exhibit the work of talented rebels at odds with the R.A. Philip Wilson Steer, Sickert, and among the younger men, Ambrose MacEvoy, William Orpen and Augustus John are the most important names associated with it. Orpen was brilliantly



STUDY OF A FISHERGIRL OF EQUIHEN  
Pencil drawing by Augustus John

endowed, but after a good start he degenerated into an Academic slickness which requires no further comment. John's reputation as a draughtsman is so extensive that it needs no recapitulation here. In the Edwardian era, James Pryde and William Nicholson as "The Beggarstaff Brothers" produced posters and drawings for woodcuts which attracted considerable attention, and the Scotsmen, D. Y. Cameron and Muirhead Bone were producing traditional landscape drawings mainly with a view to etching. Charles Rickets and Charles Shannon were the most celebrated illustrators and the Slade School reached its peak in the production of John, Orpen and Wyndham Lewis.

The resurrection which took place in the early eighteenth century seems sudden in retrospect and almost miraculous. The late nineteenth century, and the course of twentieth century drawing so far, has been a far more gradual development with, as will be seen, a fairly large number of diverse practitioners in action concurrently. The decline from greatness which followed the deaths of Constable and Turner was sharp, but the line continued in a gradual curve which began to rise imperceptibly in the 90's, was faced with



a relapse as a result of the wild Francophilia of the cosmopolitan "twenties" and early thirties, and is now moving up again. The "Vorticist" movement of the hectic period shortly before 1914 brought Wyndham Lewis to the fore as perhaps the greatest living British portrait draughtsman, and produced William Roberts, whose metallic figure drawings have considerable power. At much the same time, the mystical realism of Stanley Spencer's early figure drawings and, in landscape, the work of Paul Nash began to show the first signs of re-emergence of the native tradition in a pure state. In the twenties, as a result of Roger Fry's admirable realisation of the significance of Post-Impressionism being pushed too far, false and hysterical trends based on the multifarious movements contained in the *Ecole de Paris* eclipsed the growing tendency to recognise the value of the indigenous tradition, in a Mediterranean fluorescence which did inestimable damage to the roots of certain very talented artists. Marc Gertler was one who suffered from false cosmopolitanism, to some extent Christopher Wood was another, though he redeemed himself towards the end of his brief life, and there are several more who fared equally badly. It was not until the 'thirties that the camps could be seen more evenly divided, and not until the Second World War that the direction was clearly taken by the younger generation in spite of the opposition from the Francophiles.

I have not space here to document the considerable body of draughtsmen who are British in the sense that they are aware of their tradition, nor can I tabulate the conflicting influences present in their work, over and above their artistic nationality. The French masters, and of course the towering single figure of Picasso, have left their mark, beneficial and otherwise, on all contemporary painting and drawing. What I shall do in ending this essay, is to restate what I consider to be the main streams or characteristics of the British genius, the poetic, the satiric, the mystical, the romantic and the preoccupation with linear rhythms, which are the bones and basis of our art, and have been so for a thousand years, and to name my own choice of those whom I think figure most significantly in this tradition to-day. Of the generation which follows the lyrical romanticism of Paul Nash, follows in time rather than in direct derivation, Graham Sutherland—the artistic descendant of Blake, Samuel Palmer, Cozens and Turner—seems to me the most important, for the vital paraphrase of landscape forms at which he has arrived through drawing. Edward Bawden, whose vision is of a gentler sort, stems through Nash from Edward Lear and recalls Bewick and Barlow in his approach rather than in his subject matter. The drawings of David Jones are a symbol of the continuity of tradition. They bear a strong family resemblance to the first colour plate in this book—not that they are archaic, but in their lyrical, linear freedom. His animal drawings and his engravings only serve to emphasise this fact for they are in the tradition of British line drawing so consistently excellent throughout the centuries. Frances Hodgkins is another fine lyrical artist of the





#### ORCHARD

Pen and wash drawing by John Minton, 1945

younger generation in all save her actual age. Edward Burra looked back to Rowlandson and Hogarth and he is, with Spencer, the major visual satirist of to-day. Henry Moore, the sculptor, deserves mention here for a few of the best of his numerous drawings and so does John Piper, who follows the tradition of Cotman and the topographers, though neither of them is outstanding as a draughtsman. Of an even younger generation still, I reproduce a chalk drawing by Robert Colquhoun and a landscape in pen and wash by John Minton. Colquhoun's roots are in that Celtic gift for design mentioned at the beginning of this book and his origins as an artist go back to the Northumbrian illuminators. Minton is English and Palmer shines through him, but his work is personal none the less. These are two from among several young artists whose work in due time will become familiar.

It has not been my intention to propound a specious archaism nor to advocate a bigoted parochialism. I do not think that any of the last four reproductions in this book will convey the impression that the present British school displays antiquarian or over-insular tendencies. Trying to go back may have been the downfall of the Pre-Raphaelites, awareness of



one's native tradition is another thing. It is my belief that the value of our long tradition is such that it can help to produce, in the not too distant future, a new renaissance in British art and thus a new national culture to put into the international pool of European art. If this is achieved it will be through drawing, for that is our natural mode of visual expression.

My chapter headings read as a cycle. If this great wheel continues to turn, the chapter yet to be written will be ASCENDANCY No. III.



THORNTREE

Pen and wash drawing by Graham Sutherland, 1945

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ENGLISH  
WATER-COLOUR PAINTERS

BY

H. J. PARIS

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WATER-COLOUR AND THE ENGLISH TRADITION

**P**AINTING deals with facts, visual facts, things seen, records by hand of reports by the eyes. A picture is a thing made, a fact in itself, like a chair or a table or a map. Its appeal is largely to the senses, especially to the sense of touch. In its inception it has little to do with ideas, or associations of ideas, as words have, which are the language of speculation, and abstractions in themselves. All this seems very obvious, but it cannot be emphasised too often when using words to explain painting. Such ideas and associations as may be conveyed are always by way of the representation of things. The symbolism of painting is that of objects brought together, however much may be said of the abstract qualities of pattern and line and colour, all of which require to be related to material objects before they have coherent meaning. We are concerned with the record of plastic facts, with things seen in the round, with solid tangible materials having weight, depth, a relative scale, and a plottable positive position in space. Not that a picture starting from a literary, or an anecdotal impulse, is necessarily a bad picture; but, once started, it becomes a statement of a matter of fact, a representation by agreed convention of line and tone and colour, of objects in relation to one another (*Composition*) with surfaces rough or smooth, hard or soft, simple or complex, all subject to the movement of light and the cancellation of darkness. This statement of observed facts is the true *subject* of the picture.



In effect it amounts to : "here is a tree, a ruined church, a stream," or, more generally : "here is that which sways and rustles, with broad masses of light and shade, its edges fringed, turned this way or that, towards or away from us, with a solid rough-surfaced cylindrical trunk rooted in the ground; here is a building of stone, grey, worn, moss-grown, chipped here or there; here is a liquid glittering mass of shifting sunlight, breaking inverted images of tree and trunk and building."

That is the artist's side of it. That is the problem which, from the earliest times to the present day, has occupied the painter. That is the problem of representation, of likeness, of truth, of realism. That is what the painter paints. It is all factual. Wordsworth may write :

Hung o'er a cloud, above the steep that rears  
Its edge all flame, the broad'ning sun appears;  
A long blue bar its ægis orb divides,  
And breaks the spreading of its golden tides;  
And now it touches on the purple steep  
That flings his shadow on the pictur'd deep.  
Cross the calm lakes blue shades the cliffs aspire,  
With tow'rs and woods a "prospect all on fire" . . .

and satisfy the visual memory with generalisations; but the painter is concerned with precise shapes and substances, with scale and aerial perspective, focus and tone and the edges of things. And as he would, presumably, not choose to paint unless he had something definite to say about appearances, it is our affair in looking at the picture to read the facts back, and to concern ourselves with their solid material nature.

But as the artist is working, and for us, when he has finished working, there is added another quality, which is not visible from the view-point. It is the physical factual quality of the medium he is using, and retains its character whatever object it is made to represent, whereas words and sounds tend to be lost in the associations they call up. There are many reasons—topographical, romantic, decorative, illustrative, personal—for making a painting in the first place, and even for making it in a particular medium; but it is the character of the thing made, the way in which the particular materials have been used, and their limitations and qualities understood, which makes a painting good or bad. It is this material calculated quality which remains to justify the work, when the association of the view is done with, or the topical interest of the subject lost at the change of fashion. This is one of the qualities which make a good picture continually satisfying, which make it worth reading many times, when the whole of the subject matter is known by heart, the power of its "literary" evocation exhausted, and when the mind has passed to other things, or the eyes learnt to see differently. But the whole of painting is an illusion, an attempt to record three dimensional things in terms of two dimensions.



LANDSCAPE WITH COTTAGES  
John Crome, 1768-1821



Such a purpose would demand a solid plastic material, which could be built up architecturally with a thick paste and loaded touch, as though it were a construction in itself, rather than a flat illusion. This may account for the fact that, among those nations whose art is most conscious of plastic values, water-colour has rarely been practised widely in its own right, but more as a ready means of making notes and personal memoranda for oil paintings, or in its opaque form as gouache. Gouache provides a short cut to some of the effects of oil painting but is rarely as satisfactory.

The English tradition, on the other hand, follows in the main, its own way. It is a decorative, flat, linear art of patterns. Old English ornament on jewellery, the celebrated early English embroidery, and portraits, such as that of *The Lady Margaret Beaufort*, show an innate preference for linear pattern and flat smooth shapes. The national preference was even strong enough to modify the practice of Holbein, when once he came to stay in England, so that he made a map of the features of Henry VIII. (See Roger Fry *Reflections on British Painting* 1934.) This lack of plastic feeling may account for the paucity of English sculpture. It may also partly account for the excellence of English water-colour technique.

Water-colour is essentially a flat art. Its particular beauty and virtue is in its transparent delicacy, and in the freedom and freshness with which it can be spread in thin washes, or dropped in rich luminous blots; or in the combination of areas of clear washes, in which the underlying nature of the paper is preserved, with limpid rich accents, happy-drying dots and strokes and dashes, distributed like sign-posts to guide the eye through the design. The vehicle, water, is always the most important ingredient, and not the body of the paint. Water-colour is a medium rapid in execution, and provided its thinness is appreciated, its scope for work on a small scale is almost unlimited, especially for conveying the moist variable atmosphere of landscape. But for anything on a large scale, or requiring elaboration of surface, it is weak, and for the very searching analysis of volume and form it is too fluent and accidental.

It is not that water-colour is an inferior art to that of oil painting, but that it is a different one. It is a more graphic one. It is more of a writing than a building—almost more of a shorthand writing. Its shapes are more ideographic. In this respect it is more akin to written words. It is an in-between art. In between the plastic architectural statement of true oil painting, and the descriptiveness of words, when they are used accurately and precisely. It has a language of its own, and should not be called painting.

But there is another reason for the popularity of water-colour in England, a social one, rather than æsthetic. In the eighteenth century, English gentlemen were as much given to the grand cultural tour of the Continent as Americans are now, and, before the advent of photography, what better pictorial record of memorable views and monuments could be made than in the simple, rapid, portable medium of water-colour? Water-colour drawings



BANGOR, NORTH WALES  
Paul Sandby, 1725-1809

*By courtesy of the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff*





*By courtesy of J. Laite Wright, Esq.*

LOWTHER CASTLE

Thomas Girtin, 1775-1802

came then to be made and gathered into portfolios, and to be discussed with the travel tale, much in the same way as snap-shots are now. From this practice the especial love of landscape for itself emerged, and the habit of looking for pictures in the landscape—the habit of the picturesque. Picturesque tours rapidly became a social passion :

"Le Pittoresque nous vient d'Angleterre; un beau paysage fait partie de la religion de l'aristocratie d'un Anglais, chez lui c'est l'objet d'un sentiment sincère," wrote Henri Beyle in some wonder in his *Memoires d'un Touriste*. It went further even than this; for many of those who professed the picturesque as a polite amusement also painted in water-colour, thereby providing a living for many professional artists as drawing masters. Some of the best of our painters kept themselves by teaching, and made innumerable drawings as copies for their pupils. This practice may account partly for an extreme stylisation of treatment, which became as personal a thing as handwriting.

This calligraphic formal element takes us further still from the plastic feeling of painting on the Continent, and makes the study of English water-colour to be that of the work of individual artists and their personal ways. It is not the study of a self-conscious school of painting, or of studio discoveries. It is even a side line to the main story of painting; and for it the whole *apparatus criticus* seems cumbersome and inappropriate. Such continuous tendencies as can be called a tradition are broad and simple. It is too personal and sweet an art to build a science round. We love water-colours as things made by the Englishman at home, out of his own nature, not as evidence of theories, as delightful things, personal things, like the taste of good wine, or the softness of silk, or the smooth damp sweetness of England after tea.

## THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

ALTHOUGH water-colour, as a means of picture-making in its own right, came to perfection in the eighteenth century in England, so that the French speak of the transparent method as the English method, and no other nation has, in fact, taken to it with such a natural felicity, the medium was used much earlier in other countries, notably by the German, Dutch, and Flemish artists. Dürer made the first water-colour landscapes of importance in Europe. Rubens and Van Dyck also used water-colour, both transparently and opaquely, as a means of making notes.

It will not do, therefore, to claim the origin of the art for England; and it will not do, either, to accept the old simple story of a development from tinted drawings to water-colour "paintings," based on the assumption that lack of colour at first was due to lack of colours. Some of the Dutch drawings of the seventeenth century are quite brightly coloured—Adrian Van Ostade's *Musicians at a Cottage Door*, for instance—and have considerable strength and elaboration. Berchem, who was popular with English gentleman collec-





SNOWDON  
Unfinished painting by John Varley, 1778-1842

tors, does much more than tint his landscapes in water-colour. Early book miniatures, which are strictly water-colours, are brightly coloured. And there was a strong school of portrait limners working in England since the time of Holbein, who sometimes set their portraits against landscapes or architectural backgrounds. Nicholas Hilliard's *George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland* will serve as an example. It has a town and a bright blue hilly distance, reminiscent of a Dürer wood-cut background, a green grass foreground, and an elaborate tree arched above the figure.

But, although England was in touch with the art of the Low Countries, and although Van Dyck made beautiful water-colour drawings in England, there is nothing comparable in English practice until the time of Gainsborough. It is hard to believe that nothing came of the immediate example of Van Dyck and Rubens, and there may well have been isolated drawings made in their manner, but if there were, they have not yet come to light. For the known beginnings of water-colour practice in England we have to look at the work of travellers and topographical draughtsmen.

There was, however, a considerable interest in drawing and painting. This is shown by the technical hints given in popular books written for the instruction of gentlemen. Henry Peacham, in *The Complete Gentleman* 1622, does not hesitate to include drawing in the curriculum with military matters, though he gives it a strictly utilitarian and topographical value. In *The Gentleman's Exercise*, attached to the later editions of *The Complete Gentleman*, but first published in 1612, there is a passage "Of Lantskip," which is concerned with effects of sun and sky and not merely topography. Something more definite still, though showing signs of derivation from Peacham, is Salmon's *Polygraphice* 1672, where, among receipts for faking precious stones and making cosmetics, there is a chapter in which he writes freshly about sunlight and the movement of trees and clouds and flashing water :

"Let eurything which moveth, whether essentially or accidentally, haue its proper representation."

There follows a description of a winter scene which might well have been taken from a picture by Isaac Van Ostade. This is a delightful little book, though all its freshness was buried away, and we are only to hear of "pilgrims, ruins of temples, castles and monuments; with a thousand such other only proper to particular subjects" for some time yet.

Lord Shaftesbury, writing from Italy to Lord Somers, in 1712, says :

"Though we have as yet nothing of our own native growth of the kind worthy of being mention'd; yet, since the public has of late begun to express a relish for ingravings, drawings, copyings, and for the original paintings of the chief Italian schools. . . . Content therefore I am, my Lord, that Britain stands in respect as she now does. . . . She has her *models* yet to seek, her *scale* and *standard* to form with deliberation and good choice."

The "models" were to be the works of Claude Lorraine, Salvator Rosa, and Gaspar Poussin, the "choice" Italianate picturesque "created landscape." Meanwhile there were competent draughtsmen beginning to practise in the water-colour medium.

First there was John White, of whom Laurence Binyon gives an exciting account in an essay published by the Walpole Society. White was draughtsman to Sir Walter Raleigh's unsuccessful Virginian expedition of 1585, and was made Governor of the "Colonic" in the second attempt of 1587. His drawings are of native villages, customs and types. Some of them were engraved as illustrations for the account of Virginia in Theodore de Bry's *America*. The original drawings, now in the British Museum, were lost until 1865. Binyon tells a remarkable story, how, when the MS. book was soaked with water as the result of a fire in the auction room, the drawings printed off on the blank pages facing them. The off-sets were afterwards bound up separately, and may be seen beside the originals. This is interesting in the light of Blake's method of making colour-printed drawings.

Another side of the topographical story is represented by the life and work of the Bohemian Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-77), who travelled in the suite





LANDSCAPE WITH BRIDGE  
Thomas Gainsborough, 1727-1788

of the Earl of Arundel to record his embassy to Ferdinand II in 1636. The published account of the journey has no illustrations; but twenty water-colour drawings by Hollar, which seem to have been intended for it, are at Chatsworth. During the Civil War Hollar was in Antwerp, but afterwards returned to London and worked for booksellers. In 1668 he was sent to draw the fortifications of Tangier. These drawings now in the British Museum, are in ink and water-colour, delicately handled. Hollar died in 1677. He never seems to have lacked work, but was always without money. Aubrey says he was "a friendly good-natured man as could be, but shiftless as to the world."

Hollar had a friend in York, Francis Place, an amateur, who etched and made drawings showing the influence of Hollar and the Dutch masters. *The Dropping Well Knaresborough* is remarkably free in treatment and has comparatively little pen line. Place was one of a circle of friends who met at the house of Henry Gyles, the glass painter. Francis Barlow, who drew animals and birds, and illustrated *Æsop's Fables*, was another of the circle.

Topographical drawings continued to be made throughout the eighteenth century and some way into the nineteenth, and there is a thin thread of tradition which leads to the transformations of Turner and Girtin, and which



BETWEEN CHAMOUNI AND MARTIGNY  
J. R. Cozens, 1752-1799

can be found again in certain tendencies of the present time. Views, especially of London and of the main provincial towns, and records of the houses and estates of country gentlemen, had a considerable vogue, when engraved and published by subscription. Ultimately a demand arose for original drawings of places of interest, so that picture-making in water-colour gradually became an end in itself. Francis Place's work has the air of having been done largely for his own delight, and points towards the picturesque amusement of the next century.

Something of the growth of the feeling for picturesque landscape may be measured by comparing Denham's poem *Cooper's Hill*, 1642, with Dyer's *Grongar Hill*, 1726. Both make use of the same device of the "prospect" for very different ends. Sunlight and a generally romantic atmosphere breaks in upon Denham's topographical record and the moralising. Trees are described by their colours, and :

. . . a dark hill steep and high  
Holds and charms the wandering eye.

Here Dyer's eye is consciously selecting and arranging the picture for the picture's sake. Dyer was himself a painter and a pupil of Jonathan Richard-



son, who wrote a treatise on *The Science of Being a Connoisseur*. Later, when the cult of the picturesque was at its height, we find the oracle of the connoisseurs, the Rev. William Gilpin, quarrelling with *Grongar Hill*, because it is not so good a landscape as might have been expected — "we have nowhere a complete formed distance." The habit of looking for pictures in the landscape, and of selecting and composing the view according to rules, is quite soon added to the topographical habit, and becomes strong enough to dictate to the poets, as well as to the amateurs of painting.

What the rules were, and how they came to be, is the matter of the next chapter.

## THE CULT OF THE PICTURESQUE

Dryden published his translation of Du Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica* in 1695. William Mason's appeared in 1782, when the cult of the picturesque was at its height. "I mean [by picturesque] nothing more than such ideas as could be transformed into a picture," writes William Gilpin, "and I distinguish widely between them and *poetical* beauties." Dryden supplied a guide book for collectors, "to give reason to those who blindly valued." In the preface he says, "That *Picture* and that *Poem* which comes nearest to the resemblance of *Nature* is the best. But it follows not, that what pleases most in either kind is therefore good, but what ought to please . . . . *Rules* were invented, that by them we might discern when *Nature* was imitated, and how nearly." But *Nature*, meant *Nature* seen through the eyes and the time-yellowed varnish of old masters. "Composition should conform to the manner of the old masters, just as *Epic* should follow *Homer*, and *Tragedy* *Sophocles*." By the end of the seventeenth century the stage was already set.

The eighteenth century was the age of antiquarian research, and widely diffused classical scholarship. Ever since, there has been a nostalgic longing among the English for the ancient splendours of Rome, and the romantic associations of the Campagna, its aqueducts and hills and sunlit tombs and ruins. The Rev. Archibald Alison gives voice to the feeling (1790) in writing of "the emotion of sublime delight, which every man of common sensibility feels upon the first prospect of Rome . . . all that the labours of his youth, or the studies of his maturer age have acquired with regard to the history of that great people, open at once before his imagination, and present him with a field of high and solemn imagery, which can never be exhausted." Visiting such places with Du Fresnoy in their hands, tourists would while away the tedious hours of travel by fitting pictures to the scenes they passed, noting the "pleasing horror" of the Alps, and remembering the "florid inventions" of Salvator Rosa, the "effects of light" and "delicate tints" of Claude's lacy landscapes, and "the solid judgment" and "true resemblance to *Nature*" of Poussin.



In 1719 Jonathan Richardson in his *Two Discourses* opens to Gentlemen just such a "New Innocent Amusement." There was a host of books building up æsthetic and philosophical theories; among them notably those by Alison, Richardson, Burke, Hogarth, Lord Kames, who wished a scene to raise a variety of emotions, R. P. Knight, and John Scott of AIMWELL. Gilpin's first essay, *On Picturesque Beauty*, was published in 1792, though it was circulating in MS. by 1776. In his *Tours* Gilpin makes a series of expensive little school books, illustrated with aquatints after his own drawings, simple steps to picturesque understanding, taste without tears. *Tours* began to be made, and records of them to be published in great numbers, and, just as an army of itinerant draughtsmen had played up the pride of ownership of house-proud country gentlemen, so now there followed the landscape painters with their views of Keswick and Tintern and the Wye, which threw the amateurs and the blue-stocking ladies into ecstasies, when they came to recognise views for themselves: "Could I have attended the beauties *en passant* between dear sweet Ilam and Sudbury, I should present my dearest Mary with such a mixture of pastoral delights, as would serve a Claude or a Shenstone for their whole lives."

Even Mr. Pitt was induced to pitch his tent before some such a landscape as they chose to paint, whilst his French horn breathed music like the unseen genius of the wood. There was now a handy medium, an eager and critical public, and a universally accepted subject matter.

The more important artists are considered separately in another chapter, out of context because they stand in high relief against the "cult." But there were innumerable water-colourists, whose technical virtuosity, but lack of originality, makes their work seem best in its historical and fashionable setting. Some others will be noticed as members of the various water-colour societies which came into being after 1800.

Among the tourist topographical artists, who follow on the seventeenth-century line with an added flavour of the picturesque, are Thomas Hearne (1744-1817), Julius Cæsar Ibbetson (1759-1817), Michael "Angelo" Rooker (1743-1801) and Joseph Goupy (d. 1763). Hearne was a pupil of William Woollett, the engraver. He was a pleasant artist antiquary with ease and delicacy of style. Ibbetson copied a good deal for the dealers, especially from Berchem, and illustrated a *Picturesque Guide to Bath*. His two books, *A Process of Tinted Drawings*, and *An Accidence or Gamut of Painters in Oil and Water-Colours*, show something of the technical methods of the time. Rooker was a scene painter and a pupil of Sandby. He drew many picturesque views of houses and beauty spots, and contributed to the *Copper Plate Magazine* (1775-1777). Goupy was also a scene painter and worked with Peter Tillemans. He was also a drawing master and taught Mrs. Delany.

George Barret, Senior (1732?-1784) is more important. Burke brought him to London, where he often worked with William Gilpin's brother, Sawrey Gilpin. He was remarkably skilful with large water-colours, and



Gilpin refers to a room which he decorated for William Locke of Norbury, with a scene from Keswick, "corrected by the rules of composition."

Philippe de Loutherbourg (1740-1812) painted on-coming storms and other dramatic effects, and made a number of highly picturesque drawings. His mechanical scenery, the *Eidophusikon*, depicting Milton's Hell and the effects of fire over the Mediterranean, amused Gainsborough, so that he made himself a model. Another picturesque painter of quality was George Robertson (1747-1788), who went to Italy with Beckford and worked there with Vernet. He used combined transparent and opaque colours, and imitated the admired Gaspar Poussin. Samuel Scott (1710-1772) chiefly worked in oil, but made a number of water-colours. He was with Hogarth's "Peregrination" to Sheppey, and contributed two drawings to Ebenezer Forrest's account of it.

Among the more celebrated amateurs were William Taverner (1703-1772), whom Smollett praised; Lady Diana Beauclerk, whom Bartolozzi engraved; and Lady Neale, who corresponded with Gilpin and was a pupil of John Laporte (1761-1839). Edward Dayes (1763-1804) must represent the figure painters. His *Buckingham House*, *Saint James's Park*, is typical, and stands for a *genre* served also by Rowlandson's *Vauxhall* and Sandby's delightful *Ladies in a Park*.

Belonging to this chapter, and outstanding to modern eyes, is the work of Francis Towne (1740-1816). He was little known until recently, when Laurence Binyon and Mr. A. P. Oppé wrote of him. He lived in Exeter and came occasionally to London, travelled in Wales and Switzerland, went to Rome, and visited the English Lakes, making drawings remarkable for their grasp of form and pattern. He painted "oil portraits" of country houses near Exeter, and somewhat defiantly declared, "I never exhibited a drawing in my life," though he showed oils in London. The "Roman" drawings in the British Museum have the English romantic feeling for Italy, but they are original paintings for painting's sake, and not merely views for view's sake. The Swiss drawings, 1781, anticipate Ruskin's study of geological formations. The patterns are simplified, and often show something of an Oriental severity. Great flat shadows play an important part in the composition. In the Lakeland pictures, 1786, spray never splashes, waterfalls never fall, but are bound into the pattern with careful pen lines.

From the point of view of criticism, Towne stands between J. R. Cozens, with whose Swiss drawings his invite comparison—though they lack the freedom and mystery and ease—and Cotman, whose sense of mass he anticipates without the liveliness, the infallible eye for tone values, or the fluent draughtsmanship. He is masterly in the use of line, and thin, sometimes rather acid, flat colour. Towne's lack of the virtuosity apparent in many lesser artists more popular at the time made him work harder with his brain, to the greater value of his drawings; but it also makes them rather static. His modern counterpart is J. D. Innes, who also inherits from Cotman.



RHAIDDU DU, NORTH WALES  
Francis Towne, 1740-1816

## A NOTE ON TECHNIQUE

SINCE it was the pursuit and record of the picturesque which gave the impetus to landscape painting in water-colours, it was view-making, and not picture-making, in the modern sense, which was the chief concern; and contemporary criticism was, therefore, confined to noting "when Nature was imitated, and how nearly," or else to remarking the "hands" and "manners" of various artists. A whole jargon existed, with words like *tinting*, *staining*, *washing*, *colouring*, *touching*, *marking*, and *shadowing*, which among connoisseurs was comparable to the technical jargon of stamp collectors, and which served the artists and drawing masters as a means of describing a definite procedure. Gilpin had made his "strictures" in his *Essay on Prints*, 1768, and his *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty*, and in 1824 there is even a book to explain Gilpin, with a vocabulary of terms, John Heavyside Clark's *Practical Illustration of Gilpin's Day*, with recipes for colouring "effects . . . from morning till night." There is also *An Epitome of Gilpin's Principles*, by the Rev. T. D. Fosbroke, 1826. There is even a definite drill sequence for setting up a drawing and working it out.

David Cox, the indefatigable student and teacher, made a series of notes to help Miss Frances Carr in her tour up the Rhine. He says, "These



arrangements of light and shade have one principle common to them all. The strongest points are placed on objects near to the margin of the river." The sketches show, "Hills occupying three-fourths of the view," "The use of shadow in the foreground," "Effect to give great distance," "Arrangement giving breadth of light and dark," etc. Great attention is paid to making interesting foregrounds; and drawings are thought out in three parts, foreground, middle distance, and distance, each planned and coloured in its own particular way.

The actual sequence of colouring is also prescribed. Edward Dayes, in *Instructions for Drawing and Colouring Landscapes*, says that after completing the pencil outline, there are two ways of working. One is to make all the shadows and middle tints with Prussian blue and brown ink. The other is by "dead colouring it all over, making light and shade and middle tint, as is done in oil painting (only preserving the lights)," and colouring over this ground. That is: first, fix the shapes and pattern with pencil outline; second, think only of light and shade in monochrome; third, "have regard only to colour."

W. H. Pyne says that Girtin was the first to depart from this method, "laying in the object upon his paper with the local colour, and shadowing the same with the individual tint of its own shadow. Previous to the practice of Turner and Girtin, drawings were shadowed first entirely through, whatever their component parts." But this statement is not quite true. Mr. Oppé in an article on Francis Towne (*Walpole Society*, Vol. VIII), has shown how Francis Towne used pale ground washes of local tint and worked by contrasts of warm and cold colours. Sometimes Towne made the foreground the lightest part of his picture.

In transparent water-colour, the paper has a decisive influence over the quality of the wash, being the lightest tone of all, from which all the others have to be keyed. It also imposes the uniform texture of its own surface, often giving a glare to the tints which lie thinly on the size. Various attempts have been made to increase the range of possible textures and to avoid the glare.

Girtin used an absorbent paper, which became impregnated with colour and kept a matt surface, though alterations were difficult. Sometimes a unifying underwash of pale warm colour was run over the whole drawing, which, on the whole, proved more satisfactory than a mechanically toned paper. Sometimes the texture was varied by burnishing the grain in those parts which it was desirable to keep flat, and rubbing and roughening it in the broken, glittering, accented parts.

Cotman often worked on a rough paper with a full brush, and then "wiped out" with a damp rag, so that the colour lay in the hollow of the grain, leaving the top surface to sparkle.

Turner systematically used innumerable tricks, not all of which he invented himself, to vary the surface of his drawings; wiping out, scraping,



THE RETURN  
Thomas Rowlandson, 1756-1827

and often leaving his drawings to soak in water for hours to get greater delicacy and mistiness. Stippling, borrowed from the miniature painters, was a common device to get brilliance, pure colour being dotted in with the point of the brush. It is a questionable device, very often abused. Robert Hills used it to excess over the whole area of his drawings. Rossetti found it necessary for his brilliant gem-like little water-colours; and it became a positive vice in the hands of the Victorian guinea-an-inch painters like Birket Foster.

Whatever tricks are used, and water-colour technique is full of tricks, it remains a strictly limited, conventional, descriptive medium. Its beauty lies in the way in which its limitations are realised and exploited. It is a matter of swift decisions, the calculation of opposites of light and dark masses and linear patterns, governed by the underlying paper, the fluency of the water, and the density and penetration of the stain. It is a virtuoso medium, lending itself, on the one hand, to swift and facile luminous effects, which easily please, and, on the other, in the hands of a great artist like Turner, to the most perfect and thrilling improvisations.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME IMPORTANT WATER-COLOUR PAINTERS

THE high moment of English water-colour falls into the second half of the eighteenth century. Nearly all the artists who really count in the school were contemporaries, and whilst the story is strictly that of the work of separate individuals, there are several focal points at which they may be seen together. Comparisons must not be taken too far, or mutual influences over-stressed, but it is tempting cautiously to hint at them, and to draw out the several threads which, at this distance in time, seem to give some sort of order.

William Gilpin, who counts nothing as an artist, but very much as "venerable master of the Picturesque," was exactly contemporary with Paul Sandby, who in his work epitomises the beginnings, and points a way out of topography into picturesque landscape. Gilpin's dates were 1724-1804, Sandby's 1725-1809. Girtin, who transformed topography, and Turner, who transformed the picturesque, were both born in the same year 1775, when Gilpin's *Essays* were circulating. Girtin, Turner and Cotman all copied J. R. Cozens (1752-1799) at the house of Dr. Monro between 1794 and 1798. There is also a slender thread linking the "pure" landscape painters; an affinity between Van Dyck's beautiful English water-colours and Gainsborough's (1727-1788).

Gainsborough may have known Alexander Cozens, J. R.'s father. They were both in Bath in 1765. Dr. Monro and R. P. Knight collected Gainsborough's drawings, and Monro copied them. Constable fancied that he saw "Gainsborough in every hedge and hollow tree," and knew Sir George Beaumont, who collected everybody and knew the picturesque William Mason, who corresponded with Gilpin and Sandby. Rowlandson etched plates after Gainsborough, and was certainly influenced by him. De Wint (1784-1849) as a "natural painter," is something of a water-colour counterpart to Constable. Blake has his splendid isolation (1757-1827). David Cox (1783-1859) studied everybody and developed his own windy open air technique, anticipating with John Linnell, Blake's friend, though it may seem far-fetched, the broken touches of pure colour later to come via France from the Impressionists. Cox falls sometimes into the prettiness of the Victorian period, only being saved, and that not always, by his personal integrity and studiousness. There is a link between Francis Towne and Cotman in their common feeling for structural design, which makes them especially interesting to modern eyes, though they were by no means so attractive to those of their contemporaries. Towne was also a topographer, and Cotman a drawing master, both serving picturesque amateurs. Bonington (1802-1828) takes us to the Continent, and has common ground there with Constable and Turner in the memorable Salon Exhibition of 1824. That is the setting and sequence.



THE SHEPHERD  
John Sell Cotman, 1782-1842

PAUL SANDBY. Those who see in the history of English water-colour the all too simple half-truth of a progression from "stained" drawings to water-colour "paintings," usually begin their account with Paul Sandby, because in his very long life (1725-1809) his own work evolved in that way, developing from drawings made for military survey, to landscapes in opaque, or mixed opaque and transparent colours, made to vie with oil paintings in the exhibitions. Sandby's work was widely known both in originals and reproductions in aquatint, a process in which he developed a method of his own, which provided the drawing masters and tourists with a means of illustrating their books in colour. There are two old tags which seem to have been used indiscriminately of several artists: one, "that he was the first to introduce Englishmen to the beauties of their own country;" the other, "that he was the first to make his drawings approach the strength of oil paintings." The first is often applied both to Sandby and to Gainsborough. The second, strangely enough, to Samuel Scott by Edward Dayes, and more appropriately perhaps, considering his ambition that way, to Paul Sandby. At any rate, Sandby attempted to do both of these things, and was a great populariser, if not a great artist. His landscapes especially have the feeling of having been turned out all in the day's work.



Paul Sandby was the younger of two brothers, Thomas and Paul, who began, when Thomas was twenty and Paul sixteen, in the military survey office at the Tower of London. Thomas became draughtsman to the Duke of Cumberland, and later under the Duke's patronage, devoted most of his time to architecture and constructional work. Paul, meanwhile, surveyed the North West Highlands, drew scenes and celebrities, landscapes and caricatures, "portraits" of country houses, and picturesque views in Wales, and made a living as a drawing master. His fine series of drawings of the *Hyde Park Encampments* (1780) is especially noteworthy. He also made "classical" compositions in tempera, and portraits in chalk and water-colour. In pen and wash he adopts a convention similar to that of Gainsborough.

Judging by the numerous references in contemporary letters, the amateurs looked to Paul Sandby as a very special authority on method; and his influence was carried further by a number of followers, among them John Cleveley, William Payne, who taught widely, Thomas Malton, and Edward Dayes, the early and apparently disagreeable master of Girtin.

GAINSBOROUGH. There is, however, quite a different tradition of "pure" landscape. Gainsborough is apart from all the cult of Claude and Poussin and the picturesque. As a boy at Sudbury he walked about the countryside drawing trees and landscape details because he loved them, and developed a passionate awareness of landscape, direct from his own observation, and not from pictures. He no doubt saw Dutch landscapes in local collections, and adopted some of their conventions, translating perhaps the Dutch mood into good English, so that, like a good translation, the mood itself becomes not Dutch but English. He added also his own fresh boyish vision, lightness and grace and aristocratic ease, oblivious of rules. There are no romantic falls and ruins and effects, no views and vistas, but common English scenes, the light movement of foliage and moist indefinite skies.

The later drawings of Gainsborough when he was too busy with portraits to go into the fields, are brilliant shorthand notes, sufficient to satisfy his personal craving, but all too easily admirable for their style and mannerism, in that age of styles and manners. He sold his portraits, but gave his drawings away, and made a great number for sheer delight. After his death they were eagerly collected, copied and imitated, no doubt because of their "graphic magic," which looked so easy to the amateurs. Roget quotes Pyne writing in 1823; "The Gainsborough mania has a long range, and there are yet some antique beaux and belles of *haut ton*, who recollect their many friends who, with themselves, were stricken with the sketching phrenzy." But they did not see landscape as Gainsborough saw it, and consequently the influence can be very much overrated. In fact we have to wait for a similar direct mental attitude until the later drawings of Girtin, and Constable "the natural painter." The direct influence comes from Alexander Cozens and his son.



VIEW OF STOKE-BY-NAYLAND  
John Constable, 1776-1837

ALEXANDER AND J. R. COZENS. Alexander Cozens came to England from Russia in 1746. He had studied in Italy and worked in Vernet's studio, and took an especial interest in method and composition. In England he taught drawing at Eton, where Sir George Beaumont was his pupil, and at Bath. Henry Angelo in his *Reminiscences*, describes the method which gained Cozens the title of "Blotmaster General to the 'Town'" from the cholerick Dayes :

"Cozens dashed out upon several pieces of paper a series of accidental smudges and blots in black, brown and grey, which being floated on, he impressed again upon other paper and . . . converted into romantic rocks, woods, towers, steeples, cottages, rivers, fields, and waterfalls."

This is especially interesting in view of Gainsborough's method of stimulating his visual memory with pieces of coal arranged on a table. Such a method, and his preoccupation with the elements of design, free Cozens from the picturesque rules, and set him apart as an imaginative painter. He could suggest a rich full colour scheme by the carefully balanced use of ink and bistre.

The son, John Robert Cozens, was born in 1752, and is one of the most delightful, as well as one of the most important of the English water-colour



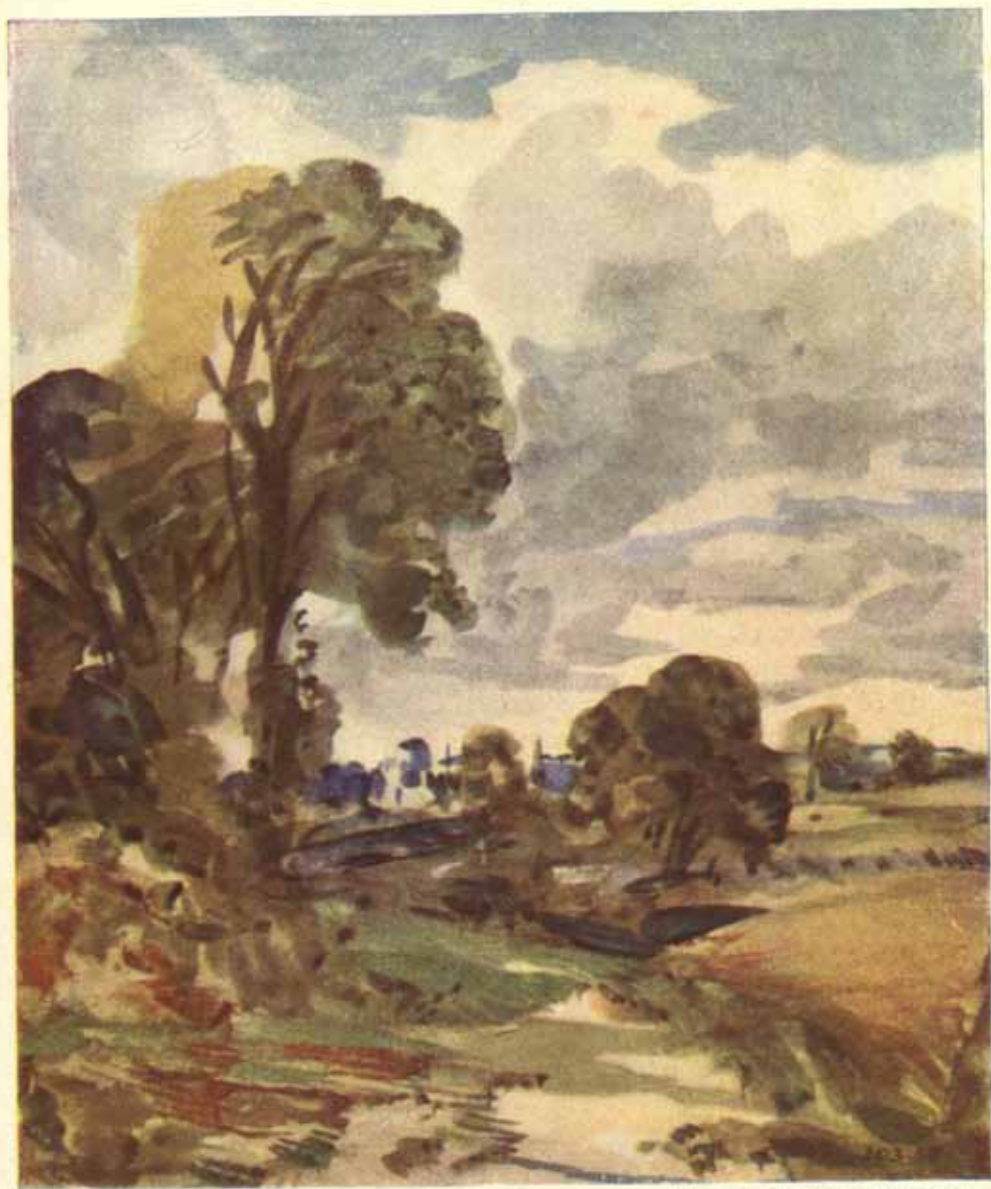
painters. He embodied the Italian ideal, and added a rare quality of feeling of his own which provoked Constable's high praise and his remark that "Cozens is all poetry." Cozens was, in fact, a poet of high order, whose medium happens to have been water-colour instead of words. He was more interested than his father in the natural scene, but profited from the early grounding in design. He adds a poetry of mood to the archaeology of the Campagna. Cozens went to Switzerland with R. P. Knight in 1776, and some of the drawings which he did then are now in the British Museum. He was in Rome in 1778; and made a second Continental tour in grand style with Beckford in 1782. In 1794 Sir George Beaumont tells Farington of Cozens' illness which appears to have been a complete nervous breakdown. He was cared for by Dr. Monro, but died in 1799.

Through Dr. Monro Cozens' influence reached Girtin, Turner and Cotman.

THOMAS GIRTIN. With Girtin we come to the full absolute perfection of water-colour. In him all the various threads converge, topography, antiquarian record and the vein of natural vision. He was born in the same year as Turner, 1775, a year before Constable, and twenty-five after Cozens. He began as a pupil of Dayes, coloured prints for J. R. Smith, in whose studio he first met Turner doing the same thing; and he travelled with James Moore, the antiquarian. Moore employed Girtin to work up drawings from his own sketches, for publication in *Monastic Remains and Ancient Castles in England and Wales* 1792. Girtin's first exhibited drawing, the *Ely Cathedral* of 1794, is based on a sketch by Moore. Moore died in 1799; but meanwhile Girtin had become known to Dr. Monro, at whose house, according to Farington, he and Turner had been working for three years in 1798: "Turner and Girtin told us they had been employed by Dr. Monro three years to draw at his house in the evening . . . Girtin drew in outlines and Turner washed in the effects. They were chiefly employed in copying the outlines and unfinished drawings of Cozens, etc., etc., of which copies they made finished drawings."

This makes Girtin in reality the pupil of Cozens. There are some 140 of these "copies" in the Turner bequest, which Turner bought at the Monro sale.

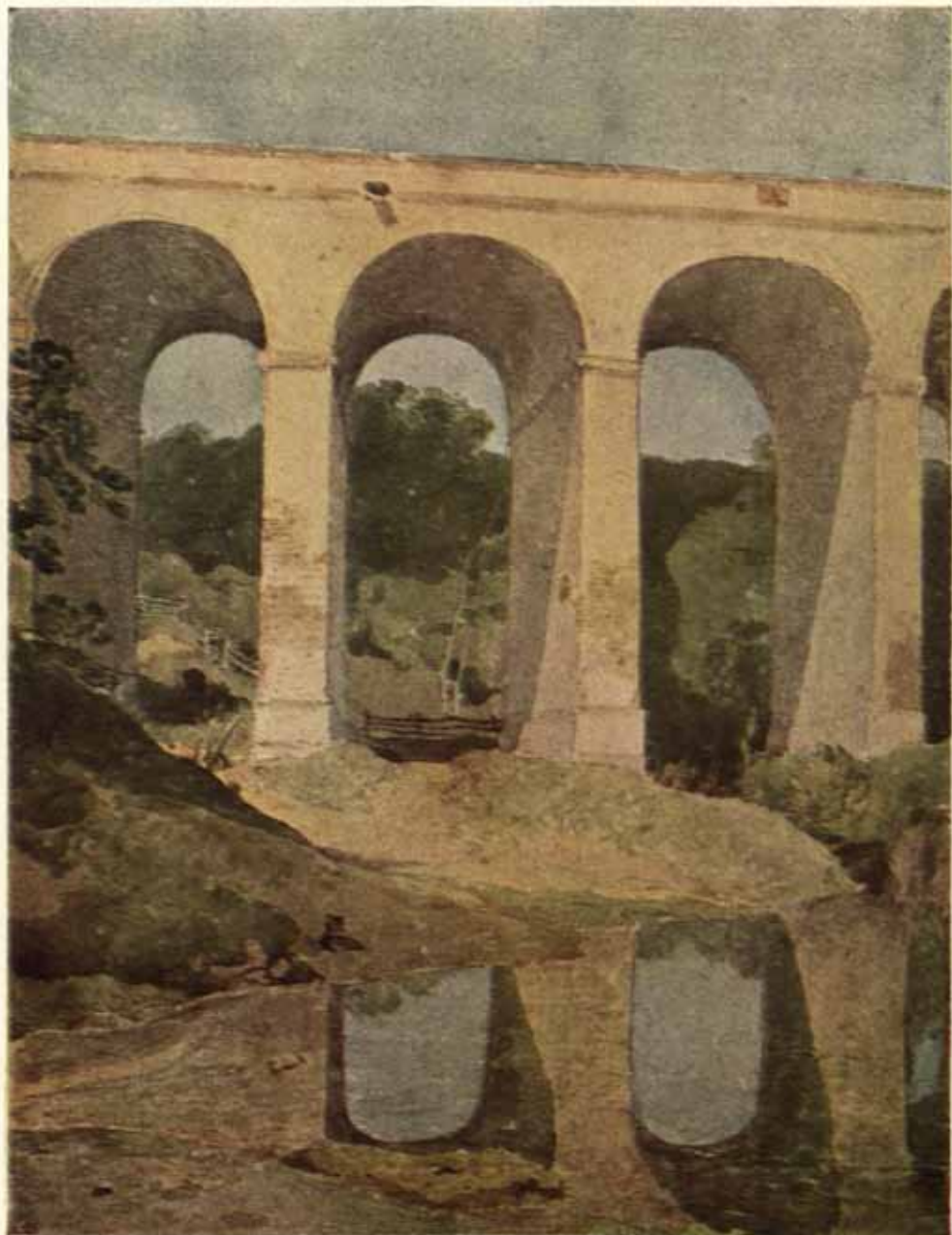
Already Girtin and Turner were using their own eyes, sketching together along Thames side. The best of Girtin's work was produced in six years. He was happiest in Yorkshire and the North country, in the moors and open spaces. He had a wonderful sense of space, no formulae, and a magnificent and austere simplicity. He expressed great admiration for Rubens and Canaletto, when everyone else was raving over Salvator Rosa, and won the very quality of Canaletto in such a drawing as *View over the Thames to Somerset House*, painted about 1797. It has miraculous clarity, lightness, warmth and spontaneity. The French drawings are some of his best. He was in France for a while for his health, and on returning to England began to paint in oil.



*By courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum*

LANDSCAPE STUDY  
John Constable, 1776-1837





*By courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum*

CHIRK AQUEDUCT  
John Sell Cotman, 1782-1842

A *Panorama of London* in oil was on exhibition at the time of his death from lung trouble in 1802. It is an observation of interest, that Louis Francia was a member of the circle of young artists who met sometimes at Girtin's house in London. This Francia was later to be the teacher of Bonington at Calais.

J. S. COTMAN (1782-1842) was another member of Girtin's sketch club, and another of the Monro circle. Not the least surprising thing about the better artists of the time is the way in which, with a common background and unifying influences, they managed to keep their distinct individuality, and show not the slightest sign of forming into a movement. Girtin, Turner, Cotman, Varley, De Wint, all worked at Dr. Monro's; all were young and impressionable and subject at the same time to the dilettante talk, the copyings of Cozens and the enthusiasms of one another; yet they have hardly a characteristic in common except their industry and honesty.

Cotman is more isolated than any. He knew what mattered to him before he came to London from Norwich in 1798, and was exhibiting at the Academy when he was eighteen. London gave him stimulus and the example of other keen young artists. The rest he made for himself, with the simple earnest dignity of Crome behind him. The country round York worked upon him with something of the force with which it also affected Girtin.

Cotman's special contribution is to design. His whole thought was for balanced masses of light and dark, patterns of rich flat surfaces, without internal modelling, without light-play and atmosphere, but with architectural firmness and breadth and great simplicity. He makes a harmony of coloured spaces filled with a clear rich blotting-paper stain. It is not "natural" painting in Constable's sense of natural, though the knowledge of visual appearances and of the way things grow is in it. Rather it is design and pattern searched out from the natural scene, balanced and sifted through the mind, and stated in the fewest possible terms.

This sort of painting could hardly be expected to be popular at the time. Nothing new is popular until it has been repeated often enough to become commonplace; and Cotman was little noticed until recently, when the abstract qualities of design and construction came to be liked for their own sakes. In his life he feared above all the drudgery of teaching, but teaching had to be his livelihood. The publication of Dawson Turner's *Specimens of Norman and Gothic Architecture in Norfolk* in 1817, which Cotman illustrated, brought him some minor reputation, and towards the end of his life Turner helped him to get the post of drawing master at King's College, London.

CONSTABLE is another solitary figure. He follows on from Gainsborough and Girtin as the final developer of landscape for landscape's sake. After beginning as a miller to look at skies and the weather with more than aesthetic interest, and after copying Girtin drawings lent to him by Sir George Beaumont, he went to London in 1795. He also copied Claude and Ruysdael.





CARRYING HAY  
Peter de Wint, 1784-1849

These are the formative influences—the wind and the weather, Girtin, Claude and the Dutchman. To these also should be added Benjamin West's wise saw, "Light and shadow never stand still." He painted a few portraits, and two altar pieces, and then—"In the last two years I have been running after pictures, and seeking truth at second hand . . . There is room enough for a natural painter."

Here is the antidote for the picturesque, and the secret of his failure to be popular during his lifetime. But Constable had faith, and the strength of faith: "I imagine myself to be driving a nail. I have driven it some way, and by persevering I may drive it home." It turned out later to be a French nail, and then it became popular in England.

Constable's whole mission was to record simply and unselfconsciously what he had learned about his chosen countryside by looking at it long and lovingly. His water-colours are part of the looking, for he used the medium only for sketches and working drawings. They are notes made out of doors of the glitter of wet leaves, charged clouds, green moisture of meadows, the moment's passionate excitements. But because he made them only for his own use, Constable's influence on the water-colour method of his time is negligible, though his pioneering, and his teaching about seeing things was the most important event in the whole history of English painting, and belongs to the world's story.



