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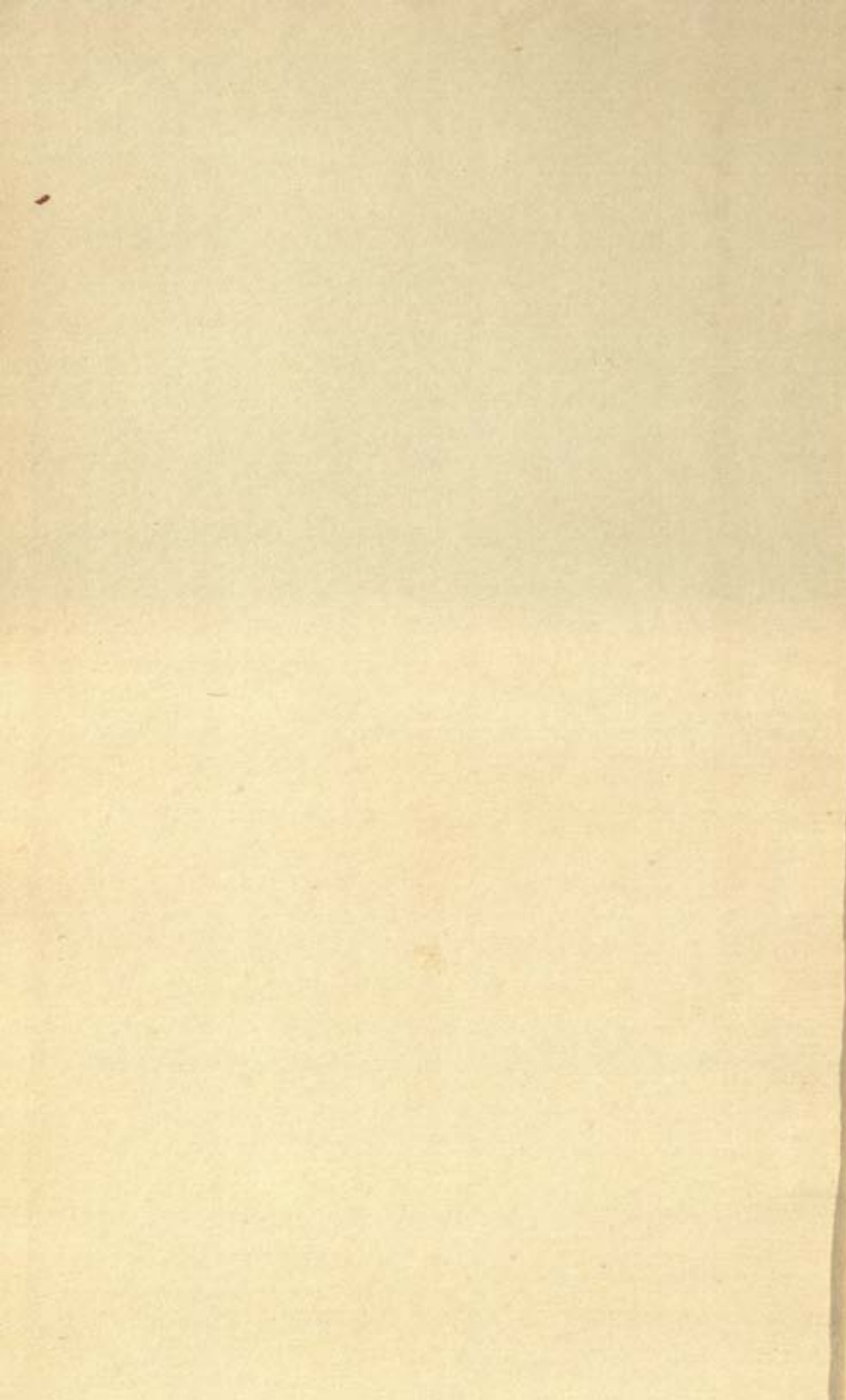
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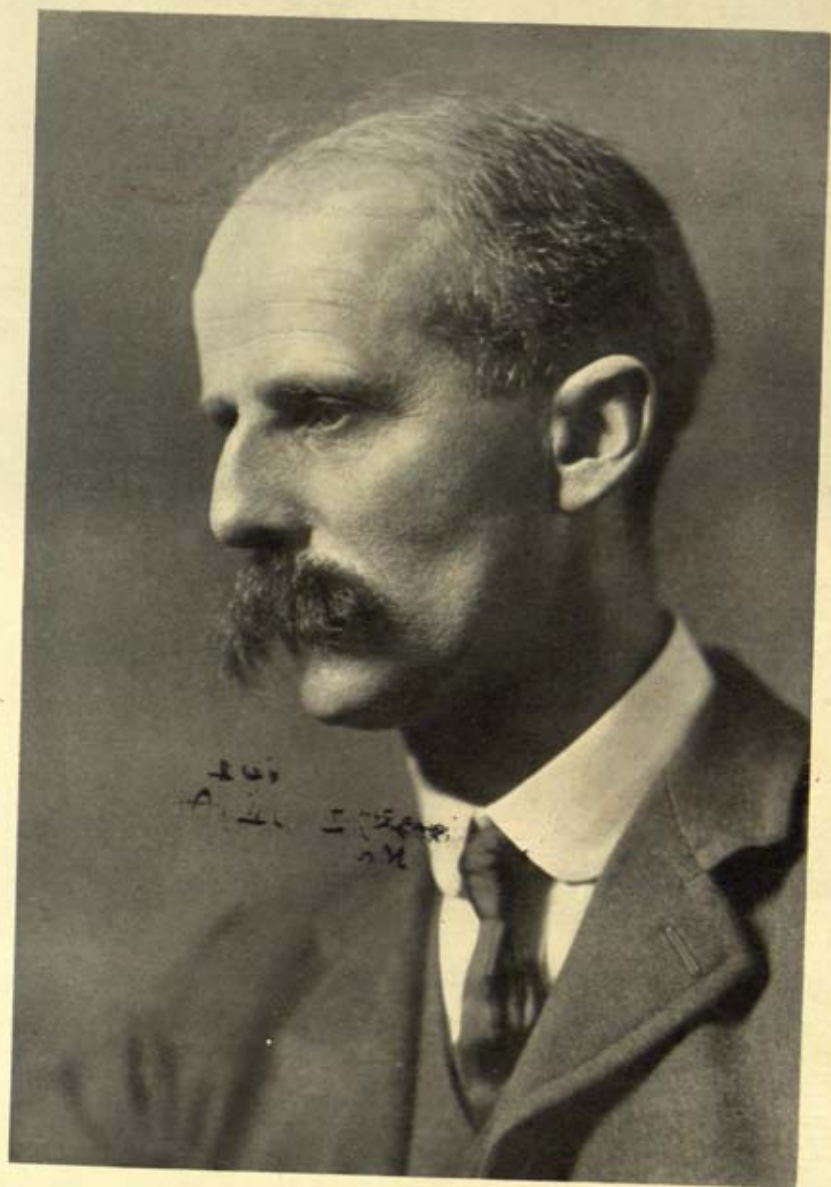


CONFESSIONS OF A KEEPER  
AND OTHER PAPERS









THE AUTHOR (1907)

# CONFESSIONS OF A KEEPER

*And other Papers*

12236

BY

D. S. MACCOLL

FORMER KEEPER OF THE TATE GALLERY AND  
OF THE WALLACE COLLECTION



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## PREFACE

THIS is a first selection from forty years' work of criticism; I have been the laziest of men about reprinting or even printing. Three of the pieces are in type for the first time; the others are reproduced with excision of matter not to the purpose and a minimum of correction; the date of each is added. In 1890, at the invitation of Messrs. Hutton and Townsend, I began to write for *The Spectator* and did so till 1896. After a short interval, or escape, I was enlisted by Mr. Frank Harris on *The Saturday Review*, and continued to write under his successor, Mr. Harold Hodge. When I became Keeper at Millbank in 1906 I dropped out, but returned to the same review under Mr. Filson Young in 1921 and again under Mr. Gerald Barry, following him to *The Week-End Review*. I name those editors for the pleasure of remembering the invariable freedom they allowed me; Mr. Hodge gave active support to more than one project. In addition to the editors of weekly reviews I have to thank those of *The Nineteenth Century and After* and *The Burlington Magazine* for permission to reprint, and to the last for the use of a few illustrations.

The first task for a critic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to champion some of the senior artists still in dispute, Manet, Degas, Whistler, Rodin, the Impressionists and others. The second was to single out the newer talents of the time. There were old masters as well to review in current exhibitions. There were various campaigns as well, for the preservation of Marble Hill, the completion of Stevens' monument, the arrest of Richmond's

mosaics, the reform of the Chantrey purchases and other features of administration at the Academy and the public galleries; single acquisitions like the Rodin; the foundation of the National Art Collections Fund and Contemporary Art Society, the salvage of Hugh Lane's pictures and foundation of a Foreign Gallery. The matter of the Bridges is still unsettled as I write. From all this I have taken some papers of a more general character, putting aside, for the present, individual artists except as they come into the argument: Rembrandt, for whom Mr. A. M. Daniel put in a word, I have included. An address to the British Academy on *Rhythm in Time and Space* would have overweighted the volume, and is held over.

I have lived to see a striking revolution in the popular attitude to what is new. We had to fight, in the earlier period, for seniors and beginners who appeared eccentric against a background of mediocrity. The assumption is now all in favour of eccentricity, that is of an art which sets up on some one corner of the field, with a super-Franciscan vow of poverty. The barriers are down, the doors are open, there is a welcome of trumpets and no resistance to what is called 'advanced art' (how advanced was the cave-draughtsman!). I find myself, therefore, once more rather solitary and unfashionable when I inquire how far actual production squares with plentiful theory. But when one considers the wild inaccuracy of our critics when they describe the colour-practice of a Monet it is conceivable that they are as far out when they attribute a mastery of 'organized planes' to Cézanne, or credit less gifted artists with qualities as



remarkable but invisible. A eulogist of the latest, the *Surréaliste* phase of Picasso and di Chirico, does indeed say that criticism of their works is impossible, because 'they are not made to be seen.' About these I might agree, but I plead for seeing what we talk about. If there is repetition in places, I may also plead that some nails call for more than a single tap.

To see the object honestly and completely and to use words precisely are the ideals of the critic, but to neither can he ever nearly attain. His statement may be true of what he has taken into account, but a residuum is left over. Therefore the 'true' statement, from the moment it is made, begins to be untrue. With that humbling reflection I submit these articles to what erosion they deserve.



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## CONFESSIONS OF A KEEPER

OR

CULTURE *is* ANARCHY

*Being the 'Foundation Oration' read before the Union Society  
of University College, London, 21 March, 1918.*

REMINISCENCE is age's privilege, and if  
I am not yet an Ancient Mariner so that

The moment that his face I see,  
I know the man that must hear me,  
To him my tale I teach,

I tell it under due provocation like the present, and it grows in the telling. It is the apology for a life in which my private business about art has been much neglected through entanglements, critical and official, with other people's.

I told a little bit of it the other night at a dinner in honour of your Slade Professors, Brown and Tonks, outgoing and incoming. I explained that long before I was a nurseling of this College the absurd idea that it was too late to be ambitious in painting, coupled with an interest in other learning, sent me into the wrong class-rooms, and I was held there by the equally absurd idea that life is long and broad, and has room for successive or simultaneous pursuits. When I returned to this place I was Opsimathes, a Late Learner. As Theophrastus says

'He is one who will study passages for recitation when he is sixty, and break down in repeating them



over his wine. He will take lessons in Right Wheel, Left Wheel, Right about face.'

That last a number of us have been doing; but in the particular field of my Late Learning I was also committed to a double life. Mr. Walter Sickert once described my case as like that of a French acquaintance of his who gave to painting what time he could spare from his official task as Inspector of Sewers. Art-criticism is not quite so noisome as that; but it is perhaps more wearing and obnoxious: the periods especially of shunting from one occupation to the other, a sickness and convalescence twice a year, are a sad tax upon time and temper. I refer to this private matter only as a warning for the young.

That was my latest provocation to taking stock and making confession. The earliest was a dinner given by his colleagues to Charles Holmes, when he became Director of the National Portrait Gallery. I was put up on the pretext of drinking the health of the critics present, for whom I was asked to reply, but really as a tame elephant, trumpeting a wild one gently into the corral. There were three of us there who had in a peculiar degree earned obloquy by practising both painting and criticism: members of the same artists' society, we had concerned ourselves with other people's painting, and from criticism passed to office. The third was Mr. Roger Fry. Now we sat like extinct volcanoes with faint wreaths of smoke about our head. By the irony of the Powers Mr. Fry, who had been one of our band for preventing the whole of the Old Masters in this country from going to America, had been appointed to export them to the Museum of New York. Mr. Holmes, who had been



great upon emotion in art, had been set to cool among passionless pedigrees, watched by stony faces of dead judges, and of Arctic Explorers more frosty than the Pole. And I, who had waged war against the administration of the Chantrey Bequest, was charged to cherish the treasures of its bequeathing and retard their natural disintegration.

It was an awkward moment for reminiscence, and I could only plead that after doing time as a contemplative critic, and exhausting what I could usefully say about my generation, I had found myself steadily dragged into getting things done or prevented, so that when the call came to shoulder responsibility and become the criticised, I was bound to dree that weird.

The next time I took up my parable was at another semi-festive gathering. The University Club at Liverpool once a year dilutes its cups with a discourse, and my story began to grow. I told them something of the early experiences of a free-lance critic who enters the Keeper's office. A first surprise was the very small part of the duties laid down that touched art at all directly. The Keeper of the Tate Gallery had nothing officially to do with acquiring pictures for the collection; had no money to expend upon them; no vote upon the few purchases made; no place indeed at the Board, except by its indulgence. It was harder to get a picture in than it would have been to steal one of those already there. Acquisition had to be effected almost entirely by roundabout and stealthy means, by inciting private gifts, or, because of the doubtful chances of such gifts being accepted, by founding outside societies to hold them in suspense. All that was illicit; what was regular and required was to become, at a moment's

notice, part a policeman and part a clerk, with fractions given to the task of head-charwoman and overseer of a refreshment bar. Incidentally to all these activities one had become what is called a *business man*.

This experience upset a good deal of what had oppressed my conscience as traditional wisdom and morals. Imagine me, up to a mature age, rising not always or even often with the lark, but at any convenient hour; putting off the writing task till the last moment, and simmering up to it in an armchair by the fire; never keeping accounts more elaborate than the most meagre of bank pass-books, and dreading of all things in life the giving of orders to subordinates and keeping discipline. Could there be a worse training? Well—I found, and it is heartening if dangerous doctrine for my youthful hearers, that there was no great difficulty in suddenly becoming punctual, in catching the early train, in keeping a part of the nation's accounts, in playing the benevolent martinet. The temptation is to do these things too well; to fall in love with system for its own barren sake; to take on the official shell. Indeed I discovered, what I had long suspected, that to be a business man is for any one of rudimentary intelligence a trifling affair compared with doing anything really difficult, such as drawing or writing. And I came up against those painful efforts of the State to be businesslike, which were displayed on so colossal a scale in the recent expansion of the nation's business.

At the Galleries our relations with the State were bleak. There was no department for directing or forwarding our efforts: there were several departments for checking them, and you may have observed that



almost the sole economy attempted in War time, and that not reluctantly, but with alacrity and an air of virtue, was to suppress the paltry sums allowed to the museums for purchase. What we had to do with was a vast machinery for controlling, not so much large payments as small outlays for upkeep. Let me give an illustration. There is a great department one of whose functions is, not to make, but to supply, furniture for government buildings. Suppose, as Keeper of a Gallery, I wanted a bookcase, a writing-table or cabinet, one not quite of regulation size and shape. It was not open to me to go to a shop, buy one, and send in the account, or order one to be made by those who make such things. The danger was that I might be a dishonest person and league myself with a corrupt cabinet-maker or furniture-dealer. There was therefore a careful ritual to go through, with several grades of priest. I communicated my wishes to the department. When a decent interval had passed a brother official called to interview me. He wore, in those antediluvian days, a top hat, sat down, and exchanged the news of the day. After a time the affair that brought him was with proper delicacy mentioned, and in its general bearings discussed. A subordinate took notes and measurements. Time again passed, and I politely renewed the application. This time an official in a pot-hat called, did not sit down, went into the matter afresh, took measurements, and in his turn retired. Time again passed, and a further reminder brought a contractor's foreman, who once more took measurements. He was the outcome of a process of tendering, by which the department had arrived at the lowest sum for which one of those occidental or

oriental magnates who employ our labour would deign to look at the job; and I am inclined to suspect that our rulers carry their rage for purity and for the lowest attainable cost so far that they give their preference, in the matter of such furniture, to firms that are accustomed to make other things, and are uncontaminated, so far, with the object required; for when, at long last, the thing appeared, it had an exotic and theoretical air, as of a form sought in the heaven of ideas by one who had never met that object in the phenomenal world. Still: you see the great principle: a larger sum, it is true, had been spent upon this abstract checking system than had been saved in preventing illicit commissions, and upon cutting, slightly perhaps, the shop prices: time, paper and ink, patience had been expended, and the object had that odd, alien look: but integrity had been preserved.

Be content with that glimpse into the pre-War leisure of checks upon expenditure. I will not expatiate on another department which was concerned with printing and stationery. It also procured, but did not print, and seemed to cultivate a like remoteness from the craft: the printer responded by eagerly releasing all his neglected founts on a single title-page. But that play of fancy has been reformed. There remained the little corner of one's office concerned with art. Here one was up against another of the hurdles in the obstacle race we must run, a Committee, the Board of Trustees. From those intimate struggles I must not too rashly draw the veil; but now that I am a trustee myself I may perhaps say something about the nature of the animal; the nature, possibly, of a bygone or obsolescent kind. A committee is our English poli-



tical device for compromising between those who want to go forward and those who want to go back or stay where they are. It is obvious that to apply such a device to the acquisition of pictures means, if it is worked for all it is worth, never getting a very good picture, if not always a very bad one. Boards have hitherto consisted largely of the lordly type. As a class lords have their virtues, one of which is a certain aloofness or you-be-damnedness which prevents them from attaching undue importance to anything that appears in print. On the other hand they are subject to sudden impulses from what is said to them by a neighbour at the dinner-table: they attach an excessive importance to information or opinions picked up in that way, and they bring with them a House-of-Lords atmosphere, which means obstruction as a half-conscious habit or general principle, tempered by the other habit of giving way under sufficient pressure at the third time of asking. I, who had avoided committees like the pest, had to learn the lesson that nothing makes a committee of this complexion so suspicious as does an air of conviction. An acquisition recommended on its merits had a very bad chance, and the late Lord Carlisle, a very uncharacteristic specimen of his order, taught me that the way to appeal to his colleagues was to disparage the work of art on its merits and advocate it as a matter of 'policy.' When this was done for me and I could remember a few emollient phrases like 'with all deference' I had a relative success, and things did slip through.

There were other people to deal with, and even more of the weariful virtue, 'tact,' required with them. The pictures one wishes to get, still more those one



succeeds in getting, are nothing compared with those one is invited to look at by their fond owners, and has to discard. The Keeper, however often disappointed, goes, 'faintly trusting the larger hope,' to view a reputed Turner or Constable, or, more thorny trial, works by a living artist. I remember being summoned to look at a 'Watts.' As often happens it was a Watts, but not the Watts 'we know,' as Tennyson said when 'O.B.' told him 'I'm Browning.' When this was explained to the indignant owner she went to the top of the kitchen stair, and in a voice worthy of Mrs. Siddons cried 'Bring up the Cimabue!' Useless to urge upon her that the Boojum among Italian Primitives was not a British painter.

More trying still are the relatives of recently deceased artists; and worst of all their widows, with their very praiseworthy loyalty and fierce belief in the husband's merits. One I remember, a gorgeous apparition, who wrought upon my feelings at length, beginning with the preface, 'You see, my husband and I were all in all to one another—more or less.'

But all these are minor troubles of the situation, and I now approach the central difficulty, which I have been skirting and avoiding—the moral question, whether there ought to be such a thing as a picture-gallery, whether a Keepership is a laudable, a reputable or a reprehensible occupation; the conflict of conscience, in a word, between Keeper and Artist, or Keeper and Critic. Mr. George Moore, I know, shakes his head very plausibly over the whole business, and considers a picture ruined for pleasure once it is in a public collection. I go so far as to agree that galleries are not ends in themselves but rather provisional stores

of imagination in a museum age; to remind us that we were not always paupers.

This question came up for me acutely when I was invited last winter to address the Art Workers' Guild on the subject of 'Construction versus Chaos.' The Guild is an association formed by the followers of William Morris on the plan of combining artists in all branches. They hold meetings for discussion on their several arts, often very interesting, but apt to fall away, as the evening wanes, into two inquiries, 'What is Art?' and 'Are Critics desirable or tolerable?' The former they never seem to settle, and they fall back on the second with relish and a nearer approach to unanimity. A leading member of the Guild, my friend Professor Lethaby, troubles the pool of talk periodically with exhortations to get going, and on this occasion there was a set debate on the Critic question. By 'Chaos' they meant the diverse tongues of the critics; by 'Construction' getting the critics to unite upon a programme. But the Master, that delicate artist Mr. Henry Wilson, made what seemed to me a false start. He advocated the doctrine of Matthew Arnold, the doctrine of collecting and absorbing the best that has been thought and said and seen, the doctrine of Culture versus Anarchy. There I felt bound to intervene, to explain that *Culture is Anarchy, is Chaos*, and to tell them this was no doctrine for artists; that as a Keeper I had come, against my natural prepossessions, to say a kind word for Chaos, since it would have few friends among them. This required a little explaining, and if you will allow me, I will repeat the explanation.

The origin of the meeting, I ought to say, was an



earlier, a private discussion with Professor Lethaby, whose project was what he called a College of Art Critics. At a previous meeting of the Guild he had expounded the need for mobilising and brigading them. The impulses of War, which led first to a censorship of military critics, then to a coalition of Parliamentary critics, and finally to conscription for civilian critics, even of a queasy conscience—all this self-protective and necessary action of the State against the German Mission—fascinated my friend, and he bethought him of Art, how little there has been of coalition among its schools, of censorship upon the extravagant contradictions of *its* critics, how little conscription of their forces to push a national policy, to foster and protect a national production. He saw Germany, before the War, loud in self-praise, lavish in tending seeds and weeds of visual art transplanted from a country in which such growths are native, but despised; he saw England, fertile in originality, but niggard in appreciation and reward, and *her* critics ready to welcome and applaud anything of foreign rather than of English make. Our own deviations had come back to us with the prestige of Munich as 'Art Nouveau'; an international influenza had caught France as Cubism, Italy as Futurism, a future lyrical with the last of the great German schools of music, that of Essen. And we took it all, not even lying down, but jumping up to embrace and celebrate.

Thus threatened and bullied by Chaos and Old Night, and eager for a counter-offensive, Mr. Lethaby found a sympathetic audience in the Guild, for a very good reason. Whatever may be the case with critics or officials, artists must be constructive,

or destructive, or nothing. The Art Workers' Guild now numbers all sorts in its membership, but represents historically and in the main a remarkable constructive movement. On that let me digress a moment. The Nineteenth Century was a very great English period in art, the first in which we may be said to have led the world. In its first half there was the landscape of Crome and Turner and Constable. That lay in the full stream of European painting, turning away, in the century of Science, from a disputed God and disordered Man to the uncontroversial hills and woods and seas. Then followed, from 1850, a peculiar English romantic dream, a revival of the discredited inventive imagination, poetical and religious, a lovely backwater opened by the genius of Rossetti, and continued by that of Burne-Jones and William Morris; a true school, since alien or uncertain spirits, a Frederic Sandys or an Arthur Hughes, were caught and infected, and powerful but commonplace minds like Holman Hunt's or Millais' were inhabited for a time by the Pre-Raphaelite demon. That movement had its flowering season of an adorable imagery, and it had its lasting constructive value in the turn given to it by Morris under Ruskin's inspiration, the effort to recover the methods of making necessary things pleasant. But it had weaknesses. It was feminine rather than masculine. Neither Rossetti nor Burne-Jones could paint a man. It was stronger in poetic illustration than in architecture or sculpture, and its attempts upon the crafts ran more to ornament than to the structure of simple things that was its programme. Above all, it failed to master, to use and regulate the machine; railed



at it, and left the machine and *its* art to master us.

For so far we have been talking of art in its accepted, conventional sense, almost co-extensive with romantic art. But that is to leave out of account the most original and overwhelming contribution to art of great Britain in the Nineteenth Century, one quite outside of the schools, whether of landscape or of other poetry, which were refuges rather than housing for modern life. I mean the art of the Industrial Age, the art of the Machine. Our chief constructive design was thrown into railways and their stations, telegraphs, factories, warehouses, exhibition buildings, iron- and steel-clads, girder bridges, tubes, machines themselves, whether of peace or war. The buildings that mark the time and correspond to the churches and other structures of the Gothic centuries are not the Law Courts and the Liverpool Cathedral, but the Crystal Palace and the Railway Stations. Here was a new construction in glass and iron, comparable in its fundamental logical daring with Amiens and Beauvais, or the stone and glass of Gloucester. But in our humble apologetic fashion we dismissed this tremendous development of art as something to be ashamed of, or covered it superficially with lendings of what we were pleased to regard as artistic, the Greek Temple at Euston, the Gothic Castle at St. Pancras, the mediaeval nonsense at the Tower Bridge. We left it to the French and the Americans to rescue the logic of our discovery from that muddle. Architects, in our view, were artists; engineers something else: whereas the engineers, when they were not imposed upon by the so-called artists, were directly creating rhythmical beauty and grace of



a bare monumental kind, an inflexible and ferocious kind, from the necessities of the task. It was an art which had no overflow of beauty in imagery, was unfriendly in its materials, and had extremely unpleasant accompaniments in the conditions of its use; smoke and grime and smell; but it was art in its degree and beauty in its kind.

This state of things—the sharp divorce between, on one side, what the Nineteenth Century was chiefly driving at, with the masculine and grim art appropriate to those objects; on the other the production of ugly things for use with a plethora of loathsome ornament—this was the situation in which the Guild began its wistful life. Its originators stood aside from the main stream of English production, and had a very good case for doing so; but they were apt to put up the wrong case. They accused the Industrial Age and the Machine of producing no beauty. That is nonsense for anyone who has ever looked without prejudice at, say, the maze of railway lines in a big junction, at a steam engine, a destroyer, or even a bicycle. Such things are much more beautiful than the ornamented ornaments that make up so large a part of Arts and Crafts Exhibitions. The radical objection to the mechanical art is not its want of beauty but the perversion and absurd extension of its use, its religion of means for means' sake, nay, of art for art's sake. But that last is our complaint against the 'artists' also, who so rarely give us a tolerable chair or carpet or tea-service, but wriggle their woful patterns over all our poor little open spaces. To deny the beauty of a Destroyer is like denying the beauty of a Tiger, because the Tiger is a cruel, a hostile and uncom-

panionable beast. Blake, who had a deeper philosophy and more masculine imagination than the Pre-Raphaelites, knew that the Tiger is more beautiful than the Lamb, though not so agreeable a member for the home circle, and the right attitude of the Guild to the mechanists would be to plead, 'We are mere children as constructors and designers; we succeed mostly in turning out toys rather overloaded with decoration; but the faith we so little exercise is that art should be concerned not merely with its own perfection in power, but also with the demands of gentle and civilised life: a modest heaven rather than a perfect hell.'