THE THAMES AT TWICKENHAM,  
Peter de Wint, 1784-1849

PETER DE WINT (1784-1849) was chiefly a water-colourist, a far less important artist, but the nearest of the masters of the medium to Constable in spirit. His weaknesses made him popular, which were a tendency to prettiness and, sometimes, too much slickness. His best work is unsurpassed in charm, atmosphere, and a mellow golden corn-ripe unity. He began as apprentice to J. R. Smith, and underwent the usual course of Cozens at Dr. Monro's. There followed forty years of exhibiting, successful teaching which, unlike Cotman, he appeared not to dislike, a tour to Normandy in 1828, and death from heart disease in 1849.

De Wint had a special fondness for long horizontal compositions, flat open country, particularly near Lincoln, and river scenes of Thames and Trent. His cool shady trees, farm-yards, and hot corn-fields, are almost always enchanting. He had a sweet simplicity, honesty of observation, and complete respect for his medium, using it freshly and directly, with a fully charged brush, and warm, flowing, well-controlled colour.

DAVID COX (1783-1859) was always a journeyman painter, making his own way from poor beginnings. He was born in a suburb of Birmingham, where his father was a blacksmith, and practised scene painting after an apprenticeship to a miniature painter. In London after 1804, still scene painting, he began to sell small drawings to a dealer for two guineas a dozen,



and married the daughter of his landlady, the widow Rag. Most of his money came from teaching, in which he stressed the importance of picturesque incident, giving tips on the painting of pretty cottages, rustic bridges, lanes and ruins, with which his own work is usually amply sprinkled. He went to Dieppe, Boulogne, Calais, and Wales, and did some of his best work in Paris. But it was after 1841, when he retired from teaching, that he found the material which pleased him most in the neighbourhood of Bettws-y-coed.

Cox suffered from a tendency to fussiness, a tendency to improvise without having anything to say. There are moments when he felt truly the gustiness of moorland, the broad sweep of sky over sands peopled with little scurrying figures, and gentle glittering happy sunshine. But sometimes his compositions are shut in, and seem to have been constructed in pieces—like theatre sets.

After his death Cox suffered from excessive praise and then blame. His best is surprising and delightful, it has rare vigour and earnestness. His worst is just Victorian.

R. P. BONINGTON (1802-1828) like Girtin was a prodigy. With the exception of a few brief visits to England he was out of the country from the age of about sixteen. His link with the English tradition was through his master Louis Francia, who knew Girtin. Unlike Girtin, in an equally brief life, Bonington made no sudden intellectual development, but was from the first the most painterlike of painters, to whom everything came easily. In Paris Delacroix was his intimate friend, and Corot was charmed with the little theatrical costume pieces in water-colour, which proved a considerable novelty in the time of the Roman cult of David. His landscapes and coast scenes are consummately skilful, with a very real appreciation of atmosphere and space and subtlety of distance; clean, clear, and delightful in colour, and of the utmost delicacy. He worked sometimes with a rather dry brush, letting the stroke trail off into enchanting vagueness, and touched in brilliant little accents, which added greatly to the brightness and cohesion of the scene.

Followers of Bonington, whose work has sometimes been mistaken for his, were Thomas Shotter Boys (1803-1874) his pupil, and William Callow (1812-1908).

## WATER-COLOUR SOCIETIES

**D**RAWINGS made for topical reasons, or as preparatory notes for oil paintings, or as copies for engravers, or as illustrations for books of antiquities and tours, had their purposes and limitations clearly defined, and the purposes were well within the possibilities of the water-colour medium. When first they came to have a value of their own, it was for the cabinets and portfolios of collectors that they were wanted. But once they came to be regarded as pictures to be hung up and exhibited, all the problems of market and display arose, and all the competitive oratory which sale and



By courtesy of His Grace The Duke of Hamilton and the Oxford University Press

‘ NYMPH STRIKING THE LYRE AT THE SPRINGS OF HELICON ’

Illustration to *The Progress of Poesy* from Blake's *Designs for Gray's Poems*, c. 1800

William Blake, 1757-1827





*Albertina Museum, Vienna*

VENICE, ENTRANCE TO THE GRAND CANAL, 1833

J. M. W. Turner, 1775-1831

display involve. True water-colours are rarely happy in large numbers in exhibition rooms, and never in competition with oils. They are personal things to be taken in hand, kept in books and portfolios, turned over, laid round the room and browsed over, stretched on the floor and contemplated. Such must have been the way at Dr. Monro's, and at Sir George Beaumont's, a quiet closeted delight. The phrase "looking over drawings" is characteristic—Mrs. Delany uses it often in her letters. But in order to attract the eye of anyone jostling round the crowded exhibition rooms, more weight, more size, more colour and resonance was necessary; and there followed the struggle with the medium to "approach the strength of oil painting," which, ultimately, for a time, destroyed the tradition.

As a result of a successful exhibition of paintings lent for the decoration of the Foundling Hospital in Guilford Street, Russell Square, in 1745, two societies for the exhibition of pictures came into being, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain*, and *The Free Society of Artists*. Both were killed by the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1783. The position of water-colours was unsatisfactory. The Academy admitted them, but hung them badly, crowded amongst the oils, and denied election to artists who worked only in water-colours. Discontent among water-colour painters, therefore, caused W. F. Wells to send round a circular in 1802, canvassing for support in founding a water-colour society. He was joined by Robert Hills, W. H. Pyne, William Sawrey Gilpin, Nicholas Pocock, John and Cornelius Varley, and J. C. Nattes, ten members in all. They drew up a constitution and rules for a *Society of Painters in Water-Colours* (*The "Old Society"*), and held their first exhibition in 1805. Various fortunes followed, including the foundation of a rival group under the same name in 1808, which became *The New Society of Painters in Miniature and Water-Colour* (*The "New Society"*) and failed in 1812; but it revived later as *The Institute of Painters in Water-Colour*. Both groups still exist, one as the R.W.S., the other as the R.I. Water-colour painting became a respectable commercial proposition, and one of the "Official" arts in 1881, when the "Old Society" was ennobled by Queen Victoria. The fortunes of the societies serve accurately to show the public attitude towards water-colour. It had been the need to exhibit to make a living, which called them into being, and the gradual emergence of a new class of commercial patron, with tastes totally different from those of the travelled and enlightened dilettanti of the eighteenth century, which induced the break in the tradition, and a period of monotonous insipidity. Water-colour gradually became a part of the furnishing industry, and furniture has to look its price. It has to have finish and polish, and tidiness and cheerfulness, and all the other easy attributes which tired business men require for their comfort.

Drawings came gradually to be bought, not for the portfolio, but for the space over the sideboard, to "go on either side of the mantelpiece," or "for the spare room." Anecdotal pictures were in demand, to flatter the consciences of slum-makers into complacency, in which beggars are always



grateful, children always happy in pretty pinafores, the sinner always repentant. Gambling and drinking was countenanced for brightly costumed swash-bucklers in top boots and feathered hats, and flimsy, simpering cover-girls were inordinately admired on their way to marble fountains. This was the day of the self-made man, who knew what he liked, if not exactly why he liked it, in which Tennyson made £7,000 a year for pleasing the Queen, King Arthur forsook his manhood, and Jenny her virtue. The change was gradual but the disease was deadly for a time.

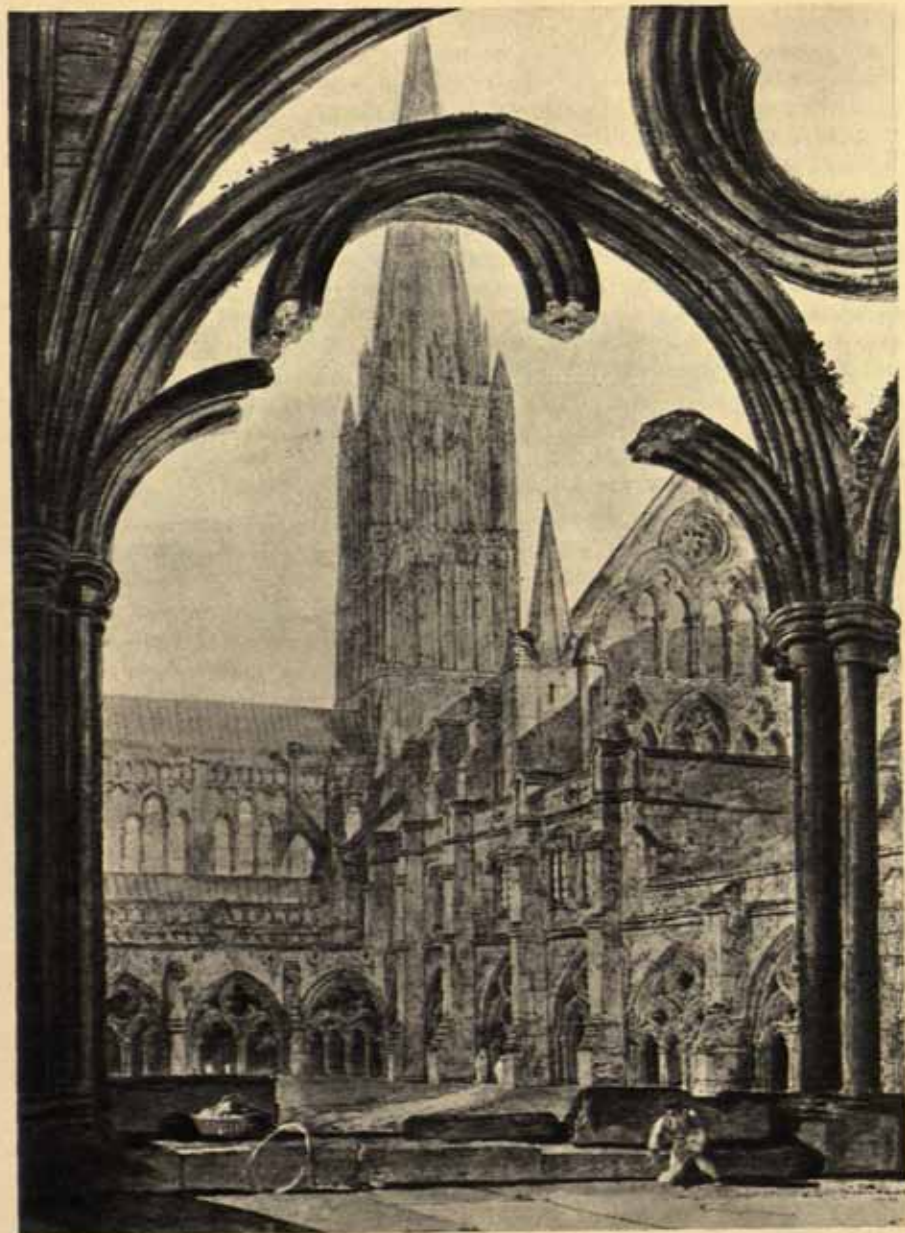
Few of the great water-colour painters were members of the Societies. J. R. Cozens and Girtin were dead before the foundation of the "Old Society." Paul Sandby was nearly eighty years of age, and Turner was well able to stand alone. Of the others working at the time of the foundation; Constable did not exhibit water-colours; J. S. Cotman did—he became associate of the "Old Society" in 1825; Cox was full member in 1812; De Wint was associate in 1810, full member in 1811, resigned 1812 and returned 1825; and Bonington was out of the country. It left a residue of highly skilful, often very agreeable artists, but none who had any really evolutionary or vital influence.

Of the foundation members, George Barret Junior (1767–1842) often painted landscapes of sunrise and sunset, and later, "classical" compositions; Robert Hills (1769–1844) usually drew animals, often with admirable firmness, and pleasant village scenes. John Glover (1767–1849) made pleasant, mellow landscapes; and John Varley (1778–1842) became the over-successful drawing master, with a trick of style, though his early work belongs to the Girtin tradition, and he was one of the Monro circle. Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding (1787–1855) exhibited 1,748 drawings with the "Old Society," was president from 1831 to 1855, and had an enormous reputation. His work is monotonously brilliant and sometimes has exquisite delicacy, though it all too often suggests a conjuring trick. Sir John Gilbert (1817–1897) was a prolific illustrator, and handled crowded historical scenes with bright colour and considerable vigour.

These are only a few of the very many, considerable in skill of hand if singularly unthoughtful, whose work frequently pleases, and, when it is undertaken for their own pleasure, rather than for exhibition, surprises with a promise of what might have been.

## ROWLANDSON AND BLAKE

IT is not possible in so short an essay to do justice to the several figure painters in water-colour, but an attempt must be made with two of them, Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827), and William Blake (1757–1827). Although they were exact contemporaries, they come together in this chapter only as opposites. Rowlandson is of his age, the humorous and bluff recorder, master of a swift calligraphy of pen and wash. Blake is of the lost tradition of mediæval mystics, declaring that natural objects weaken, deaden and



SOUTH VIEW OF SALISBURY CATHEDRAL FROM THE CLOISTER  
J. M. W. Turner, 1775-1851



obliterate imagination in him. Rowlandson makes a rollicking laughter of his daily seeing, without thought or emotion. Blake draws, with his eyes shut, passionately imagined designs from the pools of his mind, flavoured with memories of Flaxman, Michael Angelo and the antique.

Rowlandson was more than a caricaturist, the river of topical laughter, whose prints and drawings were to be seen and had everywhere, and who is now the delight of historians and biographers. He did draw the moments and occasions of life around him with a caricaturist's sense of situation and opportunity, but he is quite unconcerned with comment, satire or moral, and his humour is of a high sense of the ridiculous. He did more. He took the accidents of moving figures, and crowds of figures, and wove them into designs, with a Pied Piper's melody of flicks and flourishes of the reed pen, which compels them to tumble and foam across their tinted backgrounds. He drew many landscapes, architectural views and street scenes, usually animated with little figures, but they are pen drawings delicately flushed with colour, and not really water-colours in the full sense.

Rowlandson began by exhibiting portraits, presumably drawings—the delightful George Morland standing beside a mantelpiece (British Museum) is a later example of his portraiture—but after 1782, and a tour to Spithead in a post chaise, he started the inexhaustible series of social and topical drawings, full of spills and jostle, and the humorous misadventures of town life, for which he is best known. Two particularly fine examples of this genre have emerged from hiding since the beginning of this war, *Landing at Greenwich* and *Box-Lobby Loungers* of 1785, which were reproduced in the *Studio* Nov. 1942 in an article by A. P. Oppé. Of his very many book illustrations, perhaps the best known are those published with a rhyming text by William Combe as *The Tours of Dr. Syntax*. The first part, *Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* published in 1812, is part satire on William Gilpin, who began first to seem laughable at the turn of the century.

Blake also has vitality and huge industry, but of quite another order. His is the tension and force of a great imaginative artist, quite unconcerned with life around him, pursuing the visions of his mind with passionate devotion, and fashioning his own means of expressing them. Visionaries do not see with their eyes the natural appearances of things which normally concern the painter. Their language is the language of evocation, of symbols, shapes and sounds, images remembered with the mind from old seeing, and often brought first into association in dreams. Blake's mind was full of the Bible, of Milton and Dante, of great cosmic images of height and depth and size and splendour. He made up a huge mythology of his own from these sources, and took his forms from memories of Flaxman's drawings, engravings after Michael Angelo and recollections of the antique, with all its anatomical absurdities.

Water-colour proved the ideal medium for Blake, since the plastic quality and variety of surface, which concern the material craft of representative



WHIRLWIND OF LOVERS : THE CIRCLE OF THE LUSTFUL  
William Blake, 1757-1827

painting, cease to matter in visions. He tried oils and a sort of tempera, but was dissatisfied, and in the designs for *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and in the *Prophetic Books*, used water-colour over a printed outline.

Experiments in printing his own books led to the colour-printed drawings, which he made by pressing a design, laid in broadly with opaque colour, upon another board, and working up the impression by hand. By this means he obtained a pleasant irregular surface, and was able to make a number of replicas from one design. Among the colour printed drawings are *Elohim Creating Adam*, *Hecate*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Newton* and *Pity*, which are among the Tate Gallery's war-time acquisitions. The Tate also has now the lovely water-colour *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, painted in 1822.

In the 537 drawings for Young's *Night Thoughts* Blake abandoned opaque colour, and returned to clear water-colour. Forty-three of this series when engraved found no favour with the public, and Blake was only able to continue his original work through the help of Thomas Butts, who commissioned some of his greatest ventures. For Butts he made the designs for *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, *Comus*, the *Ode on the Nativity*, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and finally the first version of the great series of twenty designs for the *Book of Job*.





THE GOOD FARMER  
Samuel Palmer, 1805-1881

The artist John Linnell succeeded Butts as patron in 1813, and introduced Blake to a circle of friends, who became his followers, George Richmond and Samuel Palmer among them. For Linnell in 1823, the duplicate set of *Job* drawings was made, and the series for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, begun in 1824, unfinished at Blake's death. Much of Blake's best work is out of the country; but the Tate is now rich in Miss Carthew's collection, and in the provinces, the *Ode on the Nativity* set is in Manchester, the *Whirlwind of Lovers* from the Dante series is in Birmingham.

A painter who has a slight imaginative affinity with Blake is Henry Fuseli (1741-1825). His visions are as evil as Blake's are holy. He was master of the physical impossibilities of nightmare and of the haunting dream. Many of the more terrible pornographic drawings, hitherto attributed to him, may well be by the poisoner, Thomas Griffiths Wainwright. Fuseli, with his use of strange proportions and his fetish for fantastic decorative head-dress anticipates the later eroticism of Aubrey Beardsley.

## TURNER

IT is difficult to temper a judgment of national heroes, and to balance between the absurd adulation of one period and the inevitable iconoclasm which follows it. Both are obviously wrong, and the truth seems like a floating island. When one tries to assess any considerable number of Turner's large oils seen together (and he wanted them to be seen together) doubts



WOODLAND SCENE  
Myles Birket Foster, 1825-1899

arise which are very unwelcome. One wants to admire them. The dexterity is shattering, the range is unbounded, the energy and knowledge of the man seem inexhaustible, but what is behind all the clamour and fury? Is there anything behind it all? Is it play-acting, pictorial nerve-jabbing, or just a strong man showing his biceps? One hurries away to the meadows of Constable, or to a book about Turner, so as to come back armed with another man's thoughts and to look again. And yet there are the water-colours, the breath-taking water-colours.



Turner was born in 1775 and died in 1851. He was the son of a barber. He was England's most successful painter. He was Ruskin's hero, and the peculiar Admiral Booth of Chelsea; the greatest contemporary of Constable, and the vulgar old fellow with golden visions. And yet there are the water-colours. Labels will not do. Criticisms will not stick. It is just Turner again. A great genius? Yes, but there's the quiet and gentle Constable. A world's wonder? Yes, but there's Velasquez, and Rubens—Rubens could paint landscapes! And there are the Turner water-colours, 19,000 bits of paper in the Bequest more or less drawn on, and most of the elaborate middle-period drawings all over the place in private hands.

The beginning of the story is like all the others—colouring engravings; selling cheap drawings in his father's shop (there is one of Westminster in the British Museum copy of Pennant's *London*), colouring prints for J. R. Smith; Academy Schools in 1789; and his first drawing in the R.A., *A View of the Archbishop's Palace at Lambeth*, when he was fifteen. Tours and topographical drawings for *The Copperplate Magazine* and for *The Pocket Magazine* followed; then Dr. Monro's (1794–1797), and friendship and work with Girtin.

In 1797 Turner went to Yorkshire, Durham and Cumberland, and showed the same sudden development as had come upon Girtin before the same country. *Norham Castle* (South Kensington) and *Easby Castle* (Manchester) are examples of the change. All the time he was collecting material and stocking his unfathomable visual memory, and watching the public with a tradesman's eye.

There are roughly three periods: (1) Early and topographical; (2) Imitations, and attempts to out-paint the world; (3) The "coloured chaos," and the attempt to turn paint into light. He was full R.A. the year of Girtin's death, and that year also he first went abroad to the Savoy Alps. The drawings of this tour invite comparison with those of Cozens (1776) and Towne (1781). First, Cozens and poetry; then, Towne and structure; now, Turner's pile of facts and eagle's heights and depths, recorded on grey paper with opaque colour. This is the period of the great oil sea-scapes, and shortly, of *Somer Hill*, and the beginnings of the *Liber Studiorum* and many engravings.

Throughout his life Turner had supreme conviction in his own ability, and the smash and grab determination of a poor boy who has made good, to beat everyone on their own ground. He also had enormous industry, a fatal rhetoric, and a sharp blue eye trained on the public. Claude, the idol of the picturesque, was supposed to lie vanquished in the National Gallery beside *Dido Building Carthage* and the *Sun Rising Through Vapour*. Claude had made his *Liber Veritas* as a sketch diary of his pictures; Turner's *Liber Studiorum* was designed to show its author's huge range by covering the whole of landscape composition under six heads, architectural, pastoral, elegant or epic-pastoral, marine, mountainous and historical-heroic. The drawings were done in sepia, the engravings personally supervised, and most of the basic lines etched by himself.



*By courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery*

DANTE'S VISION OF RACHEL AND LEAH  
Illustration to *Il Purgatorio*, Canto XXVIII, painted 1855  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1828-1882





*By courtesy of the Redfern Gallery, London*

SEA FROM A WINDOW  
David Jones, b. 1895



MAHATTA  
Edward Lear, 1812-1888

This also is the period of the elaborate water-colours made for publication as engravings in the *Southern Coast* 1814-1826, *Rivers of Devon* 1815-1823, *Rivers and Ports of England* 1823-1827, and the long series of *England and Wales* 1827-1838. The drawings are most elaborate feats of immense skill and knowledge, worked up from the merest scraps of notes made long before. It is as though the mind were labouring over the notes, trying to crowd in every possible detail of its amazing store of knowledge, far more than the eyes could ever have seen, so that the simplifications of Cotman, and the faithful moods of Constable, seem like very truth beside a census report. But such things, once said of Turner, cross-cancel immediately in the mind against miracles of wind and cloud, light feathery wizardries, which happen all the time. In 1819 Turner was in Italy, and made his "Roman" drawings. There is a general brightening of his colour, and the dramatic entry of Light as epic hero. A second visit to Italy in 1828 begins the later method of composing by colour. Roger's *Italy* with Turner's illustrations appeared in 1830, and *The Rivers of France*, for which the drawings are in opaque colour on toned paper, in 1833.

But in 1831 Turner had made his will, and after his first visit to Venice about 1832, seems, with his life's work as he intended it complete, to have



taken his eye off the public, and painted for his own delight the supreme water-colours of the last period. His sketches are no longer records of facts and stores of material, but complete expressions of intense excitement. The technical mastery is absolute, and he could now afford to paint the flashes and moods of moments for their own sake. Before the splendour comparative criticism fails. Turner is just Turner. The rest is looking ! Or for the rest one has to tell of Hannah Danby, housekeeper, Admiral Booth, the dilapidated house in Queen Anne Street packed with pictures and drawings, and death in Chelsea in 1851. Or should the rest be Ruskin's epigram—"They buried, with triple honour, Turner's body in St. Paul's, his pictures at Charing Cross, and his purposes in Chancery. . ."

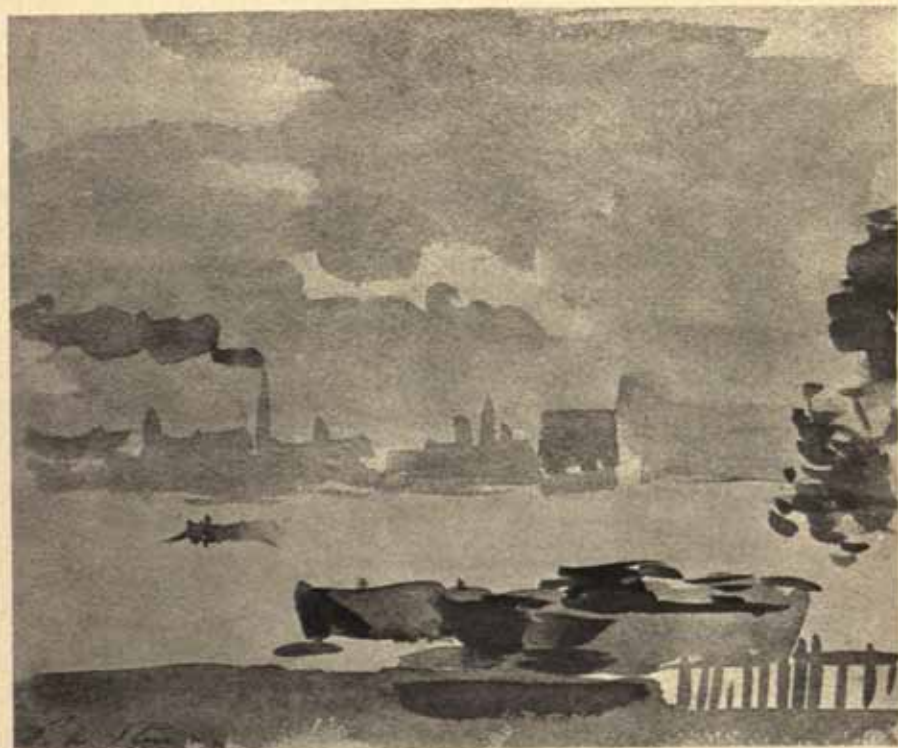
## MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY AND ROSSETTI

WHAT then of the picturesque by the mid-nineteenth century? Landscape painting in England had arisen out of pride of house and habit of travel, and, since Gilpin's day, *polite* people before a *prospect*, had known exactly what they ought to say, for he had given them a cant to say it with. They tended, in fact, to rate politeness and good breeding by this very standard. It was all very artificial and exclusive. Even Wordsworth could write in the *Prelude* of :

the Falls  
Of Tivoli, and high upon the steep  
The Sybil's mouldering Temple.

Burns was a serious disappointment to Dr. Adair and a party of ladies, when he refused to break into song before Calderon Linn. But fashions pass, and sensibility and taste was a fashion. It had served its purpose. The patrons who affected it were passing too. Constable had found the school of nature unadorned. Wordsworth had added his high moral purpose, and Turner his rhetoric. By 1812 Gilpin's picturesque lingered only, when Combe's *Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* came out. In 1818 Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* with its quiet laughter, unacceptable while the vogue for Mrs. Radcliffe and her followers lasted, emerged from the publisher's keeping : "Catherine was so hopeful a scholar, that, when they gained the top of Beecham cliff, she voluntarily rejected the whole city of Bath as unworthy to make part of a picture."

Gilpin and his friends looked only for the sublime; but the new spirit affected enthusiasm for the moral. Tours became a romantic form of sight seeing, with references to the picturesque now made only from long mechanical habit. Ruskin voices the new feeling. He derives the greatest satisfaction from old Calais church, because of the emotion he gets from it, its power to withstand the elements, its marking time which passes, itself unchanging.



CHelsea REACH  
P. Wilson Steer, 1860-1942

He decides that there are two kinds of picturesque, the "higher" and the "lower." Turner's is, of course, the higher; the lower observes ruggedness without understanding the pathos of character hidden beneath it. Ruskin finds a mill by Clarkson Stanfield attractive but useless; one by Turner sets him dreaming of the work of the winds, and the poverty of human labour.

Just how false it all was, and how uncertain Ruskin was of his own distinctions, appears when he twice mistakes the lower for the higher in his *Notes on the Educational Series*, Nos. 105 and 106 in the Ruskin Collection at Oxford: "Coloured engraving after Turner from the same series published in illustration of effect of light . . . This one is of quite intense moral interest, showing already all his sadness of disposition, his love of classic form." And of No. 105, he says it is "already as pathetic in feeling as any work he ever did to the end of his life." Actually both plates are after Gilpin from J. Heaviside Clark's *Practical Illustration of Gilpin's Day* 1824, and have nothing whatever to do with Turner.



It must be remembered that we are now in the age of Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-1873) and the dogs with the human eyes. In water-colours we come to Birket Foster's leafy lanes and pinafores (1825-1899), Albert Moore's languid ladies (1841-1893), Leighton's waxworks, Tadema's marble fountains, and the endless costume pieces made up from studio props and studio models, which provoked Rossetti's jeer at "the jointers of well-jointed dummies." Art now was very much "Fine Art," and the gentlemen dealers throve by it.

The year 1848 saw a gallant but mistaken attempt to put things right. In that year Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) met Ford Madox Brown, John Millais and Holman Hunt, and with them formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (the P.R.B.), to break away from dead formulae and studio pomps and poses.

Rossetti tells how his father, the ex-librettist of the opera at Naples and keeper of the Museum there, who had left the country for political activities and became Professor of Italian at King's College, London, used sometimes to sing to his family:

"I used to sit on the hearth rug listening to him, and look between his knees into the fire, till it burned my face, while the sights swarming up in it seemed changed and changed with the music, till the music and the fire and my heart burned together, and I would take paper and pencil and try, in some childish way, to fix the shapes that rose within me."

Here in the music, the fire and the heart-burn is the seed of the new movement. Rossetti's mission was to create a new imaginative art, which conceived the subject with poetic intensity as a real subject, with real people in it just as they might have been, behaving just as they might have behaved.

But the P.R.B. argued that a subject would look most real if it could be realised to the utmost detail; and trouble began when the utmost detail meant the utmost visual detail, the painful numbering of the blades of grass. With Rossetti the result is not so bad as it is with the others, because he used the labour of detail as a means of transcribing the imagined scene, making drawings very like enlarged book miniatures; whereas the others, lacking the imagination, attempted exactly literal transcriptions of things they had seen, or which they thought they had seen, knowing them to be there.

Rossetti used water-colour as an embroiderer uses silks, stippling and over-stippling with brilliant crude colours, which he hoped would increase the emotional tension. His little water-colours are gem-like and glittering, and have considerable power of design. *Dante Drawing the Angel* (Ashmolean, Oxford) is probably one of the best, as is the *Paolo and Francesca* triptych. The latter shows just the difference in the quality of imagination between Rossetti and Blake when it is compared with Blake's treatment of the same subject in his *Whirlwind of Lovers*.

That the Pre-Raphaelite movement was necessary is evident from the gall and stupidity of Dickens's attack on Millais's *Christ in the Carpenter's Shop*, (*Miscellaneous Papers: Old Lamps for New Ones*, June 15, 1850). But when



THE PINE  
Paul Nash, b. 1889

one remembers that the P.R.B. was aiming at the whole truth and nothing but the truth and real imaginative quality, it seems a pity that they did not pick up the tradition of Blake's followers, Edward Calvert and Samuel Palmer.



At any rate, Constable had already shown the way of visual truth, which was not the way of embroidery and Holman Hunt.

Edward Lear (1812-1888) belongs with the Pre-Raphaelites in point of time and in the spirit of their meticulous industry—he was a close friend and admirer of Holman Hunt—though he styled himself “topographical landscape painter,” and comes of the old line of Hollar and Place and perhaps of Towne. Lear began by drawing birds and animals, and made innumerable tinted line drawings illustrating his travels in Italy, Constantinople, Greece, Egypt, Jerusalem and Syracuse. He had a fine quality of line, a strong feeling for space and recession, for the “bones” of landscape, the movement of planes, wide horizons and the firmness of distant mountains. In the same tradition is Edward Bawden’s work to-day.

While Rossetti was painting Elizabeth Siddal’s white throat, and Burne-Jones was making the *Flower Book*, Manet, in France, was fighting the same battle as Constable had fought, with his *Déjeuner sur l’Herbe*, 1863. It is from France that the next move comes. From France returned the message of the “natural painter,” which brought about something of a revival of the true English water-colour tradition.

## IMPRESSIONISM AND AFTER

THE “Battle of Manet” was won, and news of the victory, and of the new Impressionist order in France, gradually filtered into England, through artists studying in Paris. The new doctrine was no more than the old message of Constable, which the French alone had understood, with a little added knowledge about the behaviour of colour and of the world in sunlight. Whistler came from Paris in 1859, and started to paint the mists and half-lights of Thames. A painting was no longer to be a moral exercise, or an anecdote, or an imaginative illustration, but a free expression of the eye’s true seeing. The standard was raised at the *New English Art Club*, founded in 1886; and, in the work of artists who were members, is to be seen a return to the true tradition of English water-colour before its unfortunate attempt to rival oils.

P. Wilson Steer (1860-1942) looked back to the way of Constable’s sketches, the light hand of Turner, the “blots” of Cozens, and saw with like eyes the diaphanous mists of Whistler. In water-colours his work is the perfection of understatement; swift hints of atmosphere and tone float happily from his brush as if of their own volition. His output is extremely uneven, as of one laying bets with the moment and often losing. The memorial exhibition of 1943 made this distressingly clear. Steer had never the knowledge of Turner behind the blots, though sometimes he nearly attained the ease. Though in oils he seems to echo other men’s manners, his water-colours did much to restore the medium to a better use. Philip Connard handles water-colour with like delicacy and with great charm.



NUPTIAL BOUQUET  
Frances Hodgkins, b. 1870

A. W. Rich (1856-1921) found the way of De Wint; Charles Conder (1868-1909) delighted with water-colour decorations on silk fans; George Clausen made swift little landscapes full of sunlight and heat and strange cloud forms; C. J. Holmes returned to the study of hills and crags and found the beauty of industrial landscape. Generally, there was a freshening and brushing up, and a renewed respect for materials.



But the weakness of Impressionism was lack of structure and design, and a certain casualness. As far as water-colour was concerned the corrective lay in the study of Cotman and Towne. Accordingly Cotman and Towne were re-discovered. J. D. Innes (1887-1914) showed direct affinity with both of them in his typical hill scenes and waterfalls, and added an emotional quality all his own. Death at twenty-seven cut off a promise of real greatness.

Then came the brothers Paul and John Nash with a naïve new idiom in water-colour, which was at the same time in the tradition. Their work came to notice in the *New English Art Club* exhibitions of about 1911 or 1912, though it was for their war drawings that the public first knew them. Paul Nash had an exhibition of drawings at the Goupil Gallery in 1916, which showed the pictorial counterpart of the poems of Owen and Sassoon. As H. W. Nevinson in oil recorded the mechanism of war and machine-minders at war, the Nashes in water-colour showed the devastating horror of the earth violated. Paul Nash later turned to the abstract, developing the cubist geometrical forms which had proved so useful in the war drawings; and John Nash continued his exploration of the folds and corners of the English scene. To the Nashes the world is always full of wonderful new patterns. This is the contemporary line from the best in English water-colour.

In the way in which Frances Hodgkins (b. 1870) uses colour and flat pattern there may be an echo of Matisse and a Japanese influence. She projects her feelings about landscapes and farms, and about still life seen in relation to landscape and mountains and distant sea, into delicate harmonies and shapes which have a highly personal and emotional appeal, and which sometimes suggest the inspired designer of tiles and textiles.

The study of shapes and patterns leads naturally to the study of things, of the world made up of a variety of things, which it has also been the business of science to analyse. "Thinginess," and the free association of the ideas and feelings which things arouse in the mind, forms the next stage in the evolution of the contemporary idiom, and the basis of a new kind of imaginative art.

Henry Moore (b. 1898) with his preoccupation with shape as shape; his careful search, with the curiosity of a Leonardo, through matter organic and inorganic, the forms seen under the microscope, as well as those of human and plant life, rock and shell, has enriched the language of art with a huge new vocabulary of form. Technically a sculptor, thinking always of the solid three-dimensional entity of things, he gives to water-colour, when he uses it, a plasticity which has hitherto seemed impossible to it.

There is also David Jones (b. 1895) searching the world with a kinder vision, deeply moved by El Greco's *Agony in the Garden*, insisting on the reality of spirit as well as matter, and obsessed with the "creatureliness" of things. His art is of the love of things seen; visual memories and symbolic images thought over and over, and woven painfully into thin tenuous designs. Jones's training is that of an illustrator. He lived and worked for a time with



WINDSOR. MEWS ENTRANCE FROM A ROOF IN SHEET STREET  
John Piper, b. 1903

Eric Gill. His mind is steeped in the mysteries of the Church, in Malory and in old Welsh legend.

Graham Sutherland (b. 1903) is more akin to Henry Moore without the plastic sense. He lives in a world of wiry lines and flat patterns, of highly emotional colour, fire reds and blacks, egg-yellows, violets and the greens of moss and mould. His trees are dangerous before they turn to coal. Moore's people might live in Sutherland's landscapes, and dying at length, turn to stone by gradual incrustation. He sees the roots of the trees groping, the lichens and strangling parasites, a glow as of fire and a deep-sea phosphorescence. Sutherland's war drawings are of the devastation of streets and buildings gutted by fire, or of tin mines and blast furnaces worked by faceless man-creatures, whose light is the oxy-acetylene flare. His rocks and his earth are mineral; and always there is fire.

John Piper (b. 1903) in his series of drawings of Windsor, commissioned by the Queen, and shown in the "Recording Britain" exhibition in London (1942), introduces a romantic atmosphere into the ordinary business of the topographer. There is also a pseudo-Gothic strangeness in his drawings of blitzkrieg for the war records, for he paints the sad haunted debris and charred beams of Bath and eighteenth-century London. It is always a bit stagey, owl-hooted, bat-haunted, and as though something had gone wrong with the foot-lights.



The war has also given work to a large number of artists drawing for historical record the daily life of the nation at war. For this water-colour has proved a most suitable medium. A practice something like the old topographical method has returned, which gives an added movement away from the exhibition set pieces, and from the popular "pretties" of the coloured reproductions. The strong imaginative impetus of the few painters like the Nashes, Moore, Jones, Sutherland and Piper, using water-colour with a new thoughtful earnestness, guarantees against stagnation, and may well augur another fine period of water-colour history.



BEACH SCENE ON THE FRENCH COAST. DETAIL  
R. P. Bonington, 1802-1828

BRITISH  
PORTRAIT PAINTERS  
BY  
JOHN RUSSELL

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THE FIRST MASTER

**B** RITISH church architects are known to have excelled in the Perpendicular style. Something of the same kind might plausibly be said of British portraitists, for there can be no question that, for whatever reason, British horizontal portraits are exceedingly rare. There may indeed be something of moral prejudice in this rage for the vertical which has affected so many British sitters. Consider for instance one of the few exceptions which come easily to mind—Joseph Wright's portrait of Sir Brooke Boothby. In this the baronet reclines among the foxgloves and peeling beeches of his property; his costume is ill-adapted to country life, and his sagging lumbar and unopened copy of Rousseau are in themselves a cautionary tale. Such moments of pastoral convention apart, British men and women have generally been painted bolt upright, wearing their best and disengaged from all known forms of activity.

Nothing in life is so difficult as to know thoroughly and set out fairly the truth about one other person; and if anything could make it still harder, it would be the imposition of a style of portraiture as rigid as that prevailing in England just before the time of Nicholas Hilliard. The armorial stiffness of these public images, with their shrill flat colour and insensitive line, may be explained in several ways; politically, by the interminable gang-fight of the Wars of the Roses; socially, by the kind of house in which they were to hang and the tyrannical, extra-human qualities which it was desired to impress upon the observer; and in respect of style, by the long decline and seeming disappearance of the qualities which in the tenth and eleventh centuries gave England, in Sir Kenneth Clark's words, "a position in European art which she has never held since." Other qualities were then in vogue, and portraiture as a department of humane studies did not exist. It is with the arrival of Holbein, and through him with Nicholas Hilliard, that the dignity of the individual becomes for painters a subject of the first order.



Hilliard was born just over four hundred years ago. Like Reynolds, he was a man of Devon. His father became sheriff of Exeter, and he himself while still very young attained an exceptional skill in the use of those precious metals and stones which had for the Elizabethans an almost obsessional charm. He was at once jeweller, goldsmith, and medallist; his extreme purity of colour and finesse of line were in part a product of the exact and scrupulous discipline involved in his other profession. Most of his portraits are small enough to lie in the palm of one's hand; and to this intimacy of size was added one of purpose, for the miniature was often meant to recall (as in the case of Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester) the aspect of someone beloved. All portraits are answers to particular questions, and Hilliard knew well that only a picture conceived upon a high plane of imagination could withstand the ceaseless patrol of loving eyes. "Of all things" he said "the perfection is to imitate the face of mankind." As a Devonshire man, and a man of his time, he was infinitely curious, and enjoyed the general energy of thought which follows from the assurance that some new and wonderful expansion of life is at hand. Though tormented by ill-health and often wretchedly poor, he maintained towards life the attitude, at once humble and audacious, which in all ages is most propitious to art. He loved travelling, grudged nobody his talent, visited Ronsard and supported a scheme for the discovery of gold in Scotland. He lived in that close and loving communion with the world which marks the great figures of the Italian renaissance; nothing less, in his view, could fittingly equip a portrait-painter, whose privilege it was to record that sovereign jewel of all the world which is the human face. Only thus could he hope to seize "the grace in countenance by which the affections appear, which can neither be well used nor well judged but by the wiser sort." He was in fact the first English artist to make for his kind the claims which elsewhere had been made by Vitruvius and Ghiberti for architects and by Alberti for painters; painters, he thought, should fit themselves to take the place among poets and philosophers to which their gift entitled them. "They have the liberal sciences" he wrote "and it is a virtue in them, and becometh them like men of understanding." Hilliard himself put first emphasis upon the line ("the principal part of drawing or painting after the life consists in the line") and his abhorrence of shadow does indeed reveal him the more clearly as a great master of line; so direct in his art in this sense that each one of his portraits seems to point to some fundamental disposition of our race. Yet it is in the structural use of colour that Hilliard also excels. His lifelong absorption in ruby and topaz, emerald and sapphire, equipped him to treat the spectrum as freely as if he had himself invented it, and to fulfil what was in his view the supreme function of limning—"the imitation of the most beautiful creatures in the finest and purest colours."



SIR BROOKE BOOTHBY, BART., 1781  
Oil painting by Joseph Wright of Derby, 1734-1797

## THE EMIGRANTS

Advances in art are rarely without some relation to public affairs ; it is for instance from the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572 that one may broadly mark the first return to British art of regular European influence. This is of course not necessarily beneficial, and there are some dour provincials who would wish, like Voltaire though for a different reason, to pass the anniversary of this event in bed, as a day of mourning. Nevertheless in this transitional stage the influence of the *déracinés* was so strong in British painting that its history must be concerned almost wholly with painters whose names alone betray the foreigner. Holbein (whom Hilliard admired above all other limners), Gheeraerds, Van Somer, Mytens, Janssens and de Critz—only by adoption are these English. In 1568 two forerunners of the alien invasion arrived in England. Isaac Oliver, the child of Huguenot parents, came as a refugee from Rouen ; Marcus Gheeraerds, then seven years old, was brought by his father from Bruges at the outbreak of the Alvan persecution. Oliver was entirely a miniaturist, and Gheeraerds retained in his large-scale



work the extreme elaboration of detail which among the miniaturists was fostered alike by the rigours of their craft and the exuberance of contemporary dress. Both stand for a transitional process. Oliver, being deeply sophisticated and readily susceptible, chose not to develop the technique of flat patterned relief as Hilliard had done, but rather to impose upon the miniature devices of light and shade, illumination and recess, which he had absorbed from Titian and Veronese; in his own case these novelties represent a genuine nervous compulsion and are often used with poetical and even with dramatic effect; but they have a horrid posterity. Gheeraerds also was an innovator, but in respect less of technique than of sentiment; he discarded few of the conventions in favour of the country whose guest he was. Emblems and coats of arms are introduced without regard for aerial perspective; costume is elaborated to the destruction of all plastic motive; and yet there is a change of mental outlook on the painter's part. The portrait is no longer the object primarily of tribal worship; its collective function is set aside by the gentle and affectionate curiosity of the artist. Little is known of Gheeraerds; unlike his pupil, Cornelius Janssens, he cannot be enmeshed in a known social context. In such a case it is difficult to find a contemporary point of reference, but I do not think it altogether fanciful to see in Verhaeren a parallel to Gheeraerds. Both were Belgians, and both in their work were unobtrusively courageous, keeping quietly within their means.

The Low Countries from which so many able executants had migrated to England were at this time already under Italian influence, and early in the Jacobean era there came to our own country the warm blast of inspiration and excitement which must always accompany a return to Mediterranean sources. Queen Elizabeth had not encouraged adventures of taste; rigid in an unshaded *allée*, she had sat for Hilliard and Oliver in a light that allowed of no shadow upon the permanent outline of her skull. Under James I many men of the first estate turned with generous and exalted curiosity towards the south; the Earl of Arundel was conspicuous among these. Before he was twenty-one he had sat in with Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones in the preparation of a masque; later he went *en mission* to Linz, negotiated peace with the King's enemies in Spain, and devised a plan for the colonisation of Madagascar. He was therefore well placed to mould the taste of his generation—and that of its successors, for Charles I as a child became familiar with a collection which had delighted Rubens. Above all he loved Italy, and for this we have to thank Inigo Jones, who took him to Vicenza in 1613. His collection was based on the great Venetians, but he had the liveliest sense of what was going forward among living artists, and it was he who introduced Van Dyck to the King.



HENRY FREDERICK PRINCE OF WALES  
Miniature by Isaac Oliver, 1556-1617

## VAN DYCK AND THE NATIVES

The central position of Van Dyck among portrait painters is well shown by the last words recorded of Gainsborough; "we are all going to heaven" he said "and Van Dyck is of the company." Van Dyck is indeed irremovably of the company. In his own century no painter could withstand the attraction, at once poetical and rudely seductive, of his approach; and in the great age of British portraiture Hogarth alone was impermeable. Some chauvinist historians omit him entirely from the history of British art, as if his presence would extinguish our native artists. This is happily not the case. Van Dyck, born when the sixteenth century had still eight months to run, did not come to live in England until 1632; a young man, and amply indulged, he had laid open his growing powers to a number of magnificent sources of influence. The palaces of Genoa, for instance, are in normal times full, not only of Titian, Veronese, and others of the great Venetians, but of the portraits executed by Van Dyck at the age of twenty-two. These, when they are accessible, might suggest that Van Dyck, so swift to take hold of others, was himself deeply impressionable; his English portraits, so easily distinguishable from his earlier work, are in effect a free adaptation of traits which were already conspicuous in our best native artists and had been painstakingly evolved over a long period of years. Van Dyck raised these to new levels of articulation, but he did not bring them with him. He brought, firstly a sense of style and heroic ornament heightened by long intimacy with Rubens and Titian, and secondly an outlook upon the world which was profoundly, even exclusively rhetorical. Rhetoric is so foreign to the English nature that, although it



is essential to the grand style of ornamental portraiture, it comes naturally, among our major artists, only to Lawrence. Our other portraitists may obstinately assume the grand manner, but they revert when the sitter is deeply known to them to a plainer and more naturalistic style. Van Dyck felt no such inhibition. He had no horror of saying more than he meant. If, in fact, he may be said to have done harm to the British school it was by imposing upon it a standard of surface accomplishment incompatible with the less arrogant aims of our native painters. His accomplishment was more than technical; he had a ready command, not to say a suavity of emotion very different from the bemused and tentative lyricism which had begun to characterise some British artists.

It is from Mytens and Cornelius Janssens that one may suspect Van Dyck to have derived his English style. Mytens was born at The Hague in 1590, and practised in England for nearly twenty years before Van Dyck became a resident rival to him; he had seen Rubens' work, and had taken from it a certain density and mass most evident about 1620, the time when he first began to enjoy the royal custom. The new freedom of brushwork and succulent *impasto* were borrowings well suited to his plain-spoken powers, and he effectively secured the attention of James I until Van Dyck arrived. At this time he enjoyed by royal favour a house and garden at the upper end of St. Martin's Lane; not a notably impulsive character, he collapsed entirely on seeing Van Dyck's work, and only the personal suasion of James I prevented him from leaving the country. Janssens, a subtler and a more obstinate artist, was too well integrated with the general pattern of English life to budge before a newcomer; not until 1643, when the world he knew had begun to founder, did he take himself off to Holland. Mytens, knowing himself o'erparted, fell in the end to ignominious mimicry of Van Dyck. Janssens persisted in his own style. This combines traces of the Elizabethan convention (in the minutious painting of lace and the almost emblematic use of costume) with a newly free and naturalistic treatment of the face. In colour also Janssens set a new course; the raucous tonality of the preceding age was let drop; only such tints were admitted as gave support to his favourite rose and ivory. He painted a great deal on wood, and in this way obtained a precision of finish to which, when he returned to the use of canvas, was allied a quite personal intimacy of feeling. In such portraits by Janssens as the *Sir Ralph Verney* of 1634 there is a sense of withdrawal from the world such as would not, fifty years earlier, have been within the gamut of a portrait painter. Hilliard's portraits, and those of Oliver, abound in private allusion; the simplest flowers cannot be introduced without some esoteric purpose; but in Janssens this elaborate symbolism is displaced by the direct sympathy and unselfconscious pleasure in mankind which were to outlast the splendours of rhetoric.



PRINCE RUPERT, COLONEL MURRAY AND COLONEL JOHN RUSSELL  
Oil painting by William Dobson, 1610-1646

When Janssens left England, Lely was already installed ; so vast was his accomplishment and so pervasive his style that it is comforting to find that here also a foreigner based his conquest upon existing native modes — on that of William Dobson, for instance. In considering such painters as Dobson one is reminded of a pronouncement of Hilliard's : only gentlemen, he thought, should paint portraits. No one should paint portraits for a living. Hilliard did not of course foresee the apostolic succession of giant practitioners who were to stand in the eyes of many for the whole history of British portrait painting. The grand style of portraiture exists at a level of consciousness quite different from that envisaged by Hilliard as appropriate to portraiture ; its success in England derived partly from its alliance with indigenous traits, partly from the sanguine and even brutal perfection of means with which Lely bore down, like an armoured division, upon the creatures of his time. Dobson of course did nothing of the sort. A follower, possibly a pupil, of Van Dyck, he lived only thirty-six years, and died in 1646. His *oeuvre* is not large. At first his paint was thin and smooth as enamel, but later he developed in



his technique a splendidly rich and open use of pigment, boldly supported by a conscious fluency of design not equalled by any of his contemporaries. With this fine equipment Dobson was able to enunciate a view of his countrymen which is now so generally accepted that its source is easily forgotten. He was well placed to speak for the cavaliers; himself of good family, he worked at Oxford when the Court was there, and the noble and melancholy regard with which his subjects survey the world has become almost a national legend. Dobson's favoured position (Charles I called him the English Titian) and unequalled romantic powers did not prevail against an unstable and extravagant nature, and he was twice in prison for debt. Other portraitists had other ways of augmenting their incomes: Geldorp, for instance, exploited his connections in society. "Mighty great" as Vertue says "with the people of quality in his time, he used to entertain ladies and gentlemen with wines and hams and other curious establishments, and carried on their intrigues." While other painters acted as dealers, kept immoral houses or modestly said what they had to say and were silent, the powerful engine of Lely's career gathered speed.

The Civil War variously affected the national style in portraiture. Lely for instance accommodated his whole method to the change of regime, and in this also he had a native example. It is tempting, when considering Robert Walker's work, to believe that periods get the painters they deserve; his portraits of Hampden, Cromwell, and Ireton seize exactly the mood of outraged resolution with which an army of serving-men and tapsters was led against the Cavaliers. There is always a lot of metalwork in a Walker portrait; and above the heavy plate armour there rises usually a face pale with some noble congestion of thought. Walker was a very considerable artist, and his severity of judgment is the more impressive for being delivered in a style as fluent and tender as that of his royalist colleagues. The Earl of Arundel, one feels, would not have begrudged Walker the apartment in Arundel House which was made over to him during the Commonwealth.

Lely came to England in 1641, at the age of twenty-three. His massive and indefatigable powers were thenceforth engaged without pause until in 1680 he was struck with apoplexy at his easel, and suddenly died. He was a natural decorative artist; even his handwriting was disposed in the nicely agitated folds which occupy so vast an acreage in all his female portraits. The element of moral judgment, so strong in Walker, is quite lacking in Lely; but if in this respect he took his sitters at their own valuation, he had an inexhaustible physical curiosity. The landscape of the male human face can rarely have been so closely scrutinised as in some portraits of Lely; the battered old men of his Commonwealth period have never been given quite their due as masterstrokes of surface observation. With women also at this time he showed some independence of convention. In general however the organic weakness of Lely is one



SIR ISAAC NEWTON, 1702  
Oil painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller. 1646-1723

which was later put summarily by Constable. "In the world of art," he said, "there is plenty of fine painting, but very few good pictures." Lely never went to Italy, though he was always ambitious of going; the best he could do was to buy or accept in pawn examples of Italian masters from the rival collections of Buckingham, Arundel and Charles I. Technically his work is often so fine (as a colourist he can stand in any company) that it is legitimate to regret that he never mated with an Italian tradition. As it was, his career had many solid merits; he continued throughout his career to explore and develop his means; unlike most British artists, he was at his best in his last period. In this an extraordinary freedom and mastery of brushwork began to involve him in the problems other than those of appearances, and it is a tribute to his integrity that, in spite of his unchallenged success in the world, he continued to set himself new problems.



## FROM KNELLER TO HOGARTH

Van Dyck had, equally in his work and in his person, an overriding and now legendary fascination. Lely had no such personal sway; still less could such things be said of Kneller. However great their quantitative influence might be, no one can ever have written to them, as in 1636 the Earl of Newcastle wrote to Van Dyck from Welbeck, "next to the blessing of your company and conversation, the greatest blessing were to be Argus, or all over but one eye, so that it or they were ever fixed upon that which we must call yours." So powerful however was the tradition of Lely and Kneller that when Reynolds returned from Italy in 1752 he was reproached for not painting like Kneller; "Shakespeare in poetry," his adviser continued, "and Kneller in painting, damme!" The defective education of native artists was partly responsible for this; so too was the absence of competitive connoisseurship such as in 1629 had lured Rubens to England. Great subjects were not lacking; Wren, Newton, Pope and Berkeley were alive, and it was in such cases that Kneller, whose characterisation was often mean and pinched, was stung into a fine directness of statement. In his staring *Pope*, for instance, the sockets seem hardly able to contain their weight of eye. The history of Kneller's talent is instructive: he had many advantages, had been in contact with Rembrandt, and had studied Raphael and Titian in Italy. He never lacked for patronage. Yet his *oeuvre* is consistently unequal and shows no such organic development as does Lely's. Between 1675 and 1723 there are a number of portraits by Kneller so sure in their colour, so naturally accomplished in draughtsmanship and the use of paint as to silence all comment. These are overlaid, on a general view, by a great mass of indifferent work, evidence in part of a defective organisation, but a sign also of a social contract already pushed to a point at which true portraiture was bound to become an exceptional thing. Some native painters, with smaller gifts to exploit and fewer patrons to appease, were not enervated in this way; Greenhill, Riley and J. M. Wright come under this head. There were some foreigners of an individual turn—Soest, for example, Huysmans, and Dahl. There is also a woman disciple of Lely, Mrs. Beale, whose sluggish though not incompetent work is admired by feminists. These painters however had no lasting influence; those of the first class had no powerful or well-developed style upon which a school could be based, and those of the second were the last of the *émigrés* who for so long had dazzled or sought to dazzle indigenous patrons. It was the style of Kneller which was to last, to become stiff and inexpressive at the hands of Hudson and to be re-animated by the finely deliberate method of Reynolds. So deliberate indeed was Reynolds, so well-mounted and all-pervading his view of portraiture, that it is easy to undervalue the unequal and ill-rounded work of his immediate predecessors. Kneller



QUEEN ELIZABETH, 1533 - 1603

Miniature on vellum by Nicholas Hilliard, 1572

*By courtesy of the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery.*





*By courtesy of Viscount Lee of Fareham*

THE ARTIST'S FAMILY

Oil painting by Sir Peter Lely, 1618 - 1680

died in the year of Reynolds' birth ; and the standard of painting in the preceding years was later stigmatised by Reynolds as "the lowest it had ever been in ; it could not indeed be lower." This is not quite true ; one could more fairly say that his was a transitional period in which a few original and sensitive artists contrived to work as they pleased, while several craftsmen of strong constitution grew fat upon the profits of a stationary tradition.

Joseph Michael Wright is a Scottish painter, and a good one. He died, an old man, in 1700. He had not a large practice, and did not multiply his statements to order. With both male and female subjects he suggested a position of great dignity and reserve ; it is as if he had surprised them in some tranquil pavilion of the mind. Nobody runs wild in a portrait by Wright. His work raises a point which, though relevant to the work of all portraitists, is specially apt in the case of such lonely figures as Wright. Such painters may be said to work upstream, in their eagerness for something more than anatomical truth ; yet they are rewarded in the end, for their faithful record of enquiry, though not perhaps in itself complete, will seem in sum to make the profoundest portraits of themselves. It is in this sense that all portraiture might be said to be ultimately self-portraiture. As Sickert said, "it is the painter, in the end, who is betrayed."

John Riley, no more than Wright, was a pushing artist. He was born in 1646, and lived only forty-five years. In life he was morbidly shy. Patrons have always liked to make free with painters in their studios, and this Riley detested. His timidity led him at times to assume the grand conventional style ; but in such portraits as his Lord William Russell he shews himself unafraid to navigate such inland seas of the heart as do not normally exist for portrait-painters.

John Greenhill died of debauching in 1676. He was then thirty-two, an age at which painters who know how to organise their talents begin to feel beneath their feet the firm arch of a career. As original as Wright or Riley, he differed abruptly from them in his approach ; this is firm and direct, almost Hogarthian in the resolution with which the strong lines of each simple design are driven into place. Greenhill might almost be said to express the poetry of disabuse, so eager is he to command the truth.

These three painters were not nobodies, and lacked entirely the surface amenity which, so common in the eighteenth century, has come to be regarded as a normal attribute of English portraiture. Nor were they learned painters, clever at the kind of enlightened poaching which Reynolds recommended to lively young students. In no other period would painters similarly endowed have achieved so high a degree of individual and poetical utterance ; this is the great virtue of the seventeenth century—that the habitual mode of the time gave shelter to the artist of limited means and allowed him, within his limits, abundant leash. In the succeeding ages



this was not the case ; but of its truth at this time one may judge also from foreign examples. Soest, for instance, who died an old man in 1681, played the bear in society, disliked women and gave to most of his men a drugged and stertorous expression ; his treatment of neckties alone betrays a certain animation of touch. Yet he was Riley's master, and his bold modelling and easy sense of design are those of an individual. Soest took a ponderous interest in character, but for Huysmans the portrait released quite other preoccupations. He was a rococo artist, easily led away from the central figure ; populous with peacocks and does, garnished with *motifs* from landscape and architecture, his immense machines pursue a course of their own. He loved a crowd. He never knew when the canvas was full ; there was always room, he thought, for a few more negro slaves, Cupids, waterspouts and favourite hounds. I like Huysmans, but he makes a large hole in the textbook history of the time. With Michael Dahl there is no such embarrassment. He came to London, a young man, in 1682. He went on painting till he died in 1743. Reynolds admired him as a colourist, and if he does not appear to have quickened at any unusual trait of character he had at least a plain and stable judgment.

Dahl never begged an open question. What is lacking from his work is the shock of human dignity revealed in such a portrait as Kneller's *Newton* ; in this the terrible grip of the eye can never be forgotten. Its glare encompasses the universe. Lely and Kneller at their best were porous ; their splendid equipment could absorb the great extremes of human stature. To regard the figure of Reynolds as a solitary and mountainous phenomenon, led up to by no regular upward plane, is surely at once historically and morally false ; not only were fine portraits painted during his boyhood, but the new self-consciousness of the artist, so ably expounded in Reynolds' Academy lectures, was equally in process of evolution some years before his birth. We have not, in short, to consider such capable *routiniers* as Hudson or Jervas, but rather to come to terms with Hogarth and Jonathan Richardson.

## THE FIRST PRECEPTORS

Richardson was not a great artist, but he had in a high degree the sense and pride of *métier* which was to culminate in the foundation in 1768 of the Royal Academy of Arts. He was a pupil of Riley, whose niece he married. Thomas Hudson, Reynolds' master, was his son-in-law. His own substantial practice and solid accomplishment placed him at the prosperous heart of his profession. He enjoyed the company of writers, and in 1715, at the age of fifty, produced his *Essay on the Theory of Painting*. This apologia for what he called "the dumb art" of painting had upon



SELF-PORTRAIT

Pen drawing by Jonathan Richardson, 1665-1745

both Hogarth and Reynolds a signal and permanent hold. For us it cannot have any such powerful attraction; but what is now taken for granted was then so novel as to set any young painter on fire. To Reynolds, curled up in his father's study at Plympton, a first perusal of the *Essay*, coupled with the sound instruction contained in Padre Pozzo's book on perspective, was of crucial importance. The *Essay* at once looks back to Hilliard and the humane wisdom of Alberti, and forward to the grand international view of art which, like a bourdon of learning and good sense, underlies the *Discourses* of Reynolds. Richardson in his own painting made no conspicuous advance, but in his written work he called for that heroic conception of art and life which we associate with the great painters of Europe. "Painting" he said "pours ideas into our minds; words only drop them." A portrait-painter, "chiefly concerned with the noblest and most beautiful part of human nature, the face," should know equally the dark places of the heart. As his business was with people of condition, he should yield in nothing to writers or professional men; he should study "not only history and poetry, but anatomy, osteology, geometry, perspec-



tive, architecture and many other sciences." Richardson had the intellectual ambition, if not the universal tenderness of Alberti. What was lacking, and was later supplied by the example of Hogarth, was any marked sense of plastic values. If in fact he had had a greater mastery of formal appearances he might have advanced the history of British portraiture by fifty years.

Hogarth did not paint many portraits, but his *Captain Coram*, which from 1740 was on show at the Foundling Hospital, ideally supplemented the elevated precept of Richardson. For Hogarth, enquiry into his sitter's character was a purely visual function; it was the look of complexity which fascinated him. He knew that it is by some interior fatality that each face assumes the formal intricacy peculiar to it. It is because he seized on this with extraordinary force, with the rough and sinister resolution of which Baudelaire speaks, that his portraits are on a level of utterance quite new in British painting. He was not primarily a portraitist, and the full range of his personal style may not be gauged without reference to his narrative and subject pieces. True baroque, a virile and not a parasitic convention, has often been rooted in popular feeling. The spatial devices of Annibale Caracci and Pietro da Cortona, evolved in praise of the Church of Rome and the triumph of the Counter-Reformation, were adapted by Hogarth to express the pride and ambition of the English Protestant middle classes. Hogarth's observation was as direct as Defoe's, and he put down exactly what he saw. His relish for each particular fact about life opposed him frontally to the general practice of his time, which tended rather to a generalised and ideal convention. He was a social rather than a political critic; concerned with classes rather than with parties, and with the first principles of human dignity rather than with their application among the legislature, he could not count on the sources of income available to the courtier-artist. He therefore set himself to break the ring of connoisseur-buyers. Himself a true admirer and cunning exponent of the Italian tradition, he chose to use it as a living force, and among classes which had not previously bought pictures, rather than to exploit the perfunctory appetite of wealthy amateurs. Artists at this time had no way of exhibiting their work in public, or of studying from the life; their existence depended upon the approval of connoisseurs, and in this respect also Hogarth was a pioneer. There is in short a great paradox in his work; he enthroned the "serpentine line of beauty," one of the bases of the rococo style, as the great principle of composition, and sometimes the texture of his paint, Whistlerian and fluid as milk, is as fastidious as anything produced by the Ecole de Fontainebleau; yet for all this his judgment remained severe, and his eye for social detail was as sharp as that of Beatrice Webb. It is thus that in each of his few portraits a rough downward pounce upon each particular of the head is balanced by a mastery of heroic design. A contemporary view is always instructive,



THE GRAHAM CHILDREN  
Oil painting by William Hogarth, 1697-1764

and Fielding, in speaking of the physical truth of Hogarth's portraits, praises equally their conquest of the mind. "It has been thought" he says "a vast commendation of a painter to say that his figures seem to breathe, but surely it is a much greater and nobler applause that they appear to think."

Richardson talked a great deal about Italy, but had never been there. Those painters who were inspired by his books to make the journey were sometimes affected by it in ways which he did not foresee. Allan Ramsay, for instance, had not long returned from his stay there before Vertue called him to order, remarking that his pictures were not at all like those of Kneller and Dahl, being "rather licked than pencilled." Hogarth is to us a figure of such overbearing force that it is easy to forget that for the greater part of his career the conventions of Kneller retained their



full hold upon the public, and that Hogarth, and the great tides of feeling which he was the first painter to harness, counted for little in comparison. Ramsay was sixteen years younger than Hogarth, and when *Captain Coram* was first hung at the Foundling Hospital, Ramsay had hardly settled in after returning from Rome.

Ramsay was not an obtrusive artist, and had not overmuch energy or professional fire; Farington records that he very rarely worked for his own pleasure. Such, however, was the delicacy and surface beauty of his work that Reynolds at one time thought it worth while to assimilate and reproduce the main features of his style. Ramsay is personally one of the most agreeable of British painters, and it is a pleasure to read of his career. He was fortunate in his father, for Allan Ramsay the elder, a vernacular poet still read by Scotsmen, took of life a more rational and high-spirited view than was common in Scotland at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Gay and Pope were among his readers, and in Edinburgh itself he ran a circulating library of *avant-garde* literature, built a theatre, and lived in a house which, from its octagonal design, was called by his neighbours "The Goose-Pie." Enlightenment had its limits, however, and when his son was about to leave for Rome, he could not bring himself to name the city, but referred to it as "the seat of the beast beyond the Alps." Young Ramsay set an example not often followed by English artists when he determined to speak only French when in France, and only Italian when in Italy. He could read Latin and Greek with pleasure, and made Horatian pilgrimages in Sabinia. Life in Rome itself was very pleasant for young men of parts. Prince Charles Edward and his brother were there, and between shooting blackbirds in the gardens of the villa Ludovici, holding jumping matches in the Borghese Gardens and dancing all night at a ball given by Cardinal Corsini, Ramsay did not find it at all a dull place. He studied also at Naples, with Francesco Solimena, and when he went to Venice, Guardi, Longhi and Tiepolo were there also. He complained only that at Rome the air smelled of sulphur. When he returned to this country he swam happily and at ease in what must seem to us enchanted waters—the London of Johnson and Mrs. Boscawen, the Edinburgh of Hume and Adam Smith; he had a strong Whig connection, and dined very often with the Hollands and the Stanhopes; with Lord Bute, moreover, he was so closely associated that Sterne once remarked that he seemed to paint "only the court cards, the King, the Queen and the Knave." Ramsay in his lifetime was everywhere welcome for the exceptional grace and solid instruction which were combined in his conversation; and to us he seems for sweet amenity to surpass all other portraitists. Northcote and other shrewd observers remarked that he could not draw like a master and had no powerful command of design; he pleased instead by French virtues uncommon in England at the time. In one of his dialogues he speaks obliquely of his admiration for Quentin



THE ARTIST'S WIFE, c. 1755  
Oil painting by Allan Ramsay, 1713-1784

de Latour, and it is to Perroneau and Latour that he may at his best be compared. He had no gift for chiaroscuro, and suffused the whole canvas in a regular and unaccented light, laying on his colour without violent contrast and in the high but light tonality more natural to the pastellist than to the painter in oils. He excelled with portraits of women, and each of these is in fact a model of sympathy and discretion. In 1766 Rousseau visited England, and Ramsay painted him, at Hume's request. He did not enjoy it; in speaking of the picture he said, "My Rousseau, if he should prove less witty, will at the same time be less ungrateful, less mischievous and less changeable than his predecessor. I am afraid however that both of them are attended with more expense than their company is worth." The scowling figure in his fur cap is indeed a notable contrast to the bland contentment with which Ramsay usually endowed his sitters. His work is unequal, and loses heavily by being seen in bulk. As



he grew older he gave less and less of his time to painting ; a happy marriage, the freedom of a great and brilliant society and the pleasures of authorship increasingly absorbed his attention. In 1761 he became Painter to the King, and from this time onwards, although he supervised the production of a great many royal images, he painted few new portraits himself. He had a further claim upon his time ; Horace Walpole remarks that his little daughter, "quick as Ariel," travelled with him. He still loved to go to Italy, and Boswell records that in 1778 he entertained Johnson and Gibbon with the story of a recent visit to Horace's villa. In old age, and as a widower, he returned once again to Rome ; he and his son read Homer and Tacitus together, and at Naples, Sir William Hamilton played Handel sonatas to them on the violin. He had never been strong, and the return journey to England killed him. Ramsay conspicuously lacked what a great painter needs—the constitution of an ox ; the bouquet of claret sufficed to intoxicate him, and an analogous weakness displaced him from the first rank of artists, but his qualities died with him and have not recurred in our portraiture.

### THE HEADMASTER

Reynolds alone among British artists gains nothing by editing. His work is inestimably more impressive in its total than in any of its items. Throughout a long and unbroken career he was able so to renew the sources of his inspirations that his work comes to resemble a vast convoy of intelligence, beauty, rank and power, as fecund and various as the age which produced it. Many British artists have been more gifted than Reynolds, but none has known so well how to manage his talent ; none has been so little infatuated with his own vision of the world, or with his own initial abutment upon it. He seems indeed to straddle the virtues both of his own century and of its predecessor. In his love of general ideas, he is of his own time ; "this disposition to abstractions" he said "to generalising and classification, is the great glory of the human mind." Yet equally, in his methodical and deliberate exploration of his own powers, and his faith in the "sovrain treacle of sound doctrine" he is a man of the seventeenth century, Cartesian and Miltonic. The society for which he worked was saturated with discovery and pride, and it is not surprising that his qualities are not those now in vogue. He excels, not as a visionary in arms against the imperfection of the world, but as a historian and prosaist, concerned to interpret his time in a noble and expressive idiom. So far from wishing to seem a great original, he taught, and himself aimed to master, a grand and impersonal style in which individual utterance would be transcended by the great rhythms of the European masters. Gothic and rococo alike seemed to him both fussy and impious ; of Gothic architecture he said that, "though not so ancient



RICHARD ROBINSON, D.D., PRIMATE OF ARMAGH

Oil painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1775

*By courtesy of The Barber Institute, Birmingham*





THE PAINTER'S DAUGHTERS

Oil painting by Thomas Gainsborough, c. 1760 - 1761

*By courtesy of the Trustees of the National Gallery*

as the Grecian, it is more so to our imagination." Reynolds lived in a complacent age, and was careful to appraise it in terms which, though to us they may seem effusive, were at the time regarded as temperate and exact. He laid great stress upon the artist's duty to contemporary imagination, to the extent even of saying that the artist is more concerned with that than with absolute truth, and it is in this respect, as much as in any other, that his imitators fell short of their model. It was not that Reynolds ever courted fashion, but rather that, himself dead-centred in his time, he could embrace it in its entirety. To this end his energies were uniquely spent; such bachelors are rare in history, and there is not with him, as there is with Johnson, a dark and terrible lining to his abstention. As a young man he met with an accident in Minorca, and a lasting injury to his mouth (he remarked that his lips were "spoiled for kissing") gave trouble to his audience when he came to deliver his lectures; he also became deaf, from too many hours of work in damp Italian palazzi, but in general his strong and regular constitution reflected the even cast of his mind. "Sir Joshua" said Johnson "though a thinking man, has no vexing thoughts; he is the same all the year round." It was upon this level ground that the great arch of his career was built. His father, a scholar of Corpus Christi and Fellow of Balliol, was a man of generous mental range, reputed to have "no knowledge of the world, or of the value of money." In Reynolds himself these attributes were all amply present. A clergyman's child has usually to make his own way, and it was in no light spirit that he decided to make himself a painter. He was seventeen when his father wrote to a friend that "on his own head" he had begun to paint. In later life he deprecated any great show of original talent; "after his oracle Dr. Johnson" said Gibbon "my friend Sir Joshua denies all original genius, any natural propensity to one art or science rather than to another." As if persuaded by the painter himself, critics have often denied to his early works any evidence of exceptional gifts; it is not however the case that he returned from Italy transformed and reanimated. His Italian experience was an authorisation, rather than an awakening, and his instinctive mastery of style was not one that could be acquired by study. It was however in Rome and Florence, Parma and Bologna that he developed the allusive and deliberate method which is his own; and it is the great paradox of our portraiture that his personal style, which he had hoped to make the normal heritage of all young painters, should in fact have died with him.

A deep fosse of ignorance and apathy has too long separated us from a full enjoyment of Reynolds; nor would he have wished for admiration on terms other than his own. Intimacy with him is withheld from most people, not merely by defects of specialised knowledge, but by the geographical situation of his work. He of all painters most needs to be seen in the mass; only an overall view, and long perusal of examples taken from every period of his life, can give the measure of this giant



professional. Reynolds painted and thought about painting for more than fifty years ; by ceaseless exercise he sharpened his natural judgment until acumen appeared to merge into inspiration. Hogarth as a young man had taught himself to memorise the appearance of groups in vigorous action, and in this way to store up material for future narratives. Reynolds turned instead to the great painters of the past, and studied them until at last he could draw, as if from some vast armoury of memory, upon some grand example for every subject that was set him. In this he resembled Stendhal, who so trained and prepared himself in earlier life that when at last he came to begin *La Chartreuse de Parme* he appeared able to improvise the whole of its vast structure, so thorough was the preliminary drilling of his powers. So stubborn a worker was Reynolds that at the height of the Gordon Riots he reached the Academy punctually at his usual time ; and in 1779, when the British fleet was blockaded in Plymouth harbour and three of his sitters were captured by the French while travelling on the Dover-Ostend packetboat, he redoubled his output ; but the final proof of his method is that the work of his last decade was done with ever-mounting pleasure. His niece wrote at this time "My uncle seems more bewitched than ever with his palettes and pencils." Nor did this diligence ever make him dull. He dined out constantly, and enjoyed the regard equally of high and of intellectual society. If he had need of a fine waistcoat, Lady Ossory was pleased to embroider one for him ; if he wished to give his guests venison, a buck was sent from Belvoir. He has been called a snob, but he was in no sense what he would have called a "toad-eater" ; he was never in royal favour, and did not care to court it ; and if he was often in noble company it was because he could not fail to be liked. He loved every kind of sociable amusement ; *ridottos*, masques, Mrs. Vesey's chaoses, Mrs. Montagu's feather-room, a gala performance of Vestris or Garrick—each was more tempting than the other. Most of all, perhaps, he liked his own crushes in Leicester Fields ; at these flexible feasts Gibbon and Burke, Goldsmith and Johnson sat in with such other familiars of Reynolds as Mrs. Cholmondeley, Mrs. Thrale and Miss Burney ; Reynolds had his own ideas about conversation, and at his table "story-telling, premeditated bon-mots and studied witticisms" were all rigidly proscribed. Nor did he forget that others were young and unknown ; such diverse figures as Crabbe and J. M. W. Turner profited by his kindness in this respect.

Reynolds had longed, with Richardson, to see an English Raphael ; the prestige of British painting was not high at the time of his birth, but he could be content with the success of his *Discourses*. Marie Antoinette had a copy of them in her library ; Catherine the Great read them avidly in French ; the good eighteenth century hand, the fruit of long intercourse with Burke and Johnson, commended them also to Charles Eliot Norton, and in the great age of New England they were debated in Boston, while



THE GRACES DECORATING HYMEN  
PORTRAITS OF BARBARA, ELISABETH AND ANNE MONTGOMERY, 1773  
Oil painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1723-1792

Madeira was served with slices of carraway cake. Sir Joshua took for his central idea of beauty ("what bears the strongest characters of the general fabric of the species") an idea of Adam Smith. It is beauty of this kind which is the particular gift of his work. Especially in the great series of portraits of Admiral Keppel may we admire the way in which Italian motifs are made to illustrate the progress of a character as English as the Close at Salisbury, or the air above Plymouth Sound. Reynolds' work may be seen as an equation between two great traditions—that of the English character in the age of Marlborough and that of the master-periods of Italian painting. Both of these he knew deeply and loved dearly. It is therefore the more wonderful that in his last years of work he should have striven to master a new procedure, and one deriving from shores washed by a sea colder than the Mediterranean.

He could never have deserted the Italians; Michelangelo's head was upon his seal, and Michelangelo's name was the last word which he chose



to pronounce at the Academy ; and in the 1770's the rivalry of Gainsborough and the stimulus of public exhibition drove him to compose many prodigies of allegory and allusion. Scholars of the Warburg Institute have recently shown us how in these great machines layer upon layer of recollection and experience was piled, until the study of them resembles that of Cnossos or Maiden Castle ; digging will always reveal some further resource of the creator's mind. In July 1781 however Reynolds went for a holiday in Flanders and Holland ; it was then-nearly thirty years since he had returned from Italy. He did not altogether enjoy himself ; the ballet was not all that a disciple of Noverre could wish, and he was given no milk to his tea ; the ordinary people, moreover, were "very ordinary, without exception." What he did admire was the vigorous and plain handling of the Flemish masters, and especially of Rubens ; this so ate into his mind that even the horses in the streets recalled to him the heroic beasts of Rubens' world. When he returned to London he began a great new series of portraits, each free and loose in handling but formidably direct and assured in design. This period produced, in *Lord Heathfield*, a portrait which can stand in any company ; and with it many full and tender portraits of women. Not all his sitters, in previous years, can have approximated to the flasks of ideal beauty which he produced. Lady Sarah Bunbury, for instance, so far from sacrificing in real life to the Graces, thought of nothing but eating beefsteak and playing cricket on the Steyne. There was now no such discrepancy. This however was the master's last period ; a paralytic stroke in 1782 was followed in 1789 by the loss of the sight of one eye. He worked no more, but played whist, kept a canary, had the newspapers read to him by a devoted pupil, and sometimes dined out ; his opinions remained firm, and a young lady at Holland House was once sharply rebuked for her sympathies with the revolutionaries across the Channel. His last Discourse to the Academy, in December 1790, was in effect a farewell to the profession he had served so well, and in February 1792 he died.

## THE POET

Reynolds and those who followed him were not poets. They respected poetry, and often alluded to it, but for themselves they were not poets and they rather deprecated any suggestion that poetry was essential to painting. Painters, they thought, were men of too much sense. Thus it is that nothing in their work is truly involuntary ; there is no margin for magic, and they would not have liked it if there were. Poetry did not intrude upon them. There are in fact levels of high technical fluency at which poetry can have no place, and it was on such planes as these that a great deal of eighteenth century portraiture was done. That is why this century, for all its amenity and grace, is less revealing than the seventeenth ;



THE ARTIST'S WIFE, 1816  
Oil painting by John Constable, 1776-1837

technical ability had outgrown imagination. Of Gainsborough, at least, this could never be said; deliberate academic method was quite foreign to his nature, and in any case his natural gifts, as prodigious as those of Mozart, disposed of any obvious need for it.

Thomas Gainsborough was born in 1727. He was one of nine children, and his four brothers displayed an extreme mechanical ingenuity which is relevant to Gainsborough's own delight in any kind of ingenious toy. One brother tried to fly from the roof of an outhouse upon a pair of copper wings; others invented a self-rocking cradle, devised a wheel which turned in a bucket of still water or threatened to make endless voyages in order



to prove an invention for the discovery of longitude. Abstract ideas did not exist for Gainsborough; he loved the particular, and loved others to share his pleasure. His attitude to Johnson is characteristic. Reynolds avowedly based all his beliefs upon Johnson's precepts; but Gainsborough was affected by his acquaintance with Johnson only in so far as he could not stop himself from copying the convulsive twitching and wriggling which afflicted the pantomath. Gainsborough cared little for the Academy, and nothing at all for those who patronised it. "Damn gentlemen," he said, "there is not such a set of enemies to a real artist in the world as they, if not kept at a proper distance." He thought of nothing but what he could see. He could say, with Constable, "There is nothing ugly; I never saw an ugly thing in my life; for let the form of an object be what it may, light, shade and perspective will always make it beautiful." In life, Gainsborough approximated to the vulgar idea of a painter; emotionally he was unstable, in company he did as he pleased, and he liked from time to time to get dead drunk among actors and musicians. His passionate love of music is among his most winning traits, and it is fascinating to picture him playing to J. C. Bach. (There must be few incidents in the history of crime so singular as that of the thief who was arrested one morning in 1775 and found to have in his pocket a watch stolen from Gainsborough and seals belonging to the youngest son of J. S. Bach.) So sweet and true is this poetical power of Gainsborough that from the most ordinary arm or leg he could produce a visual cantilena of such quality that (to refer once again to Constable) "On looking at them we find tears in our eyes and know not what brings them." Reynolds had great generosity at his command, and he tried hard to admire Gainsborough, but his lifelong horror of peculiarity was too strong, and he had little more in common with Gainsborough than with a tree-bear. Gainsborough did not wish to see painting a learned profession, or himself the companion of learned men. "I never could have patience" he said "to read poetical impossibilities, the very food of a painter, especially if he intends to be knighted in this land of roast beef, so well do serious people love froth." Gainsborough knew himself to be what he called "an original," and although it is possible to see him as a *petit Watteau*, I fancy that there is another and a more exact interpretation. He has been reproached for squandering his talent; and his *oeuvre* contains no such fine revision and renewal of style as marks that of many great European painters. Yet equally there is no dilapidation; each picture is as fluent and ornamental as the last. A pure lyrical talent of this order is so rare in English portraiture that it cannot be judged by the ordinary canon. Gainsborough once wrote to the Earl of Dartmouth in order to excuse himself from the conventional use of antique or mythological costume in portraiture. "Forgive me, my Lord" he concluded "I am but a wild goose at best." Geese are rarely such swans; many portraits painted by Gainsborough (and above all that of Lord Kilmorey)



leap instinctively and at a bound into realms of intuition unknown to other painters of his time. Yet elsewhere a certain sweet weakness of design and abuse of pictorial convention suggest some profound failure of equilibrium. Gainsborough's two daughters became insane, and he had himself marked schizoid tendencies. He rarely made an objective judgment, and in personal relations did not know the meaning of reserve. His best portraits all speak of that perfect privacy in which two solitudes approach and protect one another. Reynolds' intimacies were of another kind; for a professional portraitist they were indeed perhaps more serviceable. When confronted with such bower-birds as Kitty Fisher, he noted exactly but did not appear to covet the double playground of their sides. Even his strongest feelings were universalised. Scraps of Pliny or Tertullian could be found to correspond to them. Gainsborough had other resources; he often complained of the drudgery of painting portraits when he would rather be working at landscape; "that's damned hard" he said "my comfort is I have five viols-da-gamba, three Jayes and two Barak Normans." Gainsborough, who throughout his life successfully aspired to the condition of poetry, died in 1788; at the first day of Warren Hastings's trial he had felt, while sitting in the public gallery, a sudden coldness at the back of his neck and a swelling no larger than a sixpence; nothing could then be done against such a cancer.

## THE PROFESSIONALS

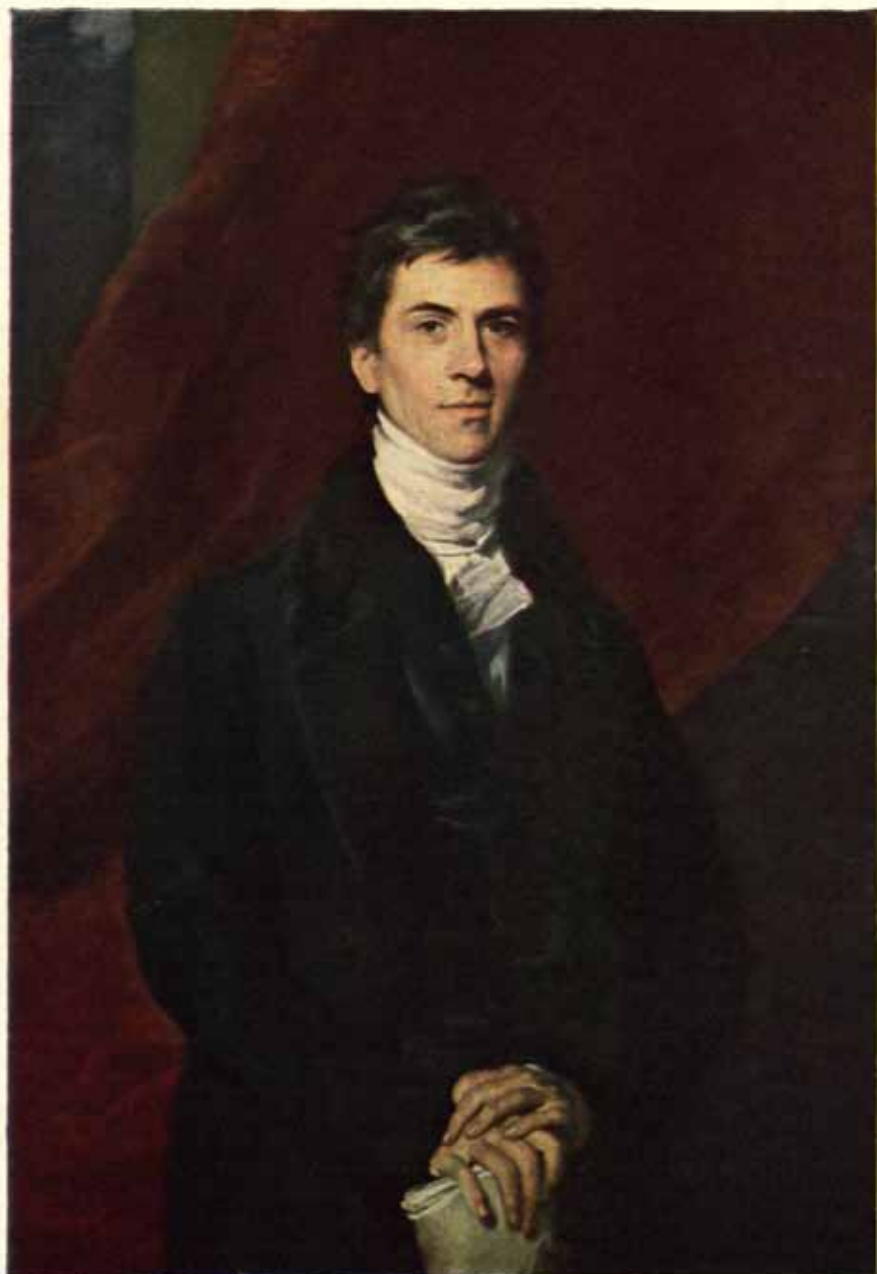
Reynolds was once asked what he thought of Opie. "Like Caravaggio, only better" he said. Opie, aided perhaps by his reputation as a Cornish original and the charm of his beautiful wife, attained at one time a success so great that he threatened to place a cannon at his door to keep people away. Like Romney, he was profoundly neurotic; in Paris, for instance, he declared that the white glare of the streets would blind him. His personal style, based upon the violent opposition of lights, is not of equal interest throughout his career, but there is a self-portrait by him in which the deliberate break-down of the conventional structure of the head makes it understandable that he should sometimes have been compared to Rembrandt.

Romney is often though mistakenly considered the peer of Reynolds and Gainsborough. As it happened he had neither the monumental quality of Reynolds nor the quicksilver sureness of hand and eye that was peculiar to Gainsborough; but he arrived at a time when a great tradition of portraiture was in full maturity, and a fund of sweetish emotion, allied to great manual facility (as a boy he had been taught to make violins) soon brought him success. He could not sustain his career on any one plane of achievement; periods of colossal ambition alternated with long



sessions of comfortless brooding. "Fear has always been my enemy" he once said "my nerves are too weak for supporting anything in public." Through his friendship with Hayley and Cowper he took to attempting classical subjects. Aeschylus, he discovered, was the painter's poet; and one of Euripides' English translators so much admired him that he once sent him a turkey by way of acknowledgement. In his attachment to Lady Hamilton, Romney was not perhaps well-advised; but it did at least produce an astonishing sequence of portraits from which it is possible to gauge exactly the physical outline and habitual deportment of this much-coveted person. Romney's drawing has a certain roly-poly quality, and it is no surprise that, on reaching Italy, he was delighted to find that Italian women wore no stays. He is a genuine minor artist, and will in time be honoured as one; meanwhile he is historically of trifling importance.

In no century but the eighteenth have we had such a triad of painters as Reynolds, Hogarth and Gainsborough. These are three planetary figures, and it is natural that in proportion to them other painters should seem to be not at all on the map. Many in fact are truly extinguished. Others have minor but genuine virtues of their own. There are even families, like that of Devis, in which painterly qualities survived through several generations; this may have been partly because they had so practical a view of their calling. One for instance cleaned the portraits at Greenwich Hall; another painted views of English seats for the services designed by Wedgwood for Catherine II of Russia; and a third went round the world as draughtsman to the East India Company. All three in their work were gay and unassuming. I should like to speak kindly of John Russell; in many ways a singular and laudable character, he became a Methodist in 1764, at the age of nineteen; he so loved to impress his discovery upon his sitters, that even when they happened to be Esquimaux, he could not forbear to proselytise. He never went out to dinner, for fear of hearing loose talk; as however he was a friend of Sheridan and Bligh of the "Bounty" he may well have heard impropriety at other times of day. These amiable traits were not reflected in his work. He was an obstinate man, and took twenty years to make a map of the stars, but in his portraits a feeble and indecisive style—derived from Rosalba Carreira—is rarely relieved by any sharpness of observation or certainty of design. A very much better painter is Johann Zoffany, who was twelve years younger than Russell. The vein of polite fantasy in which he excelled was initiated by his choice of parent; his father, a Bohemian architect, worked for that enlightened suzerain, the Prince of Tours and Taxis. Zoffany was in the best sense a toy-painter; his early training in the decoration of clock-faces with moving figures would seem in fact to have inaugurated a mode of vision in which tiny and brilliantly coloured persons embellish a doll's world. He had other subjects; in India cock-fighting and tiger-hunts; in Austria the court-chapel at Cobenzl; in England the

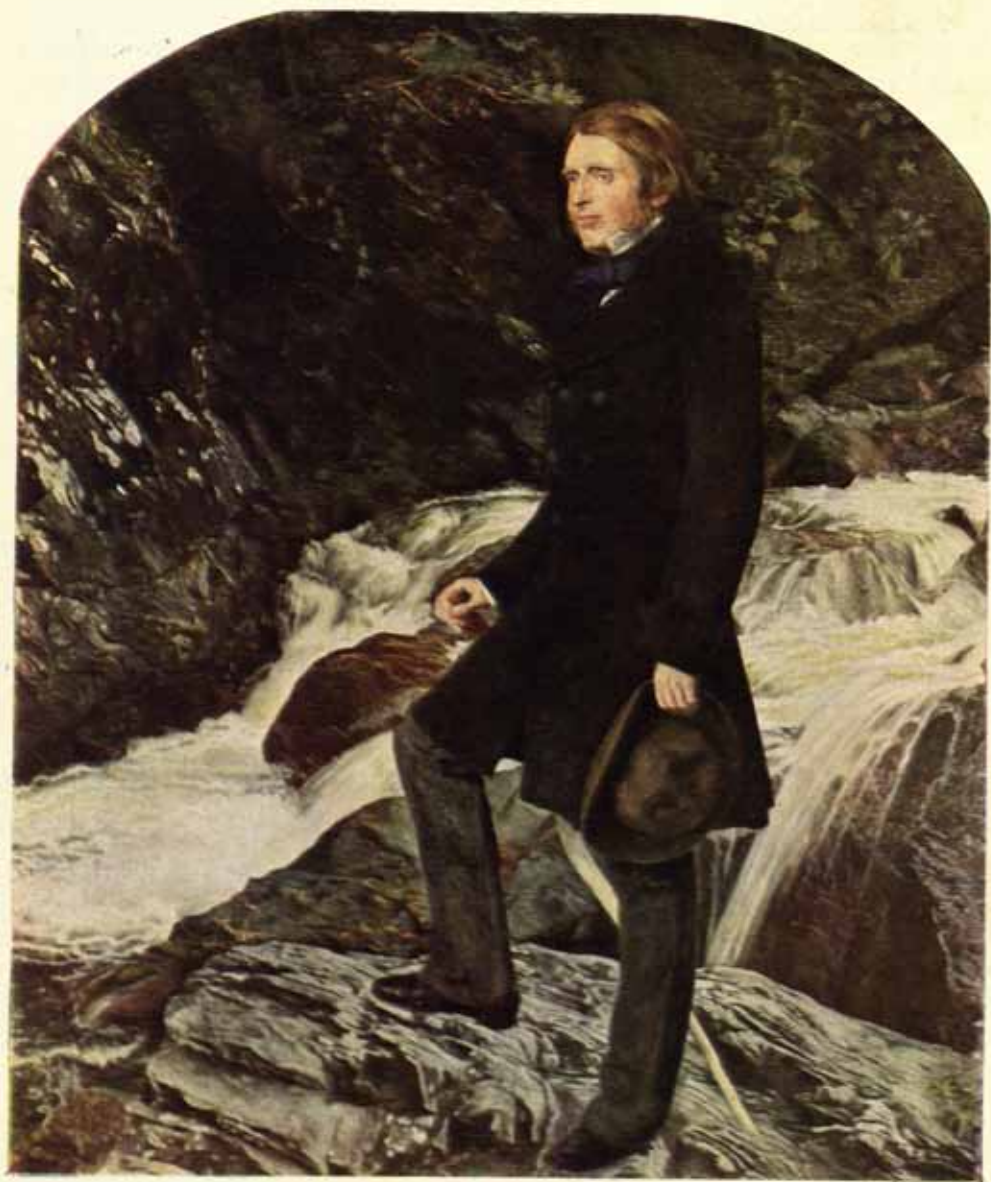


HENRY BROUGHAM, 1ST BARON BROUGHAM AND VAUX, 1778 - 1868

Oil painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence, c. 1810

*By courtesy of the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery*





JOHN RUSKIN

Oil painting by J. E. Millais, 1854

*By courtesy of Sir W. H. Dyke Acland, Bt.*

death of Captain Cook. Essentially however he remains the best frivolous decorator that this country has produced ; his command of texture and incident is so ingenious that one would like nothing better than to have an orangerie decorated by him.

It is in this period that American painters appear in England. J. S. Copley's portrait of the Sitwells is well known, and shows very well the fugacity for which this family is now familiar to us. Before he came to this country (in 1774) he found every fault with his patrons in New England; "were it not for preserving the resemblance of particular persons" he said "painting would not be known in this place." Once in England he felt bound to attempt such more general subjects as "A Youth rescued from a Shark," and should not perhaps be considered as a portraitist.

Such painters as Anthony Devis and Zoffany lived within a tradition so tight and warm (and so genial in its association) that one might easily take it to be the whole of late eighteenth century portraiture. Yet the grand style is but an incident in the long history of iconographical painting. Writers as unlike as Macaulay and Baudelaire have dwelt upon this distinction between history and romance ; reason and imagination, to Macaulay, were mutually hostile elements in historical statement ; Baudelaire opposed to David and Ingres the example of Reynolds and Lawrence who made of every portrait "un poème avec ses accessoires, plein d'espace et de rêverie." Such good portrait draughtsmen as John Downman, George Richmond and more recently Sir William Rothenstein are in themselves a parent stream in our vernacular portraiture. One could wish for no better plain statements than those made by Downman about Fox, by Richmond about Ruskin, by Rothenstein about Arthur Balfour. Richmond spoke for them all when he defined his objective as "the truth, but the truth lovingly told." Downman had the unusual habit of annotating his portraits, either with curious facts (*e.g.* of a clerical sitter "he played at backgammon from Wednesday morning till Saturday night") or with his own opinion of the subject ; "pretty" he once wrote "but knew it a great deal *too* well." In later life, as if disabused of human company, he set himself to tame the lower orders of creation ; over toads, especially, he enjoyed absolute dominion. Richmond was more delicately strung ; he had known Blake, and had heard Paganini and the dying Chopin ; he was conservative in dress, clinging to his beaver hat and high double-breasted coat by Stülz ; "where he dealt as a boy" said his grandchild "he dealt for the rest of his life." In many things a pre-Adamite Tory, he did not enjoy the happy old age which is often the reward of artists. Morbid thoughts afflicted him ; "he keeps curtsying to Death" said Cardinal Manning ; none of this appears however in his work, which went its gentle and cunning way and was to the last his prime distraction.



## THE DRAMATIST

Dr. Johnson, wishing to please a young painter, once described his work as "both noble, Sir, and probable." The qualities thus curiously paired are appropriate to portraiture, but they are not often found in company. It might be said of Lawrence, for instance, that his work is more noble than probable. Vitality and poise are not really so common as he makes out. Yet all painters have a natural disposition to stress the qualities most nearly akin to their own view of life, and it came easily to Lawrence to see each of his sitters at the very height of his trajectory. The truth for which he sought was dramatic, rather than anatomical. He was himself a capital amateur actor, and his splendid person and conspicuous social talents, allied to no powerful sense of social responsibility, maintained him throughout his life in a state of constant excitement at the habits of the great world. He was one of the few painters who have been entirely happy as a portraitist. People were his subject, and his object, and the only charge upon his attention. He had in the highest degree that sense of occasion which gives to the simplest meeting between two persons the character of an adventure. Such an approach demands equipment of an exceptional order; and this Lawrence had, for he is the best natural rhetorician of all our painters. No portraits are higher in key than his. British portraits are generally low in tone; assertion upon such a scale was something quite new. Lawrence and Wellington for instance, were ideally matched; the nose alone ("the hook" said Byron "where he suspends the world") must have seemed to Lawrence one of the great heroic phenomena on which his talent fed. He excelled with positive and finite characters, and in his enthusiasm for these developed mannerisms of posture and facial type which are admittedly extreme. So brilliant is the light on the brows of men that one could imagine them lit from within, as if by a gasolier; and often his women are so transformed by the glitter of some unwonted excitement as to present uniformly the vast liquid eyes and "bouches entr'ouvertes" by which Delacroix was held captive. These exaggerations did not pass unremarked; his contemporaries noted that in one case his sitter appeared hydrocephalous, that in another the cartilage of the nose was enlarged against nature, and that in a third the nervous irritation of age was given quite painful fidelity. Sometimes again his fondness for panorama outran all reason; it was well enough to slip Eton College Chapel into the perspective from Queen Charlotte's window, but in one portrait of Wellington the Duke is seen against a near-view of St. Paul's and outlined in a triumphal archway of unknown provenance; topography, it was felt, could not be treated so. Lawrence liked to adduce in his favour a passage from Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which poets are urged to imitate those good portraitists who, while preserving the likeness of their sitters, yet contrived subtly to ennoble them. His tastes were not



SELF-PORTRAIT

Charcoal and chalk drawing by Samuel Palmer, 1805-1881

exclusively grand ; he was happy at times to loiter on the jetty of some deserted watering-place, and in the evening to read aloud from Jane Austen. Few men can have been more deeply worldly than Metternich ; yet when he and Lawrence were constantly together at Rome, they enjoyed most such primary pleasures as a visit by moonlight to the Colosseum. For no other artist, again, would Castlereagh have offered his garden at Aix-la-Chapelle as a workroom. Lawrence lived always near to the great sources of power, and the infection of these is quite plain in his work ; yet in his personal affairs he seems to have suffered from some malady of the will. So marked in fact is this that he seems to epitomise that *impuissance d'aimer* with which readers of *Armance* and *Adolphe* are familiar. He was amorous by impulse rather than by conviction, and his indecision was in one case so cruelly extreme as to bring about the death of his betrothed. He lived in many ways the double life of an actor ; but at his best, at the full height of his nervous and exuberant style, one might say of him, as Mallarmé said of another artist, that he was "un Monsieur rare, prince en quelque chose."



## FIVE FRONTIER RAIDERS

Since Lawrence died, there has been no full-time portraitist of the first rank. There have been fine individual portraits by Landseer and Leighton, Turner and Maclise; there is even an admirable self-portrait by William Hazlitt; but no great painter has given his whole life to portraiture, and it is unlikely that one ever will again. Painters have attempted the grand style, but in looking at their work, and recalling the splendour from which it derives, one is reminded of nothing so much as of those desolate Tunisian hollows in which the fleets of Atlantis used formerly to ride. Great portraits, in the nineteenth century, are incidental to other work. It would be difficult for instance to find painters more aloof from the world of professional portraiture than Constable, Etty, Palmer, Stevens and Keene; yet each of these has to his credit portraits in which something was said that had not been said before. It is in them rather than in the well-favoured but unoriginal work of Raeburn and Hayter, Harlow and Shee, that the interest of this period resides.

Constable disliked painting portraits, and did as few of them as he could. Portraits moreover were usually commissioned by boobies—"chubby-faced boys who have had an opportunity of running all over Italy but know nothing of nature or art, having been brought up at Oxford." It was such as these who stickled for "the elevated and noble walks of art, while preferring the shaggy posteriors of a satyr to the moral feeling of a landscape." Even the study of the academic masters was fraught with bodily peril; "there is nothing so bad as the air of a large apartment, as it never changes itself, and always flies to the heart, liver and lights. I was nearly killed, copying Sir Joshua at Lady Dysart's." In spite of all this his large group of the Bridges family, which included ten figures and was done at the age of twenty-eight, will bear close inspection; yet he was happy to abandon portraiture—"at last I can stand before a 6 ft. canvas with a mind at ease, thank God." He thought nothing of the world. Lady Beechey's assiduous trawling in high society would have been unintelligible to him, and he was so far from sharing the affluence of Reynolds and Kneller that in 1817 (the year in which *Weymouth Bay* was painted) his professional income did not seem to the Inland Revenue Officers to constitute a living. What he said of Wilson might be said of himself "he walks with Milton and Linnaeus . . . and is one of those appointed to show the world what exists in nature but was not known till his time." This is as true of his portraits of his wife as of *Dedham Vale* or *The Hay-Wain*; nothing is more moving than to see this great landscape-painter at work upon the magical country of a familiar and long-coveted face. Historically these portraits are very far in advance of the practice of his time; one of them might be by Manet, and in another the assurance and force of the modelling give to the human skull the magnificence proper



MOTHER AND CHILD

MRS. YOUNG MITCHELL AND HER DAUGHTER MAY MARGARET, 1849-1850  
Oil painting by Alfred Stevens, 1818-1875

to this subtlest form of animate life. The aristocratic mannerism enjoined by Reynolds was supported both by Reynolds' own character and view of life, and by the structure of society in his time; but by 1830 new generations had grown up, the Whigs were losing their hold upon the world, and down upon the ears of both painters and writers there came the first sweet twang of that "prime romantic image," the Aeolian Harp. Reynolds had hoped that in the coming age a painter, "dowered with full knowledge of the Italian example, would attend only to the invariable, the great, and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in human nature." In the event his teaching was discarded or abused, and in its place a national style very different from that which he had envisaged began to flower at a deeper level of consciousness. Constable wrote always with a fine economy of style, and never more so than when speaking of what was nearest to him. "I have a kingdom of my own" he said "both fertile and populous



—my landscape and my childrena . . .” ; and of his work he said “it teaches me to value, if I may say so, my own dignity of mind ; above all things this is of more consequence than Gentlemen or Ladies can well imagine, as its influence is very apparent in painters’ works. Sometimes the *éclat* of other artists occasionally crosses my mind, but I look to what I possess and find ample compensation.”

William Etty was at one time (between 1807-1808) a pupil of Lawrence. This was a brief and unnatural alliance. No longer, as in previous centuries, was portraiture a heritable affair. Nor indeed had Etty any appetite for it. “There you seem at home” said Fuseli, on seeing an early figure drawing of Etty ; and there he was in fact so substantially at home that we have no figure-painter in the same class. Gentle and xenophobe by nature, he had not the gift of speech so often accorded to painters ; colour, for instance, he spoke of as “that rainbow-yested Dame.” He went abroad from policy, but took no pleasure in it ; his favourite kettle and a year’s supply of tea were always part of his luggage, and his battles with *douaniers* make monotonous reading. Venice he acknowledged as the prime school of European painting ; and when he slipped and fell into the water there, some simple Latins called him “Canal-Etti.” He persisted in these odious tours and attained in time some local celebrity in Italy. In 1823 Rossini went to see his work ; no exchange between the two is recorded. Like Flaxman, he was born at York, and so cherished his native city that he would oppose the least hint of change in its appearance. Were the Minster in danger, he would resist, if need be, the unanimous Committee of Taste, with the Pugins and Barry thrown in for good measure. It was at York that he liked to paint such occasional portraits as that of John Camidge, a local organist ; warming to the unfamiliar task, he gave to this broad Schubertian phiz an almost sinister force and definition. Here one may see, as it were in afterglow, the great Venetian tradition once more at home in England.