The Tiger and the Rattlesnake  
Are rare examples of design;  
And man, the mechanist, can make  
Terrors more cruel and as fine;  
But Art, with high explosive hurled,  
Grows much too perfect for the world.

All schools become bankrupt as time passes, and at the most lofty and solitary peaks most bankrupt. The scholars see to that. There is nothing more putrid in the world than the school of Michael Angelo, of Leonardo, of Raphael, of Rembrandt. Burne-Jones, a master in his degree, played scholar to himself in much of his production, and the dismal imitators were not greatly worse. The true succession passed to a mocking spirit, Aubrey Beardsley. But that was the epitaph. There was an earlier incident, marking where the romantic backwater came up against a wider stream and proved itself frozen. This was the famous Ruskin-Whistler case. The occasion was ridiculous,



because Whistler ought to have been hailed as an ally and not an enemy; by Ruskin, as of kin to the misty Turner, who declared that 'indistinctness was his forte'; by the romantic avoiders because the whole point of his Nocturnes was to reduce contemporary reality to its lowest terms, to a tenuous film, to make warehouses look like palaces and gas-lamps like jewels. Whistler was a mediator, after all, between fancy and realism. It was soon after this that my own experiences as a regular picture-seer began, and I have delayed in coming close to our subject because I have been tempted to retrace my own approach. My earliest vivid experience of painting was the first Grosvenor Gallery exhibition, in which the *Days of Creation* and the *Merlin and Vivien* were confronted with the *Nocturnes*. The Burne-Joneses carried me away on the spot: I looked at the Whistlers a little puzzled, as a good Ruskinian; but afterwards, when I looked at *things* again, and sketched them, found, to my surprise, that I was evoking Whistlers rather than Burne-Joneses. The Old Guard of Pre-Raphaelitism was very sad and sick to see the critics of the following period, the eighties and nineties, applauding the intrusion of a foreign art, which dealt with contemporary appearances instead of romantic evocation, and coming in the nineties I found myself an object of suspicion to both worlds, to a New Gallery audience when I addressed them on the merits of Whistler, of Manet, Degas and the Impressionists, to Whistler himself when I ingenuously lectured him on the beauties of Burne-Jones's *Depths of the Sea* in the Paris Salon, 'But I understand Botticelli much better than he does,' he complained.

An honest critic was bound, and here I come to closer quarters, whatever might be argued about the scope of the two arts, to note where was actually burning, at the time, any fire of art. There is no use in pretending that the extinct volcano is in eruption or the smouldering altar aflame. But honesty also should acknowledge the limits of the new fire, and the existence of altars, even unlit. What I call for convenience the Guild, meaning the imaginative English school, had a real point to make against contemporary Europe, though they made it on the wrong target. The line of European, that is, French painting was itself approaching bankruptcy because it had ceased to have a public practice, to be an honest trade, except in portraiture, and even there was being squeezed out by the machine, the photograph. The artist was so little in demand by any customer, so little in the way of taking orders, that he claimed to paint only to please himself, and was happy if unintentionally he pleased one or two others to the pitch of buying his pictures. This divorce from the marriage-bed of usefulness, pushed to a separation even from flirtation with significance, meant that the art became an extremely solitary virtue or vice, and finally that strict and dry spinsterhood, the last state of 'Post-Impressionism.' The War, curiously enough, has employed artists once more.

All schools, I have said, become bankrupt, but when they go into liquidation some assets remain, a composition of half-a-crown in the pound, or twopence halfpenny, or, as the widow said, more or less. And this was true of the Guild. If it had not mastered the industrial world it had a certain faith in the



remarriage of beauty and use, in the possibility of co-operation and community as opposed to very private and isolated production, in the inclusion of life instead of progressive abstraction of content from colour and design, till these die of their own inanity: in a word, a reconstructive creed. There are some works, moreover, as well as faith. The architectural element has grown, and is making way from beginnings in country houses and formal gardens to schemes of town-planning and more communal housing. Some also of the more modest but most widespread and necessary arts have really found their feet again: such as lettering and inscription and printing. So with pottery and fabrics. All that we must gladly acknowledge, and should unite to applaud. But to go beyond that and ask critics to clap their hands and cheer over our art generally would be to form a clique and not what Mr. Lethaby wants, a College of Criticism.

I come, then, to closer quarters still, and to such claims as I make for Chaos.

When the Art Workers' Guild speaks of critics, it is thinking chiefly of newspaper critics. Here let us distinguish. There are two or three kinds of writers involved.

1. First, you have what would better be described as Reporters. Daily journalism requires notices of a vast number of exhibitions, important or insignificant, because advertisements are involved. You cannot get many writers highly qualified to undertake the dull slavery of such work. Most of them have not the knowledge or conviction to make their writing more than a tossing into the air of debatable topics. About

old art they are conventional: it has been judged. About new art they are either excessively prudent, or excessively amiable. These are the critics artists approve of, when they are amiable.

2. Over against these are two groups, one of them possessed of knowledge and judgment, the other inspired by strong preference and conviction. They stray into journalism, but its conditions are uncongenial. Artists dislike them, because they do not whole-heartedly back this or that artist, but pick and choose from them as raw material to illustrate their own knowledge or likings.

With that distinction we begin to see clearer. Mr. Lethaby's idea of a College might apply to the first class, who ought to be concerted when some practical question of art is in debate, say the Charing Cross Railway Bridge, public monuments and memorials, or the Bill recently before Parliament for saving national treasures.

But with the second class, the real critics, the case is otherwise. The types overlap in different proportions. One broods over Chaos and gives it marks: judges, with a cool detached mind, each element of the anarchy on its merits of force and comeliness. No one is so superhuman as to be altogether without bias; but this type, which runs to knowledge and judgment rather than conviction, is of the wine-tasting, not of the wine-bibbing and intoxicated, enthusiastic order. Such men you are evidently not going to brigade into a crusading force. They would be poor fighters, and spoiled for their rather inhuman activities.

The other kind is hot with conviction: they are fighters for a particular imagination, just as are any



artists worth considering; one imagination against all the other imaginations. And this imaginative fight we are always in for, more particularly in an age when we are all heretics and there is no church, and most particularly protestant England, the fond mother and nurse of heresies. The ideal of England since Wickliffe started the Reformation has been a lightly organised Chaos, which we call toleration, individualism, party government, and it includes numberless sects down to anarchists and conscientious objectors. I don't think we pretend that there is anything final or satisfying about such a state of things; but our unexpressed axiom is that thought and imagination must fight out their battle in the region of thought and imagination. The alternative is the conscription of thought, or else some great religious or otherwise imaginative movement, which would bring about conversions wholesale.

National War is another matter. It very properly conscribes us physically, but for the English that is a means towards keeping the ring for freedom. As Sir Walter Raleigh said in this place a year ago, you do not easily get an Englishman to hate even an enemy, however hard he fights him. Once a prisoner he treats him as a pet, a curiosity, a souvenir, and is prepared, one may add, to listen to his views, if drill has left him views, and to consider if there is anything in them.

That, I think, is the answer the critic would make to Mr. Lethaby. The ring must be kept for Chaos, but within it every fighting critic is for a construction, and more than one may be for the same. If I may speak for my own small part, I am not likely to quarrel with his desire for construction: since it drove

me out of criticism proper. When a critic comes to that pass he has two roads before him: he may take to politics, or he may take office, if he does not take wholly to practice. Instead of that more blessed way Mr. Lethaby, and I, in my degree, took office. And my form of office, though it meant more direct work and less casual exhortation, did not mean escape from the critical problem. If the Keeper of a gallery, or the member of an Art-Collections' Fund speculates at all upon what he is doing, the critical problem shows its teeth more threateningly than ever. To the Professor of Design, like Mr. Lethaby, also. For the unwritten code is that neither of them must take sides, as the artist may, who fights for *his* imagination against all others. So long as the work of art is an example of right function and of beauty the Professor must applaud it, and the Keeper accept and keep it. His Zoo must be open to all creatures, ferocious or gentle, inhabited by devils or angels: the Lion has his crib beside the Lamb. In life the Lamb, say Ingres (a rather fierce Lamb—the anger of the Sheep is terrible), fought gamely against the Tiger, Delacroix, and all the world joined in the affray. In the museum they are caged side by side, and no one finds it extraordinary, or turns a hair. Even so those old disturbers of the peace and centres of furious contention, Blake and Byron and Shelley and Swinburne, now that they are bound in library editions, are matter for the mild Extension Lecturer. The competing imaginations are no longer treated as dangerous vistas opening upon revolution: when they cease to be contemporary we drop out the significance and catalogue the beauty: we say at the most, 'Yes, a very good Lamb of its kind and a very



fine specimen of a Lion,' and what was once in a church a god or saint to be worshipped hangs beside a Bacchanal or orgy; Fra Angelico cheek by jowl with Hogarth and Goya.

A museum is an internment camp for the imagination, a 'reserve,' as they say in the States, for the wild things of Chaos, and its Keeper is there to see fair, to keep the peace, to tend the strangest fires, in case a divine or diabolic spark should inadvertently be quenched. He may keep out the mongrels and pretenders, and may secure, if his trustees will let him, his own kind, but the eminent alien or enemy must be welcome too.

This anomaly has often come home to me when I have stayed on late in my deserted menageries. What would happen, I thought, if those quiet pictures came to life, if the spirits of them escaped from the cages of their frames, and could attack one another tooth and claw. I could fancy sometimes that I heard the chains rattling and the creatures growling. There were other dangers: cells tenanted by British maidens, I must not say of whose creation, into which I should not have ventured unchaperoned; I would rather face the wet eyes of all the Hertford Greuzes come to life.

You see, then, before you one who confesses to a very ambiguous position, a Keeper of Chaos. By nature, not being English, I am disposed to tyranny, to despotic destruction and construction; but a reasonable part of me has a sneaking admiration for the English and their faith that Chaos, tempered by committees, will work out its salvation if you give it the rope of the ring. In England hardly anything completely dies, institution, belief or periodical: or dead,

it goes on as if still alive. The Englishman beheads his King, and starts the modern Republic; but when other countries have bettered the lesson, and turn to look, the King is there again. He invents modern science, but half of him goes on by use and wont; he invents, without noticing it, industrial art, and at the same time produces a Walter Scott, a Keats and a Rossetti. The one thing he has never quite succeeded in producing is an Academy, because that would mean imposing authority on imagination itself.

Connected with the reserves I have been making is a recurring dream or vision or nightmare, which, if you will bear with me a few minutes longer, I will try to recall and describe.

The idea of it was that God had determined upon a Last Judgment, not of the moral kind we had been taught to look forward to, a judgment upon our behaviour; but something much more fundamental and drastic, an aesthetic judgment, based upon what we and other creatures are and appear: in a word the Artist, so prodigal in the types of his creation, was to come, as the critic, in judgment upon the Chaos he had made; and the conflict, carried on for ages in forest and air and ocean between competing ideas of vegetable and weed, beast and bird and fish, in desert and town between the warring tribes of man, and in his brain between contradictory imaginations, was to be tried and ended.

An old dream, it was also old-fashioned, and the God, perhaps, old-fashioned too. The scene was a little hill-town, whether in Italy, or in one of the spectral Byzantine places of Greece, I do not know. But I was sitting at the window of an inn, looking out



over the market-place. The rhythm of ancient walls and towers was the background of what I saw; and into it fitted, without a jar, like sea-shells and weed upon rock, clambering and nestling, houses and scraps of garden. Behind all this rose a pure line of mountain, and in a gap of it lay the sea. And upon it all slept a full evening light, in one of those intervals that bring to the heart conviction or illusion of universal concord and completed understanding.

The picture seemed for once to be there with little collusion or management called for; composed without a painter, and faint snatches of music began, as of a distant church-organ, crossed by the dancers' fiddle, the pipe of the hill-shepherd, but the drums, also, of battle.

Then, from that suspense or trance, the teasing critical faculty awoke again, as I first remember it during long hours of Presbyterian preaching, when my thoughts wandered, and my eye followed and probed and quarrelled with the pew-ends and the pulpit lines and the window heads and panes, and the gas-brackets.

This time it settled on the mouldering forms of a sculptured relief, imbedded in the wall of a house just opposite—and was nearly satisfied; so close to perfection was the design. This, I became aware, was in some sort the key or focus of the harmony. Then the judgment began. The strains of music grew a little louder: tentative tunes were broken off and dismissed, as in the Ninth Symphony they first challenge and then depart rebuked before the announcement of the master song. With that sound the lines of my little relief began to tremble and liquefy. The arm of a figure moved through the fraction of an inch: the



contours of limbs, the folds of drapery resettled by hairsbreadth variations; and the change was stayed. The Creator-Critic had looked upon a work of his creature, had found it good, and made it absolute. By that tiny and casual-seeming event it seemed that the future was saved for man: he was still the favourite; more specious and tremendous creatures were to yield. Meantime the limpet houses also were shuddering under a louder music; the towers were dressing rank, or in a slow dance advancing and retreating; the mountain-lines surged and fell into prouder convolutions. But it was not from these last that the motive was taken; the geometry of the crystal was not to dominate; nor were fantastic vegetables like the palm, the cactus, the monkey-puzzle, to lay their law upon other living things. These and other insoluble surds, freakish incompatibles of creation, were discarded, and with them many a formidable fancy that had survived beneath the diver in the sea, beyond the hunter in the forest, above the fowler in the air. The jagged lines of what trees this exquisite bare country had permitted ceased to vex the horizon, and fell into an obedient arabesque; and only such kind and decorative beasts and birds remained as could live within the boundaries of the design.

The Works of the Six Days had been reviewed and sifted; and to the throbbing music recomposed; the lights of heaven fixed, its clouds halted, its firmament sealed, so that illumination should not shift, changing shadows disintegrate the pattern, nor hail and rain obscure.

And now the marshalling sounds grew more urgent, and from house and field and hill and seaport streamed

men and women, come to the judging. They were a motley crowd, black, white and brown, all shapes and sizes, old and young, warped or well-fashioned. Above their anxious heads the little relief determined which were of its family elect; within them the tyrannous music wrought. A few, after such slight convulsion as the carved stone had suffered, passed through the ordeal and stood, transfigured. For the rest a dislocation too violent, or a resistance too rebellious, supervened, and as they fled to the rocks and caves for hiding, dismemberment overtook them and they dissolved in dust.

Thus Chaos passed, and a living scheme, such as a constructive critic could approve, appeared to be attained. But the end was still to come. It could not be allowed to those figures to change their place and thus derange the harmony. As the music reached its full close they took their final, their perpetual station. Nor was it permissible that the critical eye itself, free to move among solid figures, should suffer shock because here and there the picture fell to pieces. Space itself was judged, as time had been; becoming one eternal moment; a dimension was withdrawn, and all relapsed into the picture plane.

Thus on the Sixth Evening, that ushered in an unending Sabbath, the world was completely beautiful.

But it was flat, and it was finished, and it was dead; and as a detail, in its intolerant narrow perfection, it was absolutely un-English.

If, sketches and projects and spoiled pictures that we are, we revolt against such a despotism of the artist come to judgment, and pray for the hills to cover us from his perfection: then surely also there is some-



thing to be said for the trade of Keeper, who guards the painted and sculptured memories of man's unreconciled adventures within the Chaos of his Keep.

Such at least, Mr. Chairman, is my plea and confession: I do not know whether it lies with you to grant me absolution.



## WHAT IS ART?

THAT question has often been answered to their own satisfaction by the artists, the critics, the philosophers; and as often asked again. During the last few years, owing to translation and championship by my friend Mr. Douglas Ainslie, an Italian philosopher and critic of distinction, Benedetto Croce, has come before the English public, and if I may judge from stray references and reviews has been thought to have settled this puzzle of the centuries or at least made a long step to clearing it up. It would be madness, in my space, to tackle his whole system, with its derangement and amplification, not, I think, illuminating, of the old categories of the True, the Good and the Beautiful, or even the section of it dealing with æsthetic. But here comes a popular lecture,<sup>1</sup> prepared for the inauguration of the Rice Institute of Houston, Texas, in 1912, and the first of four chapters asks once more the question, 'What is Art?' Let us see whether it is answered.

'I will say at once,' he declares, 'that art is *vision* or *intuition*. The artist produces an image or a phantasm. . . . "Intuition," "vision," "contemplation," "imagination," "fancy," "figurations," "representations," and so on are words continually recurring, with synonyms, when discoursing upon art, and they all lead the mind to the same conceptual sphere, which indicates general agreement.'

<sup>1</sup>*The Essence of Aesthetic*, by Benedetto Croce. Translated by Douglas Ainslie. Heinemann.

Is it, then, a philosopher who is speaking, for this is no more than the most popular and partial of misdescriptions? 'Art' is often vulgarly limited to the art of painting only, or to the graphic and plastic arts: but even in popular use 'artist' (and what the Women's Pages think to be its feminine, 'artiste') are more widely applied. We are in one room only of the house, a very fine one, no doubt, but there are many in the mansion. Imagination, and the arts that deal with images, by vision or by evocation, are only a part of the business. Music, which is not an art of vision, lies outside; dancing lies outside, architecture lies outside, an art partly of vision, but not of images, and a host of other arts, as we shall see presently. And the most wide-embracing of the arts, Poetry, though it deals with images by evoking them, is on its material side an art of sound, of music, dealing with words.

On its material side, notice. But our philosopher wants to rule out the material side from his definition of art. For he proceeds to buttress his 'Intuition' by a consideration of all that it excludes. 'It denies, above all, that art is a physical fact,' for example certain determined colours and forms and sounds. No doubt: the verbal victory is an easy one; art is not these, but the work of art certainly is. The object of the painter in making a picture is, as Signor Croce rightly says, to reproduce his own imagination in the vision of another. This might conceivably be done by thought-transference, though even then some material means of nerve-traffic must be used; but the art of painting is the art of making pictures, of creating material dispositions that will fix the image and



communicate it. Here then is a very simple fallacy. A second follows.

'Another negation is implied in the definition of art as intuition . . . *art cannot be a utilitarian act*; and since a utilitarian act aims always at obtaining a pleasure and therefore at keeping off a pain, art, considered in its own nature, has nothing to do with the *useful* and with *pleasure* and *pain*, as such.

If the definition requires this, so much the worse for the definition. Agreed that art is not an 'act'; but it is concerned with all our acts, useful as well as useless things done in the world, and the useful is more often than not its entire aim. The philosopher, of course, is thinking all the time of the 'fine' arts, and in his definition of one of them only: but one of the fine arts, architecture, is as much concerned with use as with beauty: painting and literature and music themselves may be applied arts, aiming at information or action: a poster, a leading article, a war-march are works of art. From the art of the statesman to that of the boot-black, from the art of the surgeon to the art of the plumber, life is constituted by art, and these myriad activities are resumed in the greatest and most neglected of them, the Art of Life. The Art of Life is precisely a calculation and organizing of pleasures and avoidance of pains, and the perpetual and silly quarrel in which utilitarianism tries to swallow morality, and morality utilitarianism, is a confusion of the two. Art is the ordering of pleasures in every degree: we are all artists, and from the point of view of art morality is the limiting of our pleasures by what we owe to others, with consequent sacrifice. It may involve the sacrifice



of Life itself, and the medievals very properly put upon the list of Arts that of Dying: even the *Ars Moriendi* must have its way and graces. To enjoy ourselves is the end of Art from cooking to contemplation; 'to enjoy God,' in the tremendous phrase of the Shorter Catechism, is to move on the height where Art, Morality and Religion have come to terms.

I anticipate the philosopher. 'A third negation, affected by the theory of art as intuition, is that of art as a moral act . . . moral discrimination cannot be applied to art.' Granted, once more, that art is not an act; but is there no art of theft, of poisoning, of murder; is there none of kindness, or of redemption? Art itself is morally indiscriminate; it can only be measured as more or less efficient: but that a work of art is not subject to moral discrimination is an impudent 'aesthetic' superstition. The philosopher further rules out education (shades of Froebel and Montessori!) and 'the strengthening of the national and bellicose spirit of a people, the diffusion of the ideals of a modest and laborious life and so on.' As if a speech or a sermon were not a work of art! Why, Bradshaw is a work of art, though a poor one, as is a telegram, in its exercise of brevity and point. He rules out logic from the sphere of art: but the syllogism itself, like the demonstrations of Euclid, is an artistic device for expounding thought.

I must not pursue these fallacies further, nor the ambiguities of 'Intuition.' It is time for us to ask in our turn: What is Art? and instead of spinning from a philosophic consciousness, to consider humbly the wide usages of the word. 'Art,' we shall find, means simply *a way of doing or of making things*, from breathing

and walking and swimming to writing an epic or composing a symphony. In a vast range of these activities *use* is the only or the main factor; in some of them use falls out and *delight* comes in: in these art is concerned, not with a means but with an end. But Art is itself neither Use nor Beauty, any more than it is Goodness or Truth. It is the ordering of doing and making for use and the ordering of expression for delight. It arrives at Beauty incidentally, by pursuing use in the arts of use, significance in the arts of emotion. Why then the perpetual association and confusion of Beauty with Art? For a very good reason. The best way, the most efficient way, of pursuing use in the doing or making of things is the rhythmical way: the best way, the most effective way, of expressing emotion is the rhythmical way. The art of rowing or of boxing is to perform those actions rhythmically, and the investigators of industrial fatigue have discovered by analysis of movements that this is the secret of making, say chocolate boxes, with the least expenditure of time and fatigue. To speak with passion, to pray or to sing, is to intensify rhythm, and it is the rhythm in painted forms that recommends them to our feeling. Without that marriage to matter, O Signor, intuitions and images are only in the ante-chamber of art. Here, then, is where Beauty steps in, for Beauty is bound up with, if it is not co-extensive with, rhythm.



# VENUS OF THE BELVEDERE

THE best of masterpieces are but copies of lost originals, lost in the making, and in the private gallery that each of us hangs for himself a great many of them are not even that; they are imperfect pictures seen as perfect. When we hang them there what we mean is, This way lies a masterpiece, and benighted on this road is better than home by another. The sign has been given to which our imagination stirs and we outrun the halting indications. It is useless to bring friends into this gallery; they will insist on the acknowledged imperfections, lack of authenticity, second-rateness of your treasures, and you are properly served for pretending to show them what is not there. When we see ardently we see under an intention and ourselves do half the painting.

Such pictures have various degrees of actual humiliated existence. Some we have seen. They ought only to have been described, or half seen in passing through a darkened room. But they have been dragged into exhibition and hang there, critic-blown. Such pictures must be passed into a memory ward to have their wounds bound up and their being restored by long pity. They can only hang as remembered. Thus we must hurry away from the oil painting of Rossetti and think his pictures over at a distance. Then the intimations of his secret world come back upon us, we lend ourselves to his mood, and the pictures are re-made like flowers.

Or there are sketches, promising a result impossibly



fine. A man's hand, and what is given to him by the first splendour of an idea at times strike out something to which he feels he has no claim, something it would bewilder his ordinary drudge mind to complete. Or a high sense of beauty passes into a region that is only a holiday region and gives us a hint, Thus I would have done, if this were my country. There is a project by Mr. Whistler, a Venus coming across the sands from the sea, roses springing in those bitter fields where her feet have stepped, whose beauty and incompleteness I explain to myself by such reasons. For an hour the modern slipped his century, breathed, an excited visitor, the air of Titian's time, saw a Venus more lovely than her own familiars have reported, then awoke rebuking himself for his truancy.

But the safest kind of picture for such a collection is a picture long ago destroyed or one that has never been painted. Leonardo, that great mystificator, sculptured in snow and painted in perishable vehicles so that the legend of his powers, based on a few exquisite fragments, should mount higher than nature's thrift allows to mortal production. By the hands of his pupils he arranged that burglaries should be committed on his invention so that what a clumsy thief could steal should prove the riches of the house. So fully has the spell worked that we can hardly admit any of his pictures to be good enough for such a magician, and the missing masterpiece has been painted for him by Walter Pater. Giorgione, one of the greatest names, is so by legend and the lead given by a picture or two; we conceive him a Titian with the dew of a more sacred morning upon him. Therefore in a well-chosen private gallery Titian is often represented by a paint-

ing of the same subject by Giorgione, or he and others are set to paint a subject they never handled, but that gathers all their inspiration together in a heat.

For the masters did not always get the picture painted that ought without a doubt to have crowned their work. It is promised, it is present darkly, but some demon turns the steps of the hunter aside when he is close on the heels of the quarry, to beat yet another cover, make yet more preparations. And sometimes the lazy follower of the field, about to take a nap when the cry has passed on, comes plump upon the prize, and secures it damaged by his guilty awkwardness. Laggard, poacher, the stout follower of the chase all have their luck. The picture that speaks for an age and should have been fathered by its greatest artist creeps into dubious life among cousins. Those pictures, too, should never be seen in the body, but only as magnified or justified by distance and imperfect reproduction. I have not yet visited the gallery of Berlin and when I go there I shall shut my eyes when I pass Signorelli's picture of gods come back from exile, where a circle forms itself, saint-like, round Pan, beneath a horned moon: there is no such piece of necromancy in the world of painting. I have a very bad photograph of it, and that is much better than a picture that Signorelli, great as he was, cannot have painted so thrillingly as its subject cried for. Another picture, one of the finest in the world, I have resolved not to see, for the forecasts point to something having gone amiss. It used to be called a Bellini, and now it is called a Bissolo, which is to come down badly in the world. I suppose in addition to having imperfections



of drawing it is dull in colouring. It is an immortal design.

Last week, unwarned, I turned into Messrs. Agnews' and among a number of Italian pictures found myself confronting my picture, or rather a version of it that has been unearthed in Italy. The picture represents a lady at her toilette, sometimes called *Venus with a Mirror*, and the hitherto known version belongs to the Belvedere collection at Vienna. I am told that yet a third version of the head is in the possession of Lord Carlisle. That at Messrs. Agnews' is a little longer both ways (I speak of the picture not of the actual size) but is cut off shorter above and below to the detriment of proportion, and lacks one or two details (a vase of fruit on the window-sill, a cartellino, and the head-dress reflected in the mirror). On the authorship question I do not propose to enter. To call it Bissolo's is to lay that painter under a cloud of suspicion for having such a picture in his possession, and I have not been tempted to study his peculiarities closely enough to say whether he deserves it. I fancy he is a temporary label used by the modern critics. He means not-Catena and so on. Catena has come into a very enviable fortune. At the National Gallery he has made out a strong case for himself and at Venice his adorable picture of Saint Cristina and her angels kneeling at dawn by the lagoon rewards an early morning pilgrimage to its shrine: quite properly it can only be imperfectly seen before breakfast. But Bissolo has pictures flung to him with reservations, like the delicious blond and rose portrait of the National Gallery, and I fear that we pass his authentic works in the galleries, those of us who do not profess



to know all the painters. Peace then to Bissolo! This design was never his own. Giovanni Bellini must have hammered out its monumental simplicity; it is the mother of all later, looser, more self-conscious pictures of this sort like Titian's *Laura Dianti*, and that painter, or rather what we call Giorgione, ought to have painted it. The bare green wall of the room extends for rather better than two-thirds across the canvas, and then is broken by a window opening on landscape and a sky flooded at the horizon with bright cloud, or it may be, sea. The nude figure, seen to the knees, is seated, and built up so that the almost straight line of one side just plays over the perpendicular of the window. Her head cuts into the round of a mirror behind it and she looks into a smaller one in her hand. The other hand arranges a rich headdress and the pose of the two arms makes a lovely knot of lines in which the horizontal of the sill, the curves of the mirror and head are echoed and varied upon. It is one of those perfect designs where the pattern sense finds infinite play in the severe blocks of circles and squares combined with and disguised in a human figure. And this subtle disposing and the sculpture-like massing of the figure give force to a perfectly conceived mood, beauty caught into a trance of self-contemplation.