Alfred Stevens is of all British artists the least well known in proportion to his talent. In an age of easel painting he painted few pictures, giving his time instead to the vast decorative conceptions by which St. Paul’s and others of our public buildings might now be embellished. Stevens knew Italy very well ; he had been sent there at the age of sixteen, alone and with sixty pounds to keep him until he could keep himself. Like Nicolas Poussin, he lived almost as a vagrant ; he was thrown into political prisons and saw a whole village stricken with cholera ; where other artists had danced at the Palazzo Borghese, he went in danger of his life. Naturally a decorative and monumental artist, thinking with equal freedom in terms of painting, sculpture or architecture, he retained, in his few portraits, the prodigious physical thrust which makes him a great sculptor. Sculptor’s drawings are often lumpy and thick in the joints, as if the artist were lost without some resistance from his material. With Stevens this is never so ;



SELF-PORTRAIT

Oil painting by Charles Samuel Keene, 1823-1891

so passionately does he undertake the intellectual and emotional effort involved in the full spatial apprehension of form that his least drawing lies dense and bulbous upon the page. There are no fugitive visions in Stevens' work; his hands fell always directly upon his task, and as a

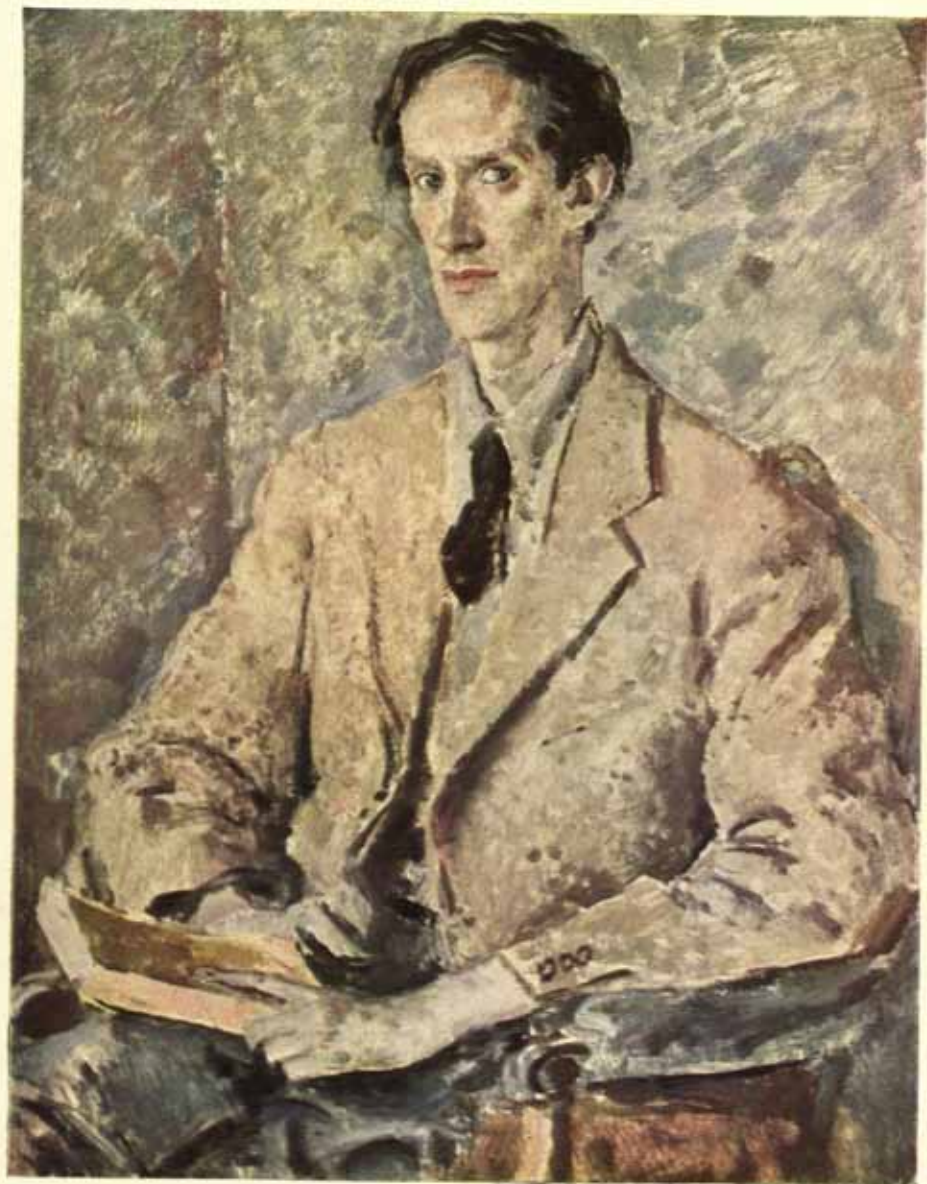


native of Blandford he had every chance of seeing how the first instruments of communal life—houses, shops, a bridge and a church—could be enhanced by fine work and a sense of continuous style. Few painters with so great a reserve of emotion have evolved for themselves so grave and impersonal a style; painting as fine as that of the heads and hands in his *Mother and Child*—painting of this considered and monumental quality is rare in British art.

Fuseli once likened Rubens' women to "hillocks of roses." Samuel Palmer rarely attempted the human face; but just as he liked to personify his favourite great trees, speaking of their great sinews and muscular belly and shoulders, so one may feel that in drawing his own head he had in mind some "mild reposing breadth of lawn and hill," with a harvest moon to point each crevice and tuft. Charles Keene did not see at all the same world that Palmer saw; he was profoundly urban, and thought mostly in terms of men and women, hansoms and gaslights, taprooms and evenings at the music-hall. Many of his jokes (he worked for many years for *Punch*) no longer seem funny; but his drawing, as quick and light as Guys and with a much greater range of human perception, can never have seemed better. The passage of generations has in fact added to Keene's stature, for one can now see in him the original of those sedulous students of banal life, Walter Sickert and his admirers. Keene had not, as Sickert had, the knowledge and example of a great French tradition of observation and analysis; he simply drew what he knew. For all that, his little self-portrait, by its easy assurance and seeming nonchalance of style, might well be mistaken for a sketch of Degas.

## ST. GEORGE AND MR. WATTS

In general, then, it is in the occasional portrait that the nineteenth century excels. Sculptors without employment and weather-bound romantic artists turned to the portrait as an unusual task, each leaving behind him one or a few statements which had not been made before. A properly constituted ordnance survey of Victorian portraiture could not however but place G. F. Watts as the chief eminence of his time. Watts disliked his surname, thinking that it sounded silly, and not grand enough for the vocation which he assigned to himself; similarly he did not care much for painting portraits. Moral rather than social entrenchment was his aim; this he put most pungently when in 1885 he was offered a baronetcy. "St. George rather than Sir George" he said. He wished people to think of his work as "a series of reflections, mainly upon ethics." For this, portraiture seemed to him insufficient. To us however his portraits seem to reflect exactly the moral preoccupation and sessions of honest doubt



THE LORD DAVID CECIL

Oil painting by Augustus John, 1935

*By courtesy of the Artist and the Trustees of the Tate Gallery*





JULIA STRACHEY

Oil painting by Lawrence Gowing, 1943

*By courtesy of the Artist*

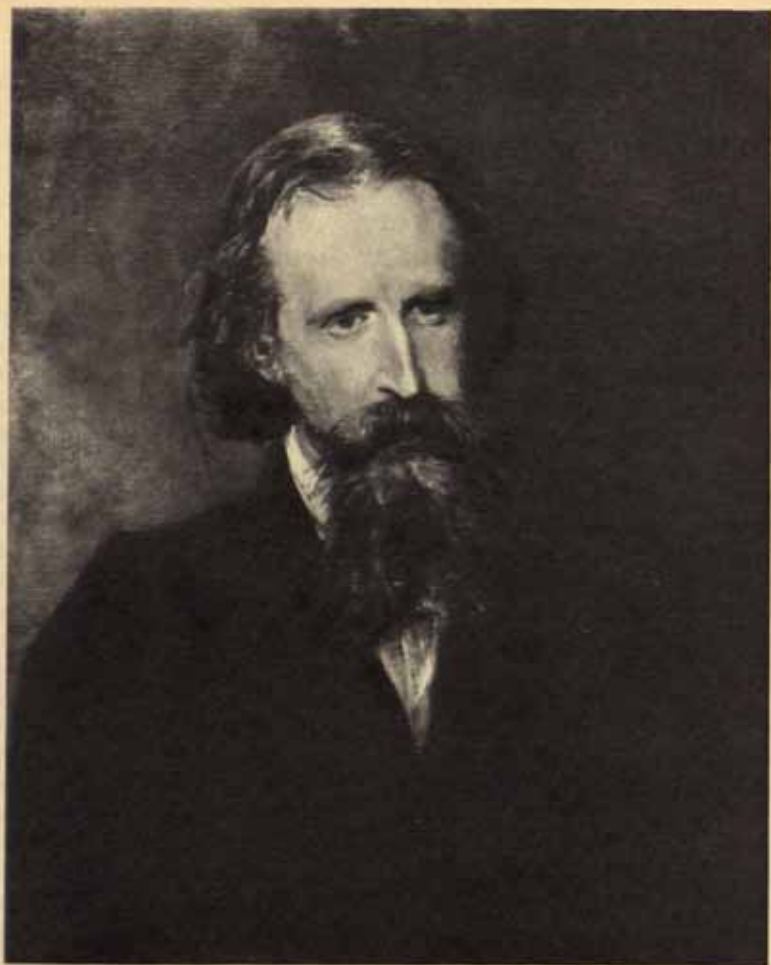
which made up his life ; the subject pieces, by contrast, are creaking absurdities. His time was one of great complacency in material things, and its genial patronage of the past is reflected in Watts' work ; he alone among the successors of Reynolds has gathered to himself something of the grand style. Like Reynolds, he deeply admired the great Venetians, and thought them, in fact, akin to Pheidias. He could never quite surrender himself to Raphael, whose drapery he found "academic, and like new blanket." He set little store by direct observation of the world, and his work rarely gives that sense of heightened vitality which is the gift of great painting. His portraits please chiefly by their obstinate penetration and shrewd assessment of character ; "you have made me like a mad labourer" said Carlyle. He achieved a remarkable congruity with his time, and was always of it, and not before it. Painters, in his view, could do anything ; when Leighton died, he said "He would have been greater as a statesman than as an artist." His moral influence was acknowledged not only by such familiars as Gladstone, to whom he had opened his heart at breakfast, but by Coquelin and Mazzini. Everyone came to his house, and a lot of things happened there. Sir James Herschel saw a comet in the garden ; Hallé and Joachim played Beethoven in the drawing-room ; Tennyson broke a long silence at table by saying that "Legs of mutton should be cut in wedges." His circle rivalled that of Reynolds for intellectual brilliance, and it is a relief to find that he knew not only George Eliot, Sidgwick, Leslie Stephen, Jowett, Meredith, Tennyson and Maitland but also a few freaks and idlers. His wife assures us that he enjoyed the company of "Hiram Powers, the American sculptor, a hardheaded reasonable man, yet latterly entirely converted to spiritualism." More congenial still was Sir Charles Newton, Her Majesty's Consul at Mitylene, who lay all day in a cave by the seashore, reading Shelley. (Mrs. Watts may not however be always the best guide to her husband's friends ; one wonders for instance if the Prinsep family relished being called "artistic to their finger-tips".) Watts himself spoke of the "bounding line" as a governing principle in design ; but in his own work the tendency of the line is less vigorous. Things appeared to him always in a melancholy light ; no one is ever quite well in his world, and it is wholly in character that he once reduced an audience of naval ratings to tears by his performance of "Tom Bowling." George Moore was not a learned critic, and could not tell Fuppo from Foppa, but he understood his own time, and what he says of Watts (that he strove too obviously to invent something that would not go out of fashion) is true. To Moore, the friend of Manet, Watts' pictures appeared to be painted "with woolwork and gum." To us, this painter's predicament is a real and painful one, and we cannot but admire his long struggle to recapture, in the era of Krupps and Joseph Chamberlain, the antique grandeur of life in a vanished world. James Russell Lowell, in his enthusiasm for Watts' fine portrait of Leslie Stephen, devised the



adjective "Sir Josh-surpassing." This is not an invention which one would wish to enjoy general currency, and it might be difficult to justify it, as a question of fact ; but such portraits as these put Watts squarely in the front rank of our painters.

## THE AGE OF THE GERMAN CIGAR

Portraiture is nothing, if it does not enlarge one's knowledge of the world ; it can otherwise have only a local importance, serving to maintain a family fetish or to break into silences at table. The routine portraits of the nineteenth century are not usually regarded in any very kindly light ; a great tradition was proving insufficient to maintain an enfeebled style. Macclise absorbed Coleridge, Talleyrand, Castlereagh and Soane ; Millais encircled Shaftesbury, Gladstone, Disraeli and Sterndale Bennett ; and Herkomer, whom nothing deterred, made away with Tennyson, Wagner, Stratford de Redcliffe and the assembled Directors of Krupps. Herkomer's portraits, as has been remarked, are like German cigars. The period, elsewhere so conspicuous for energy and aspiration, does not always reflect these qualities in its portraiture. Understanding and sympathy have recently lifted Churchyard and Calvert, J. F. Lewis and Arthur Hughes clear of the general disrepute in which their periods languish. Even Dadd has now the status of a *petit maître*, and Birket Foster is more expensive than Claude. Nothing of the kind has happened to those who, unsustained by personal talent of the first order or an assured tradition such as kept Raeburn happily afloat, yet strove to maintain themselves in the gigantic mould enjoined by their time. Millais, for instance, cannot have been seriously considered for many years. His lyrical gift, as true as could be wished upon any young artist, was systematically deformed in obedience to public demand. He was not a hero and did not pretend to be one. "A physician sugars his pill" he said "and I must do the same." He retained much of the warm and impulsive character which had saved him from the usual fate of the Wunderkind. Holman Hunt, for instance, when leaving on his journey to Palestine, was surprised to see Millais salute him through the window of the already moving train with a farewell volley of such sandwiches, buns, and elderly pies as the station buffet could offer. Millais as a young man was much championed by Ruskin, and in the summer of 1853 he accompanied the Ruskins on a visit to the Highlands. It rained a great deal, and Millais painted a portrait of Ruskin, and Mrs. Ruskin progressed an appreciable way towards becoming Mrs. Millais. Ruskin's moods were not barometric ; his plaids kept out the rain and he did not in any case think much about his wife. Indeed he prolonged their stay in order "to keep Millais up to the pre-Raphaelite degree of finish." The waterfall before which he posed was to be "a revolution of landscape



SIR LESLIE STEPHEN

Oil painting by George Frederick Watts, 1817-1904

painting." For Millais such falls had a singular attraction ; one, seventy feet high, affected him so strongly that he could not pass it without undressing and jumping in. Ruskin loved to stand for hours above the torrent, and forced Millais to render every detail. "I have got maps" he said "of all the lichens on the rocks and the bubbles painted in the foam." Millais also had his maps, and it is for the face of Ruskin, as much as for the fall of Glenfilas, that his portrait is memorable.



## THE LAST OF THE ORIGINALS

Watts was the last of the great bourgeois portraitists ; so absolute was his conformity with his time that one may readily excuse the German historian who has written that our two best Victorian painters were "James Watts and John Stuart Millais." Such painters never spoke out of time ; Sir William Richmond for instance was Gladstone's confidant and accompanied him to Monte Cassino ; and Watts exulted at the outbreak of the South African war, envying others "the splendid experience of the battlefield, compared with which every other experience must be tame." Society was taken (and only too literally) at its face value. This happily is no longer the case, and for more than one generation the general idea of an artist has been fulfilled by a legendary rogue male, in the person of Mr. Augustus John. It is the measure of Mr. John's stature that his work continues to excite or irritate us, although his earliest pictures and those of many of his contemporaries have by now acquired a fixed place in the history of British painting. He has recently published some fragments from his autobiography. Readers of these Daedalean morsels will have noted in them exactly those qualities which distinguish Mr. John as a painter. His is a world in which the prime reaction to all experience is one of bodily wonder and excitement. Such commonplace things as inevitably occur from time to time are transformed by the choleric abandon and animal resource with which Mr. John has raced through life. He himself is never commonplace ; even his silence, as W. H. Davies records, has a terrible quality. Himself sanguine in temperament and more than normally proficient at all forms of physical and mental activity, he has never had occasion to moderate the delighted and sulphurous gaze with which he first looked out upon the world. His natural talents, as great as any painter could desire, have not been developed in any very dogged or sedulous manner. Mr. John is the least classical of artists and would seem in all matters of style to have followed rather than opposed his first and natural bias. His work therefore has not the support of any one great tradition, and it is interesting in proportion as he has something important to say. Mr. John has notably more mother-wit than most portraitists, and at his best his portraits, with their prodigious assurance of design, and some also of his portrait drawings, with their rare and instinctive felicity of line, can stand in any company. He has persuaded a great many amateurs to join him in his admiration for Romany bucks and Amazonian fisher-girls ; but those who find, as I do, that this subject is quickly fatigued will take greater pleasure in the many fine portraits which are scattered among his enormous output. Mr. John has always sought, when travelling, to visit some expiring and hierarchical tribe—whether in western Ireland or in Catalonia, or simply among the gypsies encamped on the outskirts of Cambridge. It is just such a learned and erratic course that he has set



AUGUSTUS JOHN  
Oil painting by Sir William Rothenstein

for himself in painting, and his work is perhaps less an absolute creation in itself than a commentary upon a life of gay and piratical experiment. Mr. John has placed us all in his debt by his revival of the heroic and ornamental style in portraiture; conversely we are all the poorer if in recent years he seems to have become an extraordinary man to whom an increasing number of ordinary things has happened.



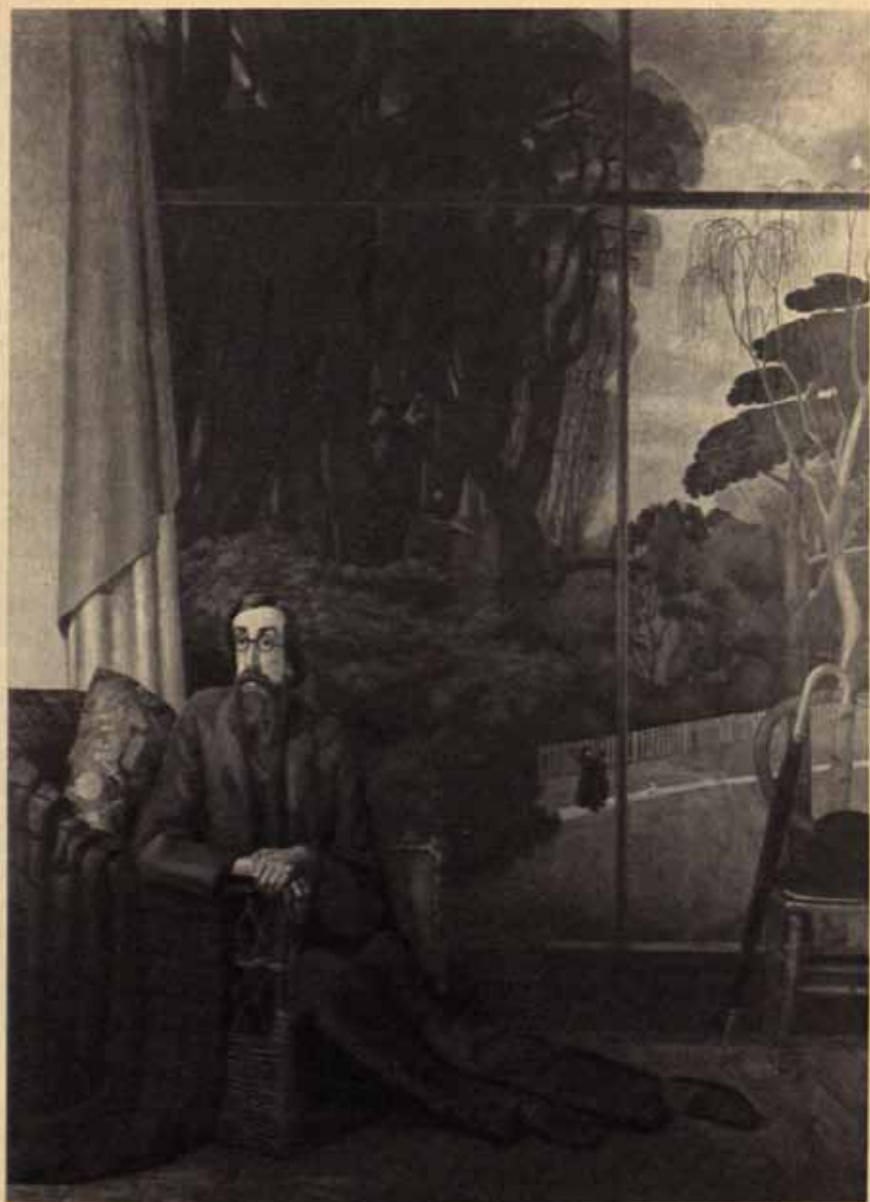


W. J. TURNER

Oil and wash drawing by Sir William Nicholson

### SOME GIFTS FOR TO-MORROW

During the war it was more than ordinarily difficult to judge of contemporary painters, or of those recently dead. One lives as if in a basement, seeing only those who happen to pass immediately by, and seeing even them from an unkindly angle. Mr. John by the vast span of his career (he was painting admirably when Lautrec and Pissarro were still alive) encourages us to telescope unduly the period of the last forty years. It was not a great time for formal portraiture, but many good portraits have been painted. Some portraits by J. B. Yeats, father of the poet, Mr. Henry Lamb's portrait of Lytton Strachey, Mark Gertler's portrait of his Mother, Sir William Nicholson's portrait of Mr. W. J. Turner, Mr. Wyndham Lewis's portrait of Ezra Pound, some portraits of Mrs. Anthony Devas by her husband, a recent portrait of Vanessa Bell by Duncan Grant—these are serious pieces; future historians will be grateful also to Sir William Rothenstein for his invariably shrewd and economical assessment of his many hundred sitters. But in so cursory a survey, to be singled out is almost more invidious than to be omitted, and I may perhaps be allowed to pass directly to the group of young artists who seem to me of quite special importance to portraiture.



LYTTON STRACHEY  
Oil painting by Henry Lamb



"La bêtise n'est pas mon fort." This epigraph from Paul Valéry might serve as a motto for William Coldstream's work. Coldstream is a young man, and his hatred of picturesque convention has enforced upon him a style so grave and puritanical that his pictures are sometimes found dull. The economy of his palette is certainly extreme; the limitations of the spectrum are not thrust upon the spectator, and of the "plain living and thick painting" enjoined by Sickert, the second at least is never in evidence. His very name is apt. Each of his works is at once a promise for the future and an act of piety towards certain great painters of the past. He is one of those few living painters who give any evidence of being able to think; feeling is to him less important than the quality of feeling. He and his school are not prodigies, and they concern themselves usually with simple objects—apples, or an oil stove, or two hands enfolding a cat. Within these limits (which are those also of Chardin) the assurance and gravity of their work are deeply impressive. It has also a certain moral bias which places it squarely in a grand line of European argument; for it is ultimately concerned less with the full expression of individual talents than with the restatement of certain first principles about appearances. Great talents in our time have burnt themselves out in pursuit of decadent romantic styles; and the importance of Coldstream and his school, the fact of their admitted purpose, is out of all proportion to their current achievement. He himself has painted many portraits, and in some of them the idea of human dignity shines out as it did from time to time in the seventeenth century. Not all his associates have his horror of personal display. Victor Pasmore for instance is more obviously gifted, and his pictures nearly always contain some incident of melting enchantment; yet their general structure is often rambling and flimsy. Neither Pasmore nor Claude Rogers is at heart a portraitist; Graham Bell, who was recently killed, would have been one, had he pleased. The youngest of this group is Lawrence Gowing, and it is he who has the most aptitude for portraiture. His judgments are not final, as Coldstream's are, for he is more compassionate, and has not the ruthlessness of design which is among Coldstream's arresting qualities. Portraiture may be said to be founded upon respect for other people; and in this, as in his attitude to painting itself, Gowing proceeds according to the absolute standards of value upon which the European classical tradition is based. It is of course rash to speak of contemporaries in the terms normally used only of figures from history; yet equally it should be possible to judge them by a scale based upon the records of previous achievement. Mr. John has shown us that the grand style of heroic rhetoric and personal myth can still be a powerful intoxicant; it may now be that younger artists will prove the validity of a quite opposite style—that of the plain statement of appearances. It is in this belief that a short book on British portrait painters may perhaps be allowed to end with an affectionate salvo for Lawrence Gowing.

# BRITISH ROMANTIC ARTISTS

BY

JOHN PIPER

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## POETRY AND THE PICTURESQUE

ROMANTIC art deals with the particular. The particularisation of Bewick about a bird's wing, of Turner about a waterfall or a hill town, or of Rossetti about Elizabeth Siddal, is the result of a vision that can see in these things something significant beyond ordinary significance : something that for a moment seems to contain the whole world ; and, when the moment is past, carries over some comment on life or experience besides the comment on appearances.

Abiding also in the romantic painting of this country is the sense of drama in atmosphere, in the weather and the seasons. As a race we have always been conscious of the soft atmosphere and the changeable climate of our sea-washed country, where the air is never quite free from mist, where the light of the sun is more often pale and pearly than it is fiery. This atmosphere has sunk into our souls. It has affected our art as it affects our life. But it has not resulted in congenital softness of vision. It has inspired the sharp-outlined visions of Blake as well as the vague adumbrations of Whistler's nocturnes.

In poetry, the kind of romantic vision that the painters have since developed is inherent in Shakespeare and Milton. The foothold of classical art in Britain has always been uneasy. Even in the eighteenth century, when it seemed surest, romance by no means died. Even the most august Augustan, Pope, wrote :

But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,  
Long-sounding isles, and intermingled graves,  
Black melancholy sits, and round her throws  
A death-like silence and a dread repose :  
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
Shades ev'ry flower, and darkens ev'ry green,  
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods  
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.



And it was at this very time that individual artists began to break the bounds of the confined area of romance that was permitted them—began to question the validity of the joint-stock romance in which they had been dealing. The imposed classical form quickened the dormant romantic spirit.

Nature until this time had been taken very much for granted as a background to the central theme of the painter—the theme of religion or history: national or family history. But in the early eighteenth century the philosophy of nature was already in the air. Soon it was being aggrandised by the more adventurous spirits into something like a philosophy of life itself.

By the end of the century Turner was beginning to believe, with Wordsworth, that painting, like poetry, "is the image of man and nature," that it should express "an overbalance of pleasure," "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," and that it should "illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement." (Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*.) This was the romantic victory.

A portent during the battle was the publication in 1756 of Burke's essay on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, an attempt to recognise absolute standards by which emotions and sentiments in the face of nature might be judged. In one way Burke slowed up the development, by enlarging the classical bounds to contain the growing child of romance; keeping the classical proportions. He was a tool of the period, as were those architects who incorporated Gothic halls or drawing-rooms in Palladian country mansions. But the Gothic Revival was not to be contained and pinned down by the classicists. The new influences in architecture, in painting and in poetry were too strong.

Landscape gardens had their vistas complicated by clumps of trees that were planted to break up the older formal avenues, and to screen newly-built ruins—ruins whose shape was classical enough, but whose windows were foliated and whose turrets crocketed. Landscape artists growing up beside poets like Gray and Cowper were conscious above all of the seasonal and the rustic; of blue skies with flying clouds, of thunder and drenching rain, and of distant trees glimpsed through closely arching trees. They were conscious, as Thomson had taught them to be in *The Seasons*, of sunlight and moonlight and the elements not as symbols, but as dramatic realities.

While, rising slow,  
Blank in the leaden-colour'd East, the Moon  
Wears a wan circle round her blunted horns.  
Seen through the turbid, fluctuating air,  
The stars obtuse emit a shivering ray;  
Or frequent seem to shoot athwart the gloom,  
And long behind them trail the whitening blaze.  
Snatch'd in short eddies, plays the wither'd leaf;  
And on the flood the dancing feather floats.

Horace Walpole chronicled the romantic advance (he began to gothicise his Strawberry Hill villa in 1750) and novelists as well as painters and poets imitated the alarming, if stagy, apparitions in his haunted *Castle of Otranto*.

Taste was widening, if not deepening. Tourists towards the end of the century set out in increasing numbers to discover the English countryside, to look at the English landscape with the new eye, taking in their pockets Burke on the *Sublime*, and a new work by the Rev. William Gilpin on the *Picturesque*. They sorted the "correct" views from the "incorrect" ones, recording the right ones in amateur line and wash. They noted the newly-built ruins with approval, and the picturesque villas for discerning gentle-folk in landscaped parks.

The Rev. William Gilpin travelled through the countryside of England and Scotland on horseback, cataloguing the picturesque views he saw in a series of *Tours*, illustrated with aquatints. (His activities were later satirised by William Combe and Rowlandson in the *Tours of Dr. Syntax*, which became as popular as the *Tours* themselves.)

In 1792 Gilpin published *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* which helped to commercialise landscape romance and put elegant rules at the disposal of amateurs with water-colour boxes. Gilpin was a populariser, and his books were only a few among the many treatises on landscape painting, and recipe books for students, that began to pour from the presses. In 1794, a writer with rather more conscience, Sir Uvedale Price, published *An Essay on the Picturesque*, which Sir Walter Scott said converted the age to his views. Its general argument was in favour of the self-sufficiency of natural beauty, urging less reliance on artificiality and formality in landscape gardening as in painting. "According to the idea I have formed of it," he wrote, "intricacy in landscape might be defined as that disposition of objects which, by a partial and uncertain concealment, excites and nourishes curiosity." He showed the rising interest in the close view of landscape details. The self-conscious youth of naturalism is described in many of his passages, such as this one: "In these hollow lanes and bye roads all the leading features, and a thousand circumstances of detail, promote the natural intricacy of the ground; the turns are sudden and unprepared; the banks sometimes broken and abrupt; sometimes smooth, and gently but not uniformly sloping; now wildly over-hung with thickets of trees and bushes; now loosely skirted with wood . . . The border of the road itself, shaped by the mere tread of passengers and animals, is as unconstrained as the footsteps that formed it: even the tracks of the wheels (for no circumstance is indifferent) contribute to the picturesque effect of the whole."

This was the theoretical view of romantic landscape current when Girtin, Turner and Constable were young men of twenty.





JAMES WARD. Gordale Scar. Oil

*"I stayed there, not without shuddering, a quarter of an hour ; and thought my trouble richly repaid, for the impression will last with life."*—Gray

## SUBLIME LANDSCAPE

RICHARD WILSON was thirty-four when he went to Italy in 1749. Caravaggio, ancestor of sublime painting, had been dead for well over a hundred years, Salvator Rosa for more than seventy, Claude for more than fifty. Magnasco, painter of diabolical fantasies, died in the year that Wilson arrived in Rome. Italy, scorched by the heat of the Renaissance, was conscious above all of its own disintegration but still achieved greatness through the effort to be worthy of past standards. It was conscious of its ruins—palatial ruins beside silting canals, gorgeous ruins among rioting trees, insecure ruins on craggy precipices. Richard Wilson, Welsh and taciturn (instead of going into raptures about the sublimity of a giant Italian waterfall he shouted "Well done, water, by God !"), was deeply affected by his five Italian years. Later he painted Wales in a Roman light ; he painted Harlech Castle dominating the Bay of Baiae. And in time he



GAINSBOROUGH. Landscape with a Bridge. Oil  
A romantic painting done towards the end of Gainsborough's life

showed English painters the salutary pleasures of exploring romantic hollows and folds in hills, damp valleys and distant exciting mountains screened by foreground trees. Wilson aroused in this country a new pictorial sentiment that Thomas Gainsborough varied and enriched. Gainsborough in his early landscapes (*Cornard Wood* was begun when he was still at school) showed a feeling for particular places and pieces of country; he looked for the character of a landscape in the Dutch manner, and commented on it as he would comment on the character of a head or a figure. This naturalism was poetical rather than romantic; and it was a kind of poetical painting that did not satisfy him for long. Soon, in a long series of monochrome and charcoal drawings, he was laboriously moving trees, bridges, farmcarts and rustic figures hither and thither in his trial compositions until he found the position that seemed to suggest "the Wonder of Divine Wisdom." He was picture-making; producing pleasing effects—as one moves props about on





ALEXANDER COZENS. *The Cloud*. Water-colour

a stage or as Capability Brown, at the same time, was moving lakes and avenues and trees in gentlemen's parks. But it is Gainsborough's latest landscape work that shows genuine romantic feeling. In *Landscape with a Bridge* the form perfectly embodies the feeling. This is no longer picture-making: it is vision and experience finding a particular outlet. Here is none of that generalisation that led Richard Wilson to remark that Gainsborough's trees "looked like fried parsley." Here distant mountains, muffled by mist, lie away beyond a winding tree-cushioned valley. Bridge, cottages and towering rock in the foreground seem the natural corollaries. The sparkling light is a foretaste of Constable's later conquests. The whole is painted with a warmth, a ground-bass of feeling, which—revolutionary as it was at the time—is deeply felt and deeply human.

Alexander Cozens, a poetical painter rather than a true romantic, may well have influenced Gainsborough. Notes he scribbled on drawings (such as "Intermixture of sky with landscape . . .") and his careful memoranda about scenes and colours show his dissatisfaction with recipes and conventionalities. And his "blottesque" drawings—with ink or wash boldly splashing in a composition—show him groping into the future of landscape art. Turner said that a certain landscape called *Hannibal Crossing the Alps* by Alexander Cozens' son, John Robert Cozens, taught him more than any



P. J. de LOUTHERBOURG. Iron works at Coalbrookdale. Aquatint

other landscape. Between them, father and son produced a body of work that contained the germ of a great deal that was to follow—the germ of the true romanticism of Girtin and Turner, the atmosphere of Constable, the careful topography and the textural detail of Dayes, Grimm and Cotman.

The sublime found pictorial expression in the paintings of Philip James de Louthembourg. He specialised in theatrical landscapes, and worked for David Garrick at Drury Lane on scenery. He painted pictures of shipwrecks, storms and battles, and he invented the *Eidophusikon*. This was a small stage in a theatre on which, instead of plays, were shown effects of light and movement in natural scenes: thunder and lightning, the changes of cloud forms, the tumbling of waves and a shipwreck off the Dorset coast.

Romance could be steered on to the stage, where it had obvious possibilities, but it was too ambitious and complex a child to be entirely absorbed by the stage. Salvator Rosa's sublime rocks and mountains and his carefully arranged groups of *banditti* discussing plans of action in mossy dingles—the whole of an extreme artificiality screened by a thin naturalism—were all very well. But England had her sublime landscapes, too. James Ward (brother-in-law of George Morland, the animal painter) borrowed his sublimity mostly from Rubens, flavouring it with England and the theatre. Tumbled rocks, fighting bulls and prone, gnarled trees were among his





WILLIAM GILPIN. Dinevawr Castle. Aquatint  
Illustration of 'picturesque' theories, from the *Wye and South Wales Tour*

subjects. At the same time the early water-colour painters were hard at their Anglicising and taming process. Hearne, Rooker, Malton (one of Turner's masters) and Francis Towne (all, like de Loutherbourg, born in the forties of the eighteenth century) tamed and formalised the sublime in their topographical drawings. Their careful delineation of the main shapes, their flat washes of colour and their feeling for a place we respond to to-day even more readily than their contemporaries did. They, too, prepared the way for the final achievement of English water-colour painting.

Thomas Girtin and J. M. W. Turner were born in the same year—1775. They, like Wordsworth, saw that man's relationship with nature could become an all-absorbing activity of the spirit. They saw the need for a religion of nature that would supersede the image-worship of earlier romanticism. If Girtin had lived he might have gone as far as Turner in realising such a religion, but he died when he was twenty-seven. In 1795 they were both working for Dr. Thomas Monro, amateur artist and mentor of the young, at tasks such as copying drawings by J. R. Cozens. An important water-colour of Girtin's, *The White House, Chelsea*, dates from 1800. It shows a view across the river at twilight with all the objects (churches, boats, windmill) in a low tone—except one. A white house to the left centre of the further river bank gleams in the twilight and throws a reflection on the water. The atmosphere, the time of day, has created the whole mood of the picture; and with the mood, the form. W. H. Pyne, an artist writing in



A ROMANTIC LANDSCAPE  
Water-colour by F. Danby

*By courtesy of A. P. Oppo, Esq.*



THE TOUR  
Of  
DOCTOR SYNTAX,  
In Search of the



A Poem

Seventh Edition  
with new Plates

*Ubi Pictura, Poësis erit: quæ, si propius atq;  
Te capiat magis, et quantum, si longius abbas.  
Hæc auct. obscurum; vult hæc sub luce videre:  
Judicis argutum quæ non formidat occurrere:  
Hæc placuit auct. hæc deus reperta placet.*

TITLE PAGE OF *The Tour of Dr. Syntax*  
Coloured aquatint by Thomas Rowlandson

1824, recorded another example of these new landscape ideas of Girtin: "He sketched a picturesque part of an ancient town—he drew the outline at broad day, and had purposed to colour the scene as it then appeared; but in passing near the spot, at the going down of the sun, and perceiving the buildings under the influence of twilight had assumed so unexpected a mass of shadow, on the fading light of the sky, and that the reflections in the water, still increased the vastness of the mass; moreover that the arches of a bridge opposed their distinct forms, dark also, to a bright gleam on the horizon; he was so possessed with the solemn grandeur of the composition, which had gained so much in sentiment by the change of light, that he determined to make an attempt at imitation, and by ardent application, accomplished the object. This piece was wrought with bold and masterly execution, and led to that daring style of effect which he subsequently practised with so much success in certain of his works."

Till then, sentiment had only been an ingredient of painting. Pictures had been flavoured by a general sentiment—a Claude-like contemplation or a Salvator-Rosa-like melodrama—but it had never occurred to anyone to make an effect of weather or season carry the whole weight. Arrangement of objects had been the preoccupation of Wilson and Gainsborough—a fitting disposition of objects to create a mood. Selection was the scheme of the best of the topographical draughtsmen. Gilpin and the other writers on the Picturesque schematised and conventionalised principles of selection. But Girtin and Turner set out to discover a pictorial shape for the urge that had possessed Wordsworth: the urge to make a particular effect of sun or rain, calm or storm, light or shadow, gloom or gaiety, stand as symbol for something universal. They wanted to make landscape a means of reporting and recording, not places and things, but life.

## LANDSCAPE TRANSFIGURED

**T**URNER probably never said, as he is supposed to have said, "If Girtin had lived, I should have starved": it is out of character. But if Girtin had lived he might have shown something like the same powers of free development. They were both born on the romantic slope and there was room for more than one genius who might move English landscape painting from its eighteenth-century resting place. For an Englishman the task was enormous; the English habit in painting styles was to be fifty or a hundred years behind the innovators. An English innovator was necessary.

Scurrilous biographers have so confused the issue that it is easy to forget that from the first Turner took his task with a heavy seriousness. "I recollect Turner," wrote Ann Dart to Ruskin in 1860, "as a plain uninteresting youth both in manners and appearance, he was very careless and slovenly in his





J. R. COZENS. Etna from the Grotta del Capro. Wash drawing  
Variation on a topographical drawing by Charles Gore, 1777

dress, not particular what was the colour of his coat or clothes, and was anything but a nice looking young man. In the year 1800 he was a fortnight at my uncle's, with whom I was then visiting . . . He would talk of nothing but his drawings, and of the places to which he would go for sketching. He seemed an uneducated youth, desirous of nothing but improvement in his art. He was very difficult to understand, he would talk so little . . . He was sedate and steady, he did not in the evenings go out except with our family, and mostly we staid at home, and Turner would sit quietly apparently thinking, not occupied in drawing or reading. He was not at all polite . . ."

Turner's plan, as it developed, was to become more proficient than anyone else alive at any manner of painting he thought important. Before he was twenty he was a highly efficient topographical draughtsman. He entered successfully into competition with the popular academic painters of the day. He then set about mastering and surpassing the sublime effects of Claude. By the time he had painted the *Sun Rising through Vapour*, at the age of thirty-two, critics were beginning to agree that he had done it. By the time he was forty and had painted *Crossing the Brook* he had begun to break the bounds. Now that Turner's art and its influences can be seen as



GIRTIN. Fields in flood. Water-colour  
A small drawing reproduced about actual size

a whole we should put his first breaking of the bounds later ; but the contemporary effect of *Crossing the Brook* was that the most intelligent critic of the time, Hazlitt, wrote in the *Examiner* in 1816 : "A musician, if asked to play a tune, will select that which is the most difficult and least intelligible. Shakespeare took the greatest delight in his 'conceits,' and some artists among ourselves have carried the same principle to a singular excess . . . We here allude particularly to Turner, the ablest landscape-painter now living, whose pictures are however too much abstractions of aerial perspective, and representations not properly of the objects of nature as of the medium through which they are seen . . . They are pictures of the elements of air, earth and water. The artist delights to go back to the first chaos of the world . . . All is without form and void. Some one said of his landscapes that they were *pictures of nothing, and very like.*"

Turner was moved by what Santayana called "the Weather in our Souls." He could see the universe in a rainstorm ; all life in an effect of sun slanting through clouds. He painted *light*—veiled light, or misty light, or full light or blinding light. To a public used to looking at solid, if ruinous castles on hill-tops, well described by means of lines and washes, it was



natural that Turner's visions should seem like "pictures of nothing" rather than—what they more nearly resemble—pictures of everything. Turner began concentrating on effects of light first in water-colour: water-colour that uses transparent washes to screen the whiteness of paper. He did not at first break up his forms: the rocks over which his waterfalls tumbled were solid enough. But he began to substitute colour for perspective, gradation for sharpness. He never let his imagination run away with him, but based it on certain practice. When he was between forty and fifty he was doing water-colours that are described by another critic of the day (Robert Hunt—a good critic, in spite of his offensiveness about Blake) as being painted with "very little else besides yellow, grey and blue. Connected, blended and sometimes delicately contrasted as these colours are . . . his effects are exquisitely tender, but not without sufficient force, from a certain magic arrangement, a graphic secret of his own; or rather from a correct and highly wrought sensibility."

He was over fifty when he painted *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus* and other oils in which he exploited the strange and daring conquests of light and colour of his water-colours. He lived for another twenty years, and from this last period dates his most important work. It became more and more subjective; more a matter of translating visions, less a matter of transcribing facts. "The right of being obscure is not one to be lightly claimed; it can only be founded on long effort to be intelligible," as Ruskin very sensibly said. But it is not necessary to follow Ruskin in a belief that the latest works of Turner are, in a sense, as *naturalistic* as the earlier ones: that by selection of colour and dimming of form Turner arrived at greater natural truth. That he arrived at greater intensity, that he interpreted his inner visions far more truly—there is no doubt of these things. *Rain, Steam and Speed, Interior at Petworth* and many other late paintings are not "naturalism"—if any meaning at all is to be left to that word as it applies to painting. But other honourable things they are: visionary, intense and prophetic.

But Ruskin in what he said of the late works was exaggerating an important truth: that Turner never became a totally "abstract" painter. His pictures were never of "nothing." The richness of nature was always at his back, and his vision was always derived from reality, even when he was most a visionary.

Turner's later work was certainly prophetic. Unlike Blake's it was not complete and rounded off in itself, not self-contained. It was capable of expansion. The French Impressionists later privately and publicly acknowledged a debt to him. And meanwhile another English painter's genius was acknowledged in France.

When Constable's paintings were first exhibited in France, at the Louvre in 1824, they caused more stir than they had caused in England. Young artists goggled at them excitedly. Delacroix repainted the background of one of his pictures after seeing them. Constable was a year younger than Turner,



J. M. W. TURNER. Weathercote Cave, near Ingleton. Water-colour

and died twenty-four years before him. "There is room in this country for a *natural* painter," he said. From the time of his youthful wanderings in East Anglian fields his passion for nature and his passion for painting concentrated and united into a singleness of purpose that no other contemporary except Turner—and few other English artists of any time—experienced. His painting was an attempt to resolve the conflict between these two passions. The problem presented itself every time he painted a picture. He had only to go down to East Bergholt and say to himself "How beautiful the trees are. Art is hopeless : it can never compete with nature," then to begin painting, and say "How glorious Claude was. Painting is with me but another word for feeling," and so on. He started a picture gaily and as he proceeded the conflict became more and more acute. In a delightful letter recorded by the painter-biographer Leslie he says, "I have got my large 'Waterloo' beautifully strained on a new frame . . . It gives me much pleasure in the present occupation ; but how long that will last I know not. Archdeacon Fisher used to compare himself in some situations to a lobster in a boiler, very comfortable at first, but as the water became hotter and hotter grievously perplexed at the bottom."

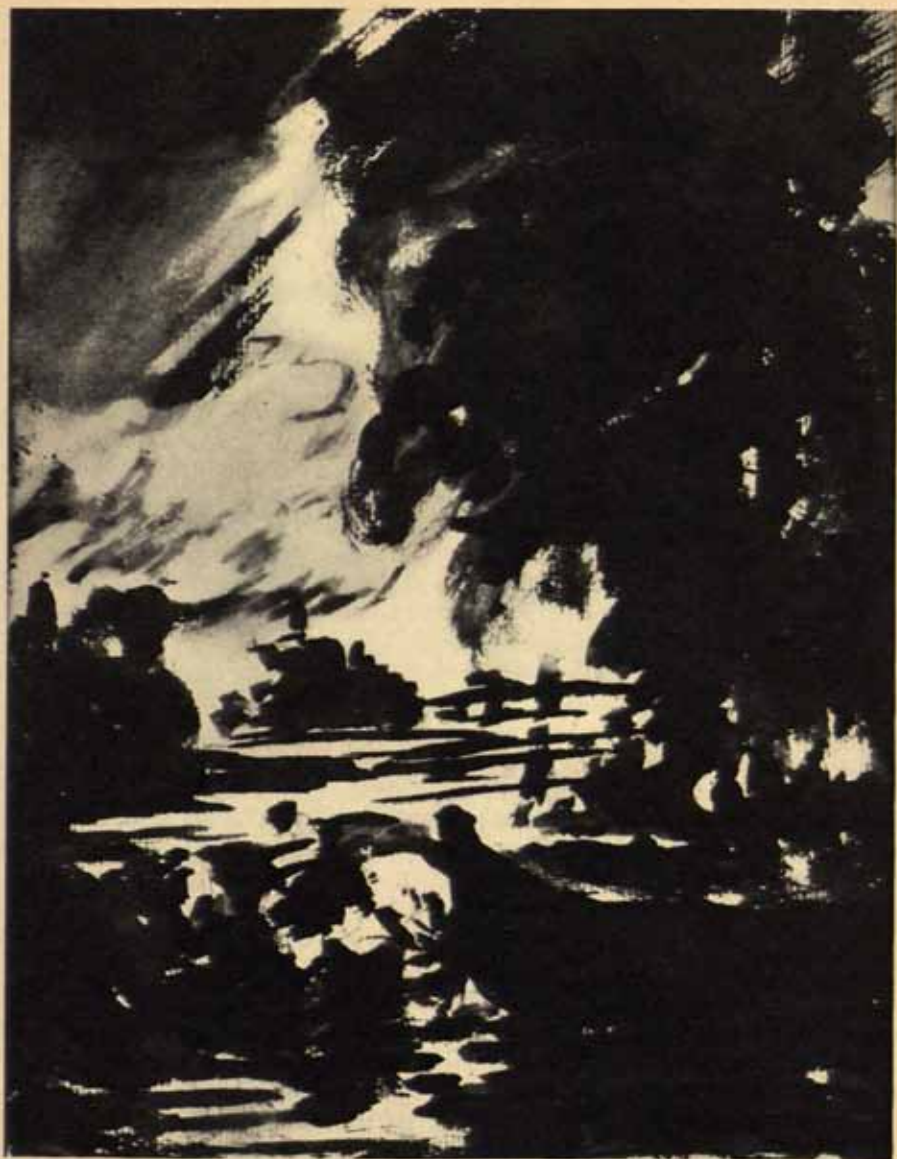
He was parochial, and made a virtue of it. He was never at ease when he went far afield, even if it was only as far as Derbyshire or Dorset, which





CONSTABLE. View on the Stour. Oil

was as far from home as he ever did go. But it was not sentiment that kept drawing him back to East Anglian meadows by East Bergholt and Dedham. It was his need to relive again and again the vital experiences he had there. He loved nature and he loved art, and all his life he walked a tightrope above that artists' abyss where the two get confused and merge into naturalism and triviality. He wanted his pictures, he said, to have the dew and sparkle of trees and bushes and grass in the real, light-drenched world. "What is painting," he also wrote, "but an imitative art? An art that is to *realise*, not to *feign*." ("To *realise*"—that continual prayer of Cézanne's.) "I constantly observe that every man who will not submit to long toil in the imitation of nature, flies off, becomes a phantom, and produces dreams of nonsense and abortions. He thinks to screen himself under a 'fine imagination' which is generally, and almost always in young men, the scapegoat of folly and idleness." Yet "imitation of nature" was a thing he never practised. His landscapes are always seen through the screen of the imagination. He explores every passage of light between trees, in the air as well as



CONSTABLE. Trees and water on the Stour. Monochrome



on the ground. Ground and sky become lively and full of meaning for one another in his paintings, trees plait their leaves into cages against space, their branches carve space itself into rich shapes. In *Weymouth Bay* low cliffs, clouds, shadows, breakers, beach of sand and stones—all take part in a flowing design that is yet calm and fixed because the flow is *through* it.

Constable, like Gilbert White of Selborne, had a genius for fixing on a normal bit of nature and transfiguring it so that it could represent all nature. He says himself: "The mind that produced 'The Natural History of Selborne' is such a one as I have always envied. The single page of the life of Mr. White leaves a more lasting impression on my mind than all that has been written of Charles V. or any other renowned hero. It shows what a real love of nature will do. Surely the serene and blameless life of Mr. White, so exempt from the folly and quackery of the world, must have fitted him for the pure and intimate view he took of nature. . . . This book is an addition to my estate."

Constable never lost his passion for nature or his single-mindedness, in spite of half a life in London and many pictures painted there, in spite of all the business of a husband, a father, a salesman of his own pictures and a Royal Academician. He worked so lovingly and tenaciously, so truly according to his passions, that he made the contrasted sparkle and gloom of nature in a small part of one county stand as a symbol for the sparkle and gloom of the world and of eternity.

David Cox during his long life was modestly prosperous. He was born near Birmingham, and worked in his youth as a scene painter; and scene-painting affected him for a long period. He worked at first in a flat patterned and dramatic (though never theatrical) way, producing fine effects of light and season in a careful topographical style. His *Treatise on Landscape Painting and Effect in water-colours* (1814) shows him at his early best. His work is never in the least showy: it is often nearer being clumsy. He worked for a time with the showy painter W. J. Müller, from whom he gained experience and efficiency. His later work is seldom graceful (though paintings like *Rhyl Sands* have an almost French grace). Sometimes it is shapeless. But always it has an airy, weather-beaten, rain-washed vitality.

The public tastes are reflected in much of the painting of the day—the still growing passions for travel at home and abroad, for old churches and old castles, for rustic cottages and sylvan dingles. The Gothic Revival had taken root. By 1800 antiquarian itineraries, books of architectural detail, careful delineations of cathedrals and parish churches—the earlier ones were in aquatint, or engraved on wood, later they were engraved on copper or steel, and later still reproduced by lithography—flooded the market. Little of such an influence is to be seen in Constable; little, except in his early work, in Turner. But the period feeling is to be seen in De Wint's water-colours of rustic cottages, in his views of Lincoln and elsewhere; and it is to be seen in the work of sensitive provincial painters like William



*By courtesy of the Earl of Harewood*

A VIEW OF YORK MINSTER  
Water colour by Thomas Girtin





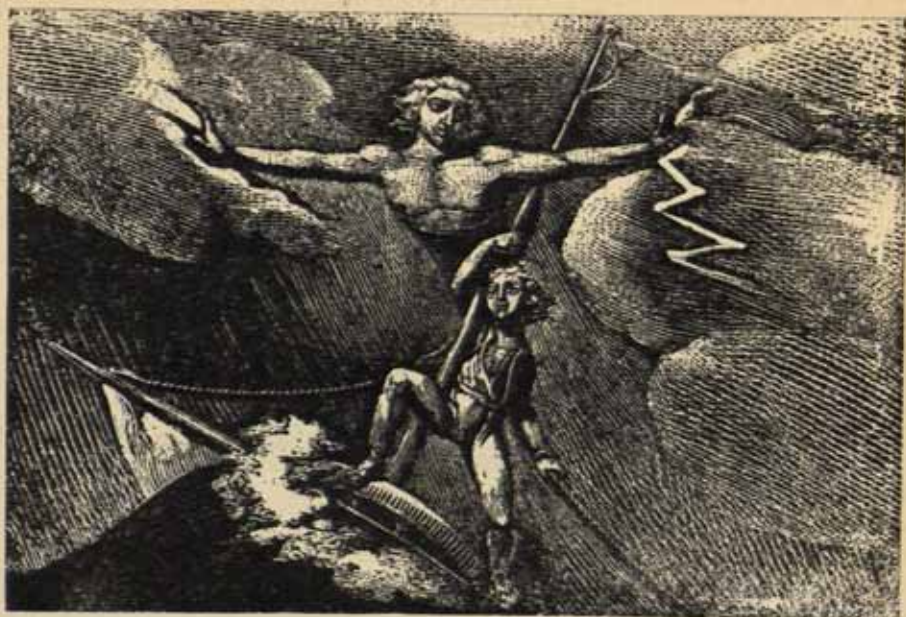
*By courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery*

LAMECH AND HIS TWO WIVES

Colour-printed drawing by William Blake, 1795

Turner of Oxford who had the contemporary passion for ivy-loaded castles and tangled woodlands. John Sell Cotman was the greatest of the later topographical and archaeological artists. He was a true romantic who found an outlet in antiquarianism. In his youth he was influenced by Girtin, who was seven years his senior, and a formed artist doing original work by the time Cotman was eighteen. It is quite likely that they were in Wales together in 1800, and Cotman must certainly have seen Girtin at work. He was little known outside his native Norwich till after his death. He suffered from periods of acute depression, and tried during his life many variations on his style of work in order to entice an indifferent public—he did figure compositions in bright colours, classical scenes with dramatic skies, and so on; but even when his style is least characteristic his personality is discernible. He was from early youth sensitive to the Gothic Revival influence, and he was much obsessed with old churches and ruins. When he was twenty-two he found a patron, Dawson Turner, banker archaeologist of Great Yarmouth, who commissioned him to illustrate antiquarian books he was engaged in compiling. Cotman set out to etch "all the ornamented antiquities in Norfolk" in 1811. Most country churches were then at an extreme of picturesque beauty. Ready to drop like over-ripe fruit, they were in an exquisite state of decay. In almost every village church a derelict wicket gave on to a porch strewn with straw, and a creaking door led into a nave full of worn grey box pews. Clear glass windows let in the sunlight that streamed over the faded umbers, ochres and greys of the walls, furniture and floor, and the whole scene was enriched by splashes of brilliant colour provided by tattered cushions and hangings. Cotman saw that this was the perfect pictorial setting for precise medieval mouldings, just as he had already seen the tangled trees at Castle Howard as the perfect setting for the precision of a classical urn on a pedestal, or a sarcophagus in a park. He was by this time a master in his own way of line and wash—his famous series of water-colours done on the Greta were behind him. He wrote to Dawson Turner in August, 1811: "Lynn . . . will be my route: Castle Rising and Castle Acre my chief objects. But should I hear of anything either to the lee or the windward of me, I shall crowd all sail. Happy shall I be should I make a prize." He made many prizes. The water-colours and monochromes that he did, and the etchings that followed them, were the precursors of Victorian and later topographical drawing, and still act as a strong influence on guide-book illustrators and architectural draughtsmen. Later on, he visited Normandy twice, with and without the Dawson Turner family, and collected material for two further volumes of architectural etchings. He had too little success and encouragement ever to become a grand-scale painter: he was continually making notes for paintings that were never executed. But his landscapes, his sea-pieces, his architectural drawings and his figure compositions show the grandeur of his spirit, besides suggesting now and again the misery of his frustration.





BLAKE. Little Tom the Sailor. Wood engraving  
 Decoration from a broadsheet version of Hayley's Ballad

## VISION AND IMAGINATION

**T**HOMAS BEWICK was born in 1753—five years before Blake, twenty-two years before Girtin and Turner. He was born and brought up in the countryside of Northumberland. His life was spent in transfiguring details of nature in exquisite wood engravings. His works seldom cover an area bigger than five or six square inches. But his ingenuity and his industry, extraordinary enough, were far less remarkable than his clear, natural vision. Ruskin very properly referred to his "especially intellectual manner of work, as opposed to modern scribbling and hatching." He looked at tree-boles, rocks in clear streams, a sparrow on a spray of leaves or an old horse in a paddock with such interest and intensity that any but the clearest and most expressive method of registering them would have dissatisfied him. His sight was not second sight like Blake's; he did not see vividly a whole world of form and emotion underlying the world of natural appearances; he did not project into natural scenes a mass of poetic and religious experiences that found a solution and a release, like Samuel Palmer—he registered what he saw with precision. But he had that rarest of qualities—normal, unhampered, unclouded vision. Poetic he was—for the 'normal' man is poetic—and the nature of his poetry is



THOMAS BEWICK. Wood engravings for the illustration of fables



disclosed by the engravings themselves and by many passages in his own "Memoir," such as this one describing his birthplace by the Tyne :

"To the westward, adjoining the house, lay the common or fell, which extended some miles in length, and was of various breadths. It was mostly fine, green sward or pasturage, broken or divided, indeed, with clumps of 'blossom'd whins,' foxglove, fern, and some junipers, and with heather in profusion, sufficient to scent the whole air. Near the burns, which guttered its sides, were to be seen the remains of old oaks, hollowed out by Time, with alders, willows and birch, which were often to be met with in the same state ; and these seemed to me to point out the length of time that these domains had belonged to no one."

He noticed many things that absorbed later English visionaries ; "the sprouting herbage that covered the ground, the dangling woodbine and roses, and the grasses powdered or spangled with pearly drops of dew, the continued succession of plants and wild flowers . . . the yellow harvest of the fields, and the produce of the orchards, the varying foliage of the fading woods, with their falling leaves, and the assembling in flocks of the small birds"—he observed them with a particular eye unusual at the time, and more characteristic of later painters and poets from Palmer to Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Bewick, in his "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," could see all human experience in a bird's nest. An artist like Henry Fuseli needed an elaborate paraphernalia of properties to interpret his romantic visions. Fuseli was born in Switzerland, but he came to England when he was thirty-eight ; though he had been here before, and had perfected his English by listening to Garrick from the front row of the pit. The English took kindly enough to his ideas to make him keeper of the Royal Academy in 1801. He is a representative artist of the early Gothic Revival, and his pictures are animated by a nostalgia for the past, an "idealisation of the distant, both of time and place" and a hankering after the strange and the terrible. His most famous picture was *The Nightmare*—an apparition of a terrible horse's head—and he was fond of painting scenes in madhouses and scenes in Hell. In his drawing of *Perseus and the Minotaur* the artist demands that the onlooker's imagination shall soar away up the staircase beyond the pendulous figure, into the "terrible zone." Horace Walpole called him "horribly mad." Blake defended him, and he championed Blake. He prospered in a world of fashion that enjoyed reading Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* and the Gothic fantasies of "Monk Lewis" in the rural residences and pavilions of architects such as Wyatt. Benjamin Robert Haydon's description of a visit to Fuseli's studio throws light on the behaviour of contemporary "romantics."

"I followed the maid into a gallery or showroom," (Haydon says) "enough to frighten anybody at twilight. Galvanized devils—malicious witches brewing their incantations—Satan bridging Chaos, and springing



HENRY FUSELI. Perseus and the Minotaur. Monochrome



upwards like a pyramid of fire—Lady Macbeth—Paolo and Francesca—Falstaff and Mrs. Quickly—humour, pathos, terror, blood and murder, met one at every look ! I expected the floor to give way—I fancied Fuseli himself to be a giant. I heard his footsteps and saw a little bony hand slide round the edge of the door, followed by a little white-headed, lion-faced man in an old flannel dressing-gown tied round his waist with a piece of rope and upon his head the bottom of Mrs. Fuseli's work-basket. . . . Weak minds he destroyed. They mistook his wit for reason, his indelicacy for breeding, his swearing for manliness, and his infidelity for strength of mind."

Fuseli was once heard muttering aloud about some angels that he was drawing : "They *shall* rise without wings." But he was not William Blake. His incantations were stage directions, and his angels would not rise without wings. Blake's incantations were rules of life.

Blake never obeyed rules made by anyone else. He broke ordinary rules all his life, with profit to his art. He was rare simply in his capacity to live fully. In its general cast his art was very much of the period, related to that of Fuseli, Flaxman, Barry, and Romney, in Romney's less public moods. Blake picked up the rags and tags of the Gothic Revival and the Italian Decadence and without fluency, but with infinite patience transfigured them into works that were vital and necessary. His few small woodcuts for the school text of Philip's *Imitation of Virgil's first Eclogue* burst with life. His hand-coloured prints that illustrate his own poems are tender and exuberant. No word-description of Blake's art is adequate ; no approach to it reasonable but the approach of acceptance. His own marginalia, letters, poems and epigrams are the best footnotes to his pictures. For instance, these :

"In a work of Art it is not Fine Tints that are required, but Fine Forms; fine Tints without, are nothing. Fine Tints without Fine Forms are always Subterfuge of the Blockhead."

"Englishmen have been so used to Journeyman's undecided bungling that they cannot bear the firmness of a Master's Touch."

"No man of Sense can think that an Imitation of the Objects of Nature is the Art of Painting, or that such Imitation, which anyone may easily perform, is worthy of Notice, much less that such an Art should be the Glory & Pride of a Nation."

["Who begins with severity in judging of another, ends commonly with falsehood."—(Lavater)]

"False ! Severity of judgment is a great virtue."—(Blake)

" . . . . Such artists as Reynolds are at all times Hired by the Satans for the Depression of Art—A Pretence of Art, to destroy Art."

"The difference between a bad Artist & a Good One Is : the Bad Artist Seems to copy a Great deal. The Good one Really does Copy a Great deal."

["He was a great generalizer . . . but this disposition to abstractions, to generalizing and classification, is the great glory of the human mind . . ."  
—(Reynolds)]



BLAKE. Wood engraving for Thornton's Virgil

"To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess."—(Blake)

All these, and the last especially, show Blake as the true romantic. The Classical Theory is based on an abstract idea of perfection, the romantic on a subjective use of particular details and moods of nature. This was the chief ground for Blake's hatred of Reynolds—and of Rubens and Correggio, artists he never tired of condemning as blotters and bunglers. The subjective artist who does not particularise and define makes no progress but loses himself in a miasma, and becomes a sham romantic. Blake, always intent on definition, in no sense a sham, and a madman only to fools, was a dangerous enemy of academies, schools and officials. And still is so.

The Blake pastoral woodcuts were small and few, but their effect large and multiform. They were cut down and manhandled before they were printed, but a few artists who saw them recognised their importance. Samuel Palmer described them as "visions of little dells, and nooks, and corners of Paradise; models of the exquisitest pitch of intense poetry. I thought of their light and shade, and looking on them found no word to describe it. Intense depth, solemnity, and vivid brilliancy only coldly and partially describe them. There is in all such a misty and dreamy glimmer as penetrates and kindles the inmost soul and gives complete and unreserved delight, unlike the gaudy daylight of this world."

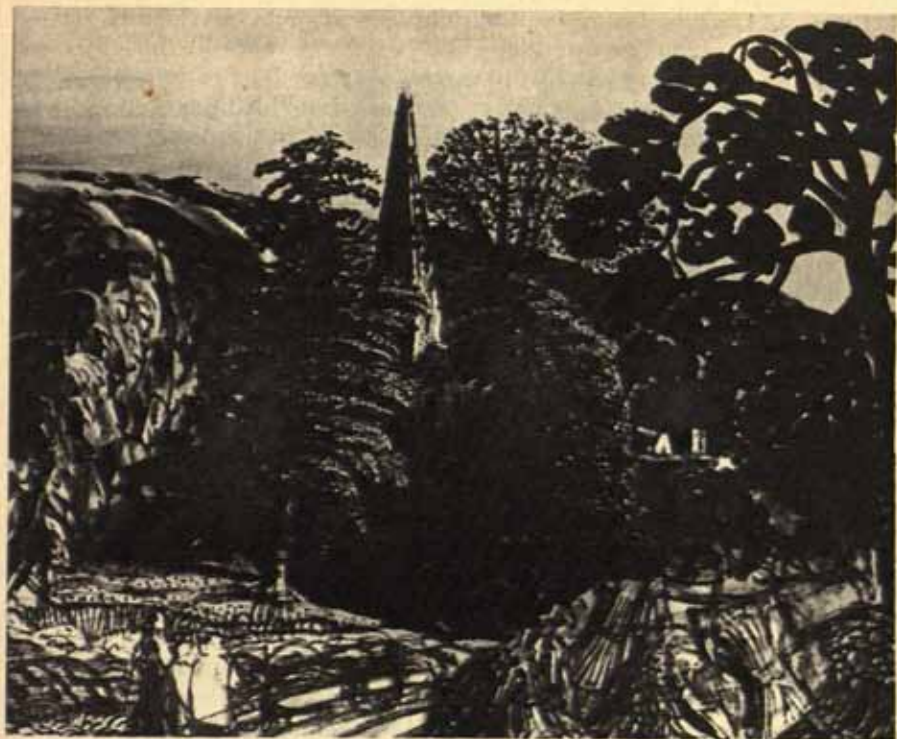
The young and successful, half business-man artist, John Linnell, who made possible Blake's *Dante* drawings, introduced him not only to his own master, Varley, but to young admirers. Among these were Samuel Palmer and Edward Calvert. Samuel Palmer was ruminative and incomplete, and for a short time he, George Richmond and Edward Calvert were absorbed by the example of the great man, doing drawings in a Blake manner. But in 1826, two years after his first meeting with Blake, Palmer went to Shoreham in Kent, to translate visions of his own into designs. He was there with



Calvert, Frederick Tatham (sculptor, miniature painter and friend of Blake), Francis Oliver Finch, painter, and others—a band that called themselves “The Ancients.” Their watchwords were “Poetry and Sentiment.” They spent summer nights in the open air, watching the Northern glimmer and the approaching dawn. They sang at night in hollow clefts and deserted chalk-pits, and acted a tragedy in a deep lane that was the scene of a past murder. They visited hopfields, distant villages, churches and primitive cottages, always travelling on foot, and they went out to meet approaching thunder-storms, to watch the gathering sky, to enjoy the lightning and to feel the beat of heavy rain. Palmer was continually sketching out of doors. A favourite place was Lullingstone Park, between Shoreham and Eynsford, which had (and yet has) groves and glades of very old trees with enormous boles. Drawings that he made of these trees are the result (as he said) of “looking hard, long and continually at real landscape,” and he speaks of “the grasp and grapple of the roots, the muscular belly and shoulders, the twisted sinews.” Other drawings and paintings, done during the seven years at Shoreham, are of ruined barns with roofs richly clotted with decaying thatch and moss, landscapes with corn-stooks, elms, falling stars, moons, church spires and sheep and “mild reposing breadths of lawn and hill, shadowy glades and meadows . . . sprinkled and showered with a thousand pretty eyes, and buds, and spires, and blossoms gemm’d with dew, and clad in living green. Nor must be forgotten the motley clouding, the fine meshes, the aerial tissues, that dapple the skies of spring; nor the rolling volumes and piled mountains of light; nor the purple sunset blazon’d with gold and the translucent amber.” (Letter to Linnell.)

The water-colour in the Victoria and Albert Museum called *In a Shoreham Garden* is representative of his half-visionary productions of this period. An apple tree trunk bursts from the ground beside a leaf-fringed path, and from its upper branches descend clouds and showers of pink and white blossom. Distant trees sparkle with subsidiary lights. The edge of a barn gable closes the scene on the right, and along the path, beyond the drooping apple tree, walks a lady with a proud and half-medieval air; an ennobling of the scene common in Palmer’s work, an enriching of the actual present by a reference to the past. It is easy to see what Palmer meant by his sly reference to himself as a “pure, quaint, crinkle-crinkle Goth.” Against the machinations of the early nineteenth century, Palmer pitted his visions of England “where shepherds piped upon their pipes, and the clouds dropped fatness.” (His son’s paraphrase.)

In the version of *The Bright Cloud*, a monochrome drawing, in the Tate Gallery, a shepherdess does in fact pipe upon a pipe to a shepherd. They and their sheep, with light-mottled fleeces, repose on a mild breadth of hill that slopes to a deep lane, shaded by heavy leaf-laden trees. An enormous white cumulus cloud swells over all. Kent, with the distant Weald on the right and the North Downs shoulder on the left, is suggested. It is



SAMUEL PALMER. A Church among Trees. Monochrome of the Shoreham period

a Kentish landscape into which have been projected many of Palmer's passions. "The past for poets, the present for pigs," said Palmer in later years ; and in his Shoreham landscapes his consciousness of the past is never absent. Ceres and Pomona, Chaucer's pilgrims on the North Downs way to Canterbury, Milton's "branching elm, star-proof," were urgent realities to him. "Throughout his life," says his son, "he revelled in richness and abundant fruitfulness. . . He was attracted by such a sentiment as that conveyed by the concluding verses of the sixty-fifth Psalm. Therefore when he encountered in nature any instance of prodigal profusion, whether of foliage, blossom or fruit, his delight took his imagination by the hand and led it far away from beaten tracks." Mysterious shadows shortening before a rising full moon, the cut edge of standing corn, fruit trees lolling to the ground under their weight of fruit ; these were the realities that gave substance to his visions. "And the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks ; the valleys also are covered over with corn : they shout for joy, they also sing."



Compared with Samuel Palmer, Edward Calvert was, in the early Shoreham days, a fully-rounded, worldly young man. He was about twenty-four, and married. He had been in the Navy, had taken part in the Bombardment of Algiers, and had cruised in the Aegean. He had led, and had enjoyed, a life of adventure but became obsessed more and more with primitivism and rustic visions, and at twenty-one he left the Navy to become an artist. His meeting with Blake and the Blake woodcuts set his course. His wood engraving called *The Cider Feast*, done before he met Blake, shows how ripe he was for the meeting. He began to engrave expressively and design dramatically. But the bursting full-fruited romance that filled both him and Palmer at Shoreham worked on the two with the years in very different ways. Palmer's landscapes became over-ripe as time went on; at once more elaborate, shrunken and frenzied. There is beauty in them—the beauty of pines against streaky sunsets—but it is an echoed beauty. Calvert fought the advances of life and the Industrial Revolution by resorting to a primitive neo-Classicism. Later on he visited Greece. His art is reflected in fragments of his writing, such as this: "How grateful to see some storm-tossed bark that has reached her little harbour of refuge at last,—masts that have long left their native forests, again associated with vegetation, as the hulk lies under sheltering ledges, tree-crowned. Cordage and spars and sailcloth are locked in peace with shapes of leafage of oak and bosses of ivy on bole or crag. How sweet to see wagons, still destined for long journeys, in rest, and to watch slow preparations under sheltering thatch and woodwork. Wheels that have made many revolutions in wilderness and desert, now motionless and half-buried in dry shavings of the joiner's shed, or straw from the harvest threshing floor."

## MATERIALISM AND ESCAPE

A VICTORIAN authoress, Mrs. Rundle Charles, jotted these notes down in her diary: "Next morning (July 25, 1848), Mr. Tennyson came again: he talked about lower organisms feeling less pain than higher, but would not fish: could not comprehend the feelings of animals with ganglia, little scattered knots of nerves and no brain; spoke of wonderful variety of forms of life, instinct of plants, etc., told the story of a Brahmin destroying a microscope because it showed him animals killing each other in a drop of water; 'significant, as if we could destroy facts by refusing to see them.'" Tennyson, like so many of the greater early Victorians, was in that famous state of "honest doubt"—ready to admit any fact however unpleasant, ready to be alarmed, convinced, horrified or charmed by all the new ideas and new discoveries; longing to recognise any signposts that might still be visible in the mists of scientific and industrial disquiet; searching for a sense of proportion through microscopes and telescopes;



and inclined to be superior about a Brahmin who saw that a microscope was more likely to destroy one's sense of proportion than create it.

English art had never been livelier than it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but before fifty years had gone by a serious blight had settled upon it. It withered the vitals even of the good painters—of all except those who had their roots firmly in the eighteenth century, such as Turner. In fifty years England managed to fritter away all her artists' great conquests in romantic painting—all the fruits of the conquests of London and East Anglia, all the freeing of the landscape-painter's country from the domineering hand of history painting and figure painting. Certainly Turner's batteries went pounding on till 1851, while Prout and Cattermole and J. D. Harding and other topographical, romantic artists were carefully recording the decaying stonework in streets and churches and all the time making charming symbols of the decay of English art. But by 1841 one lady was writing sharply to another, "When I said romantic I meant *damp*."

Why did it settle everywhere, this blight? Smugness and the birth of the business instinct caused it. An artist of sensibility born round about 1800 had little chance of keeping his gifts whole in the face of the new materialism: a materialism that had young, vital, revolutionary zeal and power. For an artist in England at this time there was only one alternative to misery and neglect—fame. And fame meant keeping up appearances, and that—with a possibly creative in-between stage—meant smooth paint and a good story. For the landed gentry were handing over their responsibilities to the new rich manufacturers who wanted large presentable works, decently traditional, to impress their friends; and this patronage crystallised into the super-romance of the Great Exhibition.

English art could not be disinfected and separated from English life at that time with any more success than usual. The artist, if he looked beyond his own art, could see no long-term security; he could see very little but present social troubles, and pending social reforms. In 1828, four years before the passing of the Reform Bill, Samuel Palmer was writing: "Politics we dabble in: Mr. L(innell), though of no party, magnifies the peasants; I, also, as you know, of no party, as I love our fine British peasantry, think best of the old high Tories, because I find they gave most liberty to the poor, and were not morose, sullen and bloodthirsty like the Whigs, liberty jacks and dissenters. . . On Theology, and church government, we keep up a perpetual running fight: I am for high church and the less of State expediency and money mix'd up with it the better." And soon after the Reform Bill was passed he writes (in a pamphlet): "It is true we vastly, and beyond comparison outnumber the enemy: but then we are men of peace; and they are beasts of prey. We are strongest by day: they ravine in the night; for their optics are adapted to darkness. And it is now a very dark night for Europe. . . Christians who have a religion to be blasphemed: now is the time for your last struggle!"



Some artists—most of them less honest, all of them less naturally gifted than Samuel Palmer—managed to adapt themselves to the changing tradition with a certain equanimity. And a few of course were above the battle. Cotman, after a life of struggle and neglect, noticed little but the unwonted security of his new teaching post at King's College. Turner's course was settled, and he never dabbled in politics, or thought about them. But there was a new race of artists who took their shape and colour from the new world. All of them were young or early middle-aged men at the date of the passing of the Reform Bill. C. R. Leslie, Constable's biographer, dabbled in many things besides painting and biography—for instance he wasted time looking for analogies between music and the drawn line. The Irishman, William Mulready, and the Scot, David Wilkie, were painters of sensibility who, by tending to answer demands made by the new age, ultimately reduced their powers and lost their vitality. Wilkie's early reforming zeal, his passion for art and his sincerity can be recognised by reading Haydon's *Autobiography*; the depredations of the age can be realised by comparing his earlier and his later work. A growing bourgeois interest in genre and respectable low life drove out the interest in romantic art.

True romantic feeling could only keep a popular appeal if cheapened and exaggerated. John Martin's remarkable melodramatic imagination was expressed in rather a flat, fiddling technique. Immense pictures of his are filled with hundreds of figures and represent subjects such as the *Fall of Babylon*, the *Fall of Nineveh* and *Belshazzar's Feast*. His imagination indeed soared, but was always held by earthly leading-strings. His pictures have little grace, little relation to other English art and little humanity; but what they have, and what makes their neglect only half deserved, is a quite extraordinary sense of materialistic drama. They are Great Exhibitions of Mankind. William Hazlitt says of Martin: "He strives to outdo nature, to give more than she does, or than his subject requires or admits. . . The only error of these pictures is, however, that art here puts on her seven-league boots and thinks it possible to steal a march upon Nature." The matter, and some of the pedestrianism of Martin's pictures, are reflected in the flattering verses of his admirer, Bernard Barton, poet of Woodbridge and friend of Lamb and of Southey:

The awful visions haunt me still!  
In thoughts by day, in dreams by night,  
So well has art's creative skill  
There shown his fearful might.  
Light and shadow, death and doom,  
Glory's brightness, horror's gloom,  
Rocky heights of awful form,  
Grandeur of the bursting storm.



JOHN MARTIN. Mezzotint for *Paradise Lost*. Engraved by the Artist

Whole volumes of epics by one Edwin Atherstone were published on several of his pictures. Martin, really, was perpetuating the sublime and awful effects of the eighteenth century, and the materialism of the nineteenth century demanded that they should be bigger and better, more lurid. He made vast plans for the improvement of London that nobody took very seriously, but they were probably workable and would have made parts of the Metropolis look like the architectural settings of his pictures. He had an attractive, generous nature and in his life periods of startling success alternated with other periods of wild despair. He had remarkable brothers, all the family having strains of exhibitionism that sometimes amounted to madness (one brother nearly managed to burn down York Minster).

The age encouraged the exhibitionist art of Martin. Other art, and a great deal of good art, it drove underground. The work of James Smetham who went out of his mind in middle age is almost unknown, but a self-portrait reproduced in his published *Letters*, and other still-existent works prove that he had talent, while the letters themselves suggest that he had genius. Ruskin encouraged him and classed him "among my best friends." Rossetti never doubted that he had an unacknowledged genius. His letters are full of intelligent comments, such as this: "Don't get into the focus of Criticism. Many men spoil their enjoyment of Art by looking on it as





EDWARD CALVERT. *The Bride*. Copper Engraving

Calvert was influenced by Blake, and worked with Samuel Palmer at Shoreham

something to pull to pieces, rather than something to enjoy and lead them to enjoy nature, and through nature to enjoy God. How wretched is that feverish, satiated, complaining spirit of criticism. Never contented, never at rest. Is this better than that, these than those? Is this a great man, and if great, *how* great? all the while avoiding *The Thing* and its relish: not thinking art, but about art; not conversing with nature, but with names."

William Henry Hunt was better known, but shows a half-submerged genius in his close, minute studies in stipple water-colour of birds' nests and primrose banks. Other artists began the exacting, descriptive work of book illustration. William Bewick had perfected the art of describing a bird or a beast or a miniature landscape scene on a couple of square inches of woodblock with an engraving tool. Nineteenth-century book illustration consisted of scene descriptions which were as a rule not cut on the wood by the artists themselves (though the designs were often *drawn* on the wood by them) but were cut by professional engravers, among whom the Dalziel brothers were tireless. This very Victorian art reached its perfection in the eighteen-sixties. It appeared in books and magazines, and excellent work in this form is prolific. "It would have been more remarkable," as Mr. Forrest Reid says, "had not drawing on wood been regarded by several of our artists only as an interesting experiment, and by others as a method of keeping the pot boiling when the more serious work of painting failed to do so." Real imagination and accomplishment are found in the work in



G. J. PINWELL. *The Swallows*  
Wood engraving by the Dalziel Brothers for *English Rustic Pictures*



this form of Charles Keene, A. B. Houghton, M. J. Lawless, G. J. Pinwell, Millais, Rossetti, Madox Brown, Arthur Hughes and Fred Walker.

Pinwell was a purely English genius : his vision narrow, rustic and inspired. His ambition was to produce masterpieces in oil, but he was so self-critical and the age was so unpropitious that he died at thirty-three with no large-scale work completed. The engravings in *English Rustic Pictures* (with accompanying poems by another hand) and in other books and magazines of the period, from his drawings, show a pure sentiment, an original feeling for design, a close observation of textures and lights on the walls of barns and farmhouses, a quiet appreciation of the form and meaning of gabled farmhouses, threshing floors, decaying thatch, weeds and wild-flowers. His genius was driven underground by the grandiose mechanics of his own romantic age, and has yet hardly come again into the open ; but his work is echoed to-day by such English rustic artists as A. S. Hartrick, Vincent Lines and Thomas Hennell.



ARTHUR HUGHES. Wood engraving  
For *The Princess and the Goblin*



*By courtesy of Sir Kenneth Clark*

HARVEST MOON

Oil painting on panel by Samuel Palmer





By courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery

‘HOW SIR GALAHAD, SIR BORS AND SIR PERCIVAL WERE FED WITH THE SANGREAL,  
BUT SIR PERCIVAL’S SISTER DIED BY THE WAY’

Illustration to *Morte d'Arthur* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, (water colour, 1864)

## ARCHAISM AND DETAIL

MUCH of the official art of the early years of Victoria's reign was romance; but its romance was smartened, tamed and domesticated. It was against smart, conventional technique and trivial sentiment that the Pre-Raphaelites rebelled. We can to-day see things to admire in the crowded canvases of W. P. Frith, author of those documentary costume-pieces *The Railway Station* and *Derby Day*. But there is no getting away from it, their sentiment is trivial. An accomplished, rebellious student in 1847 could see little to emulate in the public painting. At that date Millais was seventeen, his friend Holman Hunt nineteen, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti eighteen. Rossetti, who had been studying under Ford Madox Brown, met Hunt and Millais and they persuaded him that "Early Christian" art was the wrong term for their work, and that they ought to be called "Pre-Raphaelites." They had some slight resemblance to a German group of painters working in Rome who had called themselves Pre-Raphaelites as early as 1810. The leaders of this school, Cornelius and Overbeck, revolted against their national schools, and the body that gathered round them had the spirit of religious revivalists. They hired a palace, conformed to monastic rules and wore long robes with girdles. The first meeting of the English "Brotherhood" took place in 1848, and soon afterwards William Rossetti (Dante's art-critic brother), Woolner, sculptor and poet, F. G. Stephens and James Collinson joined the "P.-R. B." Arthur Hughes, Frederick Sandys, Ford Madox Brown, William Morris and others sympathised with its aims, and Ruskin became its apologist. Sincerity and truth to nature irrespective of fashion were the aims. Millais had great gifts and produced works of beauty and a certain perfection, but he was congenitally too worldly to carry on a life-long fight against convention and public demand. His friendship with Rossetti lasted only four years. Later, he wrote of him: "D. G. Rossetti, you must understand, was a queer fellow and impossible as a boon companion—so dogmatic and so irritable when opposed . . . At last, when he presented for our admiration the young women who have since become the type of Rossettianism, the public"—Millais always had at least one eye on the public—"opened their eyes in amazement. 'And this,' they said, 'is Pre-Raphaelitism!' It was nothing of the sort. The Pre-Raphaelites had but one idea—to present on canvas what they saw in Nature; and such productions as these were absolutely foreign to the spirit of their work."

If Rossetti was moved by a poem he could illustrate it so as to please even the poet. He had sensible, revolutionary theories about illustration. When the publisher Moxon asked for some illustrations for a volume of Tennyson's poems, Rossetti wrote to William Allingham: "I have not begun even designing for them yet, but fancy I shall try the *Vision of Sin* and *Palace of Art*, etc.,—those where one can allegorise on one's own hook



on the subject of the poem, without killing for oneself and every one a distinct idea of the poet's." His judgments, which were always passionate, were very often sound long-term judgments. "The artists already engaged (for illustrating) are Millais, Hunt, Landseer, Stanfield, Maclise, Creswick, Mulready and Horsley. The right names would have been Millais, Hunt, Madox Brown, Hughes, a certain lady, and myself." This "certain lady" was Miss Siddal, otherwise Elizabeth or "Guggum." Rossetti, whose wife she became before an early death, did hundreds of drawings and paintings of her, and her beauty it was that became the ideal Pre-Raphaelite type, to Millais's fury. Rossetti's water-colours are visions of passion in pure colour, rich like stained glass, their archaism negated by their vitality. This conflict between archaism and contemporary life accounts for the best productions of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. To use the ancients not as models but as examples, to use their lives as a standard of life—this was the intention of Rossetti and Morris in their painting, writing and craftsmanship. So they were active revolutionaries in an age of growing mechanisation. Rossetti's poetry, like Blake's, is the best footnote to his painting. In a sonnet such as this his pictorial images appear; archaism, incompleteness, passion and all:

Sweet twining hedgeflowers wind-stirred in no wise  
 On this June day; and hand that clings in hand:—  
 Still glades; and meeting faces scarcely fann'd:—  
 An osier-odoured stream that draws the skies  
 Deep to its heart; and mirrored eyes in eyes:—  
 Fresh hourly wonder o'er the Summer land  
 Of light and cloud; and two souls softly spanned  
 With one o'erarching heaven of smiles and sighs:—  
 Even such their path, whose bodies lean unto  
 Each other's visible sweetness amorously,—  
 Whose passionate hearts learn by Love's high decree  
 Together on his heart for ever true,  
 As the loud-foaming firmamental blue  
 Rests on the blue line of a foamless sea.

William Holman Hunt, born a year before Rossetti, died only in 1910. He was less worldly and more consistent as a painter than Millais; less passionate than Rossetti. He says of himself and Rossetti: "Despite differences, we agreed that a man's work must be the reflex of a living image in his own mind and not the icy double of the facts themselves." And of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* he says "Of all its readers none could have felt more strongly than I did that it was written for me." He was the most consistent Pre-Raphaelite of them all, and he carried on the principles and the traditions till his death. *The Light of the World*, now at Keble College, Oxford, was painted in 1854.



FORD MADOX BROWN. 'Last year's first of June.' Wood engraving  
For Rossetti's poem 'Down Stream'

(Rossetti to Brown: "*You certainly have not minced the demonstrative matter*")

Ford Madox Brown was one of Rossetti's few lasting friends. "By far the best man I know—the really *good* man—is Brown," said Rossetti; and Brown's biographer, F. M. Hueffer, remarks that "the deeply poetic and impulsive side of Rossetti's character infused into Madox Brown's more widely practical sympathies tended to sober some of Rossetti's Bohemianism." There was a decidedly normal, practical side to Madox Brown's nature. He saw Hogarth as the father of modern art, and was preoccupied with the human passions; not like Rossetti as a lover, but as an observer. "Why do you always choose such ugly subjects, Mr. Brown?" Ruskin said to him. Madox Brown's attitude was: "I set truth above originality, and wish chiefly to be true, no matter whence the truth comes." He received few honours, and was rather unlucky, but he managed, as he said, "to go to bed with both ears on." He was best when he was least Pre-Raphaelite, when he was least stylised and closest in his observation of human desires and failings. His illustrations (there are too few of them) are original and charming. The frescoes for the Great Hall in the Town Hall, Manchester, are among his best work. They are unappreciated, neglected and suffering



from their neglect. One of the best of them is *John Dalton collecting Marsh Gas*, painted in 1887. The long-shaped panel shows the scientist, young and earnest, sitting on the far side of a small, weedy field-pond, stirring up the mud at the bottom with a stick, so that a farmer's boy who sprawls on a plank that crosses the pond may collect the rising bubbles of gas in a wide-mouthed bottle. Some village children sit giggling on the nearer bank, and the eldest is explaining to the youngest (bent on catching sticklebacks) what Mr. Dalton is doing.

Arthur Hughes was a naturally gifted painter who kept Pre-Raphaelite sympathies till his death in 1915. *April Love*, in the Tate Gallery (a girl in a rich purple skirt in a spring garden) is a most delicate and warm-hearted work. He was the first, and best, illustrator of *Tom Brown's School Days*. His illustrations and decorations, as well as his paintings of rich colour and poetry, are at once strange and homely, seeming, as Mr. Forrest Reid has said, to bring into one world the cat purring on the hearth and the wildest gleams of fancy.



*"Golden head by golden head"*

## MODERN ROMANCE

THE Pre-Raphaelites form an interregnum in English nineteenth-century painting. Their immediate result was aestheticism, and it affected craftsmanship rather than painting. Aubrey Beardsley and *The Yellow Book* show Pre-Raphaelite parentage: subsequent English painting, till to-day, shows it very little. Beardsley in *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy* disclosed the English genius for book illustration becoming over-ripe. His drawings are beautiful; with the beauty of overblown romance, born in hot drawing-rooms among the smell of lilies and joss



J. D. INNES. Waterfall. Water-colour

Innes died at twenty-seven. Augustus John's early landscapes show his influence.  
Figure drawings by Innes show John's influence

sticks. This spirit, flickering for many years, flared up finally in the nineteen-twenties with C. Lovat Fraser and *The Beggar's Opera*.

The sharp-witted Whistler—sharp-witted enough to display Bohemian qualities that would attract public attention—recognised the changing wind. Writing of his picture *Harmony in Grey and Gold*—a snow scene with a single black figure and a lighted tavern—he says: "I care nothing for the past, present or future of the black figure, placed there because the black was wanted at that spot. All that I know is that my combination of grey and gold is the basis of the picture." In the "Nocturnes" and "Symphonies" he called the old tune of romantic art; the concentration on a single object, or a few carefully disposed objects, in a picture with an all-pervading mood. One might as well sit on a piano, he said, as copy all the details of nature. His *Old Battersea Bridge* (painted in 1877) in the Tate Gallery recalls in a *fin de siècle* way the delight of Girtin in his *White House, Chelsea*. The grey and gold glimmer of twilight fixes the mood. The simple rectangular disposition of darks—a supporting pier and part of the bridge, some distant houses and a foreground barge—give structure in a picture of soft tones, a picture whose subject is really the fading light of a calm evening.





J. E. MILLAIS. *Girls in a Meadow*. Pen and ink sketch of 1850  
Possibly a first idea for 'Apple Blossoms'

Through Charles Conder the taste of the nineties found sensitive expression. His figure groups painted on silk fans (the tones and colours softly cushioned) and his landscapes of spring blossom and blue water have a charm that for some reason does not pall.

Meanwhile what is still known as "Modern Art" was born. As far as England was concerned its origins were muddled and obscure. England had forgotten Constable, who was criticised by Ruskin as "picturesque" and "untruthful." Victorian art—the public side of it—was still a matter of smooth paint and trivial sentiment. (Millais's painting, in pictures like *Bubbles*, had descended to trivialities undreamed-of by such universal providers as Frith, Augustus Egg and Martineau.) Turner's conquests of light, taken up by the French Impressionists, began to influence, vaguely and unsurely, painters in the country of their origin. The Pre-Raphaelites had intervened. Photography and the process block had intervened also. France was the surest guide. Whistler had studied in Paris, working with and showing alongside Manet, Monet and Degas. The Japanese print with its simplifications and its stylisations was an influence, and became a cult. "Art Nouveau" with its patterns of frozen growth, its stylised sprays of lilies and fronds of fern, was another cult that began in Scotland and spread through book-illustrations, painting, house-decoration and design, here and on the Continent about the turn of the century. All these vague influences, these moods and movements in the air, needed unifying. A student had to



W. R. SICKERT. *The Visitor*. Pen and pencil

find his way about in this maze before setting to work. There have been mazes of influence in most periods. Never was there such a maze as that in England about 1900. It was more difficult than it had ever been to take Sir Philip Sidney's advice: "Look in your heart, and write"—or paint.

The best of the English Impressionists, Wilson Steer and Walter Richard Sickert, were strongly influenced by France, but their ties to England were stronger. Wilson Steer, rather late, re-directed English



people's attention to Constable ; by understanding the real point of Constable himself. A series of paintings done in Shropshire about 1905 make one (as Fuseli said of Constable's pictures) want "to call for one's great coat and umbrella," so weather-conscious are they. Sickert's romanticism was rooted in the loves of his youth : Whistler, the stage (especially the music hall stage), Charles Keen and the English illustrations of the sixties and seventies. Throughout his life he showed his abiding love of English illustration, in his choice of subject very often, in his method of composing still more often, and in his use of descriptive tones. French Impressionism, and English Impressionism as it was being used by Steer, had a profound effect on him. Allowing for friendly flattery, there is still importance in a letter he wrote to Steer from Venice in 1895. "It may be a poor compliment," he says, "but for all practical purposes the more experience I have, the more I find that the only things that seem to me to have a direct bearing on the practical purpose of painting my pictures are the things that I have learnt from you. To see the thing all at once. To work open and loose, freely, with a full brush and full colour. And to understand that when, with that full colour, the drawing has been got, the picture is done. It sounds nothing put into words, but it *is* everything put into practice." A glint of sun on a Venetian bridge, a Camden Town bedroom scene, a box at the music hall or the peeling stucco of a fading restaurant he painted with equal interest. His range was anywhere between the "smells of steaks in passage ways" and the "inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold" of *The Waste Land*.

In 1911 Roger Fry sponsored the Post-Impressionist exhibition. With his passionate interest in all painting, his remarkable knowledge and sensitive appreciation of the art of the past Fry did more than any other individual to make Britain conscious of the art of the present. English romanticism had become vulgarised and provincial. There was too much careless painting, an easy reliance on atmosphere and an absence of design and architecture. Cézanne said that what was wanted was to make of Impressionism "something solid and durable, like the old masters" ; and that what he wanted was to "do Poussin all over again from Nature." But there were no signs of such a desire in England. Here, in spite of the example of a few painters like Steer and Sickert, Impressionism had meant slipshod painting and slipshod sentiment. Post-Impressionism was necessary. But in the long run it was applied with too much austerity by the more adventurous painters. The accent on design, form, structure, which they began to press home, and the suppression of literary interest and atmosphere, tended to squash all that was most natural to English painters, and produced a new and artificial academism. The Royal Academy itself pursued an even tenour, with occasional excursions into an unhappy "modernism." Several of its efforts to keep up to date resulted in resignations. The New English Art Club has consistently encouraged "sound drawing"—



*By courtesy of the Artist and the Leicester Galleries, London*

FARMYARD SCENE

Gouache by Frances Hodgkins





*Crown Copyright reserved*

INDUSTRIAL SCENE : SLAG LADLES  
Gouache by Graham Sutherland



PAUL NASH, *Spring at Fawley Bottom*. Water-colour, 1938

when "traditional" in subject or manner. The London Group has been the trying-out ground for many young painters whose work, on account of its experimental or "modern" character, would hardly find favour with the Royal Academy or other societies. Among painters who have shown in the London Group are Matthew Smith, Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell, Edward Wadsworth, Paul Nash, Ivon Hitchens, David Jones—all conscious of recent movements in France; all with strong ties to the English tradition. Since Cézanne and Cubism (and since the English Vorticism of P. Wyndham Lewis and others) British romantic movements are too vague and prolific to chart; but among recent ones that have had a more-than-individual effect are Abstract Painting, or Constructivism, which in the hands of a sensitive painter like Ben Nicholson has a Classical appearance but a romantic soul, and Surrealism—important in this country for its effect on a painter like Paul Nash, and a sculptor and draughtsman like Henry Moore, whose forms have been enriched by it.

The work of three living painters of different ages—Frances Hodgkins, born in 1870; Paul Nash, born in 1889; and Graham Sutherland, born in 1903—shows something of the range and the subject-matter of contemporary romantic painting. Frances Hodgkins is a subjective painter whose harmonies of colour have their origins in Wiltshire farmyards, Welsh hills and Dorset coves. Recently she has been painting backyards and out-



buildings with their furnishings of derelict gear, finding here a symbol for the distress of the present world, and making new life in pictorial form grow from them. Paul Nash has often identified the romantic with the remote—of time or place. Earthworks and stone circles, cliff and hill forms, ancient forests and abandoned mine-workings, fallen trees and the sites of vanished houses—the dry architecture of geology and antiquarianism have inspired him. Graham Sutherland paints the elements, and the more elemental natural forms : tumbled rocks, organic tangles of gorse on sea walls, the sun falling behind a volcanic pile of mountains. But these are the occasions rather than the subjects for his pictures. He is the most subjective of the younger painters, and has said that he wants his pictures to have "a certain strangeness." To become absorbed by one of them is to know the meaning of Wordsworth's

"... Rolled round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks, and stones, and trees."



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BRITISH  
CARTOONISTS, CARICATURISTS  
AND COMIC ARTISTS

BY

DAVID LOW

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THE CARTOONISTS

IT is widely supposed that the English have a sense of humour but no sense of wit. There are, of course, some Englishmen under the impression that wit pointed against the things they disapprove or disdain is humour, and wit pointed against the things they approve or respect is offensive vulgarity. These strongly prefer what they think is humour, and deplore the other thing. There are others who hold that in all arts only performances possessing qualities of taste and refinement are worthy, and discourage the more robustious forms of wit found in the art of caricature as "un-English." During the last century the changes in the mood or temper of British wit and humour, which correspond to fluctuations in manners and modes, have for so long conformed to the standards of such tender souls that it might have seemed that these standards were eternal, and that England had always been more appreciative of the comic in its refined aspect as pleasantry rather than as mordancy with an edge. Hence, partly from a domestic misunderstanding among some of the English themselves, a curious misapprehension has arisen in the wider world about the people of a country which was once called the Home of Caricature and is historically the cradle of the cartoon as it is universally known to-day.

There is plenty of evidence of pictorial satire in England before William Hogarth, "Shakespeare of the etching needle," began painting and engraving his "modern moral subjects" early in the eighteenth century. Engraved illustrations to pamphlets published in the time of Charles the



First, for instance, displayed the spirit of caricature to such an extent that the unappreciative monarch was moved to anger against "these Madde Designes." The Civil War and its aftermath produced a harvest of political picture-satires, clumsy and crude. But before Hogarth there was no indigenous national caricature. It was an imported article and the local attempts were but stumbling imitations of the Italians and the Dutch. Hogarth, as much influenced as any of his contemporaries, was the first to infuse a characteristically English spirit into his practice of the art, and thus to found an English school distinct from the other schools on the Continent.

It is to the purpose here to comment only upon that part of Hogarth's work which is relevant to the development of the modern art of the cartoon. Of the rest let it suffice to say that he was a versatile painter who found himself at times unable to support his household. He was unwilling to become a mere manufacturer of portraits and conversation-pieces; so he turned to a brave new idea. Both writers and painters in the historical style, he thought, had totally overlooked that intermediate species of subjects which may be placed between the sublime and the grotesque. Here was a field unexploited in any country or any age. He began painting and engraving what he called "modern moral subjects," and found at last a steady income in the sale of prints which he engraved from those that struck popular fancy.

"Thus did he shine," as Horace Walpole said, "in a field untrodden before. The curtain was drawn aside, and his genius stood displayed in its full lustre. From time to time he continued to give those works that should be immortal if the nature of his art will allow it."

The ideal of moral rectitude which inspired the caricaturists of the Middle Ages still hung about Hogarth when he founded the first indigenous school of English pictorial satire. So he became a heavyweight opponent of wickedness in general. "It was his business to arrest the thoughtless in their hasty steps to evil—to confirm the prudent in their steady march towards good," says a commentator. His was not the art of the rapier, but of the tank.

The two plates 'Gin Lane' and 'Beer Street' are excellent examples of Hogarth's temper, the first indicting the curse of gin, the second applauding the blessing of beer; the one heaped up with dreadful misery, the other with equally dreadful happiness. His most celebrated works are the successive sets of prints, 'The Rake's Progress,' 'The Harlot's Progress,' 'Marriage à la Mode,' and others, each being a serial sermon, mostly of the hell-and-damnation variety. Virtue triumphs over Vice with sickening monotony, the Good Man always finishing up as Lord Mayor of London, the Bad Man always being publicly hanged at Tyburn.

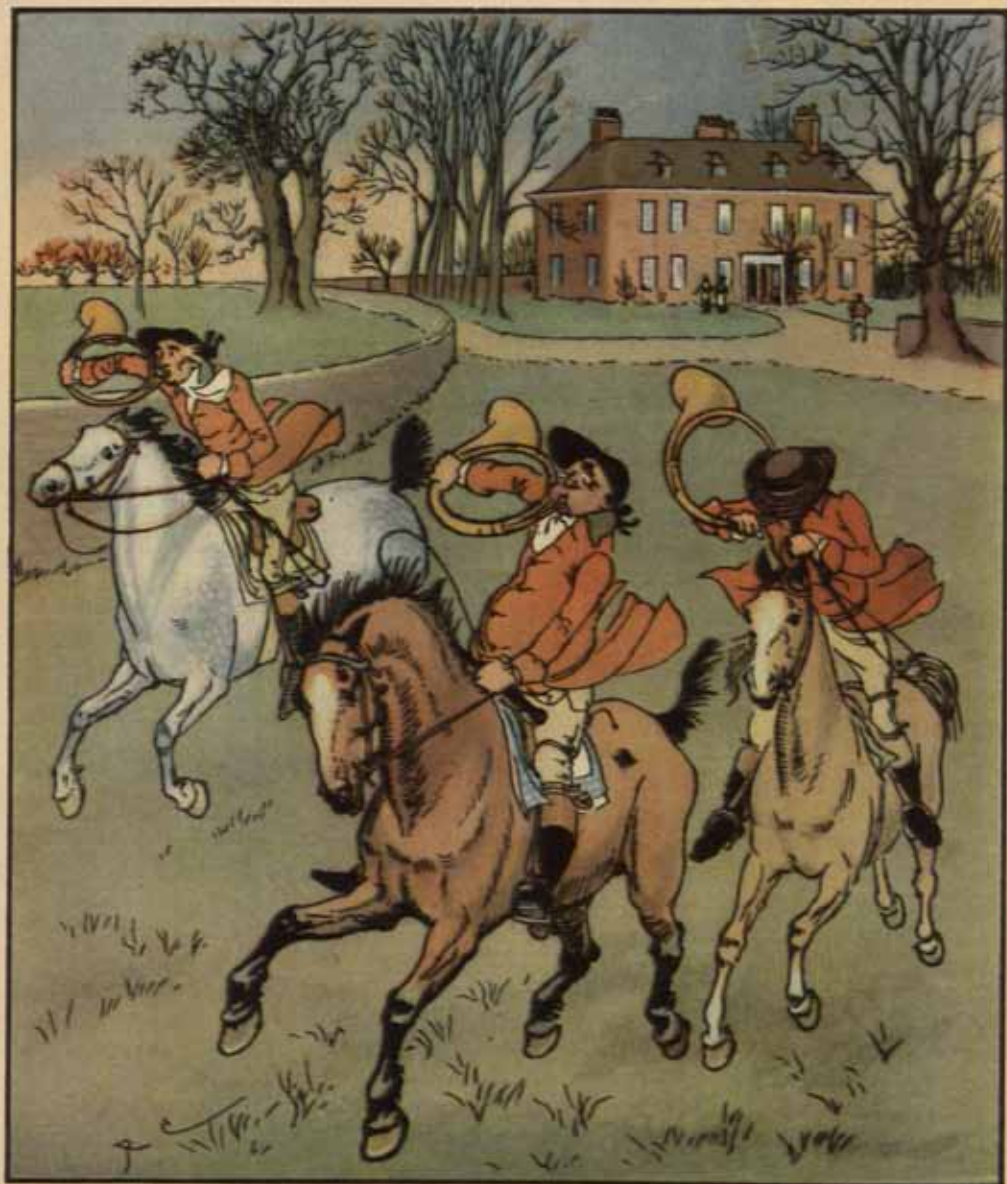
Alas! times and tastes have changed, and we cannot swallow our morality so neat nowadays. Such violence to the emotions is apt to appear



*By courtesy of the Trustees of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*

THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, BATH  
Drawing by Thomas Rowlandson





*By courtesy of Frederick Warne & Co.*

**'THE THREE JOVIAL HUNTSMEN'**  
Drawing by R. Caldecott  
From Caldecott's *Collection of Pictures and Songs*

to us childish. But to judge the works of Hogarth by standards of subsequent development in the art of which he was a pioneer, is to look back at him through the wrong end of the telescope. Hogarth's pictures, in modern setting and printed in a modern periodical, would be called "cartoons," though certainly there is little in common with the conventions, either conceptual or technical, of to-day's cartooning in, say, 'Suicide of the Countess,' 'The Rake in the Madhouse,' 'The Funeral.' "These prints are calculated to reform some reigning vices," announced the advertisement.