And this superb image has been marred in its drawing and blurred in its painting so that it too must be hung in the secret gallery, but near the centre.

## GENIUS MISLAID

*Turner at the Guildhall : a Reverie*

THE ideals that excite humanity, even to the gravest and most universal, are victims of fashion. What the moralist writes up as eternal and co-equal principles cease for periods, though he will shrink from the admission, to attract a community, and Justice will give place to a machinery worked with a grudge, Pity become an affectation of ancestors read about in books, Gaiety a queer custom among foreigners, Wickedness a tiresome and incomprehensible freak. The virtues and vices must fight for their turn on the scene; Melancholy is the favourite pastime of one age, Honesty the entertainment of another, Patriotism the adored clown of a third. Beauty and Laughter may have to be tended by sects of grim fanatics, while a tyrannical virtue or grimace is the fashion of the world, and the secret of the most ordinary affection must be guarded by hypocrisy lest it be forgotten.

The keys of knowledge are no less easily mislaid than the fires of zeal are damped. Any certainty in mathematics higher than that two and two make four depends on the word of a small body of men who do not necessarily propagate their kind. One man may reach a pitch of speculation or demonstration where no other will ever have the faculty to follow him, like a discoverer planting an unsustained flag on an island or a Fashoda. Influenza might sweep away the tiny company in whose heads a science exists, and a spell



of heat or cold, a religion, or a sudden passion for play blight learning like a garden.

If the most venerable virtues, the most redoubtable vices, the most solid sciences have so fluctuating a hold on man's attention, so insecure a tenure in his faculties, how precarious is the life of art, occupied by its nature with what amuses the mind, bound up with the keen spirit of delight, dependent on an undisturbed mood in its creator, a fixed dream, an ardent absence of mind, if mind means a just balance of interest in all that is important! Masterpieces of the past have no fixed and assured life, though we pretend they have for fear of consequences. They swim up from time to time with the damages of neglect and oblivion written upon them, they sun themselves in a little treacherous revival of esteem, and only a ring of pedants, like the hypocrite protectors of morals, preserves some fraction from being cast out to rain, to fire or to mildew. Man is bored by one masterpiece when he is impassioned by another.

Above all how hard for the individual artist to keep his genius. He becomes bored by that. He was constructed to be effective at one point, there to command his forces harmoniously, and triumphantly flame at the focus of the time's pleasure, and he is tired of the pleasure before the rest catch fire. Greatness is one room in a man's house, the house is many-roomed and rambling, and he passes in and out of greatness as that room is habitable to him or not. Ennui may drive him from it, a death shut it up, the stair become too steep, the way be forgotten, or a caprice send him elsewhere. He who was to be seen in the throne-room of his faculties, dispensing laws for the world, may end



playing with straw in some outhouse of his senses, or may return one day to beg at his own door, having lost the key. But no such decay or violent change is needed to ungear genius. We are loth to allow how delicate is the balance that makes work strong and central, by how tiny a deflection of the steering hand, how small an excursion of whim or curiosity, the track may be lost. A little change in the weather of the mind will make the old growths impossible, and call up weeds and rank extravagant flowers from the fallow. Coleridge was an exquisite poet for a few years, an eminent owl for a lifetime.

The Turner exhibition at the Guildhall points this truth with startling force. On one wall we see a painter who for years of his life was surely one of the greatest who ever lived; on the other wall we see him become, by a series of little changes of interest, an eccentric, in a climax of flimsy form and gaudy extravagant colour. In the work of the surest genius are to be found moments where the flighty or showy or merely dull gets the upper hand. Rembrandt himself had such moments that might have been the starting point of woeful developments; and in his early years at Amsterdam there was a suspicion of the shop about his portraits; but the grave inspiration welled up again and the flood went on past those backwaters. Turner's career is less consistent. The splendid art, comparable with Rembrandt's, of *Kilgarron Castle*, the *Fishermen on a Leeshore* and a dozen others at the Guildhall and National Gallery evaporated into the thin glister and petty colour incidents in the *Marriage of the Adriatic*. All was not decay and the pursuit of trifling curiosities in this decline. There was something of sublime

in the very abandonment of the art of the picture, in the pursuit of light. But with that went a less worthy corruption in the early habit of vision. We see him pause longer on little incidents, and frame small Book of Beauty vignettes out of each group on his canvas. Then too the wistful hankering of the barber's son for the elegance of life in which he had no part invades his painting, and the imagination that could cope with mountains and seas becomes a fancy meddling awkwardly with humanity. All that was common in Turner's taste mixed with what was unheard of in his sensibility to make the final strange amalgam.

But Turner's career not only exhibits the instability of an individual artist, it exhibits the root of instability in modern art. Modern art is private art, not a public speech but conversation among a limited number of people. Count Tolstoy and those who think with him are extremely angry that this should be so; they are of the strange opinion that no one ought to say anything that an uneducated peasant could not understand. It would be absurd to discuss such an opinion, but his enumeration of the obscurities and perversities, the whimsical limitations of matter and form in modern poetry throws into relief the privacy of our most characteristic art, an art sometimes so highly sophisticated that the existence of a single auditor for the poet's soliloquy is problematical. Anyone who has reflected with curiosity on the powers and obstacles of language can very well understand how a Mallarmé came to write as he did; but no Mallarmé can expect his writing to be intelligible to more than a doubtful one or two. When we recognise this, complaint and condemnation become stupid,



either of the writer that he is not understood, or of the reader that the writer is not intelligible, unless it be the duty of every man who prints to be always and everywhere comprehended. Private literature is no new thing, though it is convenient to call its development modern. In painting the passage from ancient to modern is measured by the relaxed strength of the element of *commission*, of what the client commanded and might expect to find plain, with results both good and bad. As far back as Rembrandt we find the client's, the public claim losing hold on the painter, and his private interest gaining. In Turner the tendency proclaims itself more extravagantly. What was with Vandewelde the commissioned portrait of a warship passes over into a free picture of the sea, the topographer's portrait of a place into free landscape. Portrait goes out and Effect comes in. The successors of Turner have carried further this pursuit of an individual interest, and through the absence of a patron, a subject commanded, a public to be convinced, and its own shifty holiday nature their art lives a moody and uncertain life.

## GERMAN ART

*Burlington Fine Arts Club—Grafton Gallery—Prince's  
Club, Knightsbridge*

‘**A**us alten Märchen winkt es’—what a nation desires, or fears, and would fain conceal but may not, is told in its songs and nursery tales. The nation of London tells its simple secrets in *Dick Whittington* and the *Bailiff's Daughter of Islington*, and the nation of London is rapidly becoming the nation of Europe, so there is a version of this even in modern Greece, competing with the last avatar of Dionysos as the ‘Drunken St. George.’ The Germans have many tales, but their own secret story is that of the Frog Princess or of the Beast that wooed Beauty. It is told in many other forms, but always there is the spell of ugliness outside, and the eager, beautiful soul within, the jewel in the toad's head. That uncouth Germany really has the anxious and beautiful soul we know, for a new art came into the world to deliver it, the art of music. The sound of Germany is gone out into all lands, has subdued and inspired them, an awful and a radiant spirit. Yet Germany is not content, and still hankers and struggles to understand and possess the other art, the art of the eyes, the art of the outside. This too has been granted to her on one condition, that the outside should be German, that the beauty should be of art and not a beauty of divine beings; giants and gnomes, honest burghers and their wives, imp-children and bristling warriors, deep-eyed philosophers with landscape heads, creatures with frog-faces and



tender hearts, all this and much more was to be possible, with incomparable faith and skill of line; but the enchantment was still to hold against Venus and Apollo, and to shut out the world of colour. Indomitable Germany returns to the charge; her professor-artists storm the Alpine passes with the song of the Siren or of Mignon in their ears; her collections of art begin to put to shame our own lazy reckless ways; she knows more about Greek art, about Italian art, about French art, about English art than those countries ever dreamed of knowing themselves. She knows all about it, she has plans of all the corners of the Venusberg, sections of Apollo and Venus in every limb; she is ready to follow any path to the secret, from primitive to pointillist; she has a complete set of the *Studio* on her shelves, with tributes by Mr. Baldry to the sincerity of many scores of modern artists; but that hated and wholesome spell still holds.

For the truest tale among them all is of 'Tannhäuser der Ritter gut' and what happened in his interview with the dear devil, Frau Venus. But only the first part of the story, as usually told, is exact. He did enter the Venusberg; he did, after listening to a tasteful concert, sit down to the feast; even the little incident, the shudder of Venus when he asked for salt, and the spilling of it by the attendants, represents probably some fact distorted by his nerves. After that point his account of what took place cannot be trusted. The good wine did go to his head and gave him courage. But to assert that 'soon he became confident, his humour took a jovial turn, and when the fair lady asked him if he knew what it was to love, he answered her with kisses of flame' is to play with history.

What really happened was this. For a few moments soft thoughts assailed him, and he was about to sink upon her breast; but as he looked at her with more assurance and closer scrutiny a horrible suspicion checked him. 'Is not this type,' she heard him mutter, 'already published in the *Jahrbuch des Instituts* by my highly-honoured colleague, Furtwängler, who rightly believed himself to be in the presence of a Græco-Roman repetition of a lost original?' 'Will you permit me, madame,' he proceeded, 'to verify certain proportions?' and drew from his pocket a folding foot-rule and a pair of calipers. To these remarkable attentions Venus submitted with a good grace, thinking that this, perhaps, was the northern fashion of making love. But when he seated himself again, jotted down some rapid notes, and poured forth a lengthy disquisition on her person, she was fairly puzzled. It had a distant resemblance, it is true, to the Song of Songs, in its method of enumeration; but the figures were too much of an arithmetical cast for a lyrical rhapsody. And when he wandered from this subject to others, asked her what she thought of the Glasgow School, and with shining eyes recommended her to refurnish in the style of L'Art Nouveau, she felt that the good Knight was either making sport of her or was no fitting object of her favour. Divine wrath shook that beautiful form; the lights went out; with a rushing sound the vault fell apart, the battlements folded themselves away in a wreath of mist, and the good Knight found himself alone, with his notebook, on the cold hillside. The subsequent pilgrimage to Rome is true in the main, but with mythical accretions; its object was not a visit to the Pope, but to the Vatican Museum.



Another name for the hero of this story is Albert Dürer. For he too, a northern dandy, with golden 'lockes crulle,' and rather high cheekbones, wandered out of his way, the eternal artist, along the Italian road in search of Apollo.

1906

## MAGIC WEBS

*'The Lady of Shalott' by Holman Hunt at Messrs. Tooths'—  
English Embroidery at the Burlington Fine Arts Club.*

**E**T la Roïne dit au cheuallier . . . Mais or me edictes qui estoit en une tournelle dessus la chambre monseigneur. Dame, cestoyt une pucelle que je ne villennay onques. . . . Si fus si surprins de tresgrant affaire que je loubliay | et elle fut plus loyalle uers moy que je ne fus courtois vers elle. . . .

'La dame de mallehault saprocha delle quant elle la vit seulle, et luy dist le plus priuement que elle peut. Haa, dame, pourquoy ne est bonne la compaignie de quatre? La roïne le ouyst bien, si ne dit mot, et fait semblant que riens nen ouyt. . . .

'Quant elles furent couchees si commencerent a parler de leurs nouuelles amours; la roïne demanda a la dame de mallehault selle ayme nulluy par amours, et elle luy dict que nenny. Saichez, dame, que je naymay onques que une foys, ne de celle amour ne fis je que penser; et ce dit elle de Lancelot, quelle avoit tant ayme comme femme pourroit aymer homme mortel. Mais elle nen avoit onques aultre joye eue, non pourtant ne dit pas que ce eust il este.'

That is a sentence or two from 'the French Book,' which goes on to tell how the Queen arranged for a 'compaignie de quatre' which pleased everyone, the Dame de Mallehault (afterwards Lady of Shalott) taking Gawaine for her partner.

Now let us read in the argument of Mr. Holman Hunt's picture.



'Tennyson, in his poem of the *Lady of Shalott*, deals with a romantic story, which conveys an eternal truth, based upon the romance of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. The name of the lady and the events recorded are the invention of the poet.<sup>1</sup> The progressive stages of circumstance in the poem are reached in such enchanting fashion as to veil from the casual reader the severer philosophic purport of the symbolism throughout the verse. The parable, as interpreted in this painting, illustrates the failure of a human soul towards its accepted responsibility. The lady typifying the soul is bound to represent faithfully the working of the high purpose of King Arthur's rule. She is to weave her record, not as one mixing in the world, tempted by egoistic weakness, but as a being 'sitting alone'; in her isolation she is charged to see life with a mind supreme and elevated in judgment. In executing her design on the tapestry she records not the external incidents of common lives, but the present condition of King Arthur's Court, with its opposing influences of good and evil. It may be seen he is represented on his double throne, the Queen is not there, and he is saddened by her default; but he is still supported on his right and on his left by Christian virtues. . . . The lady has already pictured the brilliant, but idle and vainglorious Sir Lancelot, who brings no offering but lip-service, kissing his finger tips. . . . The mirror stands on the immaculate plane of the lady's own inspired intelligence. . . . At this ill-fated moment Sir Lancelot comes riding by heedlessly singing on his way. . . . She turns aside to view him . . . the

<sup>1</sup>Shalott, of course, is really Escalot = Scarloete = Astolat, which Malory says is Gilford.

mirror "cracks from side to side," her work is ruined; her artistic life has come to an end. What other possibilities remain for her are not for this service; that is a thing of the past.'

Does the language of this sound more like that of the Ethical Society than of high romance? In the old story Lancelot is the hero, his 'lip-service' (delightful word) is the high purpose of his world, Love and Valour the virtues which must deal pitifully but superbly with kings and husbands, whose lesser claims scarce themselves dare assert. Lancelot, who at first, the learned tell us, was but the nameless royal child of folklore, stolen by a water-witch and nursed in Faery, became the figure of this passion, riding through the world after the rumour of beauty, and standing astounded and rapt away upon the sight of it.

'Le cheuallier sen part et cheuauche tant quil treuve une maison forte et voit une dame en son surcot, qui regardait les pres et la forest | et auoit avec elle une demoiselle. Le cheuallier se arreste, et regarde la dame moult longuement tant quil oublie toute autre chose. Et maintenant passa ung cheuallier arme de toutes armes, qui luy dist, Sire cheuallier, que attendez-vous? et celluy ne respond mot | car il ne la pas ouy. Et le cheuallier le boutte, et luy demande quil regarde. Je regards, fait-il, ce que me plaist; et vous nestes mie courtois, qui de mon penser me auez jecte. Par la foy que vous devez o dieu, fait le cheuallier estrange, scauez-vous bien qui la dame est que vous regardez? Je le cuyde bien scauoir, fait le bon cheuallier. Et qui est-elle fait lautre. Cest ma dame la royne.'



The voice of the Ethical Society did not speak for the first time in Mr. Holman Hunt. It began with the monkish romancers who claimed the hero of the one quest, the quest of beauty, for the other, the quest of the Grail. They were hard put to it to manage this with a sinful Knight, and therefore the achievement had to go not to him but to a 'blameless son,' Galahad. Yet Lancelot died a holy man; Tennyson, in the wake of Malory, had wrestled with the difficulties of the situation, and it was left for Mr. Holman Hunt to discover the fraud, refuse all concession, and cast Lancelot finally away as the trifler who came to disturb people vowed to the higher responsibilities.

And yet . . . First of all it will not do to make Tennyson a partner at this stage of his career. It was in his later days he brought Malory up to date, when he rewrote that adorable tale of Elaine le Blank. *The Lady of Shalott* is not yet the *Lily Maid of Astolat*, still less is she upon an immaculate plane of inspired intelligence. She belongs, like some other early drafts by Tennyson of those stories, to the first flush of his poetry, when love and magic and a dread mysterious curse, the fairy irresponsible sequences of Coleridge and the fresh spring-painted England of Keats were enough for him.

And for Holman Hunt too there must have been a guilty early moment when these things were almost enough, when the higher responsibilities slept, and the charm of poetry set going in his head a tangle of answering design. In those days Sir Gabriel le Desirous and Sir John Everett Dinadan and other brave knights rode with him in the lists. They are gone, and of all the company 'King Anguish of Ire-

land' only is perpetual, like Sir Antony MacDonnell, while Chief Secretaries come and go.

However these things may be, in 1857 this vision was vouchsafed to Sir Bors; in other words Mr. Holman Hunt drew one of the most beautiful designs ever made in England, and he has spent fifty years in pondering upon it and trying to explain it. I suppose the hint of it came from Blake, the wonderful room with the circular painted panels in which Job sits reinstated with new daughters about his knees. To this it was his inspiration to add the fourth great circle of the web, laid flat upon the floor, and thus build up the inevitable geometry of his design. And to this, with the tangle of its outlying threads, he added the witch, and the tangle of her hair that was to haunt Boyd Houghton and Arthur Hughes and Burne-Jones. She perhaps came over in a dream from the Witch of Dürer. Watts tried to work the charm of the mirror again in his *Britomart*, but here it was spelled once for all. To get the figure of the Penelope-witch into the design, it may be said, was no easy business, for the big circle of the web threatened to thrust her out. She had to be put inside of it.

Fifty years have nearly passed; the old enchanter has been spinning all that time, 'charged to see life with a mind supreme and elevated in judgment.' And into the design that romance brought him, he has painted his philosophy; so wonderful and elastic a thing is an ancient tale. And so wonderful a thing is a great design. Like Dürer's *Melancholy* this enigma of folklore will serve us all, even the Ethical Society.

The picture, with all its strangeness of elaboration, is far from equal to the first thought. Above and



below it has been added to and has lost in conclusiveness, and it is impossible to pretend that it is so well in colour as in black and white. 'I am half-sick of shadows,' said the Lady of Shalott, and she looks a little sick of false values trying to be true. Yet even so, here surely is a monument of English design, of romance smitten out of the Protestant rock, with the curious craft and thought of a lifetime worked upon it.

From Messrs. Tooths' to the Burlington Fine Arts Club is only a step, and there one falls among the webs that were wrought for priests when Lancelot went to mass 'with eyes red and swollen.' There is magic in one or two of them. At the ends of the room and over the mantelpiece are the treasures. They too, very likely, have changed with time, but what we see is daintily drawn 'shadows,' with brown-pink or black flesh and changing blues and greens and tender yellows of hair and clothing upon a ground of shimmering gold and ivory. The Mirror (*Speculum Majus*) quickly cracked, and the webs 'flew wide' and answered in rapid deterioration. But for a wonderful moment England was supreme in such embroideries, and the copes of Pienza and Ascoli as well as of Syon keep the name of 'opus anglicanum.'

## THE GREATER AND THE LESSER MIRRORS

*English Art from Hogarth to our time: Introduction to the Pictures in the Cartwright Gallery, Bradford, 1904.*

ENGLISH Art did not begin with Hogarth, but the gap between the rich early development and his time is so great and so thinly peopled with native artists, that the two periods are seldom connected in thought. On the hither side of the gap is modern art, a matter of individual initiative, of private imagination, of the chance purchaser. The works are detached and movable, each limited by its own frame. They are brought together in collections and exhibitions, and inevitably are seen in such collections as competitors in beauty and significance rather than co-operators. On the farther side of the gap we find art attached to a fixed place and employed to make visible and vivid the purpose of the building; we find groups of artists employed on different parts of a whole, and employed to express not whatever happens to interest themselves, but an allotted part in a vast scheme, a reading of the world common to their employers and themselves. The thirteenth century cathedral, in all its varied imagery, sculptured and stained and pictured, sets out to present no less than a complete and rounded imagination of existence and its meaning, from the humbler tribes of created things up through the hierarchy of spirits. The Powers that made the world and direct it are exhibited in the acts of a history that moves from the Creation of man through his Fall



and Redemption to the Resurrection and Final Judgment. A French writer, M. Emile Male, has shown how closely the imagery of the great mediæval churches follows the doctrinal summaries and cyclopædias that arranged all knowledge and speculation in a complete authoritative frame. To the most notable of these attempts its author, Vincent of Beauvais, gave the name of the *Greater Mirror*. The universe is reflected in a series of mirrors that includes the *Mirror of Nature*, the *Mirror of Arts and Sciences*, the *Mirror of Morals*, the *Mirror of History*. From these in succession could be learned the order of creation and meaning of the creatures, the Labours of the Year, the number of the Virtues and the Vices they trample upon, the rank of the Sciences, the scenes of the sacred historical drama. When this imaginative mirror was wrought France was the geographical centre of art, but England came near her among the provinces of Christendom.

In the fifteenth century the pressure of new ideas began to affect this close imaginative union of religion with science and art; the *Greater Mirror* darkened and cracked. But an extraordinary period succeeded, during which the matter and the habit of the mighty scheme persisted, calling out the powers of individual artists, while a revolution in the art of vision itself took place among the painters. The *Mirror of History* received its last tremendous shape in the painting of the Sistine Chapel. In this period Italy took over the leadership, and England almost fell out of history. She produced no Donatello, Leonardo or Titian, and added no great name to the northern schools of Europe; while her splendid Renaissance literature developed, she became, in the arts of imagery, a debtor nation.

The barrenness continued during the next culmination. Painting arrived at its full stature; but there was no English Rubens, no De Hooch or Vermeer, Hobbema or Ruysdael. Vandyck had his English shadow in Dobson as Holbein before him in Strete and the miniaturists, but it was Teniers and Jan Steen who first rekindled the fire of invention for us; the gleam so long 'lost outright in the temple' was 'caught in the tavern.' The *Greater Mirror* was replaced with what the Japanese call Ukiyoye, the *Mirror of the Passing World*.

England thus resumes the story of art when it might have seemed to be ended, and shares with France its leadership in the last two centuries. Of Hogarth's revivifying and transforming of the exhausted Dutch tradition a word will be said presently; but broadly speaking, the eighteenth century appears to us as a century of portrait painting and to a lesser extent of landscape painting. Our characteristic modern art therefore develops itself out of what was but the fringe and incident of mediæval. 'Nature,' for its own sake, free treatment of natural forms according to the artist's fancy and the portrait art of the tomb-effigies fell outside of the great doctrinal mirror; but nature and portrait hold the centre of the modern pictorial field.

The *Great Mirror* was blurred indeed in the eighteenth century. If we take Pope's *Essay on Man* as an example of its speculation we find the *Mirror of History* has disappeared ('Presume not God to scan'), the hierarchies of morals and sciences, soon to be so troubled, are in a provisional state, and Man, if politely puzzled, yet not greatly dissatisfied with his present or curious about his before and after, is held



up for our study and admiration. The imaginative mirror adapts itself to this change, and becomes a magnificent looking-glass, in which the eighteenth century gentleman is reflected. Here again we see a foreign graft flowering late in England, when the stock might have seemed to be exhausted; for in the hands of Kneller, the second in succession from Vandyck, his princely art had become a heavy thing. But the genius of Reynolds and Gainsborough lifted English portraiture into the tradition of the world, and began a line that ran over into the next century with lesser men like Hoppner, Lawrence and Raeburn.

There are two figures, one near the beginning, the other just at the end of the century, who stand outside of this lordly, gracious and acquiescent art. One has already been referred to, William Hogarth; the other is William Blake. Hogarth is one of our great portrait painters, in a more downright temper than his successors, but that is only a part of his activity. He would fain, single-handed, have filled out the whole circle of art. He made his attempt on sacred history, but his instinct quickly told him that his spirit and his time's could do nothing there; he turned upon his own work with savage caricature. In the sphere of the *Moral Mirror* he was more fortunate. The tranquility of the clean-cut Virtues on their thrones was broken up; satire, humour and drama were opened to English art. If it appears that Hogarth was a lonely appearance, with no successors, that is only because the succession was not one of painters, but of draughtsmen; Rowlandson and others in the eighteenth century, Leech, Keene, Caldecott and a host of illustrators in a milder time are among the progeny of that grim humorist.

William Blake, at the end of the century, suddenly unsealed the imaginative deeps and heights that had been locked. He essayed not to restore but to remake the ancient *Mirror*, and added new mythology to the old; myths to him were not disputable facts of history, but realities of the spirit. A new Dante, he explored Heaven and Hell, and thought he had reconciled them. Few have attempted to fathom his scriptures, but the visions with which he illustrated them place him among the great spiritual artists.

To draw an imaginative map of the nineteenth century in all its distracted variety would be a difficult task. Blake ushered in an ardent revival of poetry, but the steadiest drive of the century's intellect was that of positive science, and the speculative results of this brought a shock to all previous systems. The *Descent of Man* is almost as distant from the *Essay on Man* as that is from the mediæval system. Not only the hierarchy of beings above Man, the Spirits and Powers and Dominations, was becoming insecure matter for the imagination, but Man and his 'place in the universe' as well. The complacent lord of creation began to examine with more curiosity and humility its other parts. It is a symptom of this temper that when Wordsworth wrote his *Essay on Man* it was only the section on Nature that he completed, and we may say of the century's painting that landscape was its leading subject. The first achievements in this art belong to the previous century; Wilson and Gainsborough are the great names. They made English the art of Claude, of Rubens and of the Dutch. They are followed by Cozens and Girtin, Crome and Cotman, Turner and Constable, Cecil Lawson and Whistler, by a host of



others. Not only did this art satisfy a deep demand in the spirit of the time, but its development gained further impetus from the fact that in this line of painting what was novel in painter's vision itself was being discovered. From the beginning to the end of the century the beauties of natural light and atmosphere increasingly occupied painters, and the influence can be traced beyond the bounds of pure landscape. Thus, to take two examples from France, J. F. Millet, who revived the mediæval cycle of the Labours of the Year, added to it a new setting and a new sentiment; Puvis de Chavannes drew from the same source a means of renewing monumental painting. The *Mirror of Nature* had included the matter of the *Bestiaries*, and this, without its emblematic import, occupies painters and sculptors in both countries, notably Barye in France. The mention of those artists reminds us that the modern landscape development ran its course in France as well as in England, and that influences crossed and crossed back again from one country to another. Constable influenced the French school in the direction of open-air freshness and vigour of handling; Turner, later, encouraged the 'impressionists' in their research of brilliant illumination: these, as well as their predecessors, have had in their turn, an influence on later English landscape.

But if landscape painting was the most novel, persistent and characteristic line of the century, it was very far from being the only line. Never has there been such variety of effort, so many competing ideals. The early part of the century saw whole worlds of art recovered that had been outside even the wide con-

noisseurship of Reynolds. Flaxman, whose gentle art belongs to the early wave of classical revival, lived to see Greece recovered, and had a share in the revival of interest in mediæval art. A religious and romantic revival reinforced from Germany gave volume to the latter study and overpowered for a time the classics; and this interest, in its turn, was displaced by study of the Renaissance, in its forgotten earlier, as well as later development; nor was this all, for the East, in its turn, became a disturbing force. Each of these recoveries of older art, as museums, travel and criticism made them known, became a starting point for fresh experiment. In this bewildering time, all the ages of the world became, after a fashion, contemporary and tugged at the student for his adoption. Wilkie, for example, who had begun as a modest variant upon the Dutch village painters, a Scottish Ostade, became, later, a tourist of art. To disentangle all the influences here would be impossible, but we may take the middle point of the century as the date at which a number of these ferments came to a head. This is the date of the ambitious project for uniting English artists in a public monumental work, the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament. The project itself had small result, not only because no great imaginative unity and impulse was behind it, such as controlled mediæval work, but because the directing committee made poor use of the individual talents that were attracted. Yet the large historical and legendary programme had its stimulating effect, and among the competitors were Alfred Stevens, G. F. Watts and Madox Brown, who were to make their names memorable elsewhere.

Stevens had trained himself in Italy, and the plastic



genius of the Renaissance at last revealed itself in an Englishman, as if there had never been a break. His prophets in St. Paul's, sustain, without disgrace, comparison with their great originals in the Sistine, and his monument in the same church has few equals of its kind for balance and grouping of the whole as well as invention in the parts.

In Mr. Watts's painting, as in that of Reynolds and in that of Etty, who is a link between them, the Venetian influence predominates among other strains. Baulked of direct public employment he determined to employ himself for the public, and devoted his powers to two great objects, the first a series of pictures treating of spiritual matter without a dogmatic framework; the second a series of portraits of his contemporaries. These will remain as the most notable outcome from the 'historical' schemes of the time. Since the art thus revived with Mr. Watts, our age has been rich in portrait painters; it is enough to name talents so different as those of Millais and Whistler, not to speak of living artists.

Madox Brown was the most persevering of the 'history' painters, and showed in this field sturdy, whimsical, dramatic power; but he found his finest subjects in contemporary scenes such as the *Work* and *The Last of England*. These pictures connect him with the group of the Pre-Raphaelites, Rossetti, Holman Hunt and Millais, whose work cut suddenly across the tradition of English painting. While the brotherhood lasted the very different temperaments of Rossetti the worshipper of love, Hunt the Puritan, Millais the solid Englishman were united by an impulse of ardent poetry, and of intense vision that cast back to earlier

models. The concentrated passion and designer's power of Rossetti produced what in the poor shop-work of the mediæval revivalists had till now been lacking, and his pupil Burne-Jones revived the whole world of the mediæval *Mirror* as well as other legendary cycles in his own spirit of wistful melancholy, while William Morris sought to restore the circle and spirit of the mediæval crafts.

This rough indication leaves out many names and lines of effort, but may at least suggest how remarkable and various was the imaginative life of the last century, in the absence of the public patronage and of the community of thought and feeling that characterised earlier times. The conditions of patronage, indeed, were as much changed as those of production. The lords and country gentlemen who in the eighteenth century were the steady employers of the portrait painters, were displaced as England became a manufacturing and mercantile country; the taste of the new community was much of it raw and artless. The best artists have often suffered neglect, while the wealthy spent their money on shallow and ephemeral art, and for smaller purses the photographer, who had not been without effect on the vision of the painter, tended to take their place. Education may render the former class more discriminating, and with the second the artist will perhaps have his revenge now that drawing begins to be pursued again for its own sake and the taste for it revives. It is also possible that the municipalities may become patrons in the twentieth century, not only by providing galleries and buying detached works, but by giving commissions for larger enterprises. When we consider that an isolated act of



national patronage resulted in the Wellington Monument and that the mere promise of it in the case of the Houses of Parliament had effects so remarkable; when we think what France has gained from state and municipal patronage in the works of a Delacroix, a Chasseriau, a Puvis, a Rodin, it must seem worth while for the individual or the community to risk something in this direction. It will be an honour to Mr. Watts, but not to his century, that it received from him as a gift what it had refused to commission.

## REMBRANDT

## PAINTINGS

A MAN bought a house in Cordova and dug in his back garden. He dug through rubbish heaps of recent date, through the ruined fancies of successive centuries, and at last struck treasure—ten jars, big as Ali Baba's, and closed with a royal seal. Thieves or chancellors had rifled and re-sealed nine of them, but the tenth was full of gold. In a land where Moorish kings may lie an inch or two below the garlic, and to-day is but a film covering Arabian Nights, it may seem as reasonable to dig in one's back garden as it would be on the Rand. In a Dutch back garden the prospects hardly appear so bright, and the digger must have a stolid enduring kind of madness to persevere till he strikes on gold. His only chance indeed is that, after much digging, his spade may become an alchemist's wand.

That miracle happened to Rembrandt. The man who ended with the profoundest, most moving, most transmuting vision yet given to a painter began, one is tempted to say, with the commonest. His early work is ordinary material seen with supremely common vision. His ideal appears to be the baldest polish which it is possible to wreak upon a face. He has no 'taste' to help him. When he makes a collection of what he thinks beautiful objects the result is disconcerting. When he puts together his notion of a splendid and luxurious life, of a Titianesque splendour, he appears a kind of pawnbroker. Witness the



well-known *Burgomaster Pancras and his Wife*, which recent research has decided to be really the Rembrandt of Wardour Street and his Wife. But this man, who could do so little by taking thought and making a collection, who vainly hung himself, for dignity, with jewels and fine clothes, was to discover how to make more than gems and gold out of dust and a little light.

So, too, having no natural bent for express pomp or intended beauty of person, he was to win majesty from long-suffering and humble features, to discover Bible-heads in burgesses at home. As in the matter of effect, so in the matter of feeling, the ordinary and the put-up fell away; theatrical drama and swaggering gesture were replaced by quiet, undeniable looks, as of the heart intolerably shining through. What a 'conversion' has happened between the time of the *Belshazzar*, with his action like a frightened hen, and the *Nativity*, with the still-stricken face of Joseph and the bowed head of the Mage. At Amsterdam there was a little picture showing in its earliest phase a subject quintessentially treated later on. The scene was the *Supper at Emmaus*. Its colour was the clay with which Rembrandt began; its light the leather of Honthorst; its drama was startling and ingenious. The figure of Christ, silhouetted against the candle, was thrown back with a gesture of sudden assertion. One disciple cowered on the far side of the table, the other grovelled in shadow at the Saviour's feet. It is a long way from this dumb crambo to the intimate awe of the Louvre piece, where in the very quality of the light a kind of sad divinity wells out from the face that has suffered everything; the companions become aware without sound or other sign. A disguised detective might

bring down the theatre with the first effect; it is thus that a god makes himself known. Such things are not done twice, and in the etching of 1654 there is a falling away from this close inspiration, more of the Court, less of the Presence.

Such a revolution, easily to be noted in the treatment of the most pathetic moments of legend, affects as absolutely the conception of all the painter's subjects through portrait to landscape. The intensity of human interest that Rembrandt could not have won in his early years from a beheading of John the Baptist, flows easily out later from the trivial action of an old woman cutting her nails; the *coup de théâtre* of the early landscapes, the buffet of brassy light dealt to the scene, is the method of the earlier dramatic pieces; there is the same change of method in the *Mill* to an effect not of force but of quality in the glimmering sky of dawn and moving waters. The first is a blow to the senses, the other a trouble in the memory.

The course that led to this power over the springs of emotion in vision was one of unequalled scrutiny of faces in the approaches of light. Within the narrow circle of a window, an easel and a chair, Rembrandt spelled and scanned, construed and recited, over and again, the faces of himself, his father, his mother, his wife, his son, and developed in the scrutiny a new emotion and confessional in light and shadow. Tintoretto's work he probably never saw, the lesser work of Caravaggio perhaps, and if not in itself, then by report and imitation. But who could have surmised that by the track of the Dutch insect eye, and by knocking at the nearest door into shadows labelled 'Honthorst,' he was to come out at such a height?



From the first, however, where his master took one step from light to dark, he took ten; his scrutiny of shape and accent was as finely sharpened, and the measure of space he could count as one with all those subdivisions was broad and undistressed by colour. As early as 1634, in the *Philosopher* of the Louvre, astonishing results begin. The infinitely divided veils of light, the old man's figure affected by its entrance as by a grave entrancing visit or a part of his own thought, are a precocious foretaste of what was growing in Rembrandt's eyes, while his brain was still capable of stupid and tasteless compositions. By such stages of anticipation, return, and advance he won his first peak of golden, suffused light over perfect drawing of feature and expression. Such are the Queen's portrait of a *Lady with a Fan*, the Duke of Westminster's *Man with a Hawk*, and its pendant. Later the full magic succeeds, when smoothness gives way to a handling that carries drawing and expression to a higher power; yet as early as the Duke of Devonshire's *Rabbi* (1635), with his landscape face half submerged in shadow, how comprehensive already on all sides but one is the sense of presence and absence, of character and mystery in a face pored upon that we mean when we speak of a Rembrandt! When all these powers are finally assembled, with what in art is the study and store of these pictures, the concentration of so packed a history and its inspired discharge, to be compared? To look at a portrait by Rembrandt is like travelling; there is more to see than in what slips past us between London and Jerusalem; there is London and Jerusalem at once. A morning can be spent in delighted watching of the departure of a nose from the forehead, of

the complexities of firm and supple, of bone and skin as it goes on its way, and of the almost untraceable delicacies of sharp and rounded with which it ends. So one may follow out feature after feature as in a world of heightened lucidity and interest for the eye, and after these excursions the deep regard of the face takes hold again, and physiognomy becomes history, spent tragedy, reverie. Over all this passes at times a more than usually transfiguring light, and in his very last work the knowledge of the master becomes a thing of habit and ease, facts of form are flung down half disdainfully, and he appears about to pass beyond, to drop painting like a garment before a shrine where the secret will be told. Look at his portrait of himself (Lord Iveagh's) in the first room at the Academy.<sup>1</sup> It is like those evenings after whose crescendo of effects there arrives a climax and objects threaten to cry out the enigma of their being, no longer to be contained.

The present exhibition of the master's work at the Academy is magnificent. There is a certain admixture of dross, such as, in museums, is supposed to give a complete view of a painter's work, but the main effect is to prove how rich the private collections of England still are in works by Rembrandt. This was already amply proved at Amsterdam, where the English contributions outweighed the pictures from any single country; only the unique Corporation pieces, kept in Holland, made this preponderance doubtful. Lovers of art in this country ought to be in league to prevent those masterpieces being lost to us. There does not, for example, exist in the work of Rembrandt anything parallel with Earl Spencer's Portrait of a Boy.<sup>2</sup> No

<sup>1</sup>Now at Kenwood.    <sup>2</sup>Now in Sir Herbert Cook's Collection.



child, indeed, was ever painted like this, with so Wordsworthian a sense of far-coming, of things forgotten on the way, of surprise at the new world; and in the silver and scarlet of this painting Rembrandt, it has been often remarked, divined the chord of Velazquez. The Earl of Feversham's *Merchant*, Lord Penrhyn's *Lady with a Parrot*, Mr. Beaumont's *Tribute Money*, are other examples, besides those more familiar by exhibition, of England's riches. The last room holds a surprise in Lord Leconfield's *Portrait of a Youth*. Nothing in our national collection nor in the present exhibition is quite of this character, so fresh and frank in tone, so living to the last gleams upon the lips and eyes. Here is a picture to stare at for a week! At Amsterdam there were two portraits more astonishing in their kind, the pair belonging to Prince Youssopof. In these, instead of the golden bias heightened by old varnish, was pallid flesh, and the woman's portrait, more particularly, was rendered with a breadth that suggested the modern painter's hallucination of making a head with a dozen touches of a large brush, till one examined the infinite mosaic of which it was built up. Another picture to be grudged to a foreign owner was the *Christ* of Count Raczynski, half a world in a face. But I must make an end of these comparisons. One more case that goes to show the unsuspected wealth of England is the Duke of Abercorn's *Deposition*. Clearly the composition and conception of the figures is Rembrandt's, though the mossiness of Joseph of Arimathea, the garish colour of the Virgin, and a secondrateness of execution in other figures throw doubt on the authenticity of the entire work. The conception of the Christ is fine, but the neck and

shoulder are curiously dislocated and evidently repainted over another arrangement.

## P R I N T S

The Print Room exhibition of Rembrandt's drawings and etchings is at last open. None so complete has been seen before, nor is it likely to be outdone elsewhere. No finer collection of the etchings exists; that of the drawings is one of the most important.

The arts of etching and drypoint begin and end with Rembrandt. Under his hands the whole range and resources of these arts were discovered, the laws of their expression laid down, the illustration of their effects exhausted. He swept up the tentatives of fore-runners and contemporaries; he anticipated all that posterity might have looked to add in variation. The modern gleans after him in the fields he marked out, or strays outside the fence. The criticism therefore of Rembrandt's etching is the comparison of one part of it with another, the reading of the master's own criticism as he advanced in the art he was creating and would conclude.

Reading the work in this sense we note the oscillations of Rembrandt's etching between two ideals, and the eventual combination of these two in a third. The first we may call for the sake of a name the engraver's or painter's ideal, the second the draughtsman's. In the first the still-life elaboration of detail and texture that Albert Dürer had developed in engraving is paralleled by an elaboration of tone, by the employment of a system of cross-hatching passed over the drawing of



forms to work out the gradations of light. Rembrandt was tempted to translate into etching the tone-research of his painting, and beside this temptation from the poetry of light and shadow, there persists a kind of trade-convention as to the 'finishing' of an engraving that even so original an artist found it difficult to cast off. This clings most obstinately, as one might expect, to portrait pieces. On the other side is the draughtsman's ideal that the line should never be employed as a dead mechanical element of tone, but only when it expresses a fact of form as well, when it is a living element of line language following a contour if it enters among shadows. In mechanical cross-hatching the lines cease to be lines, they become substitutes for a wash. In draughtsman's etching the lines do not model by throwing veils of independent hatched tone over contours; they express contours and ask of shadows only to reveal more contours. But a check on this multiplication comes from another demand of the line. It demands not only to be a real line, an exponent of form, but also to retain the importance and eloquence it can have only when there are not too many lines in the field, or too minute. The presence of Rembrandt's drawings alongside of his etchings in this exhibition throws into relief the second ideal. Here was what the draughtsman's instinct in the moment of conception asked and obtained of lines; a strict economy in their number and with that a directly increased intensity of dramatic effect. Few who are frank will deny that to pass from the drawings to the etchings is to pass from a tenser, more nervous, world of action and suffering to a stiller, more established, but less speaking scene, where the compensa-

tion in pathetic veils of shadow shrouds forms less blood-heated and inspired with breath. The ease with which in a drawing the sweep of a loaded brush over the traits of a flexible pen or pencil added the power of shadow, makes the contrast of laboured gradation against the quick word or cry of the single stroke or sweep the more striking. As in clinging to the engraver's ideal portraits are the more obstinate, so in this ideal of open essential lines landscape, as the most private and least commissioned work, is the more free. An early example of the superiority of the drawing to the etching is the lovely study of a nude woman in the Museum collection (A. 4) which was actually etched (No. 42). Compare the vital drawing of breast and belly with the dryer account given by the needle; what the background adds in elaboration it subtracts from effect.

The difference I am attempting to establish marks the experiment of a master every kind in whose work has its interest, and it is evident that even now the consensus of critical opinion does not accept Rembrandt's own judgment as shown in the growth of his style. Thus I read in the catalogue under the *Portrait of Ephraim Bonus*, 'One of the most masterly and effective of all the etched portraits of Rembrandt.' Frankly, this verdict completely puzzles me. The etching is surely one of the worst composed of all the portraits with its ugly balustrade and background, and the figure is one of the most faulty in drawing. Rembrandt's curious trick of making the arms of his sitters too short becomes here a deformity, and the stupid hatched work is surely not his at all. The famous portrait of *Jan Six at a Window* does deserve



admiration as a climax of the painting ideal in etching, but even here a touch or two of likeness-correction in the face makes the whole ethereal structure of air-painting stagger. The *Tholinx*, another portrait that collectors put at the top of their lists, was clearly to Rembrandt himself something of a failure, with eyes first too heavy, then too weak; the *Clement de Jonghe* is one of the simplest of this series, but who that fully enjoys Rembrandt's real triumphs can look without irritation at the *Jan Cornelis Sylvius*, the *Uytenbogaert* with its dreadful background, or the *Coppenol*, evidently a vain bore treated in the manner that he could appreciate. We see a fine drawing in the process of spoiling when the humorous *Jan Lutma* is altered from its first nobility by the insertion of a window and trimmings. We must suppose that Rembrandt, bothered by the taste of his sitters, handed over these plates to pupils to undergo the same process of degradation as Vandyck's superb etchings suffered. Their reputation is one of the Salerooms, of dealers disputing over impressions with 'a black ring' and 'a white ring.' The real masterpiece of this series is the *Haaring*, not the Old but the Young, and in the first state. This far outdoes the *Six* in grandeur of light and shadow, in its combination of portraiture and mystery. In the second state some scruple about likeness has wrecked its line-work with a few harsh touches, and the beautifully adjusted veil of ink has been tattered. All this set of portraits, with its few precarious triumphs and its more frequent descent towards a tedious trade article, contrasts vividly with Rembrandt's unfettered work after himself and his own people in early years. Everything done after his

mother is perfect in a natural nobility of arrangement, intimacy, concentration; the puzzle is that this kind of draughtsman portrait had so few successors. The *Young Man in a Velvet Cap* (147), the neighbouring Saskias, the *Jan Asselyn* (221) and the profile of a boy (175) may be named among them. Relatives and artists were treated thus. But the greatest puzzle of all is those four heads of 1635, one set of which is signed by Lievens, another by Rembrandt, with a word added, now made out as the Dutch for 'retouched.' It is supposed that the originals were Lievens's, the copies by a pupil of Rembrandt retouched by the master. But three of the heads are superb pieces, of a quality unknown in the rest of Lievens's work, and one of them is the head usually taken for that of Rembrandt's father. Something like these Rembrandt might have developed out of his first etchings instead of the painter style. Drawings for them must surely have been his.

The portraits then remain somewhat arrested in the general development of Rembrandt's etching style, they have a taint from outside; the dramatic subjects follow the lead of the landscapes. When he has fully explored his instrument Rembrandt's notion of the line-work in an etching is a network of expressive contours, each weighted with as large a share of form and story as it will carry, all this to be secured as much as possible in a single biting. But beside this etched line to represent the pen line of his drawings, he makes increased use of the dry point line with its burr to represent his emphatic brush strokes. Sometimes the plate is printed in this state. But he does not want to deny himself shadow though he is tired of the line-



slavery of hatching. In his final manner he relies on the inking of his plate to give him an effect like that of the brush wash over his drawings. It was impossible to obtain this without some addition of line-work to hold the ink; he adds the minimum necessary. We can see him do this between the first and second states of the *Christ Entombed* (277); when an open line drawing is converted into a deep mysterious night piece. This clear separation of the systems of line and tone, allowing of a vigorous eloquent drawing, over which floodings of shadow may be disposed and differently disposed in successive printings, is Rembrandt's last word.

There are two cases at the end of the gallery of which the effect is overwhelming. They represent not only the culmination of all this science of expression in etching, of bare strong line and of line counter-pointed with darkness, but also of Rembrandt's dramatic and tragic power. It seldom happens that the exhibition, side by side, of different states of a print adds to the emotional effect of its subject. Here, in the case of the *Christ Shown to the People* and the *Three Crosses* it does. The troubled gropings and shiftings in that high wrestle of invention make of these sequent prints successive moments in a strain of growing agony. In the first scene, the *Ecce Homo*, the crowd of curiosity and rancour drifts and surges like a wave against the cliff-pedestal, and then drops away leaving it bare for its crowned victim, bare except for the doubtful shape upon it of some obliterated god. In the other, the *Crucifixion*, the curtain of night-in-day shuts ever more closely, horsemen that were too fine to live in that haggard light fall away, leaving one

stricken centurion, and all ends in stark wounded lines and a terror-white more awful than the darkness.

It is well to take such work in the order of its production, to begin with the old *Ecce Homo*, and see the designer attempt, by taking thought, to render the scene grandiose before the tide of real inspiration had risen to sweep away and transform the put-up impressiveness of such staging and characterisation. How vulgar its graces, how wormy its shadows become when we reach the end! Yet the impressive root of its creation, the architecture of its action piled up side-wise against the hanging towers of the distance returns in one of the last and most perfect plates, the *Deposition* (276) purged and solemnised. And we can trace the architecture of the final *Ecce Homo* growing in the *Christ Healing the Sick* (233) through the *Christ Preaching* (249) to its ultimate momentous shape. Borrowed, it is said, from Lucas van Leyden's plate, it is borrowed as a misplaced infertile seed might be borrowed, recognised by its true owner for a jewel in the confused display of a pedlar's trinkets. It is customary to exalt against Rembrandt's inventions the composition of older masters; before design like this beaten out from within by passion into the simplest and grandest utterance, the Raphaelesque harmonies awkwardly emulated in the earlier attempts appear a kind of ambling absent-minded sing-song.



## DRAWINGS

The collection of Rembrandt's drawings at the British Museum is a very splendid one, and gives as complete an idea as could be wished of the range and variety both of his subjects and of his manner of expression. But it contains, in proportion to its size, a smaller number of his most noble compositions and most poignant dramas as compared with others less extensive. Landscapes like Nos. 41, 63, 69 and 71 are of high quality, but there is nothing quite so fine as the Duke of Devonshire's *Village Road* with a mill to the right balancing a group of cottages to the left, and another village scene with two thatched cottages, or the Berlin view of a town with a cathedral (Lippmann, 57, 65, 4). When we turn to figure-studies, the Print Room is again very strong; Nos. 50, 81 and 82 are among the finest of the nude studies, and No. 83, the girl sleeping, is a superb example of rapid study with the brush; but the first-rate examples are Mr. Heseltine's nude woman seated laughing, and another reclining. So with the sacred histories. There is the rich chiaroscuro of the Samaritan at the inn-door; but the centre point of the story is handled with more intense drama in the drawing at Berlin where he finds the man; the pitiful gaze and action of the helper and the slackened breathless form of the sufferer put this among the masterpieces. Or again there is the mean comedy of Jacob (in two versions) hugging his pottage with one hand and extending with the other a hesitating pledge to Esau. But on this plane the *Nathan rebuking David* that belonged to Sir Seymour Haden or the *Leah presented by Laban* at Chatsworth is more won-

derful. And when we come to the most exalted and terrible moments treated, the *Deposition* of the Print Room (33) is more an epitome of research and remaking half obliterated than a seizing and moving vision. That will be found rather in the drawing of the same subject at Berlin, where the attendant women are dashed in, mere gestures of abandonment and grief, and among these rough shorthands of distress the head of the victim shines out in delicate wasted lines. Another scene that haunted Rembrandt and was often rehandled, was the later moment of 'the Supplanter's' story when he received his father Isaac's blessing. The Print Room version of this is more commonplace than Mr. Heseltine's, in which the light from a window falls in on the dying man, and he turns to it all the pathos of blind bedridden age deceived. Nor among the bowed praying figures that Rembrandt knew almost as their God might, have we one to match M. Bonnat's *Manoah*. But such contrasts as these are only a pretext for collecting the different moments of Rembrandt's thought, as between pictures he pored over his conceptions, and noted a closer and closer pressure towards their barest and most affecting expression. Thus we see him bring the Prodigal home and leave him kneeling a little way from his father, as he must have knelt, and in the first thought the father keeps his distance and raises his hand with something of the pardoning judge. In the second, one hand is on his son's head and the other supports him. One drawing at the Museum, empty as it is of recognisable incident, illustrates the more strongly a sense that grew in Rembrandt of the moving quality in space itself. It is named in the catalogue *Interior of a spacious building with*



*groups of figures* (61), and these are planted so as to give the feelings of height and depth, congregation and the pit of space. Some curiosities also there are, an elephant, wonderfully rendering that shadow-coloured crinkled beast with its mass that seems too heavy for the earth; lionesses too, to put beside M. Bonnat's hogs.

There is too much to say about all these; about the landscapes, through the quietest and slightest of which runs so just a sense of scale and emphasis that, as the base for further pleasure, they always yield that of things well fitted and joinered that slide into their frame easily and exactly. The drawings themselves are the right size, that for a sketch-book held in the hand, and the objects in them are the right size. Their shape itself is part of this unobtrusive ground-art, long slips to tell of a country of flat plains spreading endlessly; their simplicity holds a wonderful quantity of matter, as when in the distance of the empty-looking *Gold Weigher's Field* you may find the swans swimming on a pond. The distance, in Rembrandt, travels out at you like a bird, and the near parts escape under your feet. With these sketches landscape offers itself as the modern wandering place for the mind, not of roads to august temples nor of theatres in cave and forest for murder or love, but among the everyday stuff of wind-mills, cabins and canal barges musically intervalled, lines journeying away by the side of water, and horizons flying.

Then there are the studies that open out another world than that of Italian art with its preoccupation about the beauty of the body and the grace of life; stunted and slack shapes, the face ravaged by life, the foot worn by the road, the beggar's shoulders, heavy

age and helpless infancy; all that is patient, unhappy and to be seen with pity, Rembrandt saw.

But this may be put in another way. Rembrandt is the only illustrator of our Bible. Since the Bible drove out, in Christianised countries, the mythologies native to their races, its histories have taken the colour of the Church that read them, and in Italy the ideas of a splendid and gracious life were the natural reading. The gods returned as saints, and athletes figured in the part of Arab shepherds, dervish prophets and fishermen disciples. Hence the Bible is read in Italian painting as princely spectacle and pageant, with only occasional intrusions from the humble religion of the friars. In the hands of the more terrible spirits its awful legends turn the more triumphantly to the pride and glory of man. In Protestant countries the translation of the Bible made it familiar and homely beyond the official Bible of the Catholics, and therefore substituted it more completely and domestically for the legends and the history of the German peoples, who may be said to have taken on a Jewish past. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century an extraordinary state of things has existed in the Protestant countries, in that the humblest born has been educated in a literature more extended in humanity, more exalted in poetry than that of Greece, and has been trained and bound over to regard its legends as in a sense those of his own past, the ancient types and standard of all present actions.