His first intention was to produce tableaux of life, pictures similar to representations on the stage. The probability that his public were unresponsive to demands upon the imagination and preferred to call a spade a bloody shovel accounts for the fact that there is about his compositions a theatrical rather than a dramatic effect, the details and accessories building up the point of an idea until it rants. A sophisticated modern cartoonist might justly criticise his way of littering his pictures with symbolism, and hold it to be overdoing the obvious to underline the same point several times over in the pictures hanging on the wall and the pattern on the carpet. The exaggeration in Hogarth's drawings is not always discriminating, of the kind which illuminates and explains. Often his humour was for the elementary souls who thought deformity amusing. Though he was capable of 'The Cockpit' and 'The Bench,' both plates displaying types which obviously ring true, he could also perpetrate the "comic" 'Laughing Audience,' which to civilised people is not comic at all, but only ugly.

Such criticism may be made to-day without diminishing Hogarth's stature as one of the four Old Masters of caricature and cartooning—Brueghel, Hogarth, Gillray, Daumier. These four had the differences of their respective nationalities; and each had, further, the marked individuality which distinguishes an original from all others of his kind. But Hogarth, the heavily realistic Englishman, like Brueghel, the droll slow Fleming, Gillray, the mocking ribald Scot, and Daumier, the emotional angry Frenchman, had breadth of vision and the intelligence to digest what he perceived and to make it his. His productivity, like that of the other three, was great, and he worked on the wide canvas with a zest and exuberance which may be discerned even to-day flowing as an undercurrent to the conscientious technique of his draughtsmanship.

Hogarth always insisted that he was no "caricaturer," but he understood the word not as we do to-day, but in the Italian sense then fashionable, as meaning a maker of trick likenesses. To him caricature was not an art of calculated and balanced exaggeration of individual characteristics, but an amusing aberration consisting of drawing the features of persons "with any sort of similitude in objects absolutely remote in their kind," an old boot, say, or a chair, a mountain, the sun or what not. Hogarth was himself not particularly good at this pastime, though he made at least one "caricature" which was greatly admired, of a famous musician as a note of music. When



he essayed the expression of character not by this inventive ingenuity but by the exaggeration of visible realities, his portraits of his great contemporaries were not far removed from normal accuracy. His portraits of Simon, Lord Lovat and John Wilkes, for instance, might hang in any historical gallery as faithful representations by an artist of unusual perception and freedom of execution, if, in the latter case, allowing himself a rather ill-expressed spite. Perhaps had Hogarth had an inkling of what we mean to-day by "cartooning" he would have insisted also that he was no "cartooner." Nevertheless it was the example of his work in the new field of his own development that most inspired the succeeding generation of engravers and subject-etchers. He was the grandfather of modern cartooning. Among his artistic progeny were Gillray and Rowlandson, its fathers.

Of these two the more significant figure is Gillray. Here at last is a worthy draughtsman to whom satire was a whole-time job and not a sideline. If Brueghel had raised caricatural draughtsmanship to the dignity of being a distinct art, and Hogarth had established a peculiarly English form of pictorial satire with moral purpose, Gillray took that art, form and purpose and fashioned them into something recognisably related to the modern cartoon. Hogarth's prints had been usually impersonal, and on those rare occasions when he touched upon politics the snobbish contempt for democracy which peeped through some of his drawings, and the Rule-Britannia-and-Damn-the-French air of others, indicated that he accepted the current conventions in political prejudice without much concern. Gillray, on the other hand, was a born politician, with a keen interest in the individuals who "made the wheels go round." His satirical turn was naturally more incisive and particular than that of Hogarth, because his aim was narrower and he occupied himself with more ephemeral aspects of his subjects. He specialised in personal portraiture and became an expert in the kind of draughtsmanship suited to the expression of his own sharp wit. Although his manner appears now old-fashioned, his approach to social and political satire is akin to that of the modern cartoonist. With Gillray we see developing the familiar technique of our own times—the selection of "characters" and their establishment as regular butts to be represented over and over again in different shapes and images of fantasy.

Gillray was no hireling, no servile champion of a faction. Even when under the influence of the spirit of war he grew the orthodox one-eyed passion against the foe, he remembered to remain the critic, not the servant, of authority. He was patriotic, but his was not the shallow patriotism which pretends that everything in the garden is lovely. On the contrary, many things seemed wrong to Gillray. The overstrained Royal prerogative, the political and legislative abuses, the disposition of Society to excessive gambling, sexual promiscuity and drunkenness, all provided him with material. The tolerance of the Government and the freedom of the Constitution gave him his opportunity. He directed his wit with such daring



'GIN LANE'

Moral engraving by William Hogarth, 1697-1764

independence that each of his caricatures took on an air of fresh surprise, not to say of astonishing impudence. He made many caricatures on the morals of the Royal Court, on King George III himself, his meanness and his clumsy behaviour ; on the Heir to the Throne, his expensive habits and his money troubles, his voluptuousness and his carryings-on with Mrs. Fitzherbert and other favourites. Perhaps the boldest pictorial parody ever published was his 'Sin, Death and the Devil,' based upon Milton's immortal epic, in which the Queen appeared as the devil.

Within a short distance of the metropolitan palace of the King of England such satires were to be bought at the print-shop of Mistress Humphrey in Piccadilly for eighteen-pence apiece, while Gillray himself sat in his little room overhead etching fresh ones. Sometimes great commotion



was caused outside, but usually the artist moved about without let or hindrance, and the shop windows were broken only once. The caricatures were regularly conveyed to Court, where their Majesties are reported to have expressed the opinion that those which opposed them were very poor and those which favoured them were very, very amusing.

Gillray, who favoured principles of freedom, at first approved of the French Revolution, but the execution of Louis and the works of the Terror were too much for him. The French threat of the invasion of England gave to his works, as to those of his contemporaries, the special ill-will of a prejudice inspired by the common fear. A typical example is the rather bad cartoon which he drew showing Napoleon's head on a pike waved by a gloating John Bull, an indication of what would be the result of the threatened invasion. "We owe to Gillray's universal language of picture ... much of that returning spirit of loyalty which ultimately preserved the country from invasion," wrote an historian. The battle of Waterloo was not won exclusively on the playing-fields of Eton.

As may be expected in the case of a figure who furnished the predominant subject-matter for satire for over a decade, Napoleon had a painful, if picturesque, time at Gillray's hands. When not a baby-eating cannibal, or a mongrel pup with tin-cans tied to his tail, he was a fox, a dragon, or supper for the devil. "Boney's" followers had their share of attention, notably Talleyrand, his Foreign Minister, who had a club-foot which made it easy for English caricaturists to confer immortality upon him as "Hopping Tally."

Napoleon's wife Josephine appears at first as a thin, ill-favoured creature, and later as a fat strumpet of the Drury Lane variety. One of the more ungallant caricatures of that ungentlemanly period was 'Ci-Devant Occupation,' illustrating a rumour that Josephine and Madame Tallien had danced naked for the amusement of Barras, detailing in the caption below the unsavoury bargain that it was alleged had been struck between Napoleon and Barras regarding the former's "taking over" Josephine. In the caricature a bloated, leering Barras lolls back drunkenly while before him prance the nude ladies; Napoleon peers cautiously through the curtain at the scene. The whole composition is calculated to make the persons depicted see red.

Too much has been said and written about Gillray's indecencies. The most complete collection of his work is that which is considerably published in two large folios—one thick containing respectable prints, the other thin and comparatively unrespectable. It is natural that the crudeness of the popular taste of his day should be reflected in its due proportion. Gillray's treatment ranged from the heroic to the broadly comic, but his excesses at either extreme are excused to the discerning student because of the presence of that relevant satire which distinguishes caricature from crude foolishness. His caricature of Mr. Pitt as the bottomless Pitt, literally, excusing to the Commons a Fundamental Deficiency in the Treasury, a print of which





**'THE PLUMB-PUDDING IN DANGER : OR, STATE EPICURES TAKING UN PETIT SOUPER'**  
 Caricature of Pitt and Napoleon carving up the globe  
 Engraving by James Gillray, 1805

hangs in the Mother of Parliaments, is a classic example of pertinent wit. When Gillray illustrated his suspicion that Fox and others were inclining towards the advanced ideas of the French revolutionary sans-culottes, by drawing them always without any trousers, he produced "vulgarity" but not silliness. Fox was much incensed.

It is unfortunate that this ribaldry in a small number of Gillray's caricatures tends to frighten away the delicate-minded from the choicer examples of his skill in other moods. At his best he was a master of the peculiar technique of draughtsmanship necessary for caricature, in its full range from majestic allegory to topical skit. Nowadays of course many of his vaster plates—'The Apotheosis of Hooche,' for instance, teeming with grimacing figures and hideous cherubim, in the centre of which sits the hero playing a lute which is a guillotine—seem too crowded and suffocating; and the device, often used, of conveying the full point of the idea in enormous legends covering half the picture, balloons full of writing coming from the mouths of the figures and zig-zagging down the margins, seems tiresome to the eye of to-day. But in general his compositions were well-judged and full of novelty, and his portraits remarkably illuminating and



convincing. George III, Pitt, Canning, Burke, live in his caricatures much more vividly than in their conventional historical portraits, for he had the true caricaturist's instinct not only for expressing in exaggerated terms physical characteristics, but also for using the physical to express the spiritual.

Gillray developed intemperate habits and went off his head at a comparatively early age. His final appearance is full of a grotesque drama which itself suggests caricature. He unsuccessfully attempted suicide from the window of his room above Mistress Humphrey's print-shop in Piccadilly where his drawings were on sale, and then startled the customers by stalking into the shop naked. After that he died. A moody man, solitary even in company, was this acknowledged Prince of Caricaturists, who for twenty years had "partially guided, partially formed, and generally reflected the convictions of the many." His influence in the development of his singular art has been enduring and world-wide.

As a political caricaturist, Thomas Rowlandson imitated the Gillray manner, method and boldness in attack, but in this *métier* he was far behind Gillray. Rowlandson was an inveterate gambler who was ruined and forced to work for a living, and he had not much interest in politics or public affairs. His tastes led him naturally to prefer the study of passing pleasures, sentiments and fashions. A tavern scene inspired him more than a political situation. Woman in all her conditions intrigued him more than Liberty. His caricatures gave women a rough classification: charming young girls, graceful and elegant; and fat old libidinous, blown-out, dropsical *rouées*. When he takes us under the shadows of Vauxhall among the tarts he is the most sprightly of the caricaturists of his time, but very low and very impudent. His crowds in Hyde Park, his Bath assemblies, are vivid contemporary records, rowdy but essentially true. His caricatures about food won immediate success in that England of which a centre of interest was then the stomach. These were, of course, the days of the three-bottle men of the Regency. It was the custom for satirists to be ribald, and both Gillray and Rowlandson were but English in this respect. It is obviously easier to achieve mere grossness than discriminative exaggeration carefully balanced to illuminate an idea; and Rowlandson was more pointlessly sensual than Gillray. But, at his best, in his own particular domain as a caricaturist of life and character, he was the better artist. In the more serious departments of drawing he was a splendidly sympathetic rich draughtsman. The romantic touch and the peculiarly native charm he captured in his broad renderings of English landscape made a permanent impression upon painters and draughtsmen and won him respect as a master.

Before Gillray's unhappy end in 1815 he occasionally started drawings which he was unable to finish. Often these had to be finished for him by others. Among these others were the youthful George Cruikshank and his brother Robert.



THE CRINOLINE RACE: OR, WHAT IT MUST COME TO AT LAST  
IF THE LADIES GO ON BLOWING THEMSELVES OUT AS THEY DO  
Drawing by George Cruikshank

At first the brothers Cruikshank were closely associated and it is probable that many early drawings were the joint work of both ; but later they separated and came to the point of quarrelling with each other about their respective rights to sign with the plain surname "Cruikshank." Since, owing to this dispute, the brothers often would omit to sign their drawings at all, it is occasionally hard to identify the work of either except by a careful study of style and technique.

Difficulty in this respect is not lessened by the fact that George was an obliging fellow without any political conscience, ready not only to draw to order squibs against any policy, person or thing that could pay him his fee, but also to build up compositions of draughtsmanship from the "roughs" supplied by friends and clients, and to etch on the plates designs which were completely the work of other artists.

Robert was a fairly efficient caricaturist, more prolific in this line than George ; but no genius. George, it appears, started in to draw vigorous and occasionally indecent political and social caricatures in a manner which suggested strongly the influence of Gillray. He became "the clown in white gloves" working for the masses, specialising in brutal frankness. Even Gillray might have felt the Cruikshank 'Life of Napoleon' went too far. George had a lively time in a riotous journal called *The Scourge*, which printed several caricatures which would be good for a term of imprisonment for criminal libel in our more tender days. He took the princesses' part against the Regent and gave it hot to Canning, Castlereagh, Bexley and Sidmouth.



He had attracted considerable attention with a series of satires about the manners and customs of the Court when suddenly these ceased and the whole atmosphere of his work changed.

It was generally said—and not denied—that George's abandonment of the more downright kind of caricature was due to a tip he had received from Windsor Castle. True or not, a reaction had begun against "coarseness" and it is probable that George, always obliging, found it both more profitable—and congenial—to enter more genteel provinces of art. He became a book illustrator, at which his peculiar gifts of fancy caused him to be a great success, when he was not fighting his authors and quarrelling with his publishers—which happened constantly because of his theory that the illustrations should be drawn first at the unfettered discretion of the artist, the stories being written later to fit. From time to time the spirit of caricature gleamed, rather than shone, in his constant flow of quips about controversial topics; but finally it gave place almost completely to that of innocent fun about such subjects as the weather, sport, the fashions, the danger of travelling in "these 'ere new-fangled railways," Christmas pudding, and the like. It is by this phase of his work that Cruikshank is best remembered: for the rounded humour of his genial outlook upon the little things of everyday life, and for the true Cockney flavour of his fancy. The panorama he left of the manners and modes of his times are part of the historical records of Britain.

Cruikshank (Robert had disappeared and George now enjoyed full title to the surname), who had lived a lusty youth, came in middle life to look upon his art as an instrument in the cause of uplift, with special reference to temperance. Unfortunately, as he waxed in his crusading fervour he waned as an artist. Years before, facile critics, admonishing him for a certain feebleness in conception, had urged him to think of Hogarth. Such a subject as the evils of Gin was, of course, eminently suitable to the art of Hogarth himself. Like a gloomy elephant having a bath, Hogarth would have lowered himself into it and wallowed.

But Cruikshank's line was too light, his imagination not robust enough for a second Hogarth. His monumental effort, "The Worship of Bacchus," now reposing in the morgue for dead pictures under the National Gallery, is a mass composition of too many ideas closely drawn and so assembled as to be a weariness to the eye. His public yawned, and turned to other gods. Poor George! After thirty years he attempted a come-back, but a new public had grown up which knew him not.

The growth of politeness in 1830 may be measured by the diminution of satire found in the political lithographs of *HB*, otherwise John Doyle. Doyle was a portrait painter who had an ability—not a facility—for drawing recognisable but rather dull likenesses of contemporary statesmen in postures and situations which were not too hard on their dignity. Of his subjects, which included Wellington, Peel, Melbourne, Derby and Russell, he was

## THE SCAPE GOAT



'THE SCAPEGOAT'  
Cartoon by Cynicus





ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE  
Caricature by Carlo Pellegrini (*Ape*)

most successful with Brougham, who had a powerful face which almost drew itself. Restrained in temper and hesitant in line, *HB's* prints observed standards of decorum which are foreign to the tradition of caricature. After all, the business of a caricaturist is caricature. Doyle's publishers felt this and always called them "Political Sketches." Perhaps *HB's* most valuable achievement was his son Richard, "Dicky" Doyle, who became a comic artist of much greater range.

Times and tastes were changing. In England caricature had had a very free time during the Napoleonic episode. But, apart from the evolution in manners, changes were taking place in the modes of producing and publishing caricatures which were to have far-reaching effects upon the whole future of graphic satire, its forms, conventions and temper. Wood-engraving began to supersede copper-plate etching. The copper-plate etchers had been usually the artists themselves, who, having drawn their pictures, carried them through the entire process of reproduction personally, often adding to and improving upon them as they went along. But in wood-engraving the personal touch became rarer and finally disappeared altogether. It was a quicker and cheaper process than etching. Accordingly floods of caricatures of indifferent quality, mostly anonymous, made their appearance. Caricatures dropped in price from a shilling to a penny. Greater simplicity and speed of reproduction foreshadowed a significant change. Caricature was to be taken under the wing of the press.

In 1841, the success of the French satirical weekly paper, *Charivari*, inspired in Britain the birth of *Punch*. The latter was announced as a comic paper "without grossness, partisanship, profanity, indelicacy, or malice." After the usual struggles it found its feet, and several promising caricaturists rose to the opportunity. The most notable was John Leech; who, by the way, has the distinction, with Jerrold his editor, of being the first to apply the word "cartoon" to the graphic satires previously called caricatures.

In 1843 was held a great exhibition of rough designs, or "cartoons" (in the correct sense of the word), for the frescoes to be executed on the walls of the Houses of Parliament. It was an obvious opportunity. Leech caricatured these "cartoons" in a series of biting satires. The public remembered the word "cartoon" and has clung to it ever since.

Leech had a ready flow of ideas of his own. He had started drawing what *Punch* called "pencilings," which were not unduly cramped by the official abjuration of grossness, partisanship, profanity, etc. His earlier work was often sharply pointed. These were the stormy days of the papal "aggression" dispute, and Leech bitterly ridiculed the Pope and the Catholic Bishops. The Prime Minister, Lord Russell, had introduced his anti-Catholic Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, apologetically explaining that it was only a gesture. Leech drew his famous 'No Popery' cartoon of Russell on Cardinal Wiseman's doorstep. It made a great stir and was said to have substantially aided Russell's fall shortly after. He disliked Jews, and at the time of the



Jewish Disabilities Removal Bill he caricatured Baron de Rothschild trying to force his nose between the doors of the House of Commons, the title reading, 'The Thin End of the Wedge.' His most aggressive satire was reserved, however, for foreigners, especially Frenchmen. Prince Louis Napoleon came in for spirited attacks, and Leech offended the susceptibilities of the whole French army with a celebrated caricature, 'Cock-a-doodle-do.' On two occasions *Punch* was officially excluded from France—with Leech's help. The home statesmen were not exempt. Leech went for Brougham, Bright, Aberdeen, and especially Disraeli, firmly snubbing the ingratiatory advances of the latter, who appreciated his importance enough to court him personally, but without appreciable effect. Nor did the British lion himself enjoy a close season, but, during certain unhappy dealings with Greece, was presented as a sneaking, grovelling, dilapidated quadruped, with *Punch* holding him by the ear and saying, "Why don't you hit someone your own size?"

The famous Graham envelope was designed by Leech. Mr. Graham, the then Home Secretary, was alleged to have opened some private letters in the exercise of his official privilege. Leech drew a neat design of steaming kettles, Paul Prys, and snakes in the grass, which was printed on envelopes and had an immense sale for use through the post. Mr. Graham was effectively cured of his paternalism.

*Punch* prospered and gained circulation. He became Mr. Punch, with the added responsibilities and restraints that go with a widening circulation. His satire was scrutinised and the subjects of his cartoons debated by a vigilance committee of the staff, which included partisans of all current political faiths. When these subjects had been passed through the fire of controversy, singed of offence and passed as agreeable to everybody, they were, as might be expected, extremely fair-minded. Leech was more gentle in nature than Gillray, and his cartoons gradually lost the aggressive spirit which had filled his early pencillings. He was encouraged to avoid caricature. His serious compositions were hailed enthusiastically as his best. A heavily dramatic cartoon entitled 'General Février Turns Traitor,' published at the time of the Crimean War, was said to be his high-watermark. The Emperor of Russia had been counting upon the icy blasts of the month of February to give him the advantage over his foes; but he himself was struck down by illness during that month and died suddenly. This situation Leech illustrated by drawing the Czar lying dead upon his bier while a fearsome skeleton dressed in the uniform of a general rested an icy finger upon his heart. A heavily dramatic idea, adequately drawn, with plenty of snow and gloomy background. "Just think," said Leech's friends, forgetting much, "how savage Gillray or vulgar Rowlandson would have handled such a theme. They would have caricatured it."

Since Leech was the master hand, his imitators followed. "Serious" cartoons were more frequent, and cartoons in general became less infused



"THIS IS THE BOY WHO CHALKED UP *NO POPERY*—AND THEN RAN AWAY!"

A cartoon by John Leech of Lord John Russell "asserting the Supremacy of the Crown" at the time of the "Papal Aggression" disputes

with mockery. Satire was diffused into repartees and jokes, and Leech himself specialised in jokes about the hunting field and deer-stalking in the Highlands. His series of the adventures of Mr. Briggs, which, by the way, reveals that creation to be an ancestor of the modern comic strip, has a broad humour but appears innocent of any satirical motive, except perhaps to those persons who see in every perversion of the human shape a satirical comment upon the existence of the Race. After carrying on a decorous campaign against the wearing of bloomers by ladies, Leech devoted himself to the perfecting of a pretty girl's head—the "Leech girl"—for which he won great popularity. The political powers, no doubt grateful for his mildness, comforted his declining years with a pension.

Leech's contemporaries included a young man, John Tenniel, destined to become a landmark in British cartooning. He confirmed Leech's latter-day code of good behaviour for cartoonists. Indeed he may be said to have created upon it, to rival the original Gillray tradition, a new Tenniel tradition, together with almost an "official" style for its expression.



He took Gillray's ribald John Bull and smoothed him down into a heavily dignified figure which evoked a comfortable feeling of satisfaction in the breasts of the great middle classes of 1860, who recognised their likeness immediately.

The idea of representing the national ego as a goddess was not, of course, Tenniel's, but it was he who took not only Britannia but the whole Britannia family on the permanent staff, so to speak, of Cartooning. The goddesses! Germania, Columbia, La Belle France, Russia, Erin and the rest appeared engaged in lofty commerce one with another so frequently that they gradually created a world of their own. One lost sight of their symbolic mission and grew interested in them for their own sakes—in the sympathetic hand-clasps they would give one another in times of disaster; the frigid glances when relations were strained; the laurel wreaths they would place upon the tombs of one another's latest dead statesmen.

Tenniel, like other cartoonists of his day, worked straight on the surface of the wood-block later to be cut by the engraver. On this severely restricted space he drew his cartoons in reverse with a finely pointed hard lead pencil, making no direct use of models. The conditions were not conducive to enterprise in technical experiment, since so much had to be left to the engraver, who very often had his own ideas about how to interpret a shadow or a softness.

But Tenniel himself was a sober draughtsman who made little attempt to render in line the different textures of materials. This gave his work a peculiar woodenness of technique which imparted an air of stiff dignity to whomever and whatever he drew. He gave the statesmen, whatever their politics, a stern unbending appearance which was no doubt gratifying to them, if tiresome to their critics. His portraits were, for the most part, unillumined, and not always up to date with the ageing appearance of their mortal originals. But such details need not obscure the fact that he had in his compositions largeness of conception and dramatic power which made his art peculiarly suited to the illustration of allegory.

The subject matter, points and parallels used by Tenniel were almost invariably selected for him by others. He took only a mild interest in what lay behind his drawings. We are told that during the discussions he made few remarks, but sat thinking not of the political or social but of the artistic possibilities of the subjects. The temptation to choose a novel idea good to draw, in preference to one sound in point but poor in pictorial promise, is always present to a cartoonist; and the attraction of analogies suited to the Tenniel style but insufficiently apt to the circumstances of the occasion sometimes led to a confusion of meaning.

Strangely enough his most famous cartoon is an example of this. 'Dropping the Pilot' shows the German Chancellor, Prince Bismarck, dressed as a pilot leaving the ship, the German Empire, while the Emperor leans over the bulwark regarding him. The point of the situation which





'GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!'

Cartoon by John Tenniel celebrating the Jubilee of Queen Victoria, 1887

evoked this cartoon was that Bismarck's dismissal was an astonishing and unexpected event, but the leaving of a ship by the pilot is a perfectly normal and expected event—in no way a real parallel. The cartoon, though, was successful. Both Bismarck and the Emperor were very pleased.

Tenniel is remembered almost exclusively for the cartoons of his later years, which were eminently well-bred. But his hard pencil was sharper-pointed and less well-behaved in his youth. His cartoons during the American Civil War were sharp enough to make the sympathisers of Abe Lincoln wince. His art, mellowing early, achieved and maintained a high standard of gentlemanly decorum. He was discretion itself in producing powerful cartoons that offended nobody. Upon a tight place arising in foreign diplomacy, for instance, he would draw the British Lion gazing nobly at the horizon with his front paw resting on a document, a gun or a rock, as the occasion suggested. He would skate around the point of a sore political controversy with sufficient tact and ambiguity to avoid embarrassment, finding a playful parallel to the situation in *Alice* or *Pickwick Papers*; or depicting both sides posing nobly in armour with a wealth of historical appearance in a cartoon accompanied by a column of poetry.

Tenniel's was a great personal triumph. His work stretching over nearly half a century constitutes a history in pictures—a history of Victorian affairs from a typical Victorian viewpoint. It was generally felt by his admirers that his cartoons bore some relationship to, but were an improvement on, caricatures—something more refined. But speaking generally, the



spirit pervading Tenniel's work was the opposite of the Gillray spirit of caricature. Tenniel was Dignity, not Impudence. If his work sometimes had the defect of its great qualities—a failing in crude force when crude force was required—he nevertheless brought to the whole art of cartooning a respectability which must have astonished the shades of Gillray and Rowlandson. He became an institution and his talents were recognised with a knighthood before he died, honoured at home and abroad.

On Tenniel's death, his mantle gracefully descended upon the shoulders of Linley Sambourne, who, in actual fact, had been wearing already a capacious robe of his own for some years previously. It is said that Sambourne was rather proud of being able to draw a perfect circle freehand. One cannot expect a graphic artist, engrossed in the properties of the objects he is representing, to be as unconscious of his own manipulation as a healthy man is unconscious of his body; but Sambourne was perhaps too pre-occupied with the technical business of making lines. He took great care to make his outlines all of the same thickness, to follow rounded surfaces with rounded lines, flat surfaces with flat lines, and so on. As a result his cartoons, impeccably drawn, often had a mechanical air suggestive of the engineering draughtsman's office at which Sambourne when young had served an apprenticeship.

Even so, he evolved a style which for sheer purity of line and solid correctness of draughtsmanship has not been excelled among British artists; a line which thereafter greatly affected the technique not only of British cartoonists but of black-and-white artists generally everywhere; and a meticulous accuracy which is a standing rebuke to that carelessness which is popularly supposed to belong to the artistic temperament.

In producing a continuous stream of drawings of assorted subjects—yesterday a locomotive, to-day a Chinese pagoda, to-morrow the inside of a piano—it is human for cartoonists to err occasionally. Tenniel did, Leech did, Gillray did, Hogarth did. But not Sambourne. Sambourne had a passion for accuracy which he allied to an enthusiasm for the (then) new hobby of photography. It is written that he prowled with his camera habitually. At his death he had 100,000 photographs of backgrounds, figures and details useful in drawing cartoons. The vicissitudes of John Bull, Britannia and the other cartoon myths were acted out on his back lawn and carefully photographed, later to be translated into the dignified symphonies in line signed "*Sambourne inv. et fec.*"

It should not be imagined, however, that Sambourne was a limited inventor, as this might suggest. On the contrary. He possessed a considerable talent for grotesque and caricature. In ornamental borders and initial letters—conventions of humorous art in his day—he poured forth from a crowded imagination intricate compositions full of detail carefully distorted and harmoniously exaggerated. Though time has obscured their allusive wit and symbolic meaning, they remain models of excellent drawing; but





'PULLED UP AT LAST'

P.C. DIZZY : 'It's no use, Sir. I've strict orders from the country not to let anything of the sort pass.'

Caricature of Disraeli by W. Bowcher

they pay the penalty of being too plentiful, too crowded together to be properly appreciated by casual observers. Even the best of cooks should not serve their tasty dishes in portions of a hundredweight.

The effect of his political cartoons was greatly strengthened by his talent for reliable portraiture. While he was not a great analyst of character—the long series of Fancy Portraits which he contributed to *Punch* have a static conventional quality suggesting a tiresome dependence upon his beloved photographs—his ringleted Disraelis, his Gladstones, Chamberlains and Harcourts, when they were once "run in," became lively caricatures, supple and workable in any expression from any angle. In his cartoons on foreign affairs may be traced the rise of aggressive Prussianism in Germany, and the decay of the Czardom in Russia. 'The Release' which depicts Liberty emerging from a Russian prison after the "constitutional changes" of 1905 ; and 'The Eleventh Hour,' the shade of Louis XVI saying to the Czar, "Side with your people, sire, while there is yet time—I was too late," are but two examples of hundreds of simple, even obvious ideas given distinction by dramatic composition and masterly drawing. Sambourne made no one cartoon by which he is always remembered, as did Tenniel with his 'Dropping the Pilot' ; but 'The Tug of Peace'—heavily armed Germany, France, Russia and Britain inviting one another to enter the Temple of Disarmament first : "After you, sir"—is a famous work of his, the moral of



which is still fresh. He was perhaps at his best in Tragedy. 'Requiescat,' a heavily mournful cartoon drawn on the death of Queen Victoria, is unequalled in this vein.

During the reign of Leech, Tenniel and, latterly, Sambourne, their bright and continuous shine somewhat obscured the lesser lights of their rivals and imitators. Not to be ignored, however, is Matt Morgan, an artist of somewhat ponderous moralities on social injustice, more or less at home in the Hogarthian treatment of beautifully rounded but unhappy females, victims of the Wicked City, being fished out of the river; and rather laboured political cartoons showing more of the same females labelled 'Ireland' being betrayed by grim unshaven villains labelled 'Fenian,' and extremely sturdy John Bulls being restrained by scoundrel politicians from giving treacherous Uncle Sams the father of an allegedly well-deserved hiding.

The nearest rivals to Tenniel were W. Bowcher and Gordon Thomson, cartoonists of *Judy* and *Fun* respectively. Both were competent draughtsmen, with sound pictorial sense and good at portraits. Cartooning in the 1870's was mainly devoted to the long political duel between Gladstone and Disraeli; and Bowcher and Thomson harped on these two rich personalities. It is unfortunate for both artists, however, that they took usually too narrow an angle of vision for their works to endure. Bowcher's cartoons showing Mr. G. gazing Narcissus-like at his own reflection in a stream; travelling in a broken-down cab pulled by a disreputable nag; as the Grand Old Tinker mending a battered pot—splendid drawings that they are—might be splendid cartoons, too, were they about great issues instead of ephemeral party squabbles. Occasionally, moved by burning issues now long dead, Bowcher launched thunderbolts of more verve and significance. His Mr. G. burning Protestant archbishops at the Stake; and burying Honour, Conscience and Reputation at dead of night (both inspired by Irish Church Disestablishment) have a lively mordancy. Bowcher gave Mr. G. a bad time. But there was always Gordon Thomson on the opposition periodical across the way to reply for the defence with a cartoon of Mr. G. as, say, William the Conqueror with his foot on Disraeli's chest.

A cut below Bowcher and Thomson were their respective successors, John Proctor and William Parkinson. Proctor was an imitator of Tenniel's manner, a more animated and varied draughtsman but far less of a cartoonist. His qualities are seen to better advantage in his illustrations to "Tim Pippen" and other children's books than in his rather pedestrian satires. Over-enthusiastic admiration of both Tenniel and Sambourne was the undoing of William Parkinson, who evolved a style reminiscent at odd times of both, in which he rendered correct but undistinguished cartoons at the expense of the inevitable Mr. G.

This account of the progress of British cartooning up to the time of its arrival in the daily newspapers might fittingly end with, as postscript,



JOHN HENRY NEWMAN  
Caricature by Leslie Ward (*Spy*)





*By courtesy of the Artist*

**'DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI, IN HIS BACK GARDEN**

**Caricature by Sir Max Beerbohm**

*The group includes Swinburne, Watts Duntson, Whistler, William Morris and Mrs. William Morris, Hall Caine, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and others.*

*Cynicus*. During the early nineties *Cynicus*, a Scot, himself published from his studio, cards and books of cartoons, social and political. They were coloured by hand and their broad simplicity of treatment had an attraction of its own despite defective draughtsmanship. Dealing in generalisations and never personal, *Cynicus* was a comprehensive and downright critic. No mealy-mouth he. Among his dislikes were Parliament, Democracy, Monarchy, Labour (The Brutish Working-Man), Capital, The Law, History, the Church, Speculators, Landlords, the Peerage, Vice, Politicians, and Journalism. Each subject was accompanied usually by a rhymed couplet in appropriately biting terms (e.g., Journalism: "Gloating in gore and gruesome gabble, A paltry pimp who panders to the rabble"). The authentic latter-eighteenth-century spirit. A reminder that satire is not mere pleasantry.

### THE COMIC ARTISTS

IN the revulsion of feeling from "coarseness" which came early in the nineteenth century, caricaturists metaphorically donned white kid gloves and tried to forget their ribald past. Artists became less interested in ideas, and more in excellence of draughtsmanship. Presently there appeared a succession of comic artists of high ability, masters of draughtsmanship who raised humorous drawing to a much higher level of artistry than formerly.

It is supposed by the ignorant that satire, wit and humour are interchangeable terms meaning the same thing. But obviously satire, though essentially witty, is not infrequently serious in intent and solemn in treatment, without a gleam of humour; and, conversely, humour requires no wit nor satire to be first-rate as humour. The dividing line between the satirical and the humorous, however, especially when the form of expression is caricatural draughtsmanship—between, that is, the art which "overloads" with a critical purpose and that which "overloads" for mere amusement—is easily stepped over; and many of the distinguished cartoonists have been also distinguished comic artists. The work of Cruikshank and Leech in this field have been mentioned already. The greatest of the British comic artists, Charles Keene, was, however, hardly a cartoonist or a caricaturist in the true sense at all.

Charles Keene, a reserved, modest, frugal man, son of a solicitor, was partial to old music (especially on the bagpipes), old songs, old prints, old books, old flints, old clothes and very old clay pipes. He was an artist's artist, appreciated by his fellow draughtsmen and the knowing few, not specially distinguished by the wide public who incline to estimate the merits of an artist in the line of humour by the joke printed below the drawing. Keene was not, in fact, a humorist in the literary sense. Most of his jokes were supplied to him by friends. Neither was he the comic



draughtsman of exaggeration. His was not the humour of invention, but of observation. He was supreme in "catching Nature in her humorous moments." Working upon a foundation of scrupulously correct draughtsmanship from the life, Keene's genius as a comic artist lay in the warm geniality which he worked into the very lines of the finished drawing. He was influenced by the woodcuts of Menzel, his drawings were distinguished by broad and rich effects of light and shade, and had the restfulness which comes from complete unity. His chiaroscuro (that overworked term) was grand. Without straining truth, he produced a convincing panorama of the world as seen through the eyes of one who approved middle-class ideals, revered established institutions and resented change (especially among the "lower orders"), cordially disliked Irishmen and Americans. But though a man of strong, even childish, prejudices privately, these did not unnecessarily crop up in his drawings, for he avoided direct comment on his material. He occasionally put his cronies into his drawings but his talent in getting likenesses was negligible. His most important work was the illustrating of somewhat long-winded jokes, displaying delightfully drawn flunkies, middle-class "old gents," parvenu rich, working-men M.P.s, Church of England clergymen, snobs, waiters (his Robert was a creation), Highland gillies, and Irish peasants. The types he drew were not beautiful, elegant, nor well-groomed, like those of his contemporary Du Maurier; and he could not draw pretty girls as could Leech. In fact, the inevitable fastidious boneheads, blind to his consummate artistry, complained sometimes that his works were "degraded," "obscene," and "odious."

Keene's drawings suffered more than most in process of reproduction because of his peculiar methods of work. He *would* draw, for instance, with bits of pointed wood and home-made inks of various shade and colours, producing soft touches and delicate subtleties which excite joy in admirers of his originals to-day, but which drove the patient wood-cut engravers of his time to deep profanity. He took dislikes to drawing papers and liked to use odd scraps with a nice grain, say, on the insides of old envelopes which he treasured for the purpose. A character, this lanky Carlo Keene, on the street corner making notes in a sketchbook with an ink-bottle tied to his waistcoat button.

Since the English are suspicious of originals and must have it always that so-and-so is "a second such-and-such," Keene began as the "successor of Leech"; but he soon demonstrated that he was himself, and no successor to anybody. It was in reality Du Maurier, a polished and graceful illustrator, who stepped into the shoes of Leech as the social satirist of *Punch*. Du Maurier was a transplanted Parisian who lost his Gallic lightness, yet his work remained more sentimental than satirical. He used the same very mannered inspiration and technical style for illustrating both serious novels and the social satires; and the satire of the latter was generally contained only in the text beneath—which is, as they say, "something else again."





**'POLITESSE OBLIGE'**

HANSOM CABBY (*suppressing a volley of imprecations at the tip of his tongue—the four-wheeler had narrowly grazed his horse's nose—as he'd a Lady inside*): 'Pray, 'ow d'yer like London, Sir?'

Drawing by Charles Keene

A specialist in the polite touch, when he essayed comicality in line the results were uncomfortable. "Don't be funny," he was told, "do the refined side of life." Yet, despite the refinement, he often succeeded in conveying biting irony, mostly by the ancient device of creating "characters" and using them as butts. His Sir Gorgius Midas, the parvenu, and Mrs. Ponsonby Tompkins, the social climber, did good service when the artist felt like using a more aggressive weapon than a feather. His Cimabue Browns came in very handy as the vehicle for a dirty right to the brisket of the "greenery-yallery" æsthete movement, which he cordially disliked. But Du Maurier's chief success lay in his pictures of handsome broad-shouldered men and elegant ladies of classic beauty, that so mightily pleased the middle classes who loved to think English Society was like that. This persistent representation of the contemporary female as a statuesque goddess was perhaps Du Maurier's most significant gift to his time; for the effect of the subtle flattery stimulated Nature to imitate Art and it is alleged that in striving to live up to the ideal the average stature of the English girl increased by four inches.

The reputation of Randolph Caldecott rests mainly on his picture books for children, which he illustrated with such simple charm that they are





'FELINE AMENITIES'

*'Look, Dear ! There's your husband going in to supper with Mrs. Scudamore—a dangerously attractive woman. Let me warn you !'*

*'How good of you ! How I wish he was going in to supper with you, dear, instead !'*

Drawing by George Du Maurier

remembered with affection as well as admiration by the children now grown to great-grandparents. He made also social pictures for the *Graphic*, convincing in character. In this work he was the pictorial equivalent of an exceptionally gifted descriptive-writer with an amiable humour. His work offers no criticism, makes no comment beyond something approximating to "You've got a nice day for it." He loved England, the out-of-doors and horses. He became a kind of national official portrayer of Christmas. In general his art displayed the good heart and kindly nature of the artist.

Caldecott was an original, independent, refusing steady work, irked by other people's suggestions. There have been many sounder draughtsmen, even in his own time, but none who could put on paper with such engaging simplicity the fresh sweetness of English fields and the clean air of English country. Perhaps only foreigners with an unaccustomed eye can properly appreciate this authentic local quality, flowing as naturally as with Morland and Rowlandson if along different channels. Caldecott died at 40—the right age for a genius who would not outstay his welcome. His influence was not lost on succeeding generations.

In 1872 began a second revolutionary development in the mode of reproducing black-and-white drawings. Though many artists had achieved individuality of style during the days of wood-engraving, generally speaking



'WATER-WORKS'

Drawing by Phil May from *Guttersnipes*, 1896

all had had to work "with the wood" and their drawings could not escape a certain family resemblance imposed by the technique of the graver's tools. The perfecting of photo-process engraving, however, promised facsimile reproduction of their own actual lines to the smallest detail. Artists began to break away from wood-cut styles, to loosen up and to draw with more stylish originality. The new process had existed for some years when its most notable consequence occurred in Phil May.

Founding himself upon Linley Sambourne, whose work his early efforts closely resembled, May evolved a style of drawing which, by contrast with the laborious and closely-worked cross-hatched technique of the wood-cut school, charmed by its simplicity and apparent spontaneity. It has often been said that this evolution of style was necessitated by the poor quality of paper and printing of the *Sydney Bulletin* in Australia, where May worked for a few years in his youth. This is, however, untrue. May's Australian work, expertly engraved and well reproduced, appears comparatively tight and careful and the files show that he evolved his linear simplicity and nonchalance at a later date, no doubt from purely artistic motives.

The influence of Phil May on English comic art is comparable to that of Caran d'Ache, on the French—which is to say that "his inimitable pencil" (to use an expression dear to inexperienced writers on this popular art in which barefaced imitation is so common) had more imitators than any of his





ALLY . . .

contemporaries. But economy of means and smooth flow of line are not virtues by themselves. That May's dashed-off effects were carefully contrived is evident from a look at his painstaking preliminary studies of figure and composition. The essential quality of the May execution was its nerve. No one but a fellow artist who has actually tried it can tell of the peculiar bravery required to sacrifice all the careful detailed preliminaries and to slap in the bold lines. Phil May was not a good cartoonist, for he had no political sense and his drawings hardly ever had an objective moral.

Neither was he a first-rate caricaturist of persons, though deft at catching a superficial resemblance. He never approached *Ape*, for instance, in the analysis, selection and emphasis of individual character. May's most famous portrait, that of Gladstone sitting on the Front Bench, masterpiece of expression that it is, full of life and repressed energy, discovers, one feels, qualities in the artist rather than in his subject.

Phil May's best known line was illustrated jokes. The convention made it necessary for his drawings to be accompanied by witticisms in text. With some artists these literary efforts were usually the essential kernel of the humour, but they mattered little to Phil May, being often just pegs on which to hang his drawings of types. For Phil May was mainly interested in types; not so much particular individuals as kinds of people—the kinds of people one saw in the streets. He was lively, suggestive, and amusing, an excellent observer of generalised character, more observant of human variety than Keene, though much less of an artist in the broader sense, without ability to create a harmonious setting. Composition did not worry Phil May, for he did not worry it. Indeed his drawings often had no composition at all, being just two figures without background suspended in space—ill-assorted figures, too, sometimes drawn in different styles and different lights. Perhaps the artist was too easily seduced by the parts he found good to draw to put in the hard labour of unifying the whole. More likely, having magnified the elimination of the unnecessary to a supreme principle, he judged backgrounds to be superfluous.

Unlike most comedians of the pen, usually sedate and respectable citizens in private life, Phil May was a careless happy-go-lucky who wore check suits, picturesque fringe, smoked cigars, and enjoyed riotous company. Lived, in fact, as comic artists are supposed to live, but so rarely do. "Draw firm and be jolly," he said. Looking at his work in accumulation it is probable that social investigators of the future will account his period



as one unusually rich with picturesque characters ; not realising that disposition of this artist to be attracted by the bits good to draw and to impart to them his own mood. Carping critical ghouls of the future may say that Phil May's drawings were shallow in that he made no psychological comment on his epoch. Those who must attach a profound psychological significance to the simplest act may have it that he had a sympathy with street urchins, on the strength of his having drawn them so often. Much more likely, he just found them jolly to draw. He was too interested in the varied appearance of the animal, Man, to concern himself with its significance. That was not his job. At his job he was magnificent.

A simplicity like that of May, but quite different in quality, revealed itself in the drawings of J. A. Shepherd, a remarkably original caricaturist of animals. Not, mark you, a mere drawer of *funny* animals, but a true observer of their characteristics, with whom the prehistoric artist who drew the mammoth in the cave of Altamira might have shaken hands as a worthy descendant. He put his zoo on paper with a sweet line, delightful simplicity, understanding and dash. He, too, has had his imitators, but remains unique.

Leech, Du Maurier, Caldecott, May—these were comic artists of the threepenny and sixpenny "class" periodicals. But there were now, thanks to cheaper reproduction, many comic papers of lesser price and refinement. *Ally Sloper's Half-holiday* gave W. G. Baxter the opportunity to develop a character which became a national institution. Ally, whose paper ran on "family" lines with recurring gags and familiar characters week by week, appeared himself regularly on the front page in a kind of topical half-joke-half-cartoon, drawn with skill and a nice judgment of requirements by Baxter, and later by his successor, W. F. Thomas. The *Half-holiday* became the poor man's *Punch*. The masses, who never quite believed in Britannia or John Bull, understood perfectly Ally Sloper, that absurd figure with bulbous red nose, Micawber hat, baggy gamp, facetiousness and ribald slap-stick, and took him to their hearts. Since the arts of cartoon, caricature and comic art are essentially of the people, it is fitting also that the merits be recognised here of such popular artists in picture-story as Oliver Veal, the father of the Ha'penny Comic strip, a genius whose eccentric creations had mouths that used to slip round to the backs of their necks when they got excited; and the unknown inventors of Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy, and Weary Willie and Tired Tim, who were too modest to sign their mirthful works which so engaged the affections of youth in the early days of the present century.



... SLOPER

Drawings by W. G. Baxter





'GETTING GLADSTONE'S COLLAR UP'

The first appearance of a famous piece of caricature by Harry Furniss

## THE PORTRAIT CARICATURISTS

SEVERAL times in the preceding pages I have distinguished between the ability to express ideas and the ability to draw caricatural likenesses of persons. In other words, between a cartoonist of situation and a caricaturist of personality. The two are by no means the same. Indeed, their arts can become quite different. It is sufficient usually for cartoonists to deal in generalised "likenesses" founded upon current already-created versions of what persons are like—whether these are resemblances in actuality or not; but the study of individual particularity, involving the mental as well as the ocular vision, is the *sine qua non* of personal caricature.

It is not surprising, then, that caricaturists of personality are seldom cartoonists of situation, and vice versa. We have seen that Gillray was a brilliant exception to this generalisation in being excellent in both; Rowlandson, an indifferent portraitist himself, borrowed Gillray's likenesses shamelessly; Cruikshank's were mostly just comic portraits, possessing no true insight into character.

There is in existence at least one large canvas to show that Tom Patch, a cartoonist of minor merit in 1760-1770, had the proper idea, even though his attempts do not quite come off. Of more consequence was Robert Dighton, a portrait painter who early in the last century produced a gallery of etched caricatures in colour of Oxford celebrities. The Dighton manner was developed in 1862, when there began to appear in the weekly journal *Vanity Fair* a series of single figure caricatures of celebrities excellently printed in colour and with the authentic touch, a series which began what became later a national institution—the "*Vanity Fair* Cartoons." These



'THE MAN WHO LIT HIS CIGAR BEFORE THE ROYAL TOAST'  
Drawing by H. M. Bateman

By courtesy of the Artist





By courtesy of the Artist

'THE PAST MEETS THE PRESENT: JUBILEE DAY ON OLYMPUS'  
Cartoon by David Low

The gathering includes such well-known gods as Ramsay MacDonald, Bernard Shaw, Wells, Maxton, Rath, Bamberbrook, Lloyd George, Barris, Churchill and C. B. Cochran: also, some obscure—and perhaps legendary—youths.

were the work of a genius in his speciality, *Ape*—the pen-name of an Italian, Carlo Pellegrini. *Ape's* caricatures were maximum likenesses, that is to say they represented not only what he saw but also what he knew. Most of them today look as though they were probably more like the persons they depict than were those persons themselves.

*Ape* found some people harder to get than others, and he did not particularly like tracking down the difficult ones. So a new young artist, Leslie Ward, signing himself *Spy*, was set to crack *Ape's* hard nuts. A stern apprenticeship. When finally *Ape* had a disagreement with the proprietor of the journal in 1873, *Spy* slipped into his place.

*Spy*, who came of a family of artists, had had an orthodox art training which left him with a somewhat harder and less elastic equipment than his master. But, following the *Ape* style, he was a careful and conscientious worker who went to great trouble to gather his materials. "Distance frequently lends fictitious appearance to a face," he said, peering close under the whiskers of next week's subject. He followed his subject about many times to observe his manner of walking, noting closely his odd-shaped skull, his turn of wrist, the peculiar curl of his nostril, the unique droop of his eyelid, and so on. He would sit for hours in court memorising the features of a lawyer, or in church hunting a bishop in his pulpit. *Spy* frequently had sittings from willing subjects, but he learned to use his memory extensively in circumstances where subjects were unwilling and sketch-books



DAN LENO  
Caricature by S. H. Sims





MARIE LLOYD  
Caricature by Henry Osipov

were inconvenient. He held that personal idiosyncrasies could only be discerned at first hand. As a result, his gallery is not a monotonous repetition of types, reeking of similarity, but a differentiation of individuals.

The popularity of the *Vanity Fair* type of caricature died, unfortunately, with the coming of the snapshot camera to surfeit the public with intimate views of celebrities. *Spy* tailed off latterly from true caricature into mere characteristic portraiture calculated to please the subjects, by hiding rather than by interpreting their irregularities.

The region of politics has always attracted caricaturists because the celebrities there are ready-made, offering themselves on a plate, so to speak.

In 1880 arrived Harry Furniss, a versatile black-and-white artist who specialised in caricature portraits of politicians on their own stamping-



GEORGE MOORE  
Wax model by Edmund Dulac

ground, as they lived and had their being. Harry Furniss was a facile—perhaps too facile—worker. Indeed, at his zenith he was almost a factory. Besides his three or four weekly portraits he produced frequent political cartoons, created a dainty “Furniss Girl,” illustrated many books, a good number of which he wrote himself, went out on long lantern-lecture tours, started a couple of weekly papers, and in addition found time to be a busy man-about-town. He had vehement political views of his own, too, that sometimes obtruded themselves into his work. Had Furniss produced less he would have been accounted a better artist. But this pertinacious performer galloped too fast for his horse. He had too much energy, and he imparted it to his material. His figures had little repose. His style of execution, seen so often, became monotonous, even when applied to the



caricature of other styles—a favourite trick of his—and his quick cleverness did not last. Nevertheless in perspective it is obvious that he was an unusually accomplished caricaturist able to represent—and misrepresent—individuals as he saw them, with a fancy pleasing and humorous if superficial. Harcourt's chins and Gladstone's collars are good examples of his invention, the latter a piece of caricature which became so celebrated that it passed into history with the statesman.

The successor to Harry Furniss as *Punch* Parliamentary caricaturist was E. T. Reed, who, on the other hand, had too much repose. Reed was primarily a comic artist, best remembered for his 'Prehistoric Peeps' and humours of the law-courts. Purely as a portrait-caricaturist, his work wore the old-school-tie and was perhaps too careful of the dignity of the personages who were its raw material; though when he had adjusted his style to the (then conventional) form of portrait-crammed cartoon, he was lively enough. His caricatures never aspired to be other than amiable and amusing. Within their limitations—rather severe limitations upon the true art of caricature—he was usually competent and sometimes excellent.

All the caricaturists mentioned, some more than others, aspired to formal artistic qualities in their works. They conceived of "good drawing" as polished classical draughtsmanship, properly shaded, faultless in proportion and perspective. In the nineties, a decade fertile in adventurous talents impatient of tradition, there began to appear occasional caricatures by Max Beerbohm, *Max*. It was obvious that in the accepted sense *Max* could not draw at all. His technique was naïve and almost childish. He appeared ignorant of the traditional clichés and formulæ. He sidestepped rather than overcame the problems of linear representation. But it was just as obvious that he had a lively wit. His free pencil, guided by his wit, proved, in fact, admirably suitable for the rendering of personal character, for it permitted to an unlimited extent the artistic sleight-of-hand involved in complete representation. There are certain guiding principles for expressing what can be seen, but there are none for expressing in graphic terms what can *not* be seen. In *Max's* best caricatures may be discerned an instinct discovering "the emotional elements of human form," and an artless ingenuity in adapting a propriety of thoughts and lines to the subject.

*Max* was (for though he still lives, his caricatures have ceased) a master of the caricature situation and the caricature caption. It was in the combination of his artistic and his literary wit that he reached his highest form as an interpreter of character. His 'Tout Seul se Rétablir,' for example, showing a worried group including Hyndeman, Wells, Galsworthy, Sidney Webb, Cunninghame Grahame and others, with the sub-caption, "Urgent conclave of Doctrinaire Socialists to decide on some means of inducing the Lower Orders to regard them once more as Visionaries only," contains all the elements of good caricature.



*'TRY ZIDEWAYS'*

CARRIER : *'Try zideways, Mrs. Jones, try zideways !'*

MRS. JONES : *'Lar, bless 'ee, John, I ain't got no zideways !'*

Drawing by L. Raven Hill

But *Max* did not have the caricature of the nineties to himself. The theatre usually has afforded a parade of personality, and during these years there grew up a spate of theatrical caricaturists. The most notable was S. H. Sime, a beautifully imaginative artist, with a mordant fancy which sometimes overlaid his observation of character, but whose studies of people nevertheless are full of true and well-balanced caricature. No mere vulgar sprawling irresponsibility about him, but a patient individual appraisal in his own terms. A decade later was the droll Henry Ospovat, pre-occupied with the physical, which is in his case enough ; and, yet another decade, H. M. Bateman, whose romping caricatures of actors and his fellow artists show him to have a judgment of essentials.

Still living but, alas ! no longer caricaturing is Edmund Dulac, a careful exponent with a nice capacity for wedding style to subject. His Bernard Shaw in wood-cut is a finely executed reflection and his George Moore modelled in wax is the spirit (and, one is almost persuaded, the body) of the man himself. In Dulac's work was a touch of *Max* plus a tender and orientally scrupulous artistry.

To these add Edmund Kapp, more character-portraitist than caricaturist, the decorative Powys-Evans, *Quiz*, and others perhaps too newly arrived to judge of the lasting quality of their talents. And last (but not, I hope, least) the writer, Low, of whom it is advisable only to say with hypocritical modesty that he does his best.



## YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

MANY changes have taken place since Mistress Humphrey hung Gillray's etchings in the window of her shop for sale to passers-by. To-day cartoons find their place chiefly in the daily newspapers. Of weeklies printing cartoons, *Punch* alone survives, the vehicle still for the Tenniel Tradition now become a national institution, carried on with undiminished honour by Bernard Partridge. If, indeed, after the latter's record of achievement over forty years it may not be said now to be the Partridge Tradition. For some time before Tenniel's retirement in 1900, Partridge had been drawing joke illustrations and theatrical portraits, sober but exhibiting a sense of character and humour. When Sambourne succeeded Tenniel, Partridge became "junior" cartoonist, and the work of these two artists contrasted piquantly week by week. In pen technique they were opposites. Sambourne used bold firm lines, but Partridge drew with the finest of pens, elaborately shading his careful compositions. Both were essentially honest draughtsmen "of the studio" with no tricks, but while Sambourne often merely suggested, Partridge drew minutest details.

Partridge as cartoonist owes little to his predecessors save the approach and the inherited symbolism, which he soon made his own. The stately but stiff goddesses of Tenniel (which in Sambourne's version had grown womanly but lost no weight) when depicted by Partridge became slim and graceful. The national animals and birds—British Lion, Russian Bear, German Eagle, etc.—became more like the animals one sees at the Zoo.

Partridge's cartooning covers the period which may be called the prelude to the present. A time of rich material. At first overshadowed by Sambourne, who got the cream of the international subject matter, his *métier* was perhaps too heroic to show to advantage in the knock-about of domestic politics, despite his ability in portraiture. Graceful allegory, like 'Hopping,' in which pigeons representing the Overseas Dominions are seen returning to Britannia; or classical drama, are more in his line. His most memorable cartoons appeared during the first world war, when he rose to the occasion in his own particular field. 'The World's Enemy' shows Kaiser Wilhelm on a battle-torn landscape challenging the Spirit of Carnage with "Who goes there?" "A friend—your only one," replies the wild figure. Another cartoon pictures the Kaiser confronting King Albert of the Belgians: "You have lost everything," says the Kaiser. "Not my soul," says the King. These impressive cartoons were remembered twenty-five years later, when, wearing a different moustache, history repeated itself.

Contemporary with Partridge as cartoonist for many years was L. Raven Hill. Those who remember gratefully his joke illustrations of the nineties and onwards will debate whether he was seen at his best in the more specialised field of cartooning; for Raven Hill was a comic artist as essentially as was Keene, and his talents were not pre-eminently those of a



**'IN HONOUR OF THE BRITISH NAVY'**

To commemorate the surrender of the German Fleet  
Cartoon by Sir Bernard Partridge, 1918

cartoonist. The comparison with Keene arises naturally since in Raven Hill's earlier work the carefully studied backgrounds, the unity of composition, rich effects of light and shade—to say nothing of the peculiar chuckling humour and the instinctive choice of certain types of jokes—show that the master had a pupil capable of digesting and absorbing his lessons. Had bicycles and motor-cars been invented in Keene's day he would have done just what Raven Hill did with them. If, then, an artist is entitled to be estimated on his best work, undoubtedly Raven Hill must be represented by his famous picture, 'Try sideways, Mrs. Jones, try sideways!' Or by one of his many sidelights on soldiering and camp-life—say, that of the newly-enlisted yeoman who couldn't get his horse to eat its oats and complains, "Please, sergeant, my 'orse won't pick up 'is seed." Or by the drunk just passed by a clattering fire-engine who snuffles bitterly after it: "Orright, keep yer 'ot potatoes!" These are good comic art. There is unforced fun in the drawing. Naturally, therefore, as a cartoonist he was most at home in the





'ONE MAN  
IN HIS TIME PLAYS MANY PARTS'  
Caricatures of Joseph Chamberlain  
by F. C. Gould

vein of humour, dealing with byplay of home affairs rather than with the drama of nations. The infinitely varied Lloyd George became to him almost what Chamberlain was to F.C.G., and his best cartoons were among those which dealt humorously with the Welsh Wizard. By the cussedness of fate, however, his best remembered cartoon is one of the "serious" kind, published when Lloyd George undertook to solve the shell-shortage problem during the first world war. It represents L.L.G. post-riding the two horses Capital and Labour drawing the cartloads of munitions, and is entitled, 'Delivering the Goods.'

The example of *Punch* had inspired emulation overseas. India had *Hindu Punch*, printing cartoons suggestive of Tenniel with Eastern flavouring; Canada had its *Grip* with drawings by Bengough; Sydney *Punch* burst forth in Australia, followed, as a reaction, by the *Bulletin*, an illustrated weekly specialising in topical cartoons, political and otherwise. The *Bulletin* had no use for imported traditions, but was a wholly indigenous

article reflecting the native freshness of a new land, and its pungent and witty manner of dealing with public affairs was all its own. Here was an ideal nursery for satire and a school of cartoonists and caricaturists grew up around it, just as in France, a generation before, Philipon's "phalanx"—including the great Daumier—had grown up around *Charivari* and *La Caricature*. Two of the most famous *Bulletin* artists, though, were not Australian at all. Phil May (whose work is noted in earlier pages) was English, but he first made his mark in Australia. Livingstone Hopkins, *Hop*, was an American who found that the climates of both Australia and the *Bulletin* suited him. He was a humorist of the Artemus Ward vintage with a quaint drollery in both the invention and the execution of his cartoons.

If the *Bulletin's* cartoonists had influence on the political and social development of Australia, it was *Hop's* pungent fun that had most to do with moulding its sense of humour. As might be expected, in days when Britain used the "colonies" as a kind of ash-can for its ne'er-do-wells, the *Bulletin* was not always pro-English, and *Hop's* cartoons were sometimes scandalously irreverent. What orthodox English spine would not creep at,

say, *Hop's* prickling piece of debunking, published on the occasion of the demise of the reigning sovereign, when the pubs of Sydney were shut for two days as a mark of respect: 'The Nation Mourns,' showing a thirsty customer with his tongue hanging out waiting on a pub doorstep? Another *Bulletin* man, Norman Lindsay, Australian-born, is justly more famous beyond Australia as an illustrator than as a cartoonist; but his work over thirty years on the *Bulletin* is an historical record salted with many excellent cartoons. 'The War God Strikes his Gong,' printed at the opening of the first great war, is perhaps his high-water-mark.

The cartoonist for the modern newspaper works under very different conditions to those of Gillray's time. The one cartoon a week has become one cartoon a day. The methods of preparing his work are more simple; but the very efficiency of the machine of which he is a part circumscribes him within the limits of a rigid time-table, and forces him to an endless pursuit of ever-changing headlines.

F. C. Gould, *F.C.G.*, was the first in Britain to contribute a cartoon daily to a newspaper. *F.C.G.*'s talents diverted him from stockbroking to journalism at 36 and he was aided for a great part of his career by sympathetic editorial collaboration. Politically minded and a strong Liberal partisan, his cartoons had a penetrating content that endeared him not only to those who shared his view-point but to those who liked a dash of vinegar with their politics. As a draughtsman he began influenced by the Tenniel school, and never quite got rid of a certain wood-block flavour in his penmanship. *F.C.G.* had notable dexterity in original first-hand portraiture, and in many cases his were the originals of what became later the commonly accepted cartoon versions of public men. When lesser men showed with their "brilliant pencils" "the way to draw Chamberlain," for instance, they showed only the way to draw Chamberlain as *F.C.G.* drew him. This unusual ability, together with his clever ideas, his fund of allegory and quickness in finding parallels to current situations in well-known literature, drama and art, well appreciated as they were, rather obscured his talents in drawing. In some quarters, where the relationship



'GOOD-BYE TO ALL THAT'  
Cartoon by Tom Webster





'A FANTASY: LABOUR LEADERS AT THEIR DEVOTIONS'  
Cartoon by Will Dyson

between qualities of line and keys of expression are imperfectly apprehended, *F.C.G.* is remembered, quite unjustly, as a poor draughtsman. The truth is that his drawing was adequate, fit for its purpose, one with the material. Many of his cartoons would be not nearly so good were they drawn "better." His most ambitious work was the *Modern Froissart*, an annual illustrated history of modern England, in the style of a quaint mediæval chronicle. Foreign politics he left alone. Joseph Chamberlain and his fiscal policies were *F.C.G.*'s particular prey. He admitted once that he had drawn Chamberlain in no less than a hundred guises, ranging over history, mythology and zoology. It was said that Chamberlain was as proud of his collection of *F.C.G.*'s as of his collection of orchids. *F.C.G.* worked for the *Westminster Gazette*, a newspaper primarily of opinion. But the expansion of the modern newspaper as a business enterprise was now under way, with certain consequences to cartoonists. To accord with the shift towards entertainment, cartoonists became more numerous and prolific; but on the other hand the commercial necessity of not alienating circulation tended to restrict the strong meat of satire and to encourage facetiousness.

The aggressive Gillray spirit seemed to have died out of cartooning in Britain when Will Dyson arrived from Australia to prove that it had merely been renewing its youth overseas. Dyson was a Sydney *Bulletin* portrait caricaturist who after trying his luck for a year in London became

a cartoonist. In the weekly *Herald* (now the *Daily Herald*) he began to offer cartoons of socialist inspiration, drawn with an infusion of grotesque macabre suggesting Continental influences and containing a sarcastic disrespect for orthodox standards that was an emetic for the complaisant. He soon became the most effective propagandist Labour had—Labour, that is, not necessarily the Labour Party, for Dyson was an individualist with strong ideas and ideals of his own, who could be caustic about leaders. On the outbreak of war in 1914 he rose to great heights. His incisive cartoons on the efforts of Germany to pervert the gifts of science to destructive purposes (later collected under the title of *Kultur Cartoons*) frequently occupied full-pages in the national daily newspapers. Loaded with meaning and direct appeal, they were powerful in the full sense of the word. To those brought up on the Tenniel tradition, Dyson's strength, under stress, sometimes had a streak of over-caricature. The strong Workingman swelled perhaps too much, his Capitalists were too aggressively fat, and his Devils were too devilish—and too numerous. Devils kept creeping into his cartoons. When in post-war days of "tranquillity" the *Herald* revived to serve a Labour Party now groomed to respectability as His Majesty's Opposition, the editor was moved to shut down on the Devils. Dyson was conjured to play the Party game and flatter the Party leaders, to become tame and "funny." Could the leopard change its spots? Dyson was a mordant wit, not a "popular" humorist. He retired and it was not until after an interval of some years that he rejoined his old paper once again as cartoonist. But it was a different world with different values and he himself had changed. His heart was no longer in his work, which was insignificant compared with those earlier cartoons which had stamped him as the most distinguished survivor of his day in the earlier tradition of satirical caricature. Contemporary and contrasting with Dyson were W. K. Haselden and Poy, pen-name of Percy Fearon, both of whom for many years poured out daily amiable cartoons on social and political affairs respectively. Haselden, working for a newspaper which made a particular appeal to women, was more preoccupied with the quick expression of his



DILLY AND DALLY      JOHN CITIZEN      DUX AND DRAKES  
Original drawings by Percy Fearon (Poy)





**'AFTER THE RAID'**

*'Is it all right now, Henry?'*

*'Yes, not even scratched.'*

Drawing by Sidney Strube, 1941

pleasant ideas about manners and modes than with perfection of drawing. *Poy's* most striking characteristic lay hardly in art at all, for he never essayed high flights of draughtsmanship. It was his fertile invention of humorous endearing symbols, mostly in pairs, which gave him pungency in political comment. His Dux and Drakes, Dilly and Dally, Cuthbert the Whitehall rabbit, and Dora the Defence-of-the-Realm-Act old lady, were in their time national pets. He created John Citizen, the representative of the Common Mass, the first variant of the obsolete figure of John Bull to win general acceptance. A well-known and characteristic *Poy* cartoon was that which appeared on a particularly disastrous gloomy day during the first great war. It represented John Citizen with his mouth spread by a glove-stretcher, entitled, 'Smile, Damn You, Smile!'

Although the drawings of Sydney Strube do not in the least resemble those of Cruikshank, the two may be said to be akin in that both have the



'AND HERE IS SIR ROBERT PIPPIN TO TELL YOU  
SOMETHING ABOUT REBUILDING THE POST-WAR WORLD'

Drawing by Captain Bruce Bairnsfather

peculiar flavour of Cockney. Strube is essentially a "popular" humorist, a specialist in extracting a political twist out of current songs and sayings. He is constitutionally too friendly to dip his pen in acid for a cartoon crusade against sin and wickedness. In his cartoons even aggressive dictators are no devilish madmen, but just somewhat mistaken persons. He is completely at one with his multitudinous public, for whose delectation he created the famous Little Man to display the good-humoured attitude towards the little troubles of everyday life—especially income tax.

A bird of another roost is Tom Webster, sports cartoonist. The British it is freely admitted, are a nation of sportsmen. That is to say, they have a pronounced capacity for sitting in a grandstand watching someone else play games. Tom Webster, daily reporting the pageant of sport in his lively new manner, filled a long-felt national need and became popular at once. It was no longer necessary even to sit in a grandstand, for one could enjoy the



sporting life through his eyes over breakfast. Webster's drawing is not drawing in the conventional sense at all, but rather comic pictorial gossip reporting. Ordinarily, more than half of his cartoon is text. He disdains draughtsmanship and banks on undiluted verve and raciness almost entirely. With the aid of freely-sketched caricatures of his butts, not more profound than the circumstances warrant, he carries on sustained personal "gags" which in some cases continue for years and years. His work has extraordinary popularity and he has many imitators—none of whom gets anywhere near him.

To the list might be added the writer, Low, about whose works opinions differ. Since close proximity to the trees proverbially renders the wood invisible, useful comment here must be confined to the remark that at least the philosophical attitude to, and technical intentions of, his cartoons may be guessed from the comments expressed in this book.

There are others, new hands discovered by the recent war, but these too, must await the fullness of time for disentanglement of creative genius from emulative talent and a proper estimation of their respective contributions to the fullness of art.

In British Comic Art for a decade after Phil May there were no marked innovations, most artists being content to follow the footsteps of the big men of the past with individual variations. Artistic children of Leech, Keene, Du Maurier and May multiplied, preserving traditional forms and styles. If of these no outstanding personality springs to mind it is because the general average of proficiency is so much higher. Of many, there is space here to mention only George Belcher, influenced by Phil May but the sole survivor to better his master; Heath Robinson, the mild delineator of the maddest inventions; and Bruce Bairnsfather, the war comic artist, creator of the immortal Old Bill, without whom the first world war certainly never could have been won.

With the grotesque of H. M. Bateman, the British inheritor of Caran d'Ache, master of the "story without words" and of the Embarrassment Situation, came a hint of approaching change. With Kenneth Bird, *Fougasse*, a moderniser of the hieroglyphic method to illustrate the lives and habits of Londoners, came another, even broader. In the recent past has appeared a definite decline in the traditional illustrated-joke form and a return to the pure visual humour of character or situation which needs no words. This is exemplified in the drawings of *Pont* (regrettably dead too soon), a keenly satirical social observer none the worse for his technical *naïveté*.

Here, arbitrarily, this survey must end, necessarily incomplete. Hogarth's "moral pictures" have become the familiar daily cartoons on public affairs. The crude scrawlings of primitive humorists have become the polished and specialised comic art. In Britain, at least, as befits an aspiring democracy, there is still an appreciation of the need for expression both satirical and urbane, rude and polite. Perhaps the best is still to come.

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# SPORTING PICTURES OF ENGLAND

BY

GUY PAGET

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## ORIGINS OF BRITISH SPORTING PAINTERS

THOSE who wish to understand England and its growth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot do better than study the sporting pictures of that period. They give as true a picture as the history books of Green or Macaulay. They are essentially English, in fact they form the first English School of painting. Most painting in England before 1660 and much of it for some time after was done by foreigners and a handful of their pupils. The great artists associated with English painting, Holbein, Van Dyck, Lely, Kneller, Van Wyck, were all foreigners, as were many founder members of the Royal Academy in 1768.

The earliest English sporting painters owe much to foreign teachers. There were no others. To the Dutch we owe the introduction of outdoor games into polite society; the only one generally played by the great before the Restoration, unconnected with the practice of arms, was "real" tennis, and *The Gentleman's Recreation*, published in 1686, in all its five hundred folio pages makes no mention of a single game. Our earliest knowledge of football, cricket and other games is from statutes forbidding them, since they distracted the common people from the practice of archery and quarter staff. On the other hand the Flemish school of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gives us glimpses of many games played on the ice and village greens of Flanders by both rich and poor. King Charles II introduced pall-



mall on his return from Holland and to him we owe organised racing both at Newmarket and Windsor Great Park; though in his time it took place at Datchett Ferry instead of on Ascot Heath to which place it was moved by Queen Anne.

The continent of Europe was two hundred years ahead of this island in matters of art. England had not started building Renaissance houses, when those in Italy and France were mellowed with age. From 1400 to 1500 England was continually torn asunder by civil strife which overlapped the Hundred Years War with France. Feudalism had devoured itself and a new class ruled, men who had made fortunes in cities by trading with both sides and the descendants of ennobled lawyers enriched by abbey lands.

But it was not till Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries, that the nobles realised that a Norman Castle was not the acme of comfort and began to convert the semi-fortified monasteries into dwelling houses. By the time of Elizabeth and James I, they were building mansions more for comfort than protection. The Great Rebellion interrupted this process and Oliver Cromwell, realising that castles were incompatible with central government, destroyed or dismantled the vast majority.

Versailles had set the example of vast magnificence. Louis XIV had decorated it with battle pictures and fair women. Now the average Englishman likes fair women but the last thing he desired in his new home was to be reminded of war. Still the walls looked dull and cold with only plaster decoration. England had ever been the land of the horse and the hound. The Romans had imported British hounds and decked their triumphs with them; even before the Tudors, stallions had been imported from Asia, North Africa and Europe to improve the native breed and a pack of hounds was still an essential part of a nobleman's establishment. Finally, Charles II placed racing on a national basis. All these causes particular to England now called for a particular English form of art. At first the supply was crude.

Some ten years after the Restoration, Francis Barlow originated English Sporting Prints. Fifty years later Wootton was painting masterpieces at Badminton, Althorp and Longleat. By 1783, Stubbs had painted *The Grosvenor Stag Hunt* at Eaton, *Training, Hunting and Shooting* at Goodwood, and at Wentworth its famous frieze of racehorses. He published his *Anatomy of the Horse* in 1766.

In the greatest private collections of the old nobility, sporting pictures have always been allotted a large and prominent place. His Majesty the King has inherited from his forbears one of the most representative collections in the world. In spite of this, the Royal Academy, from its start, has always frowned on sporting art. Not ten per cent. of its best exponents have been admitted to even the outer court of the Academy and it is hard for a sporting picture to pass through its portals. Is it because the Englishman has made up his mind that the foreigner can do certain things better, that it is thought a painter must have learnt his art anywhere but at an English school? Yet without this school,



we would never have known how the common people dressed or amused themselves, how the plumed sombrero of Charles I became the top-hat of the Prince Consort, or the horses of the reign of Charles II evolved the mighty Ormonde and Manifesto, or how the shooting dog and even our present-day hounds became what they now are from the running and hunting dogs of the Plantagenets. The record of the gradual change from the open fields to the enclosed country would be for ever lost. Neither would we know the stages our race-meetings have travelled from simple little gatherings near Datchett Ferry in the 1680's to the pageant of present-day Ascot; how hawking was conducted would have vanished from our ken, and the differences in the conduct of a shoot two hundred years ago.

During the eighteenth century the breeding of horses, dogs, cattle, sheep and pigs had taken the place of war and had become the ruling passion of the country gentleman; with this went a love for country life, shooting, hunting, racing, gardening. But for this passion, Whitehall might have become a Versailles and wealth and fashion might have been concentrated in London as in Paris. But in England, even the government of the country had to give way to it, and the sittings of Parliament were regulated by the shooting and hunting seasons. In England alone the real home of the ruling class is in the country, not in the capital, from the monarch to the well-to-do tradesman.

Early in the eighteenth century the demand sprang up for portraits of race-horses, hunters and hounds, followed by those of cattle and sheep. As the breeds of the latter improved (and nearly every county had its own special breeds) so the breeder wished them to be more widely known, to add both to his fame and profit, and so the sporting artists of the seventeenth century evolved this most profitable, if not highest, form of art.

## THE NATURE OF BRITISH SPORTING ART

THE term Sporting Art covers three distinct kinds of pictures. First, the subject picture largely imaginary but founded on fact, such as Alken's *Hunt Scurry*; second, the illustration depicting some particular scene as true to the actual event as possible, such as Pollard's *King's Birthday*; third, the portrait of an animal with or without human figures, such as Ben Marshall's *Tom Oldaker*. All three overlap in many instances and some pictures contain all three elements.

Sir Francis Grant's *Quorn Hunt at Borough Hill* is a good example of the last. Here we have a fine landscape with the Quorn Hunt moving off to draw, but the arrangement of the figures is purely imaginary, while each horse and human is a carefully drawn portrait compiled from individual sketches or painted direct into the actual design from life. On the other hand, I should call Stubbs' *Shooting at Goodwood* and Boulton's *Mr. Packe at Prestwold after Partridges* portraiture and illustration only, and Ferneley's *Quorn Hunt at Kirby Gate* is portraiture and imagination. No hard and fast line can be





TWO ROYAL SADDLE HORSES AND ANDERSON THEIR GROOM  
Oil painting by George Stubbs, 1793

drawn. The introduction of a gun or rod, a dog or dead bird does not make a portrait a sporting picture, though Wootton's portrait of *Tragomwell Frampton* and Marshall's of *Gully* and *Jackson* undoubtedly are sporting pictures. Every line of them breathes of sport.

What is the reason that sporting pictures have been so neglected by the average collector and art critic? Before a man can sit down to paint a hunting run on any scale, he must be master of landscape painting; he must know the anatomy not only of man, but of horse, hound and quarry; he must possess a lively imagination, a good memory of how animals look as they move and a sense of design (an unteachable quality), not only of his landscape but of how to blend his subject into it. Many of the greatest animal painters, including Stubbs and Marshall, got other men, sometimes R.A.s, to do their landscapes, but the results do not come up to the best of either. Above all the artist must have an intimate knowledge of the sport he depicts—in fact, he must have hunted quite a lot. The slightest inaccuracy, even a spur too high or too low, will arouse the suspicion of the sportsman, who will at once look for further slips. Thus the sporting artist has to please many different critics, each ignor-

ant of three-quarters of his difficulties and each looking for some fault in the realm they do understand. Is it surprising if the artist should sometimes fail to please them all?

The average collector is a self-made man, who collects because he has not inherited. As a rule he starts late in life and therefore has no real understanding of sport. His taste must be guided by others. The average sportsman is not as a rule an art connoisseur. He may like sporting pictures, either because he has always been brought up amongst them or because they recall some of his happiest hours, but very few will be able to explain their artistic merit to a non-sportsman. The Royal Academy, as I said before, has always looked down on the animal painter. Yet Stubbs got as much for his pictures as Reynolds. Stubbs could paint a man or woman as well as Sir Joshua Reynolds, but Sir Joshua could no more have painted *Lady Lade* or *The Hambletonian* than Crome or Wilson could have painted *Master Bunbury*. Benjamin West, P.R.A., could paint *The Death of General Wolfe* but never Wolstenholme's *Essex Harriers*. So it has gone on, till at long last in Munnings they have



DARK BROWN HUNTER "CURRICULE" LED BY A GROOM IN ROYAL LIVERY  
Oil painting by Ben Marshall, 1767-1835



elected a sporting P.R.A. Sir Edwin Landseer declined the honour in 1868, but he was an animal painter, not a real sporting artist. Sir Francis Grant was elected for his portraits.

So the embryo collector will not be advised to buy sporting pictures by the R.A. If he turns to the picture dealers and the sale rooms, he too often cannot differentiate between what is good and what is just expensive. Being business men, dealers buy what they understand and that is not sport as a rule, though one or two have very fine collections. The collector will be advised to buy Italian, Dutch, French, Spanish and even English eighteenth-century portraits but never sporting pictures. So until Americans, whose fathers had brought them up to appreciate good pictures, came over here to hunt, race and shoot, some of our greatest pictures went for a song. The Americans quickly altered all that, however, and some of the best collections of sporting pictures are to-day in North and South America.

Another difficulty which presents itself to the lover of sporting pictures is that the vast majority are in private hands. It is only during the last few years, with the exception of the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, that public galleries have possessed any. To see the best, or even second-best, requires much travel and many private introductions. One must go to Althorp and Welbeck to see Wootton, to Wentworth for Stubbs, Cottesbrooke and Ashwardby for Marshall and Ferneley, Cheam for Wolstenholme, into Essex to see Mr. Gilbey's collection of fishing pictures and to Raby Castle for Chalon. In all these places there are other masters of the English school, but it will take a journey lasting a month to get any real idea, for I have only mentioned a few of the greatest collections; there are Goodwood, Petworth, St. Ann's, Badminton and a hundred more I could name. His Majesty the King's collection of sporting pictures is unfortunately hung in the private apartments, not open to the public.

I am glad to say that our public galleries have at last woken up and are now alive to their past neglect. The Tate Gallery has appealed to the public for gifts of sporting pictures to supplement its meagre collection. The Walker Art Gallery has accepted the bequest of a fine private collection and Mr. Walter Hutchinson hopes to found a Gallery of National Sports and Pastimes.

The end of the war has seen the closing of many great mansions and the dispersal of the accumulated treasures of generations, so there should be no difficulty in forming a really worthy collection of this greatest English School. One curious fact about this School is that though essentially English, many of the artists were of foreign extraction whose fathers sought these shores for religious liberty and whose sons found expression of what they sought in depicting the freedom of the English countryside and its sports. In the case of the Sartoriuses, Alkens and Herrings, they handed their gift down for three generations. Chalon, Reinagle, Laport, bear foreign names. But with the exception of a school of Londoners, who flourished round the engraver, John Raphael Smith, about 1775, the great majority were English country-breds.



*By courtesy of the Author*

GREY ARAB STALLION

From the original oil painting by John Wootton, c. 1686-1765





*By courtesy of the Duke of Westminster*

THE GROSVENOR STAG HUNT

From the original oil painting by George Stubbs, A.R.A., 1762



THE LAST HORSE RACE RUN BEFORE CHARLES II AT DORSETT [DATCHETT] FERRY, 1684  
Etching by Francis Barlow, 1687

## SOME LANDMARKS

**F**RANCIS BARLOW, c. 1626-1702, is the father of English Sporting Pictures. No artist could have been born at a worse time. His prime coincided with the Great Rebellion and the Commonwealth and his maturity with the unsettled period between the Restoration and the accession of Queen Anne. The old nobility had not recovered their equilibrium or the new found their stability.

Barlow did great pictures of birds for Denzil Onslow and for the Drakes of Shardeloes; he designed General Monck's hearse and painted pictures of his lying-in-state and funeral, but what he is most famous for is his sporting prints. These came out in *Several Ways of Hunting, Hawking and Fishing in the English Way*, 1671, etched by Hollar and Bullard and in Bloom's *Gentleman's Recreation*, 1686, the best of which he etched himself. These were followed by *The Last Horse Race run before Charles II at Dorsett Ferry*, 1684. His spelling is even more original than my own. I long suspected "Dorsett" to be a mis-spelling for "Datchett" and this has been confirmed by Sir Owen Morshead, the learned librarian of Windsor Castle.

Where Barlow learned to paint is unknown, but it is impossible to look at his bird pictures without being struck by their likeness to Hondekoeter's. His friends and engravers, Faithorne and Hollar, were forced to flee the country after the fall of Basing House, but we have no knowledge of Barlow's



whereabouts until 1651, when both he and Faithorne are known to have been living at the Drum, Drury Lane. John Evelyn, the diarist, refers to him as a famous painter in 1656. One of his most interesting pictures is Lord Onslow's *Hunting the Hare with Southern Hounds*. The hounds are nearly life-size, judging by the hare which has caught them up owing to their dwelling and pottering on her line. He also illustrated an edition of Aesop's *Fables* which he published at his own risk, but nearly the whole edition was burnt in the Great Fire of 1666. He left no direct successor, yet, though not in the highest class, he was the best engraver, bird painter and illustrator England had so far produced.

John Wootton, c. 1686-1765, was the next important sporting artist, and could hardly have come under Barlow's personal influence though his books would have been familiar to him. Wootton studied under Jan Van Wyck (John Wyck) until Van Wyck's death at Mortlake in 1702. After his return from Italy, where he went on the advice and with the assistance of the Duke of Beaufort, Wootton struck out in a style of his own. He was joined by James Seymour (1702-1752), a one-time well-off amateur, and by Peter Tillemans, a Dutchman. These three worked together for several years and each had a style of his own though they were in many respects similar.

Lord Hylton possesses a *Race at Newmarket*, signed by Seymour; Knoedler sold a picture with an identical background signed by Wootton; yet the backgrounds are in the style of neither, but in the continental manner of Battle Pieces perfected by Tillemans. There can be little doubt that these two English gentlemen turned artist spent their time racing and hunting, while the industrious young Dutchman did the donkey work. Seymour's pictures are valuable for their minute detail; the tongue of a buckle is not too small for his attention. He had the reputation of getting a better likeness of a horse than Wootton, who is said to have sacrificed truth to beauty. If this is correct, having regard to some of Seymour's early efforts, perhaps he should be forgiven!

Wootton was the friend of the Dukes of Beaufort, Richmond and Marlborough (Spencer); the Earls of Oxford (Harley of Welbeck) and Devonshire. He was patronised by Queen Anne and George I. The third Duke of Marlborough devoted the whole of his great new hall at Althorp to his pictures. The Duke of Portland has the best collection of Wootton's pictures, the pick of forty-eight painted for his ancestor, Lord Oxford; Lord Spencer possesses Wootton's two largest hunting pictures—thirty feet by ten feet. He and Seymour may be said to have been the pioneers in the straightforward portraiture of horses and hounds. It is through their work that we are able to see to-day the foundation stock of our thoroughbreds. The standards and conventions established by Wootton have been handed down in unbroken apostolic succession to Alfred Munnings and Lionel Edwards. Very few of either Wootton's or Seymour's works have ever been reproduced as prints.

The next great animal painter, probably the greatest, was George Stubbs



of Liverpool, 1724-1806. His *Anatomy of the Horse*, 1766, revolutionised animal painting. With the help of Lord Grosvenor of Eaton, Chester, young Stubbs went to Italy in 1754 to study the old masters, but he preferred nature. On his way back, via Morocco, he saw a lion attack and kill a horse. This incident was indelibly impressed on his mind and he introduced it into many of his pictures.

He was an anatomist from childhood. At twenty-one he was lecturing on anatomy at York Hospital and he was engaged in 1750, by Dr. John Burton, to do forty drawings to illustrate a book on midwifery. With his usual thoroughness he "snatched the body" of a newly dead mother and executed eighty drawings from it. Finding no one to etch them, he learnt the trade and did them himself. Having made money with his brush, he retired to a farm, where he carried dead horses up to the attic with the assistance of Mary Spencer, his life-long companion and mother of George Towneley Stubbs, who engraved many of his pictures. His industry was not appreciated by his neighbours, who said he made the district smell like a battlefield, and at the end of two years were glad to see the end of him.

In 1771, urged on by George Cosway, the miniaturist, he abandoned painting for eight years and experimented with enamels which would stand firing and last, not fade and sink, which Reynolds' colours were already beginning to do. Having discovered nineteen colours, he sought a medium to receive them. He tried copper. Lord Melbourne gave him a hundred guineas for his first effort. Then for years, with the great potter, Josiah Wedgwood, he experimented with porcelain. At last they produced a plaque 40½ inches by 29½ inches and Stubbs threw his invention open to his brother artists. In 1780 he was elected an A.R.A. and in the next year full R.A. He celebrated it by sending in four of his plaques. The R.A. skyed them. Stubbs refused to send in his diploma picture so never actually received his diploma and cold-shouldered the R.A. for ever after. His work is unmistakable. His "signature-tune" is a dock leaf but, like Reynolds, he signs his pictures all over. There is strength and weight in them attained by few; his modelling is superb. His landscapes and middle distances are often weak and this I attribute to short sight brought on by too long hours engraving. This too I believe is the reason that so many of his subjects are "falling out of their canvas" for lack of foreground: he sat too close to his subject. His greatest pictures are *The Grosvenor Stag Hunt* at Eaton, *Lord Rockingham's Racehorses* at Wentworth, and the *Hambletonian*, life-size, at Wynyard. In 1943, at Christie's, four very ordinary pictures of his, belonging to Lord Bolingbroke, fetched £10,000.

The plaques were not Stubbs's only excursion into ceramics. Most of the hunting scenes on Liverpool "transfer" china are after Stubbs and the raised hunting scenes on Staffordshire beer mugs and jugs are his work. He designed club buttons and the horses on Wedgwood's china. Stubbs might have been a great surgeon, a great potter or a great chemist but he chose to be a great artist and he died comparatively poor. His influence



was marked on all his contemporaries : Boulton, Reinagle, Sawrey Gilpin, all made the greatest possible use of his *Anatomy*, as did the succeeding generation; in fact Ben Marshall and James Ward occasionally suffered from an ill-digested dose of the *Anatomy*.

After Stubbs, the man who probably had most influence on sporting art was a Leicestershire squire, Charles Loraine Smith, 1751-1835, of Enderby in the purlieu of Charnwood Forest, M.P., J.P., poet, deputy master of the Quorn, painter, fiddler, jack-of-all-trades. By the end of the eighteenth century Melton Mowbray was the metropolis of the sporting world, and Enderby the common meeting ground of sporting art and the "noble science."

Boulton, 1753-1812, a pupil of Reynolds and Stubbs, Ben Marshall, 1767-1835, John Ferneley, 1782-1860, and his sons, Clifton Tomson, born 1775, were all bred in the Quorn country; while Henry Alken, 1785-1851, and George Morland, 1763-1804, actually helped the squire with his pictures. The Pollards and Sartoriuses did many pictures of Leicestershire hunts and hunters and amateurs such as Bunbury, Sir R. Frankland, Dean Paul and W. P. Hodges were *habitués* of both Enderby and Melton.

True, the squire was away back amongst the selling platers, when it was flat drawing and painting, but over the sticks of design and imagination, he was right up in the Grand National class at about 11 st. 7 lbs. This is proved by comparing some of his original pictures with Morland and Alken's re-drawings of them. He was a man of strong character and decided ideas of his own. Even if the artists themselves had no high opinion of his painting, their patrons would have, for did not the squire know both ends of the game, and would they not, therefore, ask the artist whom he recommended to immortalise them and their horses?

George Morland was a wild genius of humble origin. His father was an artist of some repute but went bankrupt. As quite a young man, George aspired to be a buck and mix with that raffish crew of so-called "gentlemen." His own descriptions of his jockeyship at Mount Pleasant and Margate are amusing in their self-revelation!

"'Twas a four mile heat and the first three miles I could not keep the horse behind them, being so spirited an animal by that means he soon exhausted himself, and I soon had the mortification to see them come galloping past me hissing and laughing, while I was spurring his guts out. A mob of horsemen then gathered round telling me I couldn't ride, which is always the way if you lose a heat; they began at last to use their whips. But, however, I did not fare near so well at Margate Races and was very near being killed. I rode for a gentleman and won the heat, the other horses being nearly half a mile behind, upon which nigh four hundred sailors, smugglers and fishermen set on me."

Note the spoilt child, self-pity and someone else to blame for his appalling inefficiency.



GENTLEMAN ON BLACK PONY  
Oil painting by Charles Towne, 1763-1840

Morland's drawings and paintings were immensely popular and brought him in large sums but never enough. He loved to be king of his company; any company, so long as he was king. He didn't care what he spent or on whom. All the "legs" of the town were soon on his track, tempting him from his work to buy them and himself drunkenness.

He married a sister of William and James Ward. James married Morland's sister and John Raphael Smith also married a Ward sister. They were joined by Rowlandson, who was a few years older than Morland but had a far from controlling influence on him. With Samuel Howitt and Julius Caesar Ibbetson they formed the London School. Born between 1752 and 1768, with the exception of James Ward, they were all dead by 1827. Morland was utterly unscrupulous. He signed his name to his pupils' work; he accepted payment for a picture from one and sold it next day to another; when pressed by the first, he would do a bad replica, cursing the whole time he was doing it, as if he was the injured party. His regular dealers stood over him with the door key in one hand and a fourpenny bottle of





DICK KNIGHT BAGGING THE FOX  
Water colour by C. Loraine Smith, Esq., of Enderby, 1794

gin in the other, till their order was finished and they took it away wet. Fortunately, at the height of his power, his debts amounted to over £3,700, so he had to "shoot the moon." Loraine Smith found him a refuge first in his own house and then at a farm in the neighbourhood. Cut off from his bad companions and worse liquor, surrounded by the beauties of Charnwood Forest, he did some of his best work. Thatched cottages, the oak beamed interiors, the granite-strewn hillside and rides are still there just as he painted them. If you are familiar with the colour of Charnwood granite and Swithland slates, you can easily pick them out: I put these years from 1794 to 1796. His debts squared, he returned to London and his evil ways and died a drunken pauper at the age of forty-one, in 1804. It is as impossible to distinguish a bad Morland from one of his school pupil's as to confuse a good one. Morland was, in his lifetime, and still is the most popular English artist on the Continent, especially in France; so much so, that many of his shooting prints have both English and French titles.

None of this school were, strictly speaking, sporting artists. They were painters of country scenes, into which sport and animals entered. They saw magic, where the countryman only saw decay. What was wonderful to them was commonplace to him.

Ben Marshall, 1767-1835, studied under L. F. Abbott as a portrait painter, but was so impressed with Sawrey Gilpin's 1793 Academy picture, *The*

*Death of a Fox*, that he turned from human to animal painting. Strictly speaking Ben Marshall remained a portrait painter and a very good one too. He is not essentially a sporting artist. The portrait comes first and the sport second. The arrangement of his hounds in his big hunting pictures gives away the fact that he was not a hunting man. I have never seen a hunt scurry (Shire word for fast fox hunt) by him. He never gets his hunt beyond the meet. Writing in 1796, Farington, the gossiping diarist, rates him above Stubbs. Stubbs was then 72, Ben 29. One was starting where the other was leaving off. Ben had an academy education; Stubbs was self-taught. Ben was able to study the *Anatomy of the Horse*; Stubbs had only written and illustrated it! Ben Marshall is a brilliant colourist and a powerful delineator of character. To look at his portraits of Gully and Gentleman Jackson or of himself and Goodson convince one that his horse and hounds are just as true. He lays on his paint extremely thin. He puts real sunlight on the coats of his horses. They don't shine, they reflect. As for truth, you have but to examine *Lord Sondes and His Brothers with the Pytchley Hounds, at Rockingham Castle*. Did you ever see such a scratch lot outside Mr. Wilton's emporium! There is scarcely a couple out of the same litter.



SIR MARK SYKES' HOUNDS BREAKING COVER  
Oil painting by H. B. Chalon, 1771-1849



Look at that big jolly mongrel on the left, the whippets in front on the right. You can pick out the two and a half couple he got from the Squire! One can understand the two Belvoir hounds top right "offing it" on their own. The proud owner had only collected, or better, "got them together" the summer before to hunt the Pytchley woodlands. Don't they look like it? But would Ferneley or Wolstenholme have dared?

In 1812, Marshall moved from London to Newmarket. In 1820 he was badly smashed up in a coaching accident, from the effects of which he never recovered.

In 1825 he returned to London, where he died ten years later.

The sparkle was gone, the animated crowd acclaiming the winner had become a line of dots and dashes. The sun no longer shone. Towards the end he had to supplement his income by sporting journalism under the name of "Observator" in the *Sporting Magazine*, which had faithfully supported him for forty years.

Mrs. Macdonald-Buchanan of Cottesbrooke has a magnificent collection of both Marshall and Ferneley, probably the best in the world.

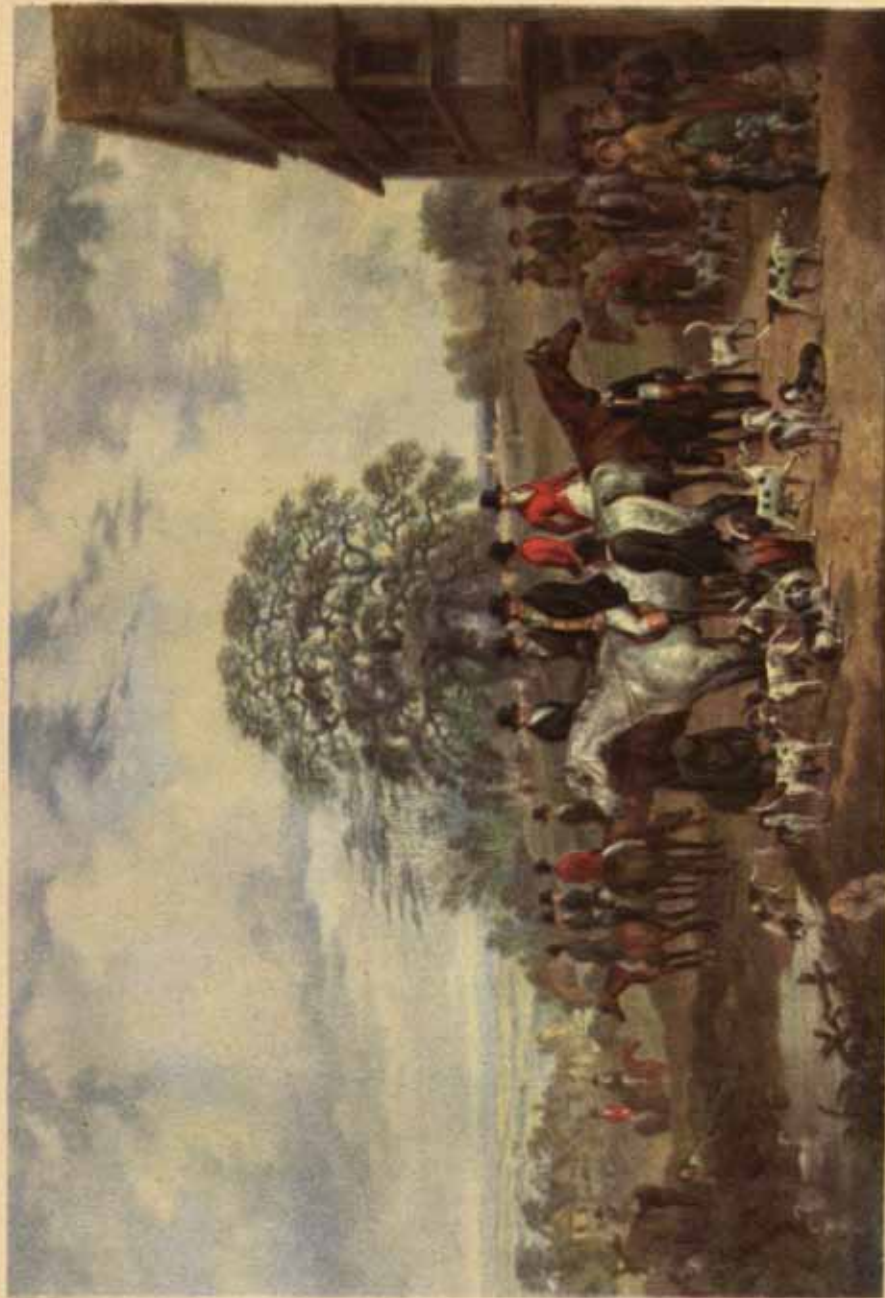
Ben Marshall had two famous pupils, John Ferneley, 1782-1860, and Abraham Cooper, 1787-1868. Cooper exhibited 332 pictures at the Royal Academy and contributed 262 to sporting magazines, but he never attempted a big hunting scene, nor is he in the same class as his master or his fellow pupil.

John Ferneley was the son of the Duke of Rutland's wheelwright and was born in the Hobeys Vale. He was apprenticed for three years by the Duke to Marshall. Having served his time, he started his career in Ireland where he painted many pictures for Lord Lismore, which now hang at Burton-in-the-Wold within a few miles of the artist's birthplace, having been inherited by the late Earl of Huntingdon.

There will always be a disagreement as to whether master or pupil painted a horse best, though no one will disagree that Ben's portraits outshine John's as much as John's hunting pictures do Ben's. They remained close friends, however, and when Ferneley settled in Melton Mowbray in 1803 he never went to London without a Melton Pie or a small Stilton for his old master. He used to do studies of horses in Marshall's style for him to introduce into his pictures and I have seen Marshall's groups, where I have been almost certain of Ferneley's handiwork.

People are slow to recognise what lies under their very noses. For a hundred years half the big houses round Melton possessed a Ferneley Hunt Scurry.

They were scattered by retired Meltonians (ten seasons was a long innings) from Cadlands on the Solent to Keith Hall, Inverurie. Yet because they were cheap, £120 at most, no one recognised them as the great masterpieces of their kind. It took the Americans to wake us up to that fact and when the Wilton Scurry portraits by Grant sold for £2,400 by auction and



*By courtesy of Captain Taylor*

**ESSEX HARRIERS**

From the original oil painting by Dean Wolstenholme, senr., 1757-1837





*By courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum*

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

Stipple engraving by C. Catton after George Morland, 1763-1804

passed on at a good profit within a week to America, people began to sit up and take notice.

In a previous chapter I stated what are the requirements for a good sporting picture. Is one requirement missing here? Design, the orderly disorder. Can you fault it? Five men charging down abreast, every one with an individual seat. Compare Geary and Wilton's. The same applies to the Musgrave Scurry or the Massey Stanley. The landscapes, however simple, are typical of Leicestershire. The colourings soft and blended. But Ferneley besides being an artist was a hunting farmer. When staying with the great ones of the land, he is more interested in how his hay and horses are getting on without him than in the grand company. It will be noticed how fond he is of painting back views. They would probably be all he would see of the gods from his half-legged horse. He is best known for his ten guinea portraits of horses, C.O.D. He knew his Meltonians too well to give credit. I have eight of these portraits and each is a different type, from my grandmother's fat cob to her husband's slashing 17-hand weight-carrying thoroughbred, or the cross fired Leopard from the Quorn Stables to Ralph Lambton's short-tail brown hunter.

With the exception of the *Doings of Count Sandor* and one or two racehorses, very few of his pictures were engraved. Not a single one of his important hunting pictures had ever been reproduced before they appeared in *The Melton Mowbray of John Ferneley*, 1931.

Having started as a cart painter he knew how to mix and lay his paint to withstand the roughest usage. I have never seen a bad, cracked or faded picture by him, though I bought one a few years ago which had never been varnished! His *modus operandi* was to do separate pencil sketches of his subject and background, often several, transfer them on to a small experimental canvas, or combine them in a finished pencil drawing. The landscape grew with the subject. Finally he would get as many men and horses as would consent to give him a personal sitting. He enjoyed great popularity amongst the limited set who knew him; but, like his master, he "did'ner hold with that there Academy" and seldom tempted fortune. Yet at Osberton, the Durdans, Streely, Ashwardby and the Inch, a room, generally the dining room, is given up to his pictures alone. And no more suitable place "if your claret is very good and your port old."

Then can you and your son's son say:

"Stand a tiptoe when this day is named  
And rouse him at the name of Vulpian;  
Then will he point and show his horse—  
Old men forget and all shall be forgot  
But he'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day.  
Then shall the names  
Edward the King, Wilton and Exeter,



Warwick and Talbot, Ashton Smith and Gloucester  
Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered."

*Eheu fugaces!* It is much easier to ride a horse and cross a county with your knees under the mahogany and your toes in front of a fire than on a cold slippery saddle!

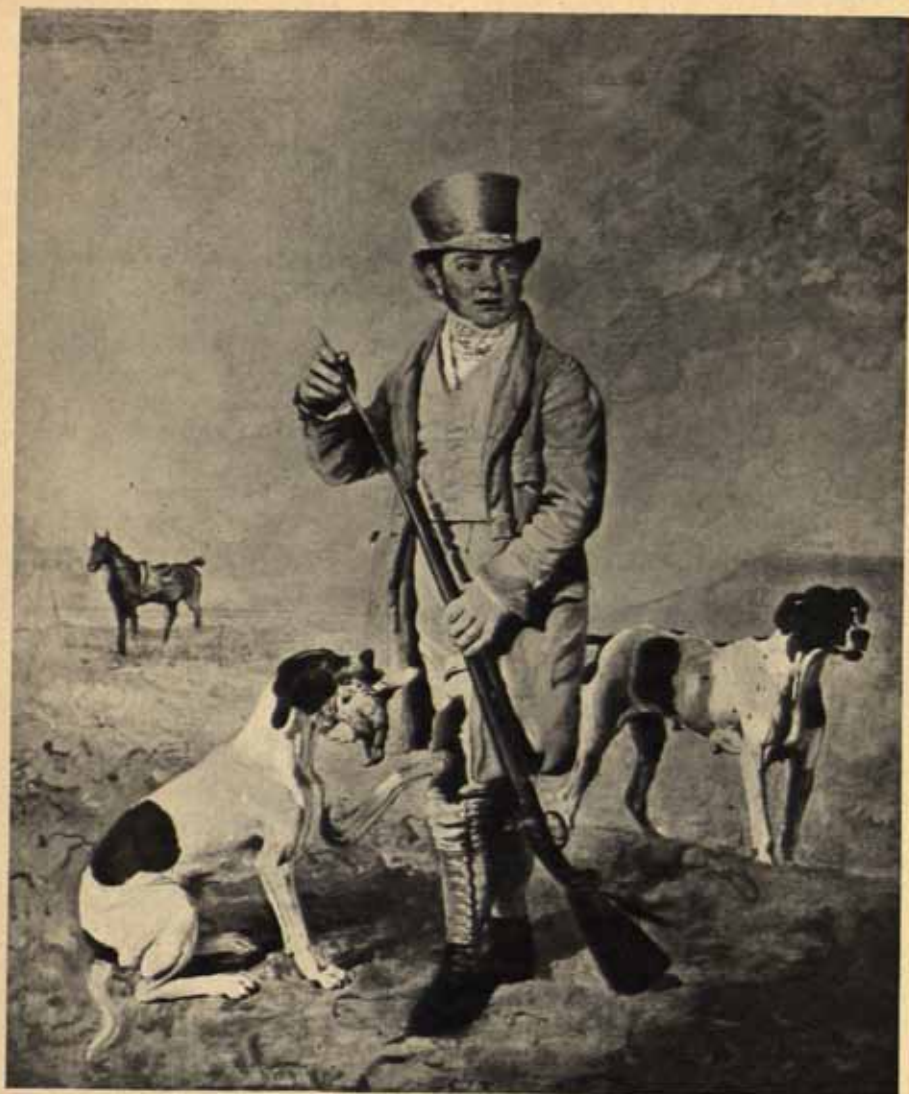
Ferneley died comparatively well off and left a large family. John junior, of York, 1815-1862, and Claude Lor(r)aine, 1822-1891, godson of C. Loraine Smith, were both good artists. John migrated to York and was much patronised by the officers at the Cavalry Barracks there. Sarah Ferneley engraved several of her father's pictures on stone, including *The Leopard* and *Samuel Dumbleton*, whipper-in to Dick Knight. John junior in many ways resembled his father but both subject and landscape are less fine and clear cut. He did a few Hunt Scurries but they are not important. Quite a lot of his work is attributed to his father, but on careful examination either "junior" or York is found; both brothers were most scrupulous about not attempting to palm their pictures off as their father's. When Claude helped the old man, it is recorded in the account book and a smaller price is charged. Claude was unfortunately lazy and unambitious, otherwise he would have gone far. He had a great sense of design and drew as well as his father. His water colours are excellent, well up to Henry Alken's when he took trouble. *The Meet at Kirby Gate*, 1859, is a good example. The horses in the foreground are easily identified as those his father painted for Thomas Paget about the same time.