To a Dutchman of the seventeenth, or an Englishman of the early nineteenth century, the cruel and passionate histories of the Old Testament have been those about which his earliest moral ideas have groped,



and in the lives of the patriarchs he has been taught to see the problems of his own life played out on a grandiose scale. For the boy who received further education this was overlaid by classical legends, and these tended to become his mental currency when he expressed himself in art. Among strict Protestants painting was not encouraged, and Rembrandt is the unique Protestant who has thrown into art this home-interpretation of the Bible, this half-terrified, half-endearment vision of patriarchs, of Joseph and Mary, of the whole Bible world, as if they were his father and mother and kindred seen in a dream, and mixed with features and dress spied in the Ghetto. Through the whole history it is what happens to the heart that he follows, and he stands, not with the spectator of the scene but with the actors. As a boy, of course, he could not be thus simple; it is later on that he ventures back to a child's *naïveté*. It is in a late etching he decides that when the shepherds came by night Mary and the Child were abed and reluctant to awake, and Joseph dull with vigil. In an early *Rest during the Flight into Egypt* a superfluous man plays at conscientious chiaroscuro in the foreground to make an effect of light on the Holy Family; in another everything is disposed painfully for composition-effect; cradle and harness are tied up in a tree as a kind of trophy, hat and clothes make a secondary group in the foreground, and Joseph gives himself a countenance by reading his book. Put beside this the amazing little drawing in M. Bonnat's collection where in the first moment of rest the Mother sees to the napkin of her baby, as she would, and Joseph holds the lantern in the traveller-hunting, picture-making night. There is another

where Joseph asks the way of a countryman, the Virgin lies speechless with fatigue, and the Child plays with the harness. Joseph occupied the humanity of the master with a sort of wistful kindness. There is an etching where the Mother is bending absorbed over the Child in a room, and we see him looking in from just outside the window. That is the temper of Rembrandt, asking how did those people feel, lingering over them in tender solicitude, over Saul struck into miserable tears by David's harp, over Hagar turned away while the very housedog looks ashamed, over the history of Tobit, over Judas rebuffed by the brute embarrassed priests.

Such is this Bible of the poor, the aged, the afflicted. The imaginative simplicity, the draughtsman dramatist power of Rembrandt has stamped for ever that strange union of modern Europe with the bitter or consoling legends of Oriental antiquity, and no man is likely ever to be in his place to do it again, either with his powers or his people's good faith. I do not know whether the drawings, etchings and pictures have ever been arranged to make a Rembrandt Bible. Some of the gaps as well as the inclusions are interesting. One of the few scenes in the Passion unillustrated is the Last Supper. Leonardo's composition was too much of a lion in the path. Rembrandt twice sketched it, and proceeded to transform its superb philosopher-orators into the deaf, cunning, and vehement followers he could conceive in the disciples. The second sketch is squared up for enlargement, but in the end he probably went by this monument as too unique, and put his own vision into the *Emmaus*.



## SKATING

*A Rhapsody*<sup>1</sup>

THE Walker . . . the Roof and Crown of Things toiling about on its hind-legs, is a spectacle interesting for the mechanic and the moralist. As hinges—as an example of what may be done with ball-and-socket joints and the like—the performance is remarkable enough. As perseverance—as a testimony to what the indomitable spirit of man will suffer to drag his body about with the most inadequate means—it is admirable. As satisfaction to the sense of movement it is pitiful, and that sense persists in man as in other creeping things, however handicapped by the insufficiency of his organs. He craves for the flight of a wind, and is put off with contrivances on the level of the block and pulley; he envies the long roll and plunge of sea-water, and must be content with a patient assiduity as of the common pump. With intricate apparatus of bones and muscles, at so huge an expense of breath and force, the walker, the pedestrian, the foot-passenger plods about his business in the dust and mire, while the swallow can provision his nest by way of sport, and the meanest sprat floats up against his dinner without a pause in his perpetual sea-bathing. Theirs is an element made for the traveller's pleasure, whereas this earth, however picturesque in hills and woods and waterfalls, was not in the least fashioned for our absurd means of going up and down in the

<sup>1</sup>Pre-airplane and pre-cinema.

same. There are hours, indeed, when the walker will forget his pain. He will drop into a swinging pace across some plain at nightfall, and taste such gentle elation as might be a pendulum's if it could feel, or he will lose all sense of his feet and the troubles and fevers of his body, and amuse himself with the thoughts in his head. Walking, again, has been excused as a digestive exercise, and in a lenient, after-supper moment, the ludicrous gymnastics applauded that earned the meal. But when the eulogist boasts loudest among his fellows, his conscience within him will murmur, 'Walker!'

The Dancer makes out of these elementary proceedings something of an art. The desire to go anywhere in particular he has discarded; the rude invention of a road, conforming itself to the accidents of the country-side, he exchanges for the smooth and level floor; and he calls in to stimulate and pardon such laughable jiggings and twirlings as he can compass, the freer movement of music. For the Musician sets free in sound a metaphor of movement, an audible ghost of form, yet is forced to sit still and stupid, while to the impulses of his body are suggested the ample curves, the large progressions, the wreathing involutions with which his own creation surprises him. The melody invites, and he may not follow. He has no limbs, no wheels, no wings, no whirlwind means of motion to fit him for the battle-marches that he sounds, or the dizzy sweep and rapture of the impalpable race. But the dancer is restive under all this surmise of what is impossible for his feet. A little he can slide on the polished floor; a little he can respond by bodily stampings and prancings to the beating of



the rhythm, the skeleton of the music's life; a little by hoppings and waggings of his toe he can make as though anon he would take flight for that neighbouring baffling realm, and be a leading motive and a bird. Alas, poor heavy, wingless biped, that so generously agitates himself in vain! Music, that acclaims triumphs more tremendous than history has seen, or the rash chronicles of dreams have feigned; that mourns over sorrows more confounding than the human heart is called to suffer; that promises heavens that flesh and blood shall not inherit,—this throb and cry we overhear from a drama whose substance and actors we cannot touch, this echo as of consolations addressed to gods before the making of the world, passes proudly over the attempted mimicries of our movements, and leaves the spirit exhausted, but hungry still. We are magicians who know the spell but not the language or gestures of the foreign ghosts we raise; we have built a palace, and are turned away from its doors; exiles, we look out over the heaving and flowing of that tide, and can signal to its golden navies to waft this way and that, but we shall never go on board and make the passage. Forth goes the bridal train, but the bridal song goes further; homeward come the warriors, but never home whither the mockery of a trumpet calls; to dust the dead, the dirge to the impenetrable of its own cloudy dwelling. The love-song leaves the pale lover beside his passion overwhelmed; the hymn deserts its singer still kneeling on the flags; and the poor dancer, dupe of those strange beckoning sounds, who has risen as if to companion the music on its voyage, comes but little speed, and is undeceived before the tune is done.

The Draughtsman at least can trace with his hand those curves that the dancer's feet would fain describe, and do feebly indicate; but drawing is another confession of our desire and impotence, for, like the player's, the artist's irritated body must remain inert. He watches the leaping lines of flame, the coil of the eddy, the labyrinthine path of smoke, a coloured impulse played upon by wind; and he must stand by and maltreat them into stagnant patterns. In the bitterness of his heart, he affects that this was his game, and goes about to hold the mirror up to Nature and still-life. The infinite, intolerable shift and flight of free creatures is an oppression to his spirit; and to make them bearable, he paints, not the flight, but the object at rest when the flight is done; he locks them up, flat and motionless, on his study-walls, and makes-believe that clouds and waters are as powerless for action as himself. Then arises the flattering race of the critics and of an art-loving public; he is incited to finish his absurd puppets and make them like. Yet at the moment when he has almost imposed on himself, and it is accepted that to sit in an armchair and look at a picture is a tolerable pastime, some innocent unlucky outsider will blurt out the forbidden word: 'I can almost see it move!'

What these attempt, or pervert, the Skater accomplishes. The medium they fumbled for he has found. The obstinate Earth, that so long withholds her secrets, and keeps some of her best gifts till she is well on in years, had this surprise in store for us. Civilisations have been accounted great, and have passed away, and never knew this art. Agamemnon is dead, and never so much as heard that there was an outside edge.



Alexander boasted himself to be something, and is buried, and had not cut a three. The vaunted change of seasons of the old world—spring, summer, autumn, and so-called winter—were variations of perpetual thaw. Those ancient peoples were nipped by winter cold, but were frozen in vain. Babylon and Egypt, Athens and Rome, waxed and waned, and the supreme art of motion was unknown to them as were tobacco and chloroform, American humour and women's suffrage. Where is now the Pancratiast, where the Pentathlete? What was hidden from the wise and noble orderers, as from the ruthless over-runners of the world, from Greek and Persian and Chinese, from Vandal, Hun and Arab, was revealed to the cosy Dutch. On a waterlogged margin of the habitable globe, in the early afternoon of time, our poor legs and feet, so long the tools of a mistaken convention, discovered their use. It is but a convention still, an abstraction of free movement in the flat, but in the perfect flat. Now the mind wills, and motion follows like a thought. It is design with a pulse of sense in it; it is geometry raised to power. For the dead figures in which Euclid traffics, given over to the owl and the man of science—the circle, the ellipse, the parabola, the hyperbola—are reborn as joy, and become to the skater a bodily glory. The flowing hand that the writing-master, cramped over his desk, struggled to impose upon the symbols of thought, and the flourishes he allowed himself to deck them with are now a flowing foot, with no purpose but the pride and pleasure of it, and all the weight and balance of the man to give it vigour and larger scope. The warm Italian words written over music to control its cadence, to enhance

its languor, to command its pomp, are now translated by the nerves and blood, as the rhythm swings from *andante* with a *rallentando* into *largo maestoso*, and then on a pirouette quickens and again relaxes, as in the sinuous excursions and returns of a wayward song.

And if as action skating is thus supreme, so is it also as spectacle. Here are poses—no, not that, not the frozen fixity of the studio, but the free poises that are possible to a body at once in flight and at rest. They are so fixed that the eye can follow and comprehend, yet with a slow play and change. And to enrich this change and play, there is the counterpoint of draperies. It echoes the movements of the limbs with the repetitions of a canon, or with other freaks of fugal variation. It is not now a jerking and twitching of the stuff, as in walking or dancing; it is a lingering wave of the last impulsion resolving itself gently into the next. If artists were not the prisoners of custom, the edge of the rink would be encircled by sculptors modelling those forms in snow.

Man is no bird, to dive and hover every way in a wind; when pre-natal lots were cast, they chose wings, but he, hands and the higher education,—though in the unauthorised broideries of his religion he admits a doubt, plays with a regret, and dreams himself an angel. Nor is he even a fish; they chose fins, he, feet, and can only kick and sputter uneasily on the surface of the thicker, dimmer element wherein they sport. But if in his careless ante-human youth he sacrificed so many bodily organs and opportunities to his soul, his soul at times requites him; and he is a wonderful trickster with such clumsy parts as he retained. At the very moment when all nature and his



very life are threatened with arrest, when the cold out of interstellar space touches him that will one day make all his history and his hopes an icicle, he snatches a victory from the very threat. On the frost, on the iron surface of his fate, he attains a supremacy and a delight that his maimed and perverted body has never known. The Last Man will not, as in the poet's slander, suffer a wet and tepid suicide; he will greet destruction on a Rocking Turn.

1891

## PAINTING AND IMITATION

THERE is a phrase familiar in the language of plumbers' and builders' bills that occurs to one's mind when reviewing any large collection of paintings. The house-decorator called on to carry out some alteration, not only does this according to estimate, but *makes good* up to his patch of new work, so that no one may know he has been at work. He does this properly enough, but *making good* is the very vice of painting. It reposes on a wrong idea of the art; it is addressed to those who will never appreciate its motives, to pacify them with a sort of consolation-prize; and its effect is to obliterate for the work in hand, and gradually to the painter's sense, what it was he went out to see. For the ideal to which he conforms in making good is that a picture should attempt illusion, should be an indifferent window-pane giving on Nature, equally realist from corner to corner. This is why what is called a 'sketch' is so often the real picture, and the so-called picture only the elaborate burial of the sketch. The sketch was all that the painter wanted to take; this was what was told him; and a mistaken conscience or a cowardly deference leads him to piece it out with the trivial gossip that accompanied it, like the confusing murmurs and snatches of conversation that get mixed up with the message on a wire. Or the case is worse where he has never clearly known what it was attracted him in the slice of Nature he sat down before, or in process of his toil forgets. He went out to fish, and comes vaguely



home with a bucket of water. It is circumstantial evidence that he has been to the river, but also that he had forgotten why he went; and he is the stupider who brings back fish and river too. *For drawing is at bottom, like all the arts, a kind of gesture, a method of dancing upon paper.* The dance may be mimetic; but it is the verve of the performance, not the closeness of the imitation, that impresses, and tame additions of truth will encumber and not convince. The dance must control the pantomime. Rivers and skies and faces are taken up by a painter as illustrations of a mood, and the lines of the image he creates are not meant to reproduce the thing, but to convey what he felt about the thing,—the salutation, the caress, he gave to it. Thus, the unbroken sweep of a contour like a bird's flight will mean one kind of movement of pleasure, the tender approaches of broken lines another, and every touch of the emerging likeness will be a commentary, a confession. He wishes to convince the imagination, not to delude the sense; and the sheer beauty of his handling will do this more effectually than a lifelike projection or a multitude of circumstance. The triumphant, true note of a tenor, the thrill in the voice of an actress, will do more to build up a scene for us on the stage than all the resources of Wardour Street and Tottenham Court Road; the imagination will supply stage-carpenters if the sense of beauty is struck; but the depositions of the tailor and the antiquary to the truth of a *mise-en-scène* will no more convince than the asseverations of a man who has forgotten the point of a story, but can take his affidavit to all its other particulars. They are accessories without the fact.

That the same opposition holds in painting between

mechanical realism and expression, is not so immediately obvious, because painting seems to proceed entirely by imitation; but a closer consideration of its procedure reveals how much of remoter suggestion it relies upon. In the lines of abstract ornament, you will often get a more striking impression of conflict or of repose than from the most document-supported picture of battle or of sleep; and it is this element, the music of space and form, that really plays to the imagination behind the images that represent person or thing. A division of the paper will do more to enthrone a figure or dignify a landscape than the dress of Kings or the presence of palaces, and the drift or swing of a composition across the canvas be more eloquent of its motive than the particular attitudes and occupations of its constituent persons.

If this is true of form, it is true also of colours. You find yourself recognising with zest the life-likeness of a scene, and congratulating a painter on the naturalness of his colouring, and all the time it is because he has picked out of the actual mess a bouquet of reds and blues that pleases you. A glint on a copper pan goes well with a streak on a carpet and a flush on a face, and you say: 'How like a pan, and a carpet, and a face!' It is a rule of the game that they should decently act their part as the colours of things; but the party is a masked ball of conspirators, and the hues that figure, whether as heroes or haystacks, are there on business of their own. Red blushes in a woman's cheek, blue takes on a celestial disguise, and green accepts a humble role in a cushion or a curtain; and all the time, demurely serving as they do the realist turn, they are whispering behind their dominos the plot



that brought them there. Even so in the art of words, it is an alphabetic music in the syllables that commends an argument to the ear of the logician, and the worshipper finds his heart fortified to sing an article of his creed by some note in the bass of its accompaniment.

An exhibition like that of the New Salon in the present year brings out this difference of kind among painters with all the greater force because of its catholicity. Puvis de Chavannes, Whistler, Burne-Jones are names for very different ways of seeing and feeling, but they are at one against the common enemy, the stupid imitator, and others may be cited. In the work of Helleu the colour-revel is more openly pursued than by most of his neighbours; in these paintings the forms are but the rendezvous where the revellers please to assemble. In one, a lady sits in a punt under a white umbrella; it is not the pretension of the painter to introduce us to her or to her features; she is a plaything for the moment of the light. In another, there is a discourse in subtle greens between the blossoms of hortensia and a silver tray. In two others, the game becomes wilder for its grave setting. The place is a cathedral interior, among Gothic columns and Gothic effigies, a place given up so long to the architect draughtsman of details and the contributor to Transactions; and it is like the masquerade of All Fools bursting in when the colourist appears. Columns and tombs become but the reverberators of the deep stains from the painted windows, and the air is full of a battledore-and-shuttlecock of purple and blood-red and emerald rays. A newer name may be put beside Helleu's,—that of a young English painter,

Charles Conder, who has contrived pearly and golden and rosy schemes out of a sea-shore and a corn-field and a spring landscape.

Carrière's mood is a different one. He is all tenderness and evasion. Of colour he will have nothing but the nuance, of form only the surmise and mystery. To this end the picture is muffled in a smoky air, and you penetrate only where he pleases. The story told with this effect of a secret is his favourite one of a mother kissing her child; and the manner, with all its dangers of stereotype, is better fitted to the fact than the more brazen exhibitions of the nursery that we know.

But perhaps the most interesting work in the exhibition for the freedom with which the resources of drawing and colour are handled, and the expressive skill with which they are applied, is that of Raffaëlli. He comes to oil-painting with the detached mind of the artist who has worked much in black-and-white and in pastel. He has no superstition about covering the canvas with a homogeneous paste, but strikes a middle course between expression by outline and expression by patch of colour that is delightful in its variety and reserve. When the character of line seemed the most interesting fact, he leans on that with the necessary indication of colour; at another point, colour takes up the tale. A keen, amused eye glances off from points of character in the face, to observe a ripple in the trousers where the man's knees cross, or a note of colour in his shabby slippers (this, be it observed, is not to generalise, but to particularise with taste). The selection is as little slavish as that of a writer, once the facts essential to a graphic medium have been given.



Those are a few instances of painters who use paint to artistic purpose. Others might be given of men who use it with the same certainty of intention and emphasis in effect, but in whom a strain of vulgarity makes the work from beginning to end repellent. Carolus Duran is one of them. He has unusual powers of vision, and a technique that probably expresses his vision completely; but there is something plushy in his mind, as well as in his backgrounds, that infects the whole texture of his work. He paints like a magnificent upholsterer. Bonnat, in the Old Salon, paints like a detective. His portrait of Renan is like a statement of incriminating evidence. 'The accused,' he seems to say, 'may be identified by various traits which I will describe, and for one by the state of his nails.' It is history of a kind; it is painting that is neither slavish nor stupid in character, but brutal.

## SUBJECT AND TECHNIQUE

THAT the dignity of the performance does not depend on the dignity of the subject, but on that of him who treats it, is surely indisputable. God himself is not dignified on the lips of the ranter, but Ithuriel loses no dignity when he handles the toad. The man of refined intelligence and feeling knows how to talk about anything, because, in the act and manner of speech, he relates himself to the thing spoken of; he places it, determines how it stands to his feeling, and conveys his determination to the listener. A thing, repellent in itself, falls to be treated; it is steadily seen and understood, and by the accent and movement of language is adjusted to speculation and sentiment, so that it is thought of under a tolerable angle of pity or horror or irony or fun. He will not cheapen sentiment by its display when it is not called for, knowing, as he does, too much for ready effusion; he will not apply ludicrous standards, being neither teetotaler nor Pharisee; and thus, whatever subject he may handle, noble or ignoble, there will result from the justice of his sentiment and the close aptness of its expression and response in the music of words, an unfailing sensation of beauty. Who would not rather hear a great and eloquent Judge pronounce sentence on an odious crime, than suffer from a turgid eulogy of virtue; or would not sooner surprise in a phrase about trivial things the voice that proclaims distinction of character, than detect in a disquisition on high and



important themes a note that stamped the speaker commonplace?

That this sense of refinement, or want of refinement, is conveyed in the very form and texture of speech, whatever its theme, no one would deny, and to its effects a large number of people are sensitive, because the art of conversation is of prime necessity and universal practice; that the same truth is obscured in the art of painting arises from the fact that it speaks a language by no means so generally known or so readily acquired. The result is that all the art of it, the means by which, as in language, the feeling of the painter towards his subject is determined and conveyed—the intonation, the accent, the expression—all this goes for nothing, and the spectator is left contemplating a bare 'subject,' because he actually sees nothing else. Just so a man who did not know Greek might get so far with a play of *Æschylus* as to discover that its subject was adultery. 'Why, what is this?' he would say; 'a book dealing with one of the worst vices of ancient civilisation!' and shut it in a pious horror. It would be necessary, for such a reader, to put some very plain and obvious intimation against the book's title, such as, 'This book deals with adultery, but does not recommend it.' Even so in painting: if the spectator, who does not know the language of painting, finds a subject classed in his mental list as 'degraded,' he will need some very coarse indication of intention on the painter's part, some violent disclaimer in the written language he is accustomed to, before he is prepared to acquit the painter of the most discreditable intentions. Before a picture of people drinking, he will clamour, 'Swear to me that you meant this for a temperance

tract, or I shall denounce you as a corrupter of youth.' The painter was quietly talking about the scene to those who could understand his language; they followed with delight the refinement of his observation, the points of irony, the close comments, the appropriate feeling of his speech: to the other man, all this does not exist, because he has not learned its A B C.

A curious result is the absolute mistakes that such a spectator must make in estimating the bearing of the art of different painters. What, for example, is the import of Hogarth as usually estimated, and what is the real import of his art? He is usually taken for what he gives himself out to be, and that is a stern moralist and preacher. He has taken care to write that kind of label conspicuously across his pictures, to indicate that intention in his titles and descriptions. But the language of painting, of which, on the dramatic side, he was a very considerable master, speaks from every line of his canvas in contradiction, and what it tells us is that the man, in spirit, was a jolly rowdy, with a jollity somewhat of the undertaker's kind. Now, except to intolerant minds, there is room in painting for the jolly rowdy; but how funny it is that he should contrive to pass muster as an austere teacher, in virtue of a moral loosely appended to his delighted observations of low life. He always reminds one of some witness in a Law Court attuning a beery voice to a note of unction, and relating that his friend, the accused, 'smelt 'orrible of drink, and his language was disgusting' (language he proceeds to reproduce with gusto). With a literary indication, then, to steer the sentiment of the public, a painter may do anything;



and an artist like Charles Keene may use the drunkard freely as a subject in the pure spirit of fun without being cried out upon, if only he legibly inscribes a written joke beneath the drawing. But the painter, the complexity of whose feeling, the gravity of whose spirit, the refinement of whose vision express themselves in their own language of painting, is denounced for want of a label parodying all this in speech; the artist whose 'finish' is of that real kind that has an observation to back every touch, an observation, and therefore a finish, going beyond all drawing but the very best, is described as the result of a hurried age; and the man who, of all the painters of our time, has most shunned the vulgarities of advertisement and publicity, has most patiently followed his inspiration in seclusion from the crowd and its ideals, is held up as the type of an interviewing society. It follows, naturally enough, that the critic, whose humble but necessary office it is to avert public wrath from fine painting, is supposed, when he praises a picture in which Degas happens to have treated a *café* scene, to wish either (1) that every one should go and drink absinthe in *cafés*, or (2) that painters should paint nothing else. What is desirable is, that painters should treat whatever subject they take in hand with the same delicacy and sense of beauty. To praise *Macbeth* is not exactly the same thing as encouraging murder, or insisting that only murder should be written about.

It is impossible to reveal to any one who has not an eye for the language of painting, where the pictorial element comes in. It is difficult, but perhaps not impossible, to convince him that there is a gap in the

set of terms under which he looks at a picture, and that it is just the part which does not exist for him, which makes it a picture. He is ready to allow that, besides the 'Subject,' there is something called 'Technique'; a picture is for him, Subject + Technique. He understands by technique some cleverness in the brushwork that escapes him, and that he makes a present of, with scorn, to the professional painter. He considers the matter exhausted by this division, and does not dream of the essential term that mediates between the two. That term is 'Imagination.' Imagination is the power of seeing images in things, and making images out of them. To extract the beauty out of a water-bottle as you look at it is to exercise the painter's imagination; and it is this faculty applied to a scene, selecting and rejecting, up to the nicest effects of feeling, that makes a picture. In the imaginative treatment of the subject, technique is already implied, for technique means remembering the tools you have to work with, and taking nothing from a scene that these tools will not naturally and beautifully render. Technique is therefore a condition under which the painter sees things, but it is not a mechanical beauty stuck upon the surface of a picture and detachable from it. It is only bad technique that can be so considered, the flashy trick that means nothing, or the mechanical smoothness and finish that means nothing. In the best painting the execution comes out of the image as necessarily, as naturally, as simply, as a blossom out of a tree. You cannot define where conception leaves off and execution begins, because they are one act. The touch is seen by the painter in his subject before he lays it on. Now, the very reverse is



true of bad painting. It is all technique and no observation. Go round the Institute of Painters in Water-Colours, or a similar exhibition, and in almost all the work you will find a most determined and laborious technique, but an absence of first-hand vision. There is a fixed idea of *stipple*, let us say, which is a kind of technique, but no more. Just because the painter had not looked at his object, and had nothing to say, he has recourse to a mechanical procedure which has a certain skill and 'cleverness' in it, but represents nothing. It is in such painting that the conception of a picture as Subject + Technique, is really justified, whereas in good painting there is no touch that does not mean an act of vision and a preference.

But, says the objector, shifting his ground, if you have this imaginative power, why not employ it always on subjects noble in themselves? The objection is surely based on a very childish and a very simple and abstract view of things, and a disregard of the range of notes from which an emotional effect of a high order may be struck out. It is like complaining that all poems are not hymns; it is like reviling the fiddle, because it is not the harp. It is wiser, surely, to recognise that an artist knows best out of what material he can win his effects of beauty; to be sure that the fiddle or the harp is of the best quality; and to realise that, for the keenest effects of beauty, a touch upon some humble or forlorn or desperate note in life is often the most telling means. In any case,—

One flash of it within the Tavern caught  
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

In this sense Subject is important. To each artist his own, and if he obtains from it an effect of beauty, and an effect of poetry or irony, or fun, it is something of an impertinence to suggest that he has chosen the wrong material.

1893



ACTION, DIRECTION,  
MOVEMENT*Royal Academy, 1892*

IF I wish to express in words the fact that a man passed rapidly through a room, I shall commit an elementary error in description if I linger to make a careful inventory of its furniture. To do this would be to indulge in a realism untrue to fact, for these objects would be present in such insistent detail neither to the actor nor the onlooker; and destructive of effect, because to describe at such length would be to slacken the expression of speed in the event by the lounging style of its narration, and thus to omit the most important truth, since that is best conveyed by an answering quickness in the manner of the telling. A hint that the china rattled on the chimney-piece may be to the purpose as indicating a vigour of tread, but to be full of information at that moment about the maker's mark on the under-side, is to convince the reader that a leisurely saunter was on hand. When a painter essays, with the means at his disposal, to tell the story of action or movement, he is attempting what at the best is a doubtful undertaking, though all the more alluring for that; he has to render a moving figure by a figure that cannot move, that must obstinately stand still; he is bound to render the room to some extent, instead of alluding to it, and this necessity, and the comparative ease of the task, invite him to reproduce its still-life at the expense of pro-

portion, to rob the figure of interest that already was incapable of motion. Now, a moving mouse is more engrossing to the attention than a roomful of precious things, and this natural arrest of the attention being denied to his art, a painter must needs use every device that remains to make his figure tell among its surroundings with the predominance of life. A laborious definition will not do it, for that is to relapse on still-life by the suggestion of a leisurely survey; rather the main character of the action must be caught, and a trait here and there of convincing expression determined, such as the eye collects in a glance; to do more is to glue the eye with impartial indifferent scrutiny to every feature of a scene, and to reproduce the absurdities of the instantaneous photograph. The wheel is stopped, so that its spokes can be counted, and the act that in life blots out everything but itself from the field is reduced to the false proportions, the cold impression of the measuring-tape. Nor does the art of suggestion stop here. By a kind of metaphor implicit in the whole texture of his work, by a vigour and vivacity of handling that argue an agitation of impression, the painter may communicate a sense of life; and by the way he paints even the inanimate surroundings, give them a vibration and intensity that make them partners in the general excitement, like the images of poetry that reverberate upon a fact the energy and spirit of a flame.