David Dalby, 1790-1840, of York is an interesting study. Little is known of him except he lived round York in the first half of the nineteenth century. He was employed by the leading families of the county, especially those round Hurworth. Two of his racehorses, *Bran*, 1834, and *Mango*, 1837, appeared in the *Sporting Magazine*. He did cattle pictures but his best works are small hunting pictures. His paints have preserved their original brilliance and look like enamel on copper. He was a hunting man without a doubt, his horses' action is very life-like, his design is generally good. But alas, he took early to the bottle. The last we hear of him is that Mr. Booth of Killerby, the cattle breeder, and a few others guaranteed him twenty hunters to paint at the huge sum of £3 3s. each!

## SPORTING PRINTS

### THE PROCESS OF PRINTING

PRINTS are almost the only medium by which the general public can know anything of sporting art. They have enjoyed more popularity during the last two hundred years amongst all classes than any other school, not only in England but on the Continent.



PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST, WITH TWO POINTERS  
Sketch in oils by Ben Marshall, 1767-1835

I know of nothing that will brighten up a dark gloomy room more than a set of Pollard, Alken, Morland, Cooper-Henderson, Jones or Reinagle; racing, hunting, farming, coaching, fishing, shooting—to suit all tastes and all purses and most forms of interior decoration. They bring a breath of



fresh air into the room and they take us back to happy days or spur us on in the daily struggle with hopes of better things, when our ship comes home. Their artistic value varies as much as their price. A coloured mezzotint by Bell, Ward or Reynolds after Morland, in its first state, is as lovely as anything the artist has yet produced, while an aquatint by C. Hunt after F. C. Turner is very near the other extreme—£1,000 to 1s.

Space does not permit me to go deeply into the various ways in which prints are produced, but a very short note on their production may not be out of place. This should be easy for one who for years has collected old prints and helped to produce new ones, but I soon found myself well out of my depth and so went back to school (Art), where printing is a speciality, and came out as wise as I went in. No-one could tell me *exactly* how Alken coloured his best aquatints, otherwise than by hand. They lent me an excellent book by Mr. Poortenaar of two hundred closely printed pages containing about 100,000 words, 90 illustrations and 43 specimens. It begins "This little book must be brief, but it could almost assume the size of the Encyclopaedia Britannica." Alas! I must be briefer still!

There are woodcuts. There are mezzo, stipple and aquatints. There are dry point etchings and soft ground etchings, steel engravings and lithographs, all under the heading—Prints.

These processes cover all sporting prints up to about 1850. Then comes the camera and mass production. No man knows how many different and semi-demi-different processes of reproduction in colour there are to-day and if he did and wrote them down, he would probably be wrong to-morrow. But they have one thing in common. They are reproductions, not productions, their origin being the camera lens, while those enumerated above are the product of the artist's eye and the craftsman's hand. I do not wish to condemn them; many are as beautiful as the hand-made, but they are just reproductions.

Printing can be divided into three categories :

1. Relief Prints
2. Intaglio Prints
3. Plane or Lithograph Prints

The photographic processes group on the same principle :

1. Relief Prints—line and half tone.
2. Intaglio—heliogravure, flat plate, rotary—photogravure.
3. Planographic Prints—collotype, photo-litho, offset litho, Pantone, process, etc.

I can say no more about the mechanical printing processes which are improving every day. They range from Comic Cuts in two colours to a twelve or more colour half tone process; from thirty foot posters to postage stamps.

Woodcuts are the most ancient form of printing; dating from about A.D. 900, they, it is thought, came from China. Like many other inventions,



*By courtesy of Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Macdonald-Buchanan*

GREY STALLION AND MARE

From the original oil painting by Ben Marshall, 1767-1835





*By courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum*

EPSOM RACES

Aquatint by C. Hunt after James Pollard, 1772-1867

the printing press came into being in several places about the middle of the fifteenth century. In the earliest printed works whole words, pages and pictures were carved out of wood in reverse, the part to take the ink being in relief to receive the ink, the "whites" being "cut" away. This is the true woodcut and termed Relief Printing.

Next came wood engraving. Here the lines are cut or graved out of the wood, the ink forced into them and wiped off the smooth surface. Damp paper is then pressed on the block and sucks out the ink. The deeper the cut, the blacker the line. This is termed Intaglio Printing.

One form of this process is the mezzotint invented about 1642 by Ludwig von Siegen and Prince Rupert. Some say the Prince discovered this by idly rubbing pictures on the rust of a cannon and then sitting on his handkerchief, which he laid by chance over his "picture" to protect his breeches. On rising he found that an impression of his picture had adhered to the linen. Others say that he carried off a portrait of his lady love where such things are not generally displayed. Mezzo is the reverse of all other methods, which are worked from light to dark, while mezzo works from dark to light. That is to say, if you put a newly prepared mezzo plate through the press it would give a completely black surface, while the others would give a completely white one.

A mezzo plate is prepared by rocking or hatching, i.e., by making thousands of burrs all over the plate (generally copper) in every direction until it attains a uniform roughness. The design is then traced on this roughness, the lights being made by taking down the roughness, tones from pitch black to pure white being provided. They can be coloured in the same way as aquatints. Mezzo is by far the most beautiful and expensive printing process. It takes the engraver many months to finish a single plate and many hours to place the colours on it for each "pull." The smallest mishap may completely ruin a print. The engraver is an artist, not a workman. The number of good impressions from a copper plate are strictly limited, as it soon wears "flat." The most usual way of making pictures on metal plates is by graving or biting the lines into the surface of the plate by acid.

To produce a Dry Point a hard shellac varnish, called the ground, is painted over the plate and the picture scratched on it with an etching pen or stylus. In a Soft Ground Etching, instead of a shellac "ground" a soft tallowy mixture is used. The plate is then placed in an acid bath, until the metal surface exposed by the etched lines is bitten to the desired depth. For half tones or shading, lines and dots of varying depth and closeness are used.

Where no lines are used but only dots, even for the outline, it is called Stipple. Line engravings are produced on a similar principle, parallel lines being used in the same manner as dots. In a few cases the lines, as in wood engraving, are ploughed out of the metal by hand but this is very rare nowadays.



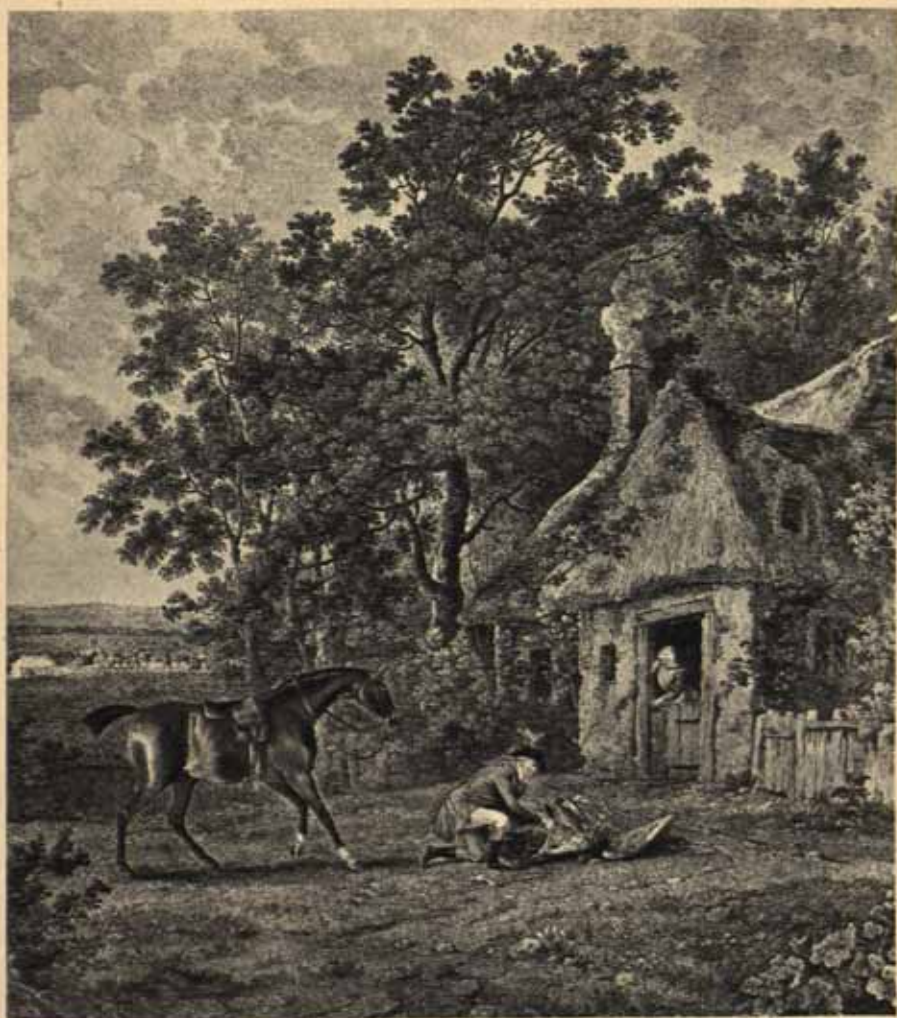
Plane or lithographs are produced generally from stones, but zinc is also used. The process is based on the antipathy of grease and water. One part of the stone's polished surface is drawn on with pen and special ink or greasy pencil. The paper being impressed on the stone picks up the ink from the treated portion, the untreated portion having rejected the ink from the rollers. The part which is required to be printed red, blue, yellow, etc., is treated on separate stones. These can be printed with or without an outline, and the outline printed either first or last according to the kind of ink used. Steel-etchings can also be coloured by this method and as many as twenty different colour printings may be carried out on one print. The disadvantage in this method is that there is no light and shade of colour, so the result tends to be "flat." Woodcuts are coloured in the same way, separate blocks being used for each colour.

Aquatints are produced much in the same way as Mezzo, but here the hatching is done by acid instead of by a rocker. The plate is dusted with powdered resin and then heated to form the ground. This leaves millions of tiny dots protecting the plate. The part required to be white is varnished over to protect it from the acid and the plate is then dipped for a few moments in the acid and parts unprotected by resin or varnish are slightly bitten, after which these lightest tones are protected and so on till dead black is obtained. The plate may then be worked up with a scraper to darken and a burnisher to lighten as with a mezzotint. The "ground" can also be produced by dissolving the resin in pure alcohol and flooding the plate with it. It will be seen from these few words, how much success depends on the skill and experience of the plate-maker.

Colour printing is done by the printer first inking the plate all over with a dabber. The plate is then wiped with a series of canvas cloths. More ink is left on some parts than on others according to the discretion of the printer. The colours are painted on the plate by means of paper stamps and when all outlines have been filled in so as to produce a facsimile of the original picture, the plate is polished in the same way as with the foundation ink which was wiped off with a cloth and it is usually finished off with the palm of the printer's hand.

The plate now looks perfectly clean, but when passed through a high pressure press it will be found that enough ink has been left to give the required result. Usually as many as twenty different colours are used. Ink, paper, wiping and pressure of the press all affect the result. This pressure soon deteriorates the plate after about forty impressions. I am indebted to Messrs. Ackermann, the great producers of aquatints, for this information.

The Baxter Prints invented early in the 19th century are no longer made. They required a very great many hand-carved blocks for one picture, a separate block being required for each bit of colour. The majority of old sporting prints are termed aquatints and the only difference between many



#### HAWKING

Detail from a coloured engraving after Sawrey Gilpin and George Barret  
by T. Morris, 1780

of them and watercolour drawings is that the former are painted over a printed outline and the latter over a pencil outline.

The method by which prints of all kinds, hand-coloured included, were produced was generally this—the artist drew his picture in oil or water-colour, then he or an etcher copied it on the plate from which the etcher would take pulls or proofs until he got one to his and the artist's satisfaction.



This was then handed to the colourist, who copied it as near to the pattern as his ability enabled him, either by hand or other process. I possess a mezzo—*Ralph Lambton on Undertaker*, by Charles Turner after James Ward, R.A., marked in ink in the margin "Mr. Turner Pattern."

When a large set or a big issue of hand coloured prints was being produced many men were employed. This accounts for the inequality of merit often found in different sets and even in individual pictures of the same set. This also, to a lesser degree, applies to true aquatints.

The wages of a colourist could not have been high, for many books with forty-eight engravings were sold for one or two guineas. The panorama of a fox hunt eleven feet long and containing many hundreds of figures was published in a roll-up case at £1.11s. 6d. If publishers, agents, papermakers, block-makers and booksellers received the same proportion as they do to-day and the artist and author had taken their cut, not much meat would be left over for the colourist. What surprises me is, not that their efforts are so often poor, but that they are sometimes first class. In fact, if the colourists had only signed their work, we would find many names, which later became renowned. It was a way to earn bread, if not butter, while waiting for fame.

People often write and ask me the value of a set of prints. My reply is, I can no more value a print without seeing it and knowing its pedigree and condition, than I can a racehorse. One set of H. Alken, *Quorn Hunt*, has been sold for £1,200; and another for 48s. framed! I think the former the cheaper as it is as certain as anything can be that they were coloured by Alken himself; the latter being a modern pull from the old plates shockingly retouched and coloured by a "dustman."

In many cases it takes a magnifying glass to tell the first-rate print from the original watercolour. The earliest sporting water-colours I have seen are a set of four coursing ones by the elder Wolstenholme (1757-1837) engraved by Reeve in 1807. I bought them for a song 30 years ago in Northampton in very dirty frames and did not discover they were the original drawings until I took them out to clean.

The Wolstenholmes, father and son, used to colour their prints in oils themselves. This has caused the downfall of many a collector, professional as well as amateur, who thought he had secured an original set in bad condition, only to find them oil coloured prints, when he has started to restore them. I have met Morlands treated in the same way. Why oil prints are ranked so vastly inferior to aquatints I have never understood, and I only wish it had been my good fortune to come across a set of oil Wolstenholmes for sale. A West End dealer, who had fallen for one, refused point blank to sell it to me at any price.

This is only the very roughest idea of the many processes that exist and I am well aware that any expert can point to many omissions but I hope few serious errors.



PARTRIDGE SHOOTING  
Oil painting by Samuel Alken, 1784-c.1825

## THE MAKERS OF SPORTING PRINTS

**F**RANCIS BARLOW, of Lincolnshire, was one of the first engravers of sporting prints, but I have not come across any printed in colour, though hand-coloured specimens, some quite modern, are to be met with. Some he etched himself from his own pencil and indian ink drawings; the majority appeared in *The Gentleman's Recreation*, 1686. There are several prints after Wootton and Seymour but they were not published until after their deaths.

Stubbs and Marshalls are met with in colour, mezzo, stipple and aquatint but it was the Alkens and Wolstenholmes who did most to popularise sporting prints.

The Alkens stretch from Sefferin, a wood carver (1717-1782), by family tradition the son of a refugee who had fled from the court of Christian VII of Denmark where he had loved unwisely and too high, to his great grandson, Henry Gordon (H. Alken, junior) who died in 1894. One of the original Sefferin's sons, Samuel, was an architect and engraver and four of his sons, Sam, Henry, George and Sefferin were sporting artists, as in turn were two





BEATING SUGAR CANES FOR A HOG

Coloured aquatint after Samuel Howitt and Captain Williamson by Henry Merke  
from *Field Sports of the East*, 1807

of Henry's, Henry (junior) and another Sefferin. Shaw Sparrow unravelled this tangled skein with his usual ability and industry in his *Book of Sporting Painters*.

As they all painted the same subject in the same style and signed their picture S. or H. Alken, it is impossible to tell by the signature alone, to which to attribute their work. The last Alken, christened Samuel Henry, called Henry Gordon, and signing his pictures H. Alken, junior, did his father's name much harm by not only omitting the "junior" but deliberately forging and passing off his very inferior work as that of his father. He died in the workhouse.

Henry Alken, senior, "Ben Tally Ho" (1785-1851) was the son of Samuel Alken (1756-1815), who had studied under J. T. Barber and became well known as a portrait painter; Henry started as a miniature painter. Christopher North in *Blackwood's* of 1824 describes H. Alken—"He is a gentleman and has lived with gentlemen. He understands their nature both in its strength and its weakness. . . . It is he that can escort you to Melton. . . . He feels the line that separates the true old *domine terrarum* and the *nouveau riche*. He feels this and paints as he feels." This disposes of the canard in *Notes and Queries*, that he started life as a valet and was a hunt servant at Bad-

minton. The mystery about him is that for several seasons he mixed with the "nobs" at Melton as one of them, but none of them knew that he was "Ben Tally Ho," whose pictures they so admired, till he let it out at Kirby Gate during a dinner with that fiery radical politician and Tory fox hunter, Sir Francis Burdett. Where did he get enough money to start? Was it from horse coping? He wrote a treatise on that art. How many pictures did he paint and how many were engraved? I believe both G. Forbes and the late Mr. Schwert tried to compile a complete list, but gave it up, when they got near five figures!

No phase of life came amiss to him. He could turn over a gig, knock down a pheasant or a Charlie, gallop over a brook or a snob, caricature the ridiculous uniforms of the Prince Regent's Army and even Prinny himself, but certainly not "The Duke." *The Man whom Boney could not turn* is full of dignity. His Hunt Scurrys, though too bunched up and crowded, move. He is too fond of one class of horse, not because he could not draw a screw as well as Leech, but because he liked that class. His colouring is clear and vivid without being crude, his lines are like his fun, clean and sharp. When he sat down to paint a picture, his composition is as good as anyone's. It is only when carried away by the pace of the hunt, that he forgets such trifles.



COURSING

Coloured aquatint after Philip Reinagle by Nichols and Black, 1815



His landscapes are as good as Birket Foster's. His atmosphere is transparent, his snow sparkles. I don't always like his hounds' shoulder action, nor is his arrangement of his field up to Ferneley's best—not so natural. Lady Daresbury's collection contains some masterpieces. His oils fall off sadly in comparison with his watercolours; the drawing is there and the spirit, but not the purity of colour. He loses distance. But, when judging them, remember that other members of the family undoubtedly did the worst and put "H. Alken" on them, though these could not deceive anyone who wasn't blind. I would rather have the first rate print than the original oil painting. Why will watercolour artists try and do oils?

Amongst other activities he used to "engrave" the amateur efforts of his sporting friends. In most cases "engrave" was a euphemism for completely redrawing and colouring the originals in his own style. I have seen the originals for the *Beaufort Hunt* by W. P. Hodges at the late Sir Julien Cahn's.

They differ from Alken's engravings as chalk from cheese; in fact he cut some in half and made two prints out of one. Those he engraved for Sir R. Frankland and Mr. Dean Paul also show the master hand. He redrew *Dick Knight's Doings* for Loraine Smith, but the tough old squire would have none of them, preferring his own crudities and cursing Jukes, the engraver, for improving them.

Alken never left his mother lodge, even when drawing a large crowd: he was always a miniaturist. Many of his fancy pictures are a collection of miniatures of real horses and men. In fact, I doubt whether he could avoid doing this, if he had tried.

Many of his best works he etched direct on to the plates and coloured them himself. Some must have been done from small sketches. My reason for saying this is that so few of the originals of his prints are extant. What remain to us prove that his original drawings would never have been destroyed if they had ever existed. Spencer of Oxford Street, a great admirer of H. Alken, found the pencil drawings, quarter size, of the *Quorn Hunt*, but no one claims to own the "originals," though I believe Lord Haddington's set of prints to have been coloured by Alken himself.

The Pollards come next in popularity. Robert was born in 1755 and died in 1838, and James his son was born in 1797, dying in 1867. They were both of the Alken School, but their draftsmanship was very inferior. Their horses' legs are far too long and thin. They excelled in racing, coursing, coaching and fishing pictures, but their hunting pictures are very inferior. They were obviously not hunting men. History is deep in their debt for the detail in their prints of our race courses and coursing meetings. Mr. Gilbey has a fine selection of the originals of their fishing prints, which are very pleasing. Neither were great artists but both were good illustrators. Their backgrounds are very true to life and easily recognised by those who know the localities from which they were taken.



*By courtesy of the Author*

A MEET OF THE QUORN AT KIRBY GATE

From the original water colour by Claude Lorraine Ferneley, 1859





*By courtesy of the Author*

SUNRISE ON THE CORNISH MARSHES  
From the original oil painting by Charles Simpson, R.I.

Squire Loraine Smith of Enderby, the Maecenas of sporting artists, was largely a caricaturist. He might have been a great artist, if he had ever been taught to draw and paint, for he had that subtle instinct for design. In prints made after his drawings his animals are anatomically incorrect, but they are very much alive and when Alken redrew the Squire's *Dick Knight* he lost some of the truth and vigour. He alone has the honour of sharing a plate with Morland, *A litter of Foxes, animals by Charles Loraine Smith, Esq., landscape by George Morland; engraved by Grozer.*

The squire provided Morland with an open hearth at Enderby when his creditors were too hot on his scent, and it was during his stays in Leicestershire, that he produced some of his best work. The story goes that the squire took the cellar key with him when he went out hunting. One day on his return he looked at one of his own pictures which he had left unfinished. "Best thing I've ever done," he exclaimed, "a bottle of port is indicated, eh, my boy!" George agreed and saw to it that the squire was equally pleased on his next return.

Morland could not draw a hound to save his life. In the hunting set by Bell "the dogs" are quite different in each picture and not fox hounds of any known breed in one of the four, but that does not stop them being superb pictures, colour, design, composition—perfect. A good set is worth £1,000.

It is with mezzotints we associate Morland, and there are no finer prints in the world; many of these are engraved by his brothers-in-law, J. R. Smith and William Ward. J. M. W. Turner, Rowlandson, Sam Howitt and several more who became artists of repute helped to produce J. R. Smith's mezzotints, not only from the works of sporting artists such as Chalon and Ben Marshall, but from those of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Opie and a host more.

Samuel Howitt's forty aquatints for Thomas Williamson's *Oriental Sports* must not be left out. They are a remarkable achievement for a man who had never seen India. A book of his *Twenty British Field Sports* fetched £1,060 in New York in 1923. But there is too much sameness about Howitt's horses. They are all half-bred Arabs and his hunting scenes, though well painted, tend to be too pretty. They fail to carry conviction. He somehow lacks guts.

I have already alluded to the Wolstenholmes—father 1757-1837, and son 1798-1883. They were originally Yorkshire squires, who came south to Essex to hunt over a property there, but strayed into that dangerous, tricky country round Chancery Court, where they lost and were ruined. They, however, made their second horse serve as their first. Instead of hunting to paint, they painted to hunt, so for once some good came out of Chancery. They both painted equally well in oils and water-colours. Their knowledge of hunting is accurate and delicate. They would have been better known if they had migrated to Melton, but they preferred the southern counties of Essex, Hertfordshire and Surrey. The majority of their pictures are small, few being over two feet by eighteen inches and many a quarter of that size.



They reproduce exceedingly well, so well in fact, that a few years ago the market was flooded with cheap forgeries. Up to 1817, Reeve of Grafton Street engraved most of the father's work, when his son undertook the job. All I have come across are aquatints. As both signed their pictures Dean Wolstenholme, the father's and son's works are hard to distinguish.

Amongst other artists, who made sporting prints, R. B. Davis (1783-1854), son and brother of Royal Huntsmen, enjoyed great popularity and deserved it. Though his fox and hounds tend to be too big in proportion to his horses, no one sits his man better down in his saddle. Many of his prints are lithographs, which are apt to be flat, but the mezzo by Wagstaff of *John Musters and His Hounds* is very fine. His Majesty the King has many good specimens of his work at Windsor.

H. B. Chalon (1771-1849) was also much patronised by royalty. He was of foreign extraction and did most of his work in the North, where coal, up to the present, has enabled his patrons' descendants to hang on to his work, so that very few have found their way into the market. There are several good mezzos by W. Ward after him.

Commander Bower's *Sir Mark Sykes and His Hounds* is a grand hunting picture, full of truth and vigour. It is well known through the first class mezzo by William Ward. Lord Barnard's *The Raby Pack*, which is sometimes met in colour, is equally good.

Cooper Henderson (1803-1877), born with the rise of the mail coach, saw its zenith and died with its extinction. No man ever made the dust fly, chains



GOING TO THE FAIR  
Oil painting by J. F. Herring, sen., 1841



A STEEPLECHASE  
Oil painting by John Dalby, 1853

rattle and lanterns gleam as he does. *The Windsor Coach at Full Speed* and *Returning from Ascot Races* must always keep their places as long as any remain who cherish memories of The Road before it became a tarred skating rink.

He has been well served by his engraver, J. Harris; his horses live. He is far better than Pollard. There is no real comparison, but there is no-one else to compare him to! If he has a fault, it is that he is inclined to over-emphasise unnecessary details in the foreground and his effect is often too shiny. Maggs, during the later part of the last century copied Cooper Henderson's style and produced some splendid "old" coaching scenes, but they somehow just miss the sparkling truth of Cooper Henderson.

The Herrings, F. C. Turner and Harry Hall did much to kill sporting prints.

They produced too much and too many were very poor stuff. Most of them are stencil portraits of racehorses which grateful backers bought to remind themselves they had once backed a winner. No ale-house was complete without them.

Herring senior started life as a stage-coach driver and painter. If he had been taught drawing instead of driving and painting pictures instead of carriages, he would have gone far. He undoubtedly had great natural genius; his farmyard scenes are full of understanding and feeling, but are often too busy. His racing pictures show knowledge and strength, but when he tries something big, he falls down, as he does when he attempts hunting scenes. One sickens of his two carriage horses and the Sultan's white Arab, which Queen Victoria gave him, jumping stiffly on hounds; yet he was the most popular sporting painter of the day.



Both F. C. Turner's and Harry Hall's hunting pictures are beneath contempt. Unlike Morland, their lack of truth is not redeemed by artistic merit. Neither artist was happy in his engraver. Both were born in the machine age and were swept along with it.

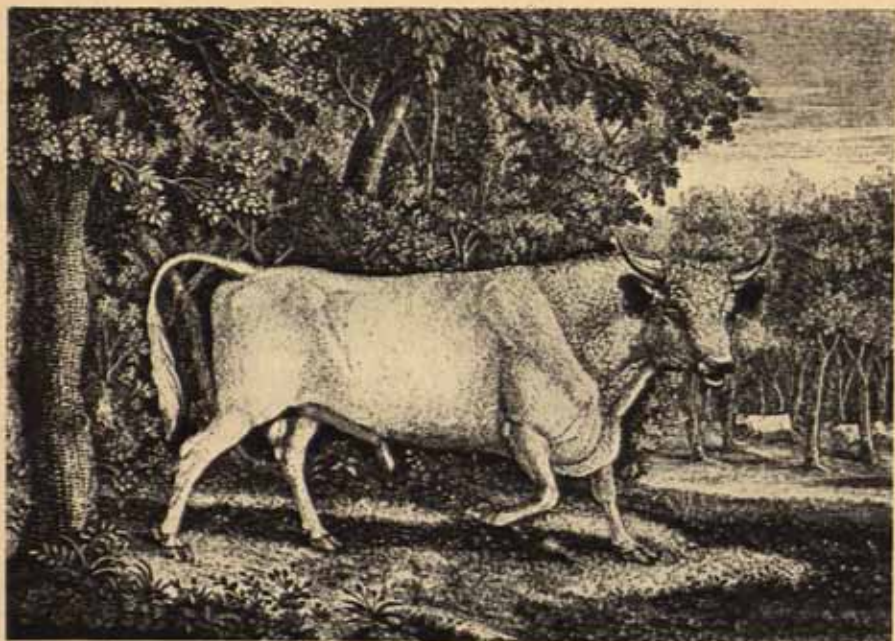
Lastly there comes Sir Edwin Landseer. No artist ever enjoyed such popularity or, during his life, such high prices. Fifty years ago "proof" steel engravings after him, fetched hundreds and a very insignificant original a thousand pounds. A portrait of three hunters was valued in 1902 at £8,000 for probate and the engravings from the private plate at £120 each. To-day you could knock off a nought and call it shillings! Yet Landseer is a great artist. He was untrue to his genius. He glutted an adoring public with poorer and poorer, stickier and stickier sentimentality, highly polished. He played down to the crowd like a bad comedian, till they gave him the "bird" for giving them what they asked for. Fortunately for him he had been dead fifty years, leaving £200,000, before his public tired of him.

With the death of Henry Alken, sporting prints rapidly deteriorated and lost much of their popularity. The photograph was creeping in and in its wake cheap and gaudy colour processes which murdered the delicacy of Alken and Wolstenholme. Not until after Queen Victoria died did photographic reproduction attain anything like success. To-day, water-colours can be very well reproduced, but the finest modern process printing is by no means easy or cheap.

The nineteenth century illustrators must not be forgotten. First of these is John Leech (1817-1864), the creator of Jorrocks and Mr. Briggs. Then there was his successor on *Punch*, Charles Keene (1823-1891). Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886) was one of the same school, the delight of the nursery; he might have risen to great things, if he had lived longer and ever enjoyed good health. He could draw and his colour was pure and natural. Sporting illustrators deteriorated far less than the painters. Finch Mason, Armour, Beer, the Tout, Snaffles and the Wag are worthy successors of Leech. Though not mentioned in most books on the Water-colour School, the men touched on here are up to the best standard and contributed much to popularise water-colours. Edward Duncan (1804-1882) was a link between the two Schools.

Duncan etched John Ferneley's *Doings of Count Sandor*, as well as other pictures for sporting artists, and was a leading light amongst the many fine water-colourists in the first half of the last century.

Lionel Edwards and Charles Simpson are artists of the first rank. Besides having had many of their works reproduced in colour, they have illustrated their own and other people's books. Simpson, in connection with Messrs. Gee of Leicester, produced by a new process chalk drawings almost indistinguishable from the originals. But I do not think that the new processes, or the new men, will ever entirely out the old.



CHILLINGHAM WILD BULL  
Wood engraving by Thomas Bewick, 1789

## BEGINNING OF PICTORIAL ADVERTISING

**T**HAT Britain breeds the best horses, cattle and sheep is denied by no-one who has studied the subject. For years they have been exported to every corner of the world. It is equally true that they deteriorate in foreign climates unless reinforced by home-grown stock every few generations.

This is most peculiar in the case of our racehorses, which are 90 per cent. pure Arab. They remain superior to their desert-bred brethren in every respect, except soundness. It is the same with foreign breeds of dogs, such as Spanish Pointers, St. Bernards, Pomeranians, Golden Russian Retrievers, Alsations, which permanently improve in this country. Many show winners, bred here for several generations, return to the land of their origin to improve the native stock. But shows have undoubtedly spoilt the usefulness of many breeds by exaggerating certain points, and the artists have helped to do the same.

The horse has come off best in Art. His eye might be too big and his head too small, or his legs too thin, but the worst looked something like a



horse. It is no good exaggerating a racehorse too much. Even in 1700 there was a racing calendar and the racecourse to prove a horse's mettle. In the eighteenth century, travel was not only expensive and uncomfortable but, in winter, well-nigh impossible. In 1797, shows had hardly been organised. The Agricultural Society was not "Royal" when it commissioned James Ward to do a picture of every breed of cattle and sheep in England. There was no other way to compare their merits. When he had done over two hundred the project failed and Ward said he lost hundreds, but what he lost on the swings, he amply made up on the roundabouts in the form of friends and patrons amongst the highest in the land.

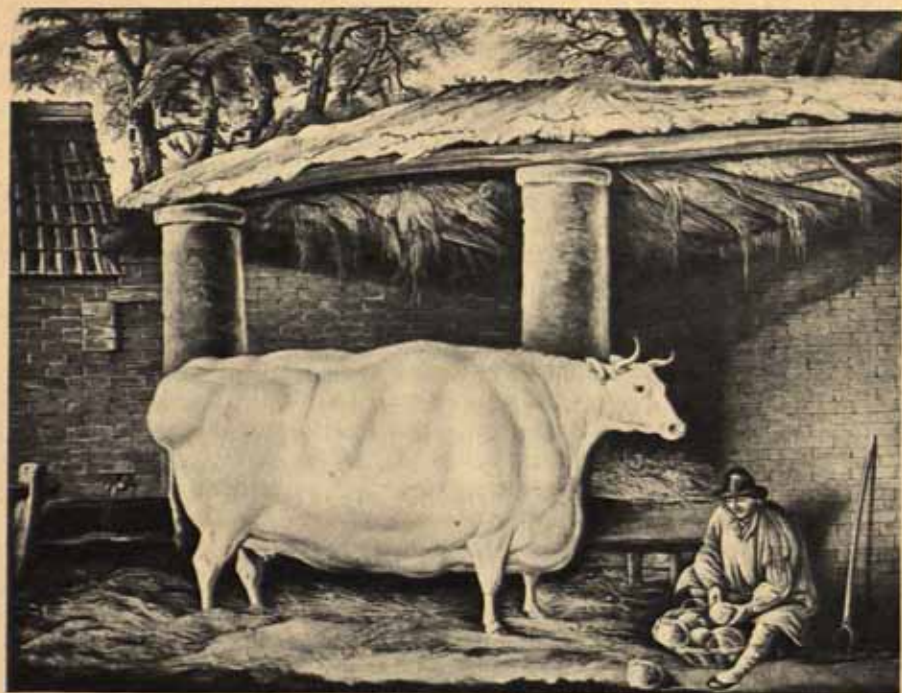
Arthur Young (1741-1820) tells us that, in 1810, "a very alert agrarian pride gave pleasure also to many lawyers, physicians, soldiers, sailors, wealthy merchants. Farming is made up from all ranks from a duke to an apprentice. There have been more experiments and more discoveries and more general good sense displayed within these ten years than in the hundred preceding them."

But long before 1810, there had been a wave of experiments all over England, which, starting with a horse, went on to all sorts of farm animals. Since 1650, war had definitely ceased to be the occupation of gentlemen; it was the affair of the Government and their "damned scum of a standing army." To work off their energy, they devoted themselves to farm improvement, not only in breeding but also in winter feeding and the production of feeding stuffs.

These experimenters wanted a shop window. Who the wealthy merchant was who first harnessed Art to the Cattle Trade, I do not know. There is no record of any breeder being impeached for pictorial exaggeration. These merchants employed the best artists of the day, and had their pictures engraved in mezzo and stipple as well as line, sparing no expense. Barlow painted an ox of 19 hands high and 3 ft. 6 ins. across the hips. Of them all, Robert Bakewell (1725-1795) of Dishley, Leicestershire, was the most famous improver of cattle and sheep, though to Thomas Bates (1775-1849) belongs the credit of the modern Shorthorn dairy cattle produced by methods of intense inbreeding. Bakewell was indeed the high priest of this new cult, and the highest in the land flocked to Dishley, leaving with pedigree bulls and rams purchased at fancy prices.

The animal portrait painter's life was not all plain sailing. Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), the wood-engraver and naturalist of Newcastle, has left behind him an account of his experiences at Barmpton, as Sparrow tells us in *Walker's Quarterly* :

"After I had made my drawings from the fat sheep, I soon saw that they were not approved, but that they were to be made like certain paintings shown to me. I observed to my employer that the paintings bore no resemblance to the animals whose figures I had made my drawings from; and that I would not alter mine to suit the paintings that were shown to me; but, if



COLLINGS WHITE SHORTHORN HEIFER  
Mezzotint after Thomas Weaver by William Ward, 1811.

it were wished that I should make engravings from these paintings, I had not the slightest objection to do so, and I would also endeavour to make *facsimiles* of them. . . .

"This proposal would not do; and my journey as far as concerned these fat cattle makers ended in nothing. I objected to put lumps of fat here and there where I could not see it, at least not in so exaggerated a way as on the paintings before me; so 'I got my labour for my trouble.'"

So much for his human friends; now for his bovine ones.

"With an old friend I went to Chillingham park where a splendid bull wheeled about and then confronted us. The creature became so threatening a hasty retreat was necessary. I was, therefore, obliged to endeavour to see one, which had been conquered by a rival and driven to seek shelter alone in the quarry hole or wood and in order to get a good look at one of this description I was under the necessity of creeping on hands and knees to leeward, out of sight and thus I got my sketch."

I wonder what Stubbs would have done? He tackled one of Lord Rockingham's stallions which broke away and attacked its portrait.



George Stubbs and Thomas Weaver dealt with tempers in a more subtle manner. They obeyed their patrons blindly. Look at *Collings' Heifer*. Was there ever such a monstrosity on sheep's legs? Note the smile of the man cutting turnips, the size of cannon balls, which are rolling out of the picture. Now turnips had only just been introduced into England by Dutch William, and were about the size of one's fist. Look at the *Lincolnshire Ox* turning a contemptuous back on Mr. Gibbons, while the game cock takes him off exactly. And this is by the same man who painted *Bulls Fighting*!

John Ferneley fared no better than Bewick, preferring his art to his pocket, so did very few cattle pictures but produced no monstrosities. Nor have I seen any palpable freaks by Ben Marshall. In his picture of *Mr. Wilkinson of Lenton's bull, 'Alexander,'* he has left it with a very cowlike head and his pictures for Robert Bakewell of Dishley are true to life. Compare them with Garrard's *Holderness Cow*, 1798, and Thomas Weaver's *Bull Patriot*, 1810. Such animals could not have stood, let alone walk. Sparrow terms Weaver a follower of Stubbs. True, he makes a fool of his patron, as Stubbs does of Collins, and has almost copied Stubbs' labourer, but he followed the master too far behind to catch even his sarcasm.

Perhaps Boulton exaggerates the length of my forbear's Longhorns but I hope not their beauty! Anyway, they are "human cows" and took a cup at Smithfield the year before he died, 1811. George III may not have been a great Empire-maker, but he was no mean judge of a cow or a picture and he assigned Boulton a house near Cumberland Lodge, from whence he could immortalise the royal stock.

What Bakewell was to breeding James Ward (1769-1859) was to painting cattle. He started as an apprentice to John Raphael Smith, the engraver, and was later appointed engraver to the Prince of Wales. He worked for Opie, Reynolds and Marshall, but he wanted to create on his own and not be a mere copyist. They implored him to continue with his engraving. George III asked him why he gave up a lucrative trade for so precarious a living as painting. "Sire, I engrave for my living, I paint for my pleasure." Some of his early work is very like Morland's but he was furious on hearing himself described as the pupil of his young brother-in-law. Cattle did not content him. He wanted to outshine Ben Marshall at racehorses. Egged on by Benjamin West, he competed with Paul Potter, who was then in vogue, and produced a group of *Mr. Allnutt's Alderney Cattle* (12 ft. x 18 ft.) now in the National Gallery; and with the great Rubens, when he hung his *Bulls Fighting Across a Tree at St. Donatt's Castle* next to Rubens' *Château de Steen* in West's Studio.

There is a great manliness and vigour about Ward, which inspires trust. No man has ever painted old horses better. He is one of the few animal painters who have ever been favoured by the Royal Academy and exhibited 287 pictures there. Sir Edwin Landseer occasionally did stud animals, notably a British boar for Mr. Weston, M.P., in 1818, but he cannot be



compared to Stubbs, Morland, Marshall, Henry Alken or Ferneley. Abraham Cooper (1787-1868) was another sporting and cattle painter, favoured by the R.A. He was elected in 1820 over the head of his master, Ben Marshall, his superior in every way, except that he was a friend of the Wards and a Londoner.

George Morland did many country scenes and kept a perfect menagerie at his house in London. He once rescued a sucking pig from an untimely oven and carried it squealing under his arm to visit a friend. To my knowledge, Morland never entered the "advertisement racket" during his life. Heaven help the man who would appeal to him for flattery. He wanted it all for himself. Yet, to-day, his pictures are used more than any other man's, to advertise scent, soaps, guns, whisky, hats, sweets, almost anything. Morland serves a great purpose. He brings us down to earth, the country earth of simple folk. His pigs are measly, his horses worn out and common, his cows tubercular, and his countrymen often dirty. He shows us the English stock before Bakewell and Collins reformed it.

Amongst the well-known sporting artists who painted cattle are the Wolstenholmes, Chalon, R. B. Davis and his brother, William. The Marquis of Exeter has a whole book of cattle studies by William Davis, who did a great many of his pictures up and down the country, which are often mistaken for his brother's, R. B. Davis's.

With so much wealth and talent at their disposal it is a pity the Royal Agricultural Society does not arrange an exhibition of cattle pictures. A single ox or pig may not be of much interest, but a comprehensive exhibition, where comparison is possible, would be. If they only traced all they could of James Ward's two hundred, they could not fail to arouse attention and controversy. There are few country houses where the family have been rooted for two hundred years which do not boast at least one monstrosity of an ox. The only man who has ever done anything in this direction is Mr. Augustus Walker of the Walker Galleries, Bond Street. He has taken a lifelong interest in the subject. In 1930 and 1932 he staged two most interesting exhibitions, as ambitious as his comparatively small galleries would allow. They proved a great success, and both should have been acquired lock, stock and barrel for the nation by the Royal Agricultural Society or some other body.

Walter Shaw Sparrow wrote an excellent article in *Walker's Quarterly*, No. 33, which is as interesting to the farmer as it is to the collector. He gives some interesting figures of the cost of Mr. John Gibbons' *Lincolnshire Ox*, 1790, 26½ x 38½. Stubbs received £64 12s. 6d. (£20 on March 5th and £44 12s. 6d. on April 9th). G. T. Stubbs received £105 for engraving it (August 2nd and February 3rd); the engraver of the title, £1 11s. 6d.; Joe Stewardson of Grafton Street £15 15s. for printing 500 copies. In all £186 19s. On the top of this was the expense of bringing the ox from Long Sutton and a long stay in London. Though this seems, even to-day, a lot



of money we must remember that prices of cattle ran high, too. Mr. Lawrence gave my ancestor £400 for the longhorn bull "Shakespeare" at the age of 17, and Mr. Fowler's herd of 53 fetched £4,289, "Brindled Beauty" £273; an average of £90 per head, and money worth four or five times what it is to-day.

The pictures I liked best at Walker's exhibitions were a couple of cattle fairs by J. Ferneley, *Birthday, of Castle Howard* by D. Dalby, a brilliant bit of white on black, and *Mr. Donald Cross's Ayrshire Cattle*, 1893, by Joseph Adam, R.S.A., which combines a fine free lowland landscape and four cows without senseless exaggeration.

Boulton and his pupil, T. Weaver of Shrewsbury, were well represented as was Garrard by his fine scenes, *Whitbread's Brewery*; mezzotints by William Ward. There were four or five of *Leicester Long Wools* by T. Yeoman of Grantham, an artist I had not met before. Munnings' Friesian bull, *Ongar Vic Klaas*, ought to have been there.

On coming away one could not help feeling, however, that such exhibitions are of more interest to the historian and the breeder than to the artist and connoisseur.

## GAMES AND PASTIMES

MY definition of sports and games is that, in the former, man set his wit and strength against nature with or without the assistance of animals. Games are where man contends with man in friendly rivalry to demonstrate his superiority in some particular form of strength or skill. So far I have only touched on the sports, but there are many games and contests which are generally included under the heading "Sports." In fact it is very hard to know where to draw the line between the two. Coursing is undoubtedly a sport if carried out in order primarily to catch a hare, but a contest, if to test the relative speed of greyhounds. Racing though commonly regarded as a sport is in the true meaning of the word no such thing, but a cross between a contest, an entertainment and a business. The same can be said of league football and cricket. The mail coaches of Pollard and Cooper Henderson are always regarded as sporting pictures but there is no more sport or pastime about them than there is about a railway train. But the English are an illogical race who do not trouble about exact definitions and will always compromise over anything except about having no sense of humour or a bad seat on a horse. Trap-shooting at clay birds certainly does not come under sport any more than darts, but where is the difference between hand-reared pheasants out of wire netting enclosures and pigeons out of traps? Fortunately this is not the place to decide this knotty point. It is to Barlow we look for sport of the seventeenth century and to the Alkens and Rowlandson for sport and pastimes in the eighteenth and nineteenth. They did not attempt to differentiate between the two.



THE MAIL COACH AT THE ANGEL, ISLINGTON, ON THE NIGHT OF HIS MAJESTY'S BIRTHDAY  
Coloured aquatint by James Pollard, 1812

Thomas Rowlandson, 1756-1827, a real cockney bred and born, shows with his chinks and washes every side of life with irrepressible fun and high spirits, not always restrained within the highest bounds of refinement and propriety. He was a fast worker and his original drawings are still to be picked up for a song out of old portfolios. His illustrations for *A Tour of Dr. Syntax* are very fine examples of eighteenth-century aquatints and show up the twentieth-century edition process plates very badly. Rowlandson has done some very fine landscapes but it is the fun and pace he put into his pictures that put him in the front rank.

Not till I started looking for illustrations for this book did I realise the paucity of pictures of our pastimes, not only of artistic merit but even of mere illustrations. Take the five most popular games in this country: football, cricket, golf, tennis and bowls. I do not know a single really good picture of one of them except possibly of cricket or of golf in some of the eighteenth-century Dutch school.

Yet golf should lend itself to "landscape figures" as much as fishing. Shaw Sparrow names several hundred men who have painted fishing pictures, but go into any golfer's home and how many golfing pictures do you find? One or two prints, perhaps, tucked away in the hall or passage or possibly in his den, but never in the principal rooms. The best known





PERCH FISHING  
Oil painting by William Jones c. 1830

pictures of bowls are various modern versions of Sir Francis Drake where costume overweighs sport. The centre court at Wimbledon ought, with its light and shade, its greens and whites, to provide a motive to some rising Segar or Teniers. The late Jeremiah Colman had a great collection of cricket pictures, some of artistic value and interest, but most of just interest, though in the best of these there are fine landscape backgrounds.

Alas, the most common form of modern cricket picture is a collection of photographic heads stuck on unnatural bodies crowded inartistically together in front of an early Victorian pavilion with gas works or worse as a background. Ranji's *Jubilee Book* of cricket was entirely illustrated with photographs. Hundreds paint gardens and cottages, heaths and churches, the play of light through trees, but how many the village cricket match, combining all or some of these elements? Boxing and boxers attracted several artists, among them Ben Marshall, Rowlandson, H. Alken and Gillray.

On the Continent bull fighting has inspired artists of every school and posters advertising these shows often are magnificent both in colour and drawing, but I have never yet seen an inspiring advertisement inviting me to a Championship Fight or a League Football Final. The efforts made in this direction either for horse or dog racing are too feeble to mention.

Beer, Beef and Baccy have done far more for art than our organised games. The average Briton will thank his gods that there is no bull fighting in this enlightened country but little more than a hundred years ago, in every

town in England there was bull and bear baiting (bull baiting was enforced by law for hygienic reasons, for it was held by the medical profession that bull-flesh was rendered more wholesome if killed immediately after being baited), pigeon and sparrow shooting from traps, badger drawing, dog fighting and cock fighting; and any of the last four can still be enjoyed in some parts of the country.

At the 1942 Preston Exhibition of Sporting Pictures, one artist attempted to portray football, billiards and bowls by the modernist method. The results were not a success and aroused as much adverse comment both from the highbrow as from the vulgar. But this should not deter others from trying. From a sportsman's or an artist's point of view both the camera and "the movie" have failed to reproduce games satisfactorily. "The Dogs" have fired a number of artists as did motor racing when it first started. Some Frenchmen produced pictures which gave the idea of speed and humour but one must be a motor salesman to see real beauty in a racing motorist or his car. Flying, too, has yet to produce its Stubbs or Leech.

Of the many artists who have tried their hand at Polo, Gilbert Holiday was probably the most successful. He was a master in depicting speed—no-one better—but his technique and knowledge just failed to put him in the top class. He died young, just before the 1939 war, from a fall with the Woolwich Drag on the top of wounds received twenty years earlier with the gunners.

## THE REVIVAL OF SPORTING ART

FROM the beginning of the nineteenth century sporting art began to sink and by 1850 few of the old landmarks remained and no new ones had sprung up. The cause was two-fold: steam and the camera. Steam transformed the art patron from the landed magnate, rich in tradition and Napoleonic war profits, into the hard manufacturing materialist who looked on hunting as a dangerous waste of time and the horse as a slow means of locomotion. The camera cheapened portraiture. The sporting artist might have stood up to its competition if he had refused its help. By slavish use of it he proceeded to produce mere coloured photographs instead of original pictures; suspended motion, instead of the appearance of motion as recorded by the slower human eye.

The present century saw a great revival in animal painting in which many women took part, notably Lucy Kemp-Welch, Maud Earl, and such men as Wardell and Briton Rivière. But sporting pictures proper were still in disgrace. J. D. Giles struck out a line on his own, breaking the Alken tradition. He placed hunting scenes on well drawn natural backgrounds of nearly every hunt in England; the subject being subservient to the background. They are too photographic and his colouring too muddy to be great works of art but it was a stride forward.



The first phase of this war, 1914-1918, undoubtedly knocked out a generation of rising Alkens and Marshalls. During the second phase, 1939-1945, many well-known artists dropped out, Lynwood Palmer, Ivester Lloyd, George Wright, Lucas Lucas, Cecil Aldin, George Talmadge and Gilbert Holiday; not giants perhaps, but head and shoulders above their fathers and most of the contemporary R.A.'s. The leaders of to-day are no way behind their eighteenth century forbears. Sir Alfred Munnings is the first animal painter to fill the high office of President of the Royal Academy. Munnings is a master of colour and the play of light and shade. Many of his admirers prefer his "rough" work, often dashed off while his "finished" pictures are drying. His *Pytchley Hounds Feeding* (1944 R.A.) attracted far more praise than his other pictures of that year. His Friesian bull, a study in greens, is a masterpiece equal to Rubens', Paul Potter's or Ward's best and his studies of the Belvoir Hounds in the snow, though impressionistic in style, please both critic and sportsman.

Charles Simpson is undoubtedly the best bird painter living. He alone, of all artists past and present, can make his birds appear out of their backgrounds as one approaches them or the light is increased as in nature. But they require large canvases and do not reproduce well, even by the most expensive processes. He is a great draughtsman and has done many first rate equestrian portraits.

Lionel Edwards, the other outstanding sporting artist, is a landscape painter in the very top class worthy to rank with any of the nineteenth century. He can paint a Hunt Scurry as good and life-like as Ferneley, on a background worthy of Birket Foster. His figures are as good or better portraits than Henry Alken's and have as much life and movement. No man softens his outlines with mist as he does and at the same time retains their truth and weight. He has only to see a hunt gallop once across his landscape to produce a dozen recognisable portraits of the men and their hunters.

We can only be thankful that men like Michael Lyne, Seago, Meade King, Peter Scott and many I have not yet met, have got through this war to carry on the traditions of their art.

Though Mr. Walter Hutchinson has not got very far with his National Gallery of Sports and Pastimes he has started to place the English Sporting School on a par with other Schools and to give both ancient and modern a fair run. With our new P.R.A., to teach portrait painting; Sanderson Wells and Lionel Edwards, hunting and shooting scenes; Charles Simpson and Peter Scott, birds; and Armour and Snaffles the fun of it; with Doris Crome Johnson to show that advanced modern technique handled with sense and discretion can be a suitable medium, the budding sporting painters will not lack leaders.

There is always room in front. "Too much," we old uns may sigh, but don't let that stop anyone. "See what is the other side of that hill in front." "Gang forrard! Gang forrard."

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