To search for convincing examples of an art like this in the Academy would be a sanguine proceeding, but something of the essential difference between the quick and the dead methods of treating action may be gathered by comparing Sir John Gilbert's picture of a



Venetian Senate with the pictures by Mr. Tadema and Mr. Poynter that flank it on either side. All three purport to render action: we are invited to read Mr. Tadema's canvas as *A Kiss*; Mr. Poynter depicts a game at knucklebones. The middle picture will probably strike most people as a sketch compared with the others; the others will seem to be carried further, to be more 'finished'. Now, if finish is possible to a picture that leaves out the most essential point, if that omission can be made up for by polish of what remains, these pictures are certainly more finished. In the other sense they are not begun, because they are like carefully told stories with the point left out. The figures are detailed with an extreme care and conscientiousness that demand a minute attention: they are not treated as subordinate to a general effect, else there were no quarrel with them; but the result is not to give them breath, they miss the imperious note of life, and have the effect of little polished china images placed on a shelf. The painter of *The Kiss* had the same patient pleasure when he made out the difficult perspective of his bronze lettering as when he put the little people in their places; and the spectator has a little more. To be thus irresolute or placid between the competing claims of marble and of maternity, is to cancel the effect of both, and to produce what the dealers will hail in their jargon as a gem of Classic Genre. So with Mr. Poynter's picture. He has expended on it a great deal of what is so misleadingly in this connection called learning. He has painted his marbles and mosaics with an approach to Mr. Tadema's skill of craftsmanship, and the type of his girl-figures is pretty; but just as the knucklebone

hangs up for ever in the air, so is the middle figure contrived in a relentless 'decorative' sleep, and the high lights on the limbs and faces of the players have an air of old habit, of having taken a permanent situation. If all this seems fanciful (the examples of failure are respectable), turn to the Sir John Gilbert. There is a good deal in it that is loosely imagined, and the general colour envelope is of an old-fashioned brownish hue; but what a swing there is in the drawing, what a gusto in seizing on the expressive elements in the actors! If two men are put side by side to talk, they do at least talk. That action is defined, the rest of them is not wrought to the same pitch, and this is finish in the proper sense. What of accessory is allowed, has a sober vivacity and sparkle. In a word, here is at least a poor relation of Tintoretto.

*Old Masters, 1896*

If I had to choose one out of all this splendid collection of pictures, I think it must be Tintoretto's *Diana*. The magnificent vigour of its lines, emphasised by the unfinished state of the picture, the sure design that locks the goddess and her hounds into their absolute place on the canvas, the grandeur of colour, the skill of modelling in the breast, the vivid energy of the painting, all these qualities blind me for the time to the merits of many estimable works. I might hesitate when I strayed as far as Titian's solemn landscape. I might linger long on my way before Rousseau's *Bridge at St. Cloud* or Delacroix' *Paganini*, and make excursions to many others; but if it were a



case of fire and a picture to be saved, I think it must be this Tintoretto.

It is one of his quieter pieces. Another is more agitated and less satisfying. Its author himself felt doubtful about it, and had tried the hounds in three positions, and repainted the principal group on an entirely different scheme. In the *Diana* he has been contented for once with that quality of stillness of which painting does well to make a virtue. Usually he is not among the serene gods of the art, but among the giants, like Signorelli and Michael Angelo, whose restless energy battles on the frontiers of their province. Of all unsettled boundary disputes, there is none more tempting to the adventurer and the casuist than that between the realms of painting and drama. Flourishing settlements have been made by painters who would capture motion and action among their subjects, and the swamps are full of commercial busybodies who have sought for gold in the illustration of small incident. One notable and restless explorer is represented in this exhibition, J. F. Millet, the painter of the *Wood Sawyers*. It may be not uninteresting to attempt to define the actual means of suggestion employed by painters who press their art in this direction.

A distinction should be made, first of all, between the movement of a picture and the movement of a figure within it. The governing lines of a composition can be so managed as to carry the eye in one direction or another, and may be endowed in their form with all the qualities of a moving thing,—spring, rhythm, agitation, recoil, reluctance. The eye following a line acts as if on the path of a moving

thing, and will attribute to figures stationed on its course something of movement beyond themselves if, in a general way, their direction and gesture consent to such a reading. In early painting, however, this power of direction in line was frequently occupied in centring attention on the dramatic focus of the painting, since means of doing this by light and shade, atmosphere, or modulated definition had not been developed. Painting also followed its more natural bent by representing figures, stationary or in quiet action, grouped about a centre of interest within the picture. Occasionally the length of the picture-field, as on a *cassone* panel, led to the choice of frieze subjects, such as a procession passing across the field. But as art becomes master of its powers, elements that at first are only explanatory and decorative set up an emotional interest of their own. The direction of movement in a picture is one of these features, and a romantic turn is given to this when the direction is to a point outside of the picture-field, when the composition is not self-contained within the frame, but drifts or drives across and beyond. The painting of landscape brings many of these motives into play; the road that winds out of sight, the river that runs, the wind that bends boughs and blows clouds across the sky, or ships across the sea; all these entice the mind to a goal outside the picture, and touch the instincts of adventure or reverie belonging to the open road, the river, or the sea, with their long stretch and invisible destination. The *Bacchus and Ariadne* of Titian, and the *Mousehold Heath* of Crome, are alike in exciting this romantic impulse,—for what the first does by the passage and pursuit of its wandering band,



the second does no less by its line of road, making for the distance like a desire, and the gesture of its solitary figure.

In classical work, then, movement, when suggested, may be enforced by the general controlling lines of direction, and by the repetition within them of figures giving one or another moment of a common action. The eye passing along the troop of Bacchus lends to each figure something of the action of that in front and of that behind, and is prepared to read into the swoop of Bacchus an accumulated impetus. Nor is it only in the figures that the action is reduplicated; it is echoed in lines of drapery as well.

By a further extension of this idea accessories outside the moving forms are enlisted in the same service,—that of persuading the mind to read movement into objects obstinately fixed. In Giotto's *Flight into Egypt* the landscape forms give another moment of the moving figures. In Mantegna's *St. George and the Dragon* the road continues the serpent-coils, in Tintoretto's the trees bend in sympathy with the onset of the horseman; in Constable's *Jumping Horse* they do more, they mimic the horse's action. It is interesting to watch Constable beating out the law for this kind of suggestion, since he was no heaven-born composer. He had not the sure instinct for the right place on the picture-field that makes Cotman's work so classical. But as he dwelt on his material, his eye led him on. In his horse he was forced to yield to the picture-demand for a certain massiveness and repose even in an energetically active form. In this he arrived at something like the solution of Velazquez in his equestrian portraits. Therefore he had to cast about for assistance to the

sense of movement from the rest of the picture. At first, he had put the willow that is now behind the horse in front of him. Then it dawned upon him that he lost energy, broke the impulse of movement, by putting this bigger statement of the profile of his moving form in front of it, that the proper arrangement was to let this and the mass of trees behind swell out from the origin of movement like a growing, gigantic wake behind a ship. Thus he arrived at his grand composition, but he seems first to have set his tree further back, and drowned it among the others, only finally to have set it boldly between. Notice how everything in the treatment of this trunk is handled to accord with a metaphoric enhancing of the original image, the muscular and knotted forms of the bark echoing those of the horse's legs. The execution too of this latest part has reached an intensity of vigour that contrasts with the less excited statement of quiet parts like the church-tower. The movement repeated in the tree is carried farther back and taken up in the barge. The eye indeed, as it sweeps across the picture, seems to pursue, hardly knowing it, a flying form, which it *explains* by reference to the most striking object, the horse. A little doubt on the painter's part, as to whether horse or barge was the key to the picture, mars slightly an excellent composition.

This, then, is what we may call the classical treatment of movement,—a procedure by which, to use a musical analogy, a figure given out by the voice is repeated fugally on the strings, on the brass, on the woodwind. Let us now follow the adventurers who tamper with the moving form itself in search of means of suggestion. We shall find them taking up one or



another side of the act of vision directed to movement.

Let us dismiss at the outset the methods of the camera. These are statements of what the eye does *not* see. Except in the swiftest movement, as of the spokes of a wheel, we do not see a mere blur, still less the absolutely arrested moment that the camera can shoot for us. Our apprehension is rather of a succession of sharp definitions of the whole figure, or parts of it, changing one into another by a series of jerks of attention, and co-existing for a short time, so that we are fixed on one, but aware of another. An approaching engine, a bird in flight, a waving arm are examples.

We shall not expect to find in painting more than a hint of these aspects; for the defined, stationary figure cannot be sacrificed so far; we do find, however, suggestions of this kind of apprehension.

1. In sketching rapidly a man will often make shots at his outline, and his final decision leaves a number of faint contours this side and that. Such a sketch is always felt to give a sense of life and movement that the finished painting loses. However charming such a method is in sketch procedure, it would be intolerable if formalised.<sup>1</sup>

2. Tintoretto relies not on this co-existence of impressions, but on a *suddenness* of impression produced by the centring of attention on the moving forms. His great engine for this is a play of light and darkness from which they rush, a tone that drowns the background of the action, and a light that flies along the edges of action, rendering them precise and em-

<sup>1</sup>It was formalised with a vengeance by the Futurists twelve years later.

phatic. This, with a science of contorted limbs and draperies, and a corresponding vigour of handling, is his main instrument.

3. But a third means, also employed by Tintoretto, and indeed by Michael Angelo, is more conveniently illustrated from J. F. Millet. This is the *caricaturing* of forms to render the intense impression of action. The stretched arm is drawn out longer, the bent leg is bent further, the distended muscle knotted, the gripping hand magnified. Millet, by prolonged study of a man in rhythmic action, sifted out the points of attack most characteristic for the eye, and thus arrived at a deliberate caricature as definite for his own purpose as a caricature intended to bring out the fun or ugliness of a subject. In each case some kind of over-expression is necessary in an art whose means are being forced. It was perhaps from Goya that he learned this kind of drawing. We find it again in Daumier, and in the admirable little portrait of Paganini, by Delacroix. Millet was in every direction a seeker. He could handle paint if he liked with the easy after-dinner oratory of a Tiepolo, the style that glides, punctuated by approval, round well-worn shapes of thought, complimentary and flattering statements of things. He broke this up for a somewhat ugly but very real study and research. His colour too was partly wrecked by his curiosity. In two things, the concentrated sentiment of figures and their right proportion and definition in a picture-field, he was unerring; these were the points where his sincerity reached its goal.

I have mentioned the case of Millet's handling because, in opposition to the lazy view that dismisses handling as 'mere technique,' an affair with which not



the spectator of a picture, but the painter only has to do, this evolution of Millet's style shows that handling, like every other element of painting, is a wrestle in which significance is at grips with decoration. It is not necessarily eccentricity that leads to unusual handlings; it is as often the attempt to give more, sometimes too much. In one of Gainsborough's pictures in the exhibition, the effort to express action in a horse carries itself down to the very touches by which it was drawn, so that they all are anxiously hatched in the direction of the movement. Constable's palette-knife trowelling is the natural expression of an eye that sees nature splashy. Tintoretto's eager spirit is written in his touch. My assertion of the existence of 'symbolic' or 'metaphoric' elements in technique has been abundantly scoffed at; but I do not despair of convincing reasonable people of their presence. They stare us in the face in those attempts of painters in the more outlying parts of their art to express or suggest what cannot, by the conditions of painting, be directly represented.

## THE SPOT

or

*Defying Convention and Sinking Personality*

ARTISTS are introduced to the public in unexampled numbers nowadays and in very flattering terms; but anyone who has bestowed a passing attention upon the text of the introductions may well be struck rather by an anomalous state of mind in the admirer than convinced by the grounds of his admiration. Observation of the 'notices,' 'appreciations,' 'studies' that appear in the illustrated monthlies or preface the catalogues of one-man exhibitions reduces the principle of eulogy to three main types. In the first Nature is the keyword, in the second Convention, in the third Individualism or Personality. There is nothing to quarrel with in this, because the balance of these three elements is exactly the delicate feat of art, and with all but the greatest performers the balance tips precariously or lurches heavily one way or the other. The odd attitude is that of the writer who, having decided that Mr. A. is a great man for 'Nature,' considers himself thereupon at liberty, or even in honour bound, to bestow divers fleers and kicks upon Convention—nay, comes out of the affair gospel-hot in following 'Nature' as the whole secret of Art. Argument would, perhaps, be lost on the fanatic of so silly a gospel as much as with one who held that blue was red. He would have what the Broad Churchism of journalists calls leniently 'a point of view,' the



modern substitute for a creed. But we cannot allow him to hop round to all the points of view in turn. The line must be drawn somewhere against culture. Thus if he 'appreciates' Mr. A. on the ground that Mr. A. has 'ever wooed Nature as his mistress,' he must not also smile approval on Mr. B., who is 'no slavish follower of Nature, but the exponent of a vigorous convention,' and he must, if we are to sympathise at all with his infatuation, hate Mr. C., who 'cultivates an original and interesting personality,' like the very devil.

But our writers are so undulant and diverse that one can imagine them, after a consultation with their artist, regarding themselves as briefed for number one, or two, or three of these incompatible eulogies, as the case may be. If a landscape artist, say, thinking of some painter in the Academy whose work he despises, mutters something about sticking to Nature being the right way to paint, this comes forth as 'the sincere conviction on which Mr. A. has based his life-work . . . a principle that may well . . . our younger artists.' 'Nature' is switched on here, just as a remark about the tradition of good painting would switch on 'convention,' and a grumble about a man being himself bring out the 'engaging personality.' Now, a speaker who takes the line of applauding Nature at the expense of Convention can reckon with certainty on raising a cheer from a popular audience, but he could reckon on that cheer with the same certainty if he described his man as painting the vision of his soul in place of 'a servile copying of Nature.' In the interests of clear thinking we must forgo one or other of those cheers, and refuse to employ phrases so loose that

statements the direct opposite one of the other can be used with equally pleasing effect.

These remarks are immediately suggested by the preface to a catalogue of Mr. Buxton Knight's paintings now on exhibition at the Goupil Galleries. The writer, 'A. L. B.,' is, if I mistake not, the author of a serviceable account of the work of Albert Moore. In the work of that painter Convention reigned, and 'Nature' was pulled up short by sudden jerks even in places where she was doing no particular harm, but transgressed the personal taste of the painter and the Chinese elaboration of his system. 'A. L. B.,' the enthusiast for an art thus sophisticated, will forgive my surprise when I find him apparently rounding on all its principles and apparatus, and hailing in Mr. Buxton Knight the noble savage who follows Nature only, distrusts the studio, does everything 'on the spot,' etches from Nature direct on the copper, and spends his life in a protest against Convention. I am not for the moment criticising Mr. Buxton Knight, who probably knows best how he can most comfortably produce his pictures; but trying to persuade 'A. L. B.' that he has fallen into a curious looseness of thought in erecting Mr. Knight's procedure into a method for all landscape-painters, and in supposing that by his method of studying 'Nature' Mr. Knight has shaken the dust of 'Convention' from his feet. Here are 'A. L. B.'s' words:

'Whatever he has done has been done on the spot, and with no other desire than to be faithful in his record. His etchings, which are numerous, are of the same technical order (what does "technical" mean in



this connection?), exact transcriptions executed in the open directly on the copper, and without the intervention of a sketch. It is this which gives him his claim to consideration apart from the majority of his fellows. Few modern landscape-painters can affirm the same absolute self-sacrifice, or can plead that they have to such an extent subordinated the not unnatural inclination to assert individuality at the expense of fidelity to Nature. That he should have done so all his life speaks well for his consistency, and implies a rare quality of belief in the soundest principles of Art. His system of work necessarily obliges him to be a wanderer. The ordinary limitations of a studio become impossible to a man who feels so keenly that Nature abhors confinement within walls, and shrinks from the glare of a top-light. . . . Whether as a teacher, or simply by the educational value of his works, it can hardly be disputed that an artist such as Mr. Buxton Knight becomes, by the very elimination of self from the pictures he produces, a most important rallying point for the sincere workers who wish to spend their lives in a protest against Convention.'

Now, I venture to suggest that the 'claim to consideration' is not a claim to consideration at all. We cannot, in our judgment of a picture, allow any marks because we happen to know that the painter has handicapped himself by obstinately carrying through all its stages out of doors. It may have been to the painter a 'sacrifice' or an indulgence, a pain or a pleasure—there are men who dislike sleeping or eating indoors—but as far as painting goes, an art intended for 'confinement within walls,' the chances are against a picture being

successfully carried through in the open. If some of Mr. Knight's fellows have found this out, they have all the masters on their side, and the modern who shares with him the somewhat widely prevailing superstition of carrying through a large canvas on the spot goes clean against the practice of Titian, of Claude, of Turner, who worked from studies. If Mr. Buxton Knight does not make studies before etching, Rembrandt did. There is no question of sincerity involved here, no 'sound principle of Art.' A man may omit preparatory sketches because he is too masterly to need them or too stupid to see their desirability; only the etching can tell us which. But, on the whole, and however much of preliminary thought a man may bestow on his subject in place of sketching, the chances are against the artist who embarks on so rarefied a convention as etching without giving himself the chance of correcting his design.

But to return to what is called with misplaced awe 'The Spot.' The disadvantages of the spot as a work-room are obvious enough. One of them is that Nature, instead of 'shrinking from the glare of a top-light' like her sensitive admirer, always provides a top-light on the spot. A studio is a place where light can be managed, admitted from the top or the side as the painter prefers; on the spot he must take what comes, and is usually found rigging up devices of umbrellas to form a makeshift studio. To put this more generally, a picture that is painted to be seen indoors cannot very well be painted in the different conditions of out-of-doors illumination; a painter is heaping up the difficulties against himself if he attempts it, for he never really sees his picture till he



brings it in. But the chief difficulty about the spot is that there is no such place. A man may religiously return to a point geographically identical in latitude and longitude, but light, tone, the distribution of sky masses, and consequently of shadows, are so shifting that, if his idea is to make 'exact transcription' of the scene before him, he will have to begin anew every time. In other words, the study is possible on the spot, but if the picture is carried out, then the painter must exercise as much abstraction in working from the shifting scene, must rely as much on memory and a determined design, as if he had abstracted himself into a studio and worked from his notes. Or he may carry the superstition to its logical issue and determine that the picture shall be only a study, limiting himself as Monet does, not only to the spot, but also to the instant, and producing a series of rapid notes of effect with a technique thereto adapted. To sum up, then, the spot would seem to be the proper place for studies, but the studio more convenient for picture-making. If a man likes to work in the less convenient fashion, there is no law to prevent him, but he cannot take credit for greater devotion to Nature because he has done so.

There remains the other point. If Mr. Buxton Knight's methods of work do not necessarily take us nearer to Nature, do they 'protest' in any valuable sense of the word against Convention? What Convention? Not, it is to be supposed, the convention of painting. The convention of painting is that we shall be amused by a representation of the world in the flat, cut and enclosed by a frame. Anyone who protests that he cannot be content with painted forms for

solid objects or limit his view to the frame misunderstands the terms of the Convention. This is not Mr. Buxton Knight's protest; for he practises etching, an art more removed still from realistic transcription of Nature, since it forgoes colour and limits itself to lines. Where is it, then, that Mr. Buxton Knight's 'transcription' defies Convention? He is not one of those who attempt literal transcription leaf by leaf, blade by blade; he interprets like other landscape painters. I fancy all that 'A. L. B.' means is that Mr. Buxton Knight has a good eye for certain effects in Nature, and succeeds in fitting his paint to these observations, while a number of his fellows who attempt the same thing, or pretend to attempt it, fail; that he is a real student and no superficial 'faker.' But he lumps this fact—which is very much to the painter's credit—with another which is really a weakness, when he says that Mr. Knight sinks his personality, has no desire but the faithful record, paints all sorts of Nature instead of cultivating a special and intimate Art, and that in all this he protests against Convention. Mr. Knight is rather casual in his choice of subjects and rather careless of design, is ready to go for the first effect he sees; and just as he makes etchings without filtering his view through sketches, so he makes pictures without straining, reshaping, purifying, intensifying his subject. Such processes are not the same thing as exalting personality at the expense of fidelity to Nature.

Think what a crumbling foothold, what a mythical starting point is this 'exact transcription.' Suppose Mr. Buxton Knight let loose in a field with a general intention of transcribing a tree in that field. With



the best will in the world for doing as Nature tells him and sinking his personality, Mr. Knight must assert himself to the extent of deciding at what distance he will transcribe his tree, what proportion of space it will occupy on his canvas, how strongly its mass and shape is to detach itself against the sky, how much of detail he will admit, whether he will give attention most to ramification or to foliage. This selection, which we unwittingly make in looking at Nature, made consciously, is what we call a picture, and no artist can altogether dodge the necessity for those deliberate acts of choice. For every degree of laxity in his choice he must pay by a lower degree of impressiveness and interest, a greater degree of casualness and fumbling in the result. There are, indeed, two kinds of taste—good taste and bad—but the man who cannot trust his taste will hardly arrive at the secrets of beauty by trying to do without taste at all.

Mr. Buxton Knight is far from having no taste or personality, but I should make it a reproach to him that he is often too casual, too easily contented, exercises too little initial deliberation, and settles himself to an ill-digested subject, trusting vaguely that application to the facts will pull him through. He is a very prolific painter, one of the sturdiest, most honest, most capable of the children of Constable. In one out of twenty canvases he will pull himself together and arrange a view of Nature that is dignified and impressive. There are few of his pieces in which we may not recognise one beauty or another of effect. But in too many the paint itself confesses by its ugly condition the groping that must follow if a subject is

too thoughtlessly taken in hand. The educational value of his work will be increased by opening our eyes to this defect rather than by erecting it into a canon of art.

1897



## THE BRINK

*At the Royal Institute of Water-Colour Painters*

*On the Brink of Discovery.* A Water-colour by E. J. Gregory, P.R.I.

THE scene is a narrow stream or backwater bordered and roofed in by willows. Behind these a punt is advancing; a lady reclines in its bow; the puntsman, passing under a break in the leaves, is brilliantly lit up, face and flannels, by the sunshine. In the foreground, under the thin shadow of the trees, a party of four ladies is having tea on the grass, and their boat is moored beside them. To these enter Mr. Gregory. Mr. Gregory, as a human being, is fond of riverside scenes, cool water slipping under the willows, the bright life of *fête champêtre*, pretty people prettily dressed. Of Sion it was written

Thy saints take pleasure in her stones,  
Her very dust to them is dear.

So to him the River; he takes pleasure even in the steam launches; their very varnish is dear to him.

But presently the painter arouses in Mr. Gregory; he determines to make a picture of the scene. And then complication begins. When he sits down to draw there is no longer one Mr. Gregory, but three, and the three are not on perfectly good terms with one another. Number one gets a fair start, numbers two and three looking over his shoulder and only interrupting him with suggestions; but by-and-by, when his

first impulse flags, and he hesitates how to proceed, those other two, both of them able and determined men, plant their camp-stools in front of his and proceed to finish the picture for him.

Number one is a luminist. When he looked at the scene he was entranced by the cool green hall, peopled by unobtrusive shadowed figures, upon which breaks the punt, glancing through the stems and sprays of willow. He worked out this bright centre with the leaves across it and then paused to consider how to dispose of the nearer shapes of trees and people. Number two is an illustrator. No sooner did he clap eyes on the two groups, the punt group and the tea party, than he imagined a little comedy. The couple in the punt are recognised and, all unwitting, are to plunge into an ambuscade as soon as they clear the willow. He fastens therefore on the near figures and poses them for this game of 'I spy.' Number three is a wonderful hand at working out certain things with photographic accuracy. All things do not lend themselves equally to his talent, and he is chiefly interested in the boat belonging to the tea-party. The result of these combined labours, rendered conversationally, is something like this.

*The Illustrator.* 'Let's see—run, you, with your tea-cup, to the willow over there, and hide behind it. Put on your most mischievous expression—that's it—there you are, ready to jump out. As for you . . .'

*The Imitator.* 'I'll make something of this boat, I think. Troublesome business all these leaves; they're not badly done, but there's no end to them, and when you put in the detail they're too yellow in one place and too blue in another; but a boat . . .'



*The Illustrator.* 'Capital! There's my picture. You two other girls look over from where you are, not quite so eagerly as your sister; and you Madame, be good enough to look amused, but of course a little deprecatory. If there were a dog for one of you to hold . . . but never mind . . .'

*The Imitator.* 'This boat will knock everything. Look! not only is there all that delicious spick and span drawing in the thwarts and rowlocks and oars, but who ever saw so unholy a colour as that rosy mahogany on the shaded side with the warm reflections from the bank playing into it! I'm bound to say I've carried it so far that the grass and figures look rather papery beside it, but one can't help that: grass is the deuce if you begin to work it out in detail. . . .'

*The Luminist.* 'These figures of yours are first-rate, nothing could be more spirited, but do you think that against that tree is just the place for her, attracting attention as she does . . .?'

*The Illustrator.* 'It's the only possible place to make the point, and of course she attracts the attention. She has the cue.'

*The Luminist* (more diffidently). 'Then I should have thought that boat became too important. It's a wonderful bit of work, I must say, but . . .'

*The Imitator.* 'My dear fellow, it's the most interesting thing in the whole picture.'

Put thus into words, the mixed aims of the picture are no doubt caricatured, but the three badly adjusted interests are there, and the wonder is that someone in the party does not assert himself and put the other two in their places. With the greater number of the painters at the Institute no such difficulty exists,

because their nature is much simpler; they are either pure artists, or pure illustrators, or pure imitators. By pure artist for present purposes I mean the man who has a ready decorative knack in arranging a given material, and using his medium; but does not care enough for any one thing to make it his own, whether it be the mischievous movement of a figure or the lights on a varnished punt. Mr. George Haité is a brilliant example of this kind. He could probably, out of his head, produce very fair versions of all the subjects treated on these walls, plausible, skilfully manipulated, effectively disposed. He is master in a world of *chic*, picture-patterns, picture-devices of remarkable range and variety. I imagine him, when Nature begins to stammer out her case, putting her at her ease with a smile and an assurance that he knows the exact treatment called for. Indeed in the excited atmosphere of the Institute, the picture-illusion perhaps only exists on such terms, and the extra gaiety in the tones of *On the Broads* may be necessary, like the rouging and cork lining of the stage, to transpose the sobrieties of Nature. Of the pure illustrator it is needless to give examples. By him I mean the draughtsman who transfers his drawings into some sort of colour as the more respected and saleable material. But the third, the pure imitator, fascinates me more than either, in an endeavour to follow the workings of his mind. Never to deviate into art even as a weakness, as a tribute to human imperfection, implies a strength of character in those painters for whose exercise there seems no adequate motive in what they do. There is a painter at the Institute who always stops me with this puzzle. Every year he sends one or two



versions of the same attempt upon literal imitation. The subject is a row of old calf-bound books, with a few others more irregularly disposed. One of them lies open, showing a title page, and a pen, ink-bottle, or pair of spectacles completes the group. The subject must have been accidental, to begin with, for there is no traceable amusement in the grouping of the shapes and colours, nor of admiration for the books as such. The bindings are commonplace and give out, at some of the corners, in the peculiarly disagreeable manner of decaying calf. I do not deny that something might be made of decaying calf by a manner of seeing and rendering it; but that is not the secret of this work. The fact is recorded in the same dutiful spirit as the rest. The open page is of course the most taxing part of this imitation, for the type has to be facsimiled. The attempt upon this is always minute, patient, extraordinarily careful, but not absolutely successful. I watch these gallant efforts, apparently foredoomed to failure, as Bruce watched the spider; I hasten yearly to see whether the painted title is indistinguishable from a printed. The author of the pieces in question is fond of sententious titles, and some day I hope to see in the catalogue No. 666, *Nunc Dimittis*.

## NATURE AND ART

*At the New English Art Club*

IF the New English Art Club were really a club, we should expect very often to find its rooms occupied by gentlemen hiding studiously from one another behind their newspapers—not so much from hostility as from sheer nervous inability to find a word to say to one another. Sugar and salt, oil and water, ordinary Christianity and belief in the efficacy of faith are not more sharply contrasted than the principles of many of the pictures which face one another on these walls. At election times a candidate's proposer and seconder probably swear that their man disagrees with them profoundly on all matters of art, and can be trusted to bring a new element of contradiction into the life of the society. The exhibition is like a magazine of the modern type, whose editor aims at getting the liveliest of all sorts within one cover—anarchist and Conservative, Christian and freethinker, poet and professor, side by side. In all this the Club follows the prevailing type, and is remarkable only for securing contributors with more discrimination, and making up its numbers with less profusion of padding than the rest. At this slack-water time, when there is little talent and less direction for it, when sculpture does not exist, and painting has become a desultory conversation about the weather and one's acquaintances, a variety of opinions hazarded on those topics does something to enliven the situation; nothing is pressed to danger-



point, and everybody retires convinced of the justice of his neighbour's observations.

Mr. Macgregor and Mr. Mark Fisher are very fair examples of opposites, for Mr. Mark Fisher imitates nature and Mr. Macgregor imitates art. Of the two, Mr. Macgregor's pictures must be much the easier to make, not, of course, for Mr. Fisher, who probably would have no idea how to set about them, but for Mr. Macgregor. Given his ready intelligence, this making of castles in the air, or rather of landscapes out of a kind of clay, must be child's play, whereas Mr. Fisher must work very diligently, early and late, to match all the tones and colours of his landscapes so that they belong to the same effect. To most people that would be as impossible as it would be for Mr. Fisher to make grandiose patterns in limbo like Mr. Macgregor. From Mr. Macgregor's caution, indeed, we must judge that he would find it difficult to work in Mr. Fisher's field; it is true that he used to handle bright slabby colour, but much as he now plays with composition; the mixtures amused him for a time, but they did not go very far, and were readily imitated, so he has given them up. There they hang then, grandiose ideas of landscape by an appreciative man who has been about among pictures; and the faithful nature—the three trees, three cows, and a pond—of the man who has never thought of a picture beforehand nor criticised his notes afterwards. If we can imagine a magician in the form of Hegel entering the gallery with a dialectic machine ready to apply to all the contraries he found there, these are two painters he would pounce upon to join in beautiful synthetic union. Or, for convenience' sake, let us suppose the more impos-

ible case, that these two painters were to set up business together; their collaboration would furnish a working model of the faculties wanted to make a landscape artist. In the morning we should see the Fisher-faculties with all their tackle ready at dawn, eager to go down to the pond and get to work, wondering what all the bother was about, but politely waiting for the Macgregor-faculties to give the word. The Macgregor-faculties are still in bed, reluctantly shaken from a dream in which the pond, the trees and the cows had assumed an almost Assyrian stateliness. A considerable time passes, while the Macgregor ruminates with signs of struggle and unhappiness. The Fisher waits, divided between pity and impatience. At last the Macgregor strikes his brow, and seizing a dying brand, chalks upon the floor a diagram of trees, water and cows, saying, 'Now I think if you were to arrange something like this it would be grand.' The Fisher sniffs at the symbolical trees and cows, but glad to be off on any terms, goes forth and returns with his landscape as nearly as possible fitted into the diagram. Then new trouble begins for the Macgregor over the design of the tones and colours. 'That colour on the path will never do,' he says, 'that Monet-Sisley pink. Yes, yes, I know, you tell me you saw it there; but you have only to look a little longer at the green or the yellow sky to get the balance different.' Sleepless nights follow for the Macgregor, and toilsome days for the Fisher, while out of the material that the second brings home the first sifts a picture, knocking his first abstract idea about till it takes life and a form that can marry with the living fact.

Such is the war-like partnership carried on, not by



day and night shifts, but over each act of sensation and production, by the art of which we can say that it is not merely a tasteful scheming of pictures, nor a thoughtless grubbing at Nature. Within one brain the Macgregor must give the Fisher his orders, and check every new perception he brings back, sometimes, in doubtful, moody intervals, giving him rope to see what his roving acquisitiveness will bring in, sometimes sending him for a holiday while deep schemes are brewing, but never letting him take his collections to market without overhauling, rejection, picking, remaking.

I must ask Mr. Macgregor and Mr. Fisher to forgive me if, for the sake of the illustration, I have overpressed the difference between them. I do not pretend to find in the gallery anyone who combines the two sides in perfect balance. Every one leans one way or the other. Mr. Steer, for example, is more on the Fisher than the Macgregor side; the critical side of his mind sometimes works lazily; but it does work, and that lifts his paintings into another and more arduous world.

1898

## DEGAS AND MONTICELLI

I see the dusk, with dædal art,  
 Prick seven stars in air;  
 You choose to see the hinder part  
 Of what you call a Bear.

*Mr. Arthur L. Collie and La Société des Beaux-Arts (Alexander Reid, Directeur), have pleasure in announcing that they are now showing, at Mr. Collie's Rooms, 39b Old Bond Street, a small collection of Pictures by the great French Impressionists. The collection includes seven works by Degas, and several by Monticelli.*

*To this enter an Arrogant Painter and his Reluctant Friend.*

A. P. Come along and look at Degas, and you shall make yourself disagreeable, as we agreed you should.

R. F. No, no. I am going to be humble, and you shall explain it all to me. First, here's an old lady with a very dark complexion—no, she's got her back to the light—why, I can't think: it makes her features so indistinct. Then there's a large wall, with a little dribble of ballet-dancers at the far end; the double-bass is the only important object in it. Then here is a young person trying on a hat. Now, I'm not going to criticise the tones and drawing and colour, and that sort of thing. I know you would say, Look at the quivering, infallible line of that glove, or the rhadamanthine justice of the tones on that nose, or the caressing flutter of the colour in the feathers of the hat. No doubt that is all as it should be, and exactly like nature; and no doubt that is what gives it so



extraordinary an appearance. Don't let us discuss it; I make you a present of the whole—

*A. P.* And think the concession a trifling one. Well, having given away the picture, is there anything in the frame you would like to object to?

*R. F.* Stop; there is everything in the picture still to object to, and I am going to begin. I think you sometimes talk of decoration as well as nature. Well, why can't the man compose?

*A. P.* I don't know what else to call this but composition, where every bit of shape and colour goes with every other bit, and does its duty to a general effect.

*R. F.* I wasn't thinking of that; I allow you the colour and effect. But why does he cut a second woman in two with a cheval-glass?

*A. P.* Perhaps that was his notion of composing. He didn't want, this time, to set up a second drama in her face; but he did need her, as a mass, to balance the other figure; and there's more story told, if that's what you want, by the half that is left, than most painters could express by the whole.

*R. F.* I didn't mean that; I meant that the cutting her that way was an awkward plan.

*A. P.* Say that the pudding you are accustomed to is made another way.

*R. F.* And that a new way is not necessarily a good one. But I don't hope to convince you. Let's leave those details and come to the important point.

*A. P.* Why, what's left now?

*R. F.* I must say it, however much pain it gives you,—the Subject and the Types. Both are unpleasant. If what you say about this man's eyesight, his

sense for form and colour and arrangement, is true—and partly I can see it is—then the quarrel begins in earnest: for I say that the greater his gift, the greater the demand upon it. If he can see so keenly and so conclusively, why not also be choicer in what he sees? Why paint this happy-ninny face, ogling its dowdy person in a mirror? Line for line, surely a smile is better than a smirk, and the marks channelled by noble character more interesting than the niceties of a grimace!

A. P. This would be most convincing *in vacuo*. If we were engaged in making artists, and having got as far as Degas, you suggested, Shall we throw in something of an archangel, and consult Mr. Ruskin about the sentiments to give the compound? I should think twice before refusing. Your bias, no doubt, is for one who can tell sad stories of the death of Kings, but must you, facts being as they are, exalt a mumblor and stammerer in that line of conversation, because to the man who has a gift of speech it comes more natural to talk about the weather? Here is a man who talks supremely well about hats and heads, and horses' legs, and other creatures' legs, and so forth, and I think they are worth hearing about when he talks of them. What right have you to prescribe a subject for him?

R. F. I don't; but I say that the sun shines on the just as well as on the unjust, and that Pegasus had legs as much as the last winner of the Grand Prix. The ballet-dancer has no peculiar attraction for cross-lights and reflections, because she has an ugly head, and Antigone, when she went to her dark bridal bed, had more interesting shadows on her face than Polly when she put her bonnet on.

A. P. Only the poor painter happened to be present



when the bonnet was fitted on, and not when those grand things happened. Polly will pose, Antigone will not, and it is the awkwardness of things that you are butting against. Besides, does Antigone always die in a picture, and is the stage of great deeds always lit and carpentered becomingly? Rather, the focus of history and that of the picture seldom coincide; not the critical event but the insignificant accident is the painter's opportunity; his heroes are among the supers of the dramatist, his *dénouements* during the waits and upon the empty stage.

R. F. Then my painter shall not be the slave of weather or of fact. Your Degas, with his endowment of vision, seems to me like a man who has a passport given him to be a spectator of the Greater Mysteries (and they are enacted to the imagination within the head), but who lingers by the way to look 'through keyholes' at lesser mysteries; he will spend all his time in the corridors, and never arrive; he is accredited to a Court, and loses his way into the servants' hall.

A. P. Yes, if the light leads him there; and with its presence and the painter's I shall think the company good enough. We seem to be infected, as Bacon would say, with the manner of the poets; and if I am to keep up the image, I should say that I prefer the dialogue of the lackeys as reported by a Shakespeare, to that of the angels as distorted by a lackey; and that is what you will get if you cling to your subject-criterion.

R. F. Neither would Shakespeare stop with the lackeys, nor need the reporter of the angels be one. And, report for report, I prefer a half-realised illustration of my ideas to the most complete rendering of

what would displease me if I saw it. It is to coerce my imagination to make it behold so particularly what my eyes would avoid.

A. P. It is to teach you how to see, and what you refuse to your vision is an expansion and a refuge. You are like a man with no appetite who should object to a dinner that it was a revolting exhibition of dead flesh, when one might have been admiring the moon. He who has the sense for food does not think of the joint as a carcass; he who has the sense for painting need not think of other connections of the subject than the visible. Its grosser ties become irrelevant. And by this sense you may learn to see nothing common or unclean, but beauty everywhere.

R. F. Yet the vegetarian, though hungry, might object to your banquet; then why not the moralist to your picture? It is very fine to represent your painter as a discoverer of unsuspected beauties, as who should say: I will show you wonderful sights if you will please to hold your nose the while. I cannot slip my associations to get pleasure on these terms. And what is more, I believe he does choose his subjects as subjects of association, and choose them perversely,—I call it a kind of bravado; he chooses what the *bourgeois* will dislike, and therefore he is dictated to by the *bourgeois*. If not, he has no feeling for personal distinction, and no imagination; to him Polly is as Antigone, and a thing is to him a thing, and not a thought and a memory and a desire.

A. P. It is at least an image and a glory; and Polly he sees, which I am sure you don't. But we are talking about different things. I have a sense that you do not possess; and to make things equal, I don't mind



saying that you have ideas that I don't share. Let us look at the Monticellis.

[They examine the *Souvenir d'Ecosse*.]

R. F. Is, then, Monticelli Italian for a smudge-board?

A. P. Yes, if you like, to begin with. Did you never admire the accidental mess of colours on a smudge-board, and wish you had thought of anything so good? He did.

R. F. Perhaps; but I don't call that a picture; I expect drawing, definition, design in a picture.

A. P. How much drawing do you insist on? Do you require a certificate in bumps and shadows for the presence of all the bones and muscles your text-book tells you of, and an assurance in outline of all that air and light so mercifully steal, or will you deign to be satisfied with drawing that gives all the grace, the dazzle, the colour of a form, without the scaffolding of its anatomy? Are your fellow-creatures to you always illustrations to a work on physiology, and did they never yield up the oppression of their humanity to become prismatic changelings, colour-phantoms, pleasures?

R. F. All very well; but who has been preaching realism and Degas?

A. P. Not I; his realism is a very fine pretext for a picture, but I hope a jewel is a reality too. Here is a painter so constituted as to see one in everything. It was about him the story of the jewel in the toad's head was told: he takes the jewel and leaves the toad. Nothing of the fountain there but the diamonds, nothing of the woman but the opal; Nature reduced to terms of gems.

*R. F.* What is he talking about now? Do you know, I have been looking closer, and it is wonderful how much you can make out. It is not unlike a Watteau, with its masquerading Arcadian figures.

*A. P.* Having noticed the pic-nic, could you not go a step on the other line, and make your smudge-board a palette? Suppose you put in Diaz between Monticelli and Watteau, and then carry back through Rubens to Venice,—Tintoretto himself, if you like?

*R. F.* Something might be made of that; Tintoretto's hasty, coruscating angels that leave a phosphorescent track, and Giorgione's sumptuous people that glow to music, turning into Rubens's blowsy wives, and then again waking up as dainty French Arcadians.

*A. P.* Gently. They were only disguised as Apostles or Fraus or Chloes; they were really called Rose and Blue and Mother-of-Pearl; and this is a happy family gathering, because it is sometimes long between their meetings. I believe the Mother is baptising two little twin-pearls at that fountain.

*R. F.* I deny that that was all; if Rose spoke to Blue, so did Pierrot to Columbine; they brought north from Arcady that whisper-gesture of their head, and dance-trembling of their feet. Think! it is a silver moment between two rains on a Scottish hill-side; the flimsy rout is flitting up through the broken gateway of a Highland keep, and before the glistening train is in, the cloud will shut down, those people of the prism and the pastoral will be gone, and Rose de Venise but half wed in gossamer to Robinet.

*A. P.* I see. Give you a title, and you will admire even a good picture.



## AT THE 'OLD MASTERS'

## A DIALOGUE

*A Symbolist. An Impressionist*

## I

S. O Impressionist, do I find you among the Primitives? I have long been anxious to meet you in a place like this.

I. O Symbolist, let me thank you for the wish before you add your reason. Yet I cannot say that I feel less hopelessly actual than I always do in your presence. For what constituency in your ideas am I privileged to stand, and do I indeed look like an Emblem?

S. Flattery was far from my thoughts. What I had in my mind was that when I meet you, as I often do, in galleries hung with impressions of the casual and the insignificant, you are able with a certain plausibility to assert that for the painter objects have no meaning worth considering, that personality goes no deeper than the cuticle, that it is of the essence of the art to be superficial, of the artist to be an outsider. And you are wont to buttress your argument by a scornful glance at works which appeal by their subject to associations, or refer by their title to a story, but that as pictures are mighty poor. I often have not the heart to defend my principles before such inadequate examples, and hence my satisfaction in finding you among those older masters of expression whose works are at once significant and pictorial.

I. O Symbolist, you surprise me greatly. I had just reached among these queer map-faces and meaning-tormented figures an island of refuge in this old man's head they say is by Dürer—what a wonder he has made of that toothless mouth of age!—and I have been wondering with what face you could hold to your contention among pictures like these. I do not find in the modern gallery a more hollow pretence of expressing a 'subject' than I do here; I only find that it was dictated by a different authority. Now it is the Public, then it was the Church; but the cold and fraudulent courtesy with which the older painter treats his Biblical commission is, if anything, more conscious than the attitude of the modern illustrator to his novel. Your vaunted 'subject' is an 'imposition' of the schoolmaster, and the painter indemnifies himself by truant excursions under cover of his task. I wonder how much Van Eyck, or whoever has borrowed his name, when he painted that superb altarcloth, meddled with its significance; I conceive it meant red to him, with gold spots. Or take that notable painting of Bassano's in the other room,—imposed subject, *The Angel to the Shepherds*; picture, some well-observed flesh with a happy consistency in the paint and admirable oppositions in the colour. This he borrows from Nature under mortgage only to some loutish country figures; and as for the supernatural explosion in the clouds, I prefer to shut my eyes to it, thinking that the red drapery in the foreground would excuse many angels.

S. I admit the failure in the angel; but can you seriously hold that it is tolerable so to treat such a subject,—to be so callous to all its bearings but one,



that you can count success in a life-study or a drapery compensation for so great an evasion? Let me take, if you will excuse the word, a crucial case? Would it be possible, for you even, to paint the Cross with an eye only to anatomy and the lights and shadows upon flesh? To do so would be to confess a mind incapable of seeing things in their due relations. How huge a failure in proportion to be absorbed in maimed humanity when that is but an incident of the sacrifice, an incident hardly appreciable beside its forsaken divinity.

I. Then is it to yonder Fleming I am to turn, who made that subject the pretext for a view of his native town; or do I understand you that the Raphael here fulfils your ideal? I see rather a confirmation of my view. He repeats, indeed, a decorous hieratic tradition; but to your eye there must be something frivolous in those fluttering ribbons of the angels about the Cross. I am reminded of the words of a certain prophet of your own about another picture of his,—the figures 'poised in the attitude of three humming-birds.'

S. You ride away on the particular instance. But can you not see in it at least the propriety of the symbolic form? To reinstate the scene as it may have happened would be to admit superfluous and distracting associations. Here is no detail that is not sanctioned by pity or devotion, and summoned by a befitting thought.

I. I am keenly aware of Raphael's or Perugino's one model coming in under some such pretext, and of the fact that the pupil is uncomfortably on the fence of his master's convention, without quite knowing which side of it he will drop.

S. Well, let the Raphael be. How would you yourself think proper to treat the subject?

I. I am embarrassed which of several replies to make. In the first place, I should be very unlikely to treat that event at all, not having seen it, and being under no temptation to reconstruct it fictitiously. You are constantly pressing upon me subjects which are great measured by some standard which has nothing to do with my painting.

S. Then it has no enthralling force for your imagination, such as to compel you to find a pictorial expression for it, in spite of difficulties? So be it; but now suppose for a moment you had been a spectator, what then?

I. I think the proper answer at this point would be made by our friend Realist. He asserts that in presence of the living fact there is always a fountain of suggestion, that it teems with expression more apt and poignant than the symbolist can invent, and that the 'crude' fact in Nature has not only natural revelations, but natural veils. He says he thinks you make a mistake in accumulating objects labelled with definite souvenirs; that, association for association, he prefers them as they come charged with vague anticipations; and I have no doubt he would contend that by waiting on the event he would find a moment when a haggard light or an ominous shadow would endow it more overwhelmingly to the imagination than any ingenuity in absence could contrive.

S. I should like to argue the point with him; but let us come back to yourself. Would you, in presence of this scene, allow an incidental horror to distort its whole weight and significance, because that first entrapped your eyes?



I. You forget that I am an artist. I should paint nothing that was to me horrible, though I admit I might be so unfortunate as to horrify you.

S. Put it this way. Would you allow an accessory beauty to usurp the centre of your contemplation?

I. Accessory! Ah! there is a straight issue, and I will fight you on this matter of relation. What is essential to me will indeed seem irrelevant to you, if you obstinately sit in a formal centre, and measure the importance of an effect by its distance from a fixed thought. I go with you into a shop and ask for a yellow coat, and you object,—No, you must have a black one, because I am in mourning; or, No, you must have a red one, because it is half a crown a yard, and that is the proper sum in relation to my income. I am not bound to choose my effect out of the shop of circumstance to suit with your associations, or with your intellectual price-list. You talk of 'Subject,' of 'Scene,' as of something made up and existing in fixed elements. It is only your preconceived picture makes it so, and the title of your picture that has a quarrel with the treatment of mine. Here, you say, is My Lord Thought with My Lady Suitable Feeling on his arm; these must take precedence of the Messrs. Things and Facts, and a person of breeding will remember exactly with what deference to treat each of them. No Miss Sense Impression or Master Strange Effect, because of native charm, will be allowed to speak till spoken to, but must sit mum in due subordination to you, the Master of Ceremonies. To all this I cannot assent. I am constantly invited to decorous parties of the kind. The Important Events are seated round in

their Sunday wear; the Appropriate Reflections stand by with nicely accommodated smile. But there is an unbidden guest who has a trick of intruding, and the intruder is Beauty. She seats herself at some unregarded corner of the board, and upsets its symmetry, or she ousts an entitled shadow, and all programme and etiquette are straightway at a stand. The exchange of scheduled compliments hushes at this audacious voice, till all listen open-mouthed; the carefully marshalled apparitions instructed to reply to the toasts of Literature and the Drama, the Church and the Universities, flit like shades at cockcrow, and the Intruder's chair becomes the seat of honour by natural prerogative. To speak plainly, the intellectual relations you deal in do not hold for me as a painter, and I cannot help it if the accident I call a picture happens to me in circumstances that have for you a ready-made connection. A gleam falls, the angle of a shadow shifts, and I am rapt away, intoxicated; a dream has come through the multitude of other business, and my business is with it. This is a magic that confers dignities of its own, annulling all previous degrees; the man who last moment was a pauper in society may become a peer in light, and the caprice of a shadow obliterate a throne. Tragedy, it may be, collected the materials for her own ends, but they serve another, too; the human paints and dyes may be there to a disastrous issue in fact; but this art will create from them a charmed heaven in despite of their purpose, and control wounds and squalor to other than a pitiful effect. For I have never been witness of the scene so horrible or so scurvy that did not carry with it a picture for its anodyne.



S. Out upon you, Anarchist of Sense, Somnambulist amid swords and lamentation! Is it, then, human to be able not to think, not to feel?

I. It is humane in the surgeon when his duty requires it; why not, then, for the artist if his pleasure makes it possible? As a man, I grant you, I might be overborne in face of the event; but it is as an artist you challenge me; under that mail I should be invulnerable to the shocks of feeling. It is inhuman if you like, for it is to enter another world upon the salvage of this. There have been weddings and burials, and agonies and battles; the moralist will make his own account with the coil of causes good and bad, the tragedian will centre on the tears and cries; but I hold myself equally justified with them if I can redeem from it an effect of vision, silent, immaculate. And I say it were possible to win this from broken flesh and blood, even if a god died. Now abuse me as you will. Say that painting is to me but a lust of the eye. I say it myself, not hoping to convince those who are incapable of the splendours of that desire that I am more than a sensual trifler. But I have been turning this discussion into a rhapsody. It is time you should retort for the Symbolist.

S. I will when next we meet.

## II

I. I was so greedy last time that you ought to do all the talking to-day.

S. I know: it is your way to reiterate with a fluent defiance various things that I do not deny, and now that you have done so, I should like to point out some

things that you ignore, for your 'art of leaving out,' however convenient to a controversialist, is not convincing, and in logic, at least, impressionism is out of place. Now, as I understand your account of yourself, you drift among events as a vagabond responsible only to a single sense, a thief of effect. You are an interloper for whom the business on hand is never more than a turn of the kaleidoscope, a change of the motley. I will take, you say, out of tragedy only its vermillion, out of the puddle its yellow-ochre; a ruffian may hit just the tone I require, or a hero by his bulk serve my turn almost as well as a haystack. Now I want to know why, if you have no business with the murder or the puddle as such, you do not content yourself, having snatched your red or yellow, with making a patchwork of them, as ladies make crazy quilts from rags of diverse origin, but instead retain so much circumstance, encumber yourself with an image, however slight, of the object or person or event?

I. Why, because the pattern is so closely implicit in the stuff that I could not tear it away if I would; the circumstantial patchwork excels the ingenuity of any I could contrive, so I follow the facts just so far as my effect is a part of them.

S. That is what you say, but I must take leave to present you with another motive. You are really playing a game subtler than you acknowledge, namely Hide-and-Seek, the game of all decorators. Why, though you often reduce the portrait touches of your subject to a minimum, do you never completely discard them? For this reason, I take it, that 'recognition' is as much a device of your craft as of the Greek playwrights. You reduce a scene to its most crepus-



cular terms, and when I approach it, I am first aware only of the patchwork pleasure; but all the time I know, and am excited by the anticipation, that it will resolve itself into constituent natural objects. Then comes the pleasant shock of recognition, as much as when a Gothic boss is found to have dissimulated angels. From this view I return at will to the pattern-effect, and between the two I am sent backwards and forwards as in a see-saw, with a heightened pleasure in the sensation because of this reverberation from a perception. And when you say that I am going outside of the picture for my source of pleasure, I retort by asking: Why do you introduce this distraction, which must infallibly set the see-saw going? You really do it because you enjoy see-sawing yourself, and that to a morbid extent, for you love to get your pattern and your puzzle in unlikely places. Yet you pretend that in your hide-and-seek game you are only bent on the hiding, and not on the finding, which is half the fun.

I. No, no. Blind-man's Buff I leave to you.

S. I don't expect you to admit anything; but suppose, in a moment of frankness, you allowed us to pull down this fence you set up between the effect and the fact, we might be emboldened to ask you to pull down one just as arbitrary where there is an ancient and undisputed right-of-way. We have crossed from the region of surfaces and lustres and textures to the perception that these make not merely a pattern, but a thing or person; why now are we to strip this thing or person of all that thought and pleasure and pain have done to multiply its appeals, or horror and disgust to cancel them? Why is it to undress at your command, and come, a naked colour-and-angles, into your can-

vas? Why, in the name of—of Impressionism, must I do anything of the sort to my other impressions? It is you who are the intellectual juggler contriving this filter, this strainer of associations, of which the general law is that no one may employ two faculties on the same object, and the particular application that the painter must be nothing but eyes. Again you delude yourself. Your instinct is, happily, wiser than your theory, and chooses for your portraits types whose meaning as character adds a second, a remoter but not less powerful reverberation to the initial impression; for a moral recognition is now reflected back on both perception and sensation. You scout all this; but would you seriously contend that because the main thing in bon-bons is that they should taste sweet, they must therefore not be shaped and coloured pleasantly? Why, then, must a picture look pleasant, but not think sweet; and why must the painter be excelled by the confectioner in the power of aggravating one joy by another?

I. I have no objection to the painter having fine sentiments; but even if you can argue to his possession of them from the treacherous premisses of his painting, I do not see that you have touched him as a painter. Painting and its preoccupations proper begin where all that ends.

S. Yes; but the painter has to begin where 'that' begins; why, then, be so desperately negative about it, and not make a merit of the necessity. A subject has to pass the review of his thoughts and sentiments before he accepts it as sensation, or else he stands convicted of want of breeding, of feeling, of intelligence. Did I understand from what you said of 'decorous



assemblies,' that you keep your hat on at a banquet, or enjoy a music-hall song in a cathedral?

I. I say that the painter may or may not have a taste in the kind of impression you call a cathedral; he may have no taste for ideas, and yet an immortal taste in forms and colours.

S. Then surely you shift your ground. Your theory is not of what painting ought to do, but an apology for the painter without intelligence.

I. No; it is a definition of jurisdiction. You insist on trying a case of painting before a literary tribunal.

S. Literary! I thank you for the word. It is a common gibe of your side that we treat painting as 'literature in the flat,' and I think that no more pedantic formula was ever invented by a German for the misleading of Frenchmen than the theory it covers. Since when was it ordained that thought and feeling are peculiar to Literature; that Drama must never be seen on the stage, but only expressed in words; that, although an event is always a scene first in Nature, it must needs be a written description in Art? Literature, no doubt, has many ways of attacking thought and feeling and event. But paint has its expressions, too, and these its own, and without literary counterpart. If narrative only can give the full order and succession of events, it can never compete with painting in simultaneous presentation. Or take the case of a trick of thought which has its apt expressions in either art. The collision of thoughts that is expressed as an epigram in verse may, by a juxtaposition of two objects in paint, be sprung upon us with a more sudden emphasis, and yet with a quieter effect of reserve.

I. But where in all this does the painting come in? I allow that you may construct a pictorial hieroglyphic, and convey your thoughts in some uneasy heraldic language.

S. You forget, to quote your own phrase, that I am an artist; and your logic forgets once more that a thing may play a double part. Painting is, indeed, to me first and foremost a symbolic language; but why need the symbol, because it is significant, fail to be beautiful? You asked me to say 'how a picture happens for me.' It exists for me, then, first as a thought or a dream, but it demands expression as a decoration. I refuse to act waiting-maid to Nature with a mirror ready for her capricious moments; she is to me the keeper of a promiscuous store that must furnish me with the image I am in need of to illustrate a thought. If she offers to give away pretty trifles along with my purchase, I refuse them as superfluous. My thought is thus frugal in its demand on sense, because to allow any chance-comer, any intruding image, however beautiful in itself, to enter and take a disproportionate place, would be to clog and obscure the order and rhythm of the whole, which is one of thought. Every detail must literally tell.

I. Alas! I set you a bad example of metaphors. Descend to particulars. Paint me your Crucifixion.

S. I do not ask for a better example. The Cross itself, as the central symbol of the event, must be the key-note of the decoration; and by a predominance to the sense, and by responses and subordinations in the composition of the parts, express to the eye its control in thought. And those qualities of emphasis and



proportion and attraction in design I must see throughout, or fail as a painter, for these are the resources of my language on the side of sense, just as a poet must render an emphasis of thought by fitting it to the metrical emphasis of his verse. Then as to what I should express of the subject. I might centre on the solitary gauntness of the Cross itself, and the exaltation of its 'victor-victim,' or else on the white, upturned faces from the crowd, or on pathetic or ironic figures among them. But let me describe to you rather the conception of a friend, because it shows a freedom in the imagination of the scene by which thought abolishes history, and portrays itself in a way that may seem to you fantastic. He believes that the old subjects of religious legend are still the richest for the painter; that their symbolism is unexhausted, but must be renewed in its application; that there is room and call for an iconic art. In this instance he has replaced Golgotha by the immense square of a modern city. There are buildings round about, railway-stations, cafés, churches. A limitless crowd fills the scene, of whom a few stand round the three crosses in expectation, giving their attention chiefly to those of the 'thieves,' of whom one is a philosopher, and the other, the impenitent, a poet. In the foreground, a group of well-known commentators and theologians divide the garments. There are many other details, but a hint is enough.

*I.* His philosopher and poet will have to be labelled. Is this in colour?

*S.* No; in black-and-white.

*I.* I should like to hear the opinion of the Church on your friend's sense of relation. It seems to me that

those same relations are as much at the mercy of officious thought as of irresponsible sense.

S. You affect, then, to be unconvinced?

I. I am aware the moment has come when we ought to discover, on one another's necks, that because we begin at different ends, we meet in the middle. But, happily, I see no signs of it. What a comfort that I have an untenable theory on which I can paint, and you—a form of activity that allows you such a charming theory!

S. You will serve for an emblem after all, that of Impertinence!

1892



## PERSPECTIVE AND FRAMES

HERE is the first volume of a complete Ruskin; a monument to the writer and to the devotion of the two editors.<sup>1</sup> I will choose for notice here some papers that Mr. Cook has disinterred from Loudon's *Architectural Magazine* of 1838-9, and one from the same editor's issue of Repton's *Landscape Gardening* of 1840. The first group discusses Parsey's theory of the convergence of perpendiculars, the final paper deals with a point arising out of this discussion, namely the reason for the shapes of pictures. I am the more interested in these papers because I had ventured some observations on this last subject a good many years ago<sup>2</sup> and reprinted them in a summary form in a recent book, and I was unaware that Ruskin had discussed the same problem. There are few artistic or artistic-scientific problems that he has not somewhere or other handled.

First came the question raised by Parsey's book. Avoiding technical terms as much as possible it may be thus expressed. Suppose yourself to stand in the middle of a square with buildings on either hand and a tower directly in front. The lines of pavement on either side, the lines of roofs and mouldings of the buildings, all of which are really parallel to one another, appear in perspective to converge and rush together, and if they are prolonged meet in what is

<sup>1</sup>*The Works of John Ruskin*. Edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn. Vol. I. Early Prose Writings. (1834-1843.) London: George Allen. 1903.

<sup>2</sup>See *Spectator*, 1896.

called the 'vanishing point.' This convergence is represented by the draughtsman. But it is not only those lines that converge. Consider the sides of the tower. Even if the tower is the same width all the way up these lines, which are in that case vertical, and parallel to one another, also appear to converge. Indeed they are not, to the eye, straight lines at all, but curves, bending inwards above and below the level of the eye. Now Parsey, observing this fact and supposing himself to observe it for the first time, and observing also that draughtsmen, instead of drawing these lines as converging, draw them vertical and parallel, demanded that architectural draughtsmen and artists should reverse their practice and represent the convergence. He sent a specimen of this corrected perspective to the Academy, and attempted in vain to get the Institute of British Architects to listen to his theories. They refused discussion, on the ground that it was not 'prudent.' An odd thing was that Parsey did not see that what is true of perpendicular lines is also true of horizontals. That is to say, if we consider the horizontal lines on a building standing square in front of us they too appear to bend down to either side if they are above the level of the eye, and to bend up if they are beneath it. Parsey's contention had been reviewed in a loose satirical fashion by someone who signed as 'Candidus.' Then Ruskin, signing as 'Kata Phusin,' struck in. He was, be it remembered, only nineteen years of age, and still at Oxford. He saw that Parsey was right about the converging perpendiculars and pointed out that the horizontals also converge. But he combated the view that the convergence should be represented in drawings, and gave the reason that



the eye only takes in, for the purposes of drawing, an angle of sixty degrees, and that within this angle the convergence is barely perceptible. In this he was quite wrong, as he had to admit later. He was wrong about the perceptibility, and I may add that he assumed a great deal in fixing the picture-field at sixty degrees. That limit is accepted by perspective-theorists generally, but it is only an approximation to the limit of *clear* vision. The limit of vision is nearer 180 degrees, as anyone can satisfy himself by moving his hand round from behind his head while keeping his eyes fixed on a point directly in front of them. It is because of this that the problem under discussion becomes acute in drawing from nature, as anyone who has done so and reasoned about his difficulties must have discovered. To return, however, to Loudon's pages. It was a Mr. W. W. Pocock who pulled the theory of the matter straight. He argued that in the matter of the perpendiculars both Parsey's theory and the traditional manner of representing them were correct,—for this reason. When we look at a picture from the proper point of view<sup>1</sup> the picture itself falls into perspective: *i.e.* the sides of the frame, which are actually vertical and horizontal, curve away up and down and at either side just as the verticals or horizontals do in the field of vision that the picture represents. Therefore, if we draw them vertical and horizontal, they will appear to converge to exactly the right extent when the picture is looked at from the right point of view. Ruskin's further remarks were a following of this clue.

<sup>1</sup>The point of view is determined as follows. We must suppose the picture to become transparent like a pane of glass and that the lines of the picture overlies the lines of its subject, as if traced upon them.

There can be no doubt it is the right reply to Parsey's difficulty, though it does not dispose of all the difficulties of the subject. Into these, however, I must not here enter.

But Ruskin's part in this first discussion led to an interesting development. It was objected to his general attitude that it was not possible in all cases to take, towards the picture, the point of view that would set the perspective right. For example there is the case of small engravings of a few inches' scale. To make these fill the field of vision they would require looking at so close that the nose would touch the paper. Ruskin's reply was characteristic. Such an engraving, he said, is wrong. If its limits cut hard lines within the sixty degrees angle it is disagreeable and destroys illusion. The limits of the picture-field ought to be those of the field of vision. Hence, he went on to argue, the rightness of the Turnerian vignette, which, occupying only a part of the field, does away with the hard limits, and fades away gradually so as not to set up cutting lines. Now the true rationale of page-illustration is evidently different from what Ruskin lays down. When the small illustration is properly handled it is designed to be looked at from a distance that includes the whole page, and the cutting lines of its edges are intended to produce their effect as lines within that larger field, not to be the outside limits of a field. The same is true of pictures other than easel pictures, for example pictures that form part of the decoration of a building. To put it generally, when a picture or illustration is part of a bigger whole, a wall or a page, it must not be designed only for the single point of view in which it



occupies the whole field of vision. This case, which Ruskin took as the universal, is only one case, and a late case is the development of painting. Where he was right was in seeing that the Turnerian vignette assumed the whole page as a vague of picture-field, on which only one spot was defined. And he stumbled incidentally on that theory of impressionism which explains the comparative measures of definition in different parts of the modern picture-field by the distribution of attention. I must quote a paragraph in full, to put beside a passage of Reynolds that I have more than once quoted in this connection.

'When an artist is *composing* his picture, he supposes the distribution of sight, which may be called for convenience the attention of the eye, to be perfect; and considers only that indistinct and undetailed proportion of forms and colours, which is best obtained from the finished drawing by half closing, and thus throwing a dimness over the eye. But, in finishing, he works on quite a different principle. One locality is selected by him as chiefly worthy of the eye's attention;<sup>1</sup> to that locality he directs it almost exclusively, supposing only such partial distribution of sight over the rest of the drawing, as may obtain a vague idea of the tones and forms which set off and relieve the leading feature. Accordingly, as he recedes from this locality, his tones become fainter, his drawing more undecided, his lights less defined, in order that the spectator may not find any point disputing for authority with the leading

<sup>1</sup>I fear I am responsible for the phrase 'focus of attention' to express this act, which has now got into all the political leading articles and speeches. Focussing is part of the process, but the bringing to bear of the spot of clear vision in the eye is the characteristic part of the act.

idea. For instance; four years ago, in the Royal Academy, there was a very noble piece of composition by Wilkie, Columbus detailing his views, respecting a Western continent, to the monks of La Rabida. The figures were seated at a table, which was between them and the spectator, their legs being seen below it. The light fell on the table, down the yellow sleeve of a secondary figure, catching, as it passed, on the countenance of Columbus. This countenance and the falling light were the leading ideas; everything diminished in distinctness as it receded, and the legs below the table were vague conceptions of legs, sketched in grey.'

That passage might have been signed by R. A. M. Stevenson, in whose writings the theory of definition being controlled by distribution of attention is so clearly expressed. It is noticeable in Ruskin at this date that he attempts to argue to the ordinary rectangular shape of pictures from this very advanced impressionistic theory of the picture, dismissing architectural reasons as 'upholsterer's.' His signature, 'Kata Phusin,' was profoundly appropriate. The natural shape of the picture, he says, would be a circle, since that is the shape of the field of vision, and its diameter would subtend an angle of sixty degrees at the spectator's eye. And he goes on to find reasons against the circle in the difficulty of establishing which picture lines are verticals and horizontals in the absence of the rectangular frame.

If we are to be really exact the natural form would not be a circle, but a ragged ellipse; partly because we have two eyes, not one, partly because from the shape of the features round the orbit we see more to the sides



than we do up and down. Within this field there is the clearer field of the 'sixty degrees' and the vaguer field beyond. There are other peculiarities, if we like to go into them. For example there is a wedge in the middle of the ellipse caused by the nose, where vision is imperfect, because monocular. The owners of aquiline noses see the world less clearly just round about their nose than the owners of the humble inquiring snub, and have to make up for it by their assumption of proud indifference. What is more important is that the shapes of frames were really determined by architecture. The rectangular shape is that of panels. Panels are mostly rectangular because walls are, and walls are because floors are flat, and rectangular for convenience in planning. Pages, again, are rectangular for convenience of writing and printing and of putting books in shelves. A proof of this dependence of the frame on architecture is that in Florence, where the circle was a popular architectural filling for the spandrels of an arcade (as in the Hospital of the Innocents) the 'tondo' became a popular shape for pictures. When the oval was popular in decoration in the eighteenth century it became a popular picture shape. And the reasons enumerated by Ruskin for the superiority of the rectangle as a basis and reference for picture-composition have doubtless supported the architectural reasons against any tendency of the vignette to control the shape of frames as well as of the designs inside them.

## DRAWING AND LEGEND

*Drawings by Charles Keene at the Dutch Gallery—Remaining drawings by Phil May, and drawings by Rowlandson at the Leicester Galleries.*

CARICATURE-DRAWING has a rather difficult life among us, not only because a severe code of limits has to be observed compared with an earlier freedom, not only because, when these are observed, there is a haunting fear that to treat an opponent as anything but a noble, sincere and generous comrade is 'un-English' and 'savours of personalities.' There is all that to contend with, but perhaps the most deadly enemy of the caricature is the drawing-schools.

I think it has been objected from time to time against the brilliant caricatures of a certain colleague on this paper<sup>1</sup> that they are not 'well-drawn'; that, for example, when he portrays an eminent diplomatist as absolutely spherical he has been guilty of exaggeration.

Or again, it is severely said of Mr. F. C. Gould that he is not a great draughtsman, that his cartoons would be nothing 'without the joke,' that is to say, if the legend were unread, the persons and circumstances unknown, and the drawing regarded as a picture of figures *quelconques*, it would be no longer so funny. Conundrums are out of fashion as a form of wit, but I never heard it objected to them that if you were to cut off the second half, namely the solution, they would not be so amusing as before. And the cartoon made up of drawing and legend has so much of the conundrum

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Max Beerbohm.



form of wit that it tickles you to begin with by something odd in the disposition of its figures, but holds you in suspense till you turn to the legend for the full solution of the oddity. It is a pleasure in three courses, vague amusement and expectation while we look at the picture, then the illumination of the dialogue, and then the return with heightened sense of amusement to the drawing. In most cartoons, it is true, this reaction is faint. Perhaps drawing is good, or legend is good, or both are good: but there is no cogent reason why the particular words should be assigned to the particular figures. But when the backward and forward between text and drawing proves remarkably apt, then we have an art that cannot be pulled to pieces for separate marks on drawing and literature.

We may readily admit that Mr. Gould is not a draughtsman as the word applies to a Charles Keene. We should never look at the hands, the clothes, the accessories of setting or landscape in his drawings to find delight in the way they are seen and drawn. Give Charles Keene a human figure or scrap of landscape to draw, quite apart from any point of wit to be made, and his sense of character and beauty will take hold of it and express it so that we shall never ask for a legend. Set this task to Mr. Gould and we should probably get a very helpless and uninteresting piece of work. Yet there is a sense in which he is an excellent draughtsman. He is a politician and a wit, and he has made an extremely effective weapon of drawing for this special purpose. Examine the actual Balfour and the actual Chamberlain as casual life or the photograph presents them, and compare with these physiognomies what Mr. Gould makes of them. What an

art of interpretation and suggestion there is in the little accretions of expression by which these images have been wrought out. If he essayed to draw a portrait of either man correct in curve and measurement Mr. Gould would be working without his private guide and incentive to drawing and would fail disastrously. But let him work with a political point to make out of the features, and by a series of delicate distortions he will so persuade us of intense perkiness in one case and dreamy flaccidity in the other, that when we see the actual man we shall resent his failure to come up to the reading of his character, to fill out the part for which a witty partisan has cast him. At what is for him the useful edge of drawing, Mr. Gould has wrought his weapon to a wonderful temper and sharpness. At the beginning his want of general facility and ignorance of construction may have seemed to stand in his way: in the end they have been to his advantage, for he has invented his means of expression and they exactly fit his purpose. Suppose, for instance, that he had acquired the kind of accomplishment that Mr. Bernard Partridge possesses, the result might very likely have been to throw scruples in the way of his instinctive and direct seizing of expression. He might have begun to measure and to copy and lost his caricature-art in the process. Mr. Partridge's difficulty is to put any fun into his blameless drawings. Mr. Gould's is with any drawing he puts in that is not fun.

But if we are apt to ask of our comic draughtsmen that they shall make themselves into Leightons before they dare to begin to amuse us, we are also apt to demand rather unreasonably of every draughtsman



who is a humorist that he shall be a wit as well, and be able to drive the double team of drawing and legend with equal skill. Charles Keene was not only an exquisite observer and artist, but a humorist as well. Yet the invention of witty legends was no necessary part of his natural artistic production. It was required of him in *Punch*; he was not the man to rebel against the conditions of his work, and he got together, in one way or another, a very fair number of comic situations and dialogues as occasion for his drawings. But this necessity of the form in which he worked often embarrassed him, and every now and then forced him to take refuge in the domain of the professional joke, a domain very much restricted in this country, and a dreary one at best. His colleague, Du Maurier, belonged to the other type. It was natural to him as to Gavarni, Forain, and Caran d'Ache to express a satirical social sense in legend and drawing alike, and to invent a little world of types for the theatre of his wit. For Keene the order of things was rather to take pleasure in sketching, say a cabby bending from his box to take his fare, and then to hunt up some scrap of dialogue that would make a delicious study qualify as a joke. For this reason one prefers his studies and first ideas before the bit of forcing takes place that makes the drawing a *Punch* drawing. The effort to clinch the dialogue point, to make the persons definitely, professionally funny, often robs them of the richer and vaguer atmosphere of character in which they live. Cut away the legends and his best work will suffer little.

The same thing is true, in his degree, of Phil May. For flexibility as a draughtsman and gift as an artist he

is not comparable with Charles Keene, and the process-block helped to harden and mechanise his manner. But he too had a province of life and a humorous observation of it, and he too must have been pestered with the necessity of finding a witty legend to accompany every drawing. His finds of slum dialogue were sometimes first-rate, e.g. the 'Where've yer been?' 'I've been to the pawnbroker's.' 'Garn! yer always was a beggar to brag.' But when nothing of this sort turned up, he relapsed into what passes for wit in the 'gag' of the music-halls, and the drawings in these cases are drawings of professional comedians rather than of characters.

I think, then, that the editors of our comic journals would do well to recognise the difference between the humorist in drawing and the wit. They should not insist on the first supplying a legend with his drawings, or on the second being a 'correct' draughtsman. A Charles Keene or a Phil May should be encouraged to make his studies of life without the fear of not finding a joke to fit them; and the wit allowed to make as special and irresponsible a use of drawing as he likes, so long as he can strike out the intellectual spark from the clash of legend and illustration. The editors will rarely find the great wit among the great draughtsmen. Imagine Rowlandson, who hangs beside Phil May in Messrs. Brown and Phillips' new gallery, imagine this artist of an unspecialising period forced into the cramp of a modern paper, told off to do the high-class, middle-class, lower middle or Bohemian joke! Should we not have a great deal more of what is plentiful enough in his work, the sloppy-monstrous, exaggerated half-hearted buffoonery? As it was, his curious talent,



moving freely between the targets of the monstrous and the graceful, between Hogarth and Gainsborough, not seldom hit its mark. Tied up to make practice at the modern John Bull's eye and that of his daughters he would have been a duller artist.

The freedom I appeal for in our too-comic papers is all the more needed now that the scope of artists in the illustrated papers generally is becoming so circumscribed. How the 'art-editor,' with his photographic standard of drawing, would frown at a Rowlandson's loose and whimsical line! The thing is reduced to an absurdity when the draughtsmen of these papers are forced, in self-protective mimicry, even when they make drawings, to give them the appearance of having been executed after photographs. Take, for example, the case of a political meeting held in the evening like some of Mr. Chamberlain's recent appearances. It is impossible to photograph these without a flash-light, an interruption it is not yet customary to allow. The draughtsman makes his sketches, and would naturally make them in line, and if he has talent will hit off something of the character and action of the speaker. But he is not allowed to publish his sketches in their veridical and valuable shape. He has to waste his short time in producing from them wash-drawings which imitate the photograph's illusion of tone, but lose whatever character existed in the sketch. Why, I asked an eminent authority in these matters, are these views published, which are not in the least like Mr. Chamberlain, or indeed like anything at all but a bad copy of a non-existent photograph? He replied that if editors were to give the public line-drawings they would not consider they were getting value for their

money, because wash-drawings are more costly to reproduce. He knows his public, with its topsy-turvy ideas, but there is, after all, another public, if not so big a one.

1903



## PHOTOGRAPHY AND DRAWING

IN the calendar of criticism, like that of sport, certain lesser diversions fill in the off-seasons between the big events of summer and winter. When the football and cricket celebrations are not in full swing, leap-frog, marbles and rounders steal punctually in. So in the galleries; between summer and winter there are minor sports. Thus there is a sort of tip-cat that regularly hits one in the eye when returning to town—the question ‘Is Photography a Fine Art?’ No one, I suppose, who thinks about it, denies that photography is an art in various degrees of fineness, but the real question behind the ambiguous one is whether photography will ever supersede drawing. I have returned to my duties so late that the hottest of this annual encounter is over with the exhibitions, but I find on my table a solid relic in the shape of a volume called *Photography as a Fine Art*.<sup>1</sup>

The book is a eulogy of some six American photographers. The writer has an appalling command of recent criticism as applied to painting, and he lays it all at the feet of his photographers; but the interesting and touching thing about the photographers is that they are not at all satisfied with the results of their skill, and do everything in their power to turn the photograph into something else, namely a drawing. Mr. Bernard Shaw<sup>2</sup> has been trying to incite them to

<sup>1</sup>By C. H. Caffin. London: Grant Richards. 1902. 10s. 6d. net.

<sup>2</sup>*Amateur Photographer*, 11th October, 1902.

take a bolder line, to proclaim that the day of the painter is over, that all the art of Velazquez, at least, is superseded and outdone by the photographer. But the photographers know better. Not content with arranging their material beforehand with the utmost care, on the lines taught them by painters, they are now working at getting full control of the tones afterwards in what the camera has made of this arrangement. By the ingenious devices of glycerine and gum bichromate printing they are able to alter values, almost in fact to paint-in the tones between the contours of a form by graduating the development of the print. Thus treated, the photograph becomes a hybrid: it is half photograph, half wash-drawing. But the contours obstinately remain: the next step obviously is to alter and re-draw them. And if the photographers in question were equal to the task they would do this too; some of them are artists enough to wish to do it. But if they were artists enough actually to do it, the photograph would no longer be a photograph at all, but a drawing. The man who could control a photograph to this completely satisfactory point would never take photographs at all, except as documents.

Mr. Shaw misses the real point when he discusses the efforts of the photographer to approximate to drawing. He sees clearly enough that the attempts of the photographer to forge the technique of another medium are futile and silly. Thus Mr. Hollyer has lately exhibited an excellent photograph printed on canvas, so as to have the grain of a painting. Others print on rough paper to get the texture of chalk, stop out and blot their backgrounds, and so forth. But



these superficial imitations of technique are mere sops to the hunger of the photographer who has any tincture of art. He knows that there is something in drawing which beats him even on his own ground of giving the truthful impression of life. He will never get that elusive something from the photograph, and Mr. Shaw is perfectly right in telling him that he is on the wrong track in attempting it, and that he had much better satisfy himself with the undodged photograph. But when he is assured that the undodged photograph takes the place of the drawing and is a great deal better, the photographer shakes his head. He is not deceived.

There are degrees of dodging among the photographs in the book referred to. Mr. Annan's photograph of a Venetian canal, which is slipped in among the American examples, comes just about as near a picture as careful artistic choice of material, along with rare luck in the angle of the oar and pattern of the splashed water, will bring the photographer.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Frank Eugene, on the other hand, shows us the photographer in full revolt against his process. In his photograph of a horse in a stall he has made use, we are told, of 'fearless etching' in the background. What he has done is to obliterate the background with a number of aimless scratches, but so far from being fearless, he

<sup>1</sup>There is an amusing example of the photographer's wrestle with brute fact in Mr. Horsley Hinton's account of one of his works in the same number of the *Amateur Photographer*. He first of all dug up and replanted part of his foreground. Then he borrowed a sky from another view. Finally he added a new horizon from a third. Yet this compound, with its two horizons and three illuminations, is as far as ever from being a picture, because the group of trees in the middle distance was too big to dig up and replace with better shapes, like the docks in the foreground.

has stopped short at the horse, which remains obstinately photographic, all the more so for the sudden break into a world of scratches round it. In another example he has posed a model on a sofa, and then 'by the use of the brush and needle the sofa upon which the model reclined has been converted into water.' The result is entitled 'Nirvana.' Mr. Eugene is a better photographer than he is a draughtsman, so that the result of his etching and brushwork is not very like water, and even if it were more like, the action of the figure is so evidently not that of a floating body that the greater resemblance would only make the whole scene incomprehensible. But this unlucky idea of turning the cushions into water has one curious result. However unlike to water, this intrusion of drawing that hardly deserves the name has the effect at once of making the body look even more impossible as a body than the scratches are as waves. There it is, as like to the facts as a photograph can make it, and yet, for the want of something that the waves have in a feeble degree and that it has not, its staring resemblance to life is unconvincing. Now all that the waves possess of resemblance to life is a faint rhythmic impulse that unites them. By possession of this they seem comparatively organic and living: the forms of the body have something stiff, broken; it looks chopped and cut out, and with all the amazing likeness of its parts to bits of a body, it misses altogether the supple continuity that is the first and indispensable quality both of a living body and of a living design. The poorest drawing that deserves to be called drawing, and is not an imitation of photography, would have this; the best photographs, for want of it, irri-



tate us more than they amaze. Look, for example, at Mr. Clarence White's patient, ingenious and tasteful arrangements of figures, drapery, and accessories in this same volume. He has come extraordinarily near to a tiresome kind of painting—that is all one can say—a kind in which the modelling is small, meagre, nailed down, and his attenuation of tone does not affect this. Compare the really skilful arrangement of these skirts with what a draughtsman of the second rank, like Fragonard, using drawing as a loose habit, makes of a skirt. Look at the *Chiffre d'amour* at the Wallace gallery, and the gulf between photography and drawing becomes apparent.

In such a comparison design and emphasis are of course involved to a high degree; I wish to limit the discussion here to the point of life-likeness. Now the striking thing about photographs of a nude body (exemplified in the arm of *Nirvana*) is that there is a tendency for the modelling to look, not, as one would expect, solid and tenderly rounded, since all the signs of modelling in light and shade are given: on the contrary, the effect of solidity and roundness is perpetually contradicted by sharp and papery edges and planes, and by a dry, broken and angular character in the contours; the natural signs of modelling, as veraciously given by the photograph, do not make nature look as solid and lithe as it appears to the eye. The photograph, in a word, makes forms no rounder than they look without our knowledge of them; drawing, even if it is only a contour drawing, aims at making them look as round as they are. The photograph, it should be remembered, is at this disadvantage compared with our ordinary vision, that in the case of rounded objects at

no great distance, we see, with our two eyes, not one but two contours, one of them further round than the other. The photograph taken by a single lens loses this sign of roundness, which is only given by a stereoscopic double image. But even in this image the disturbing abruptness, flatness and meagreness persist in forms that we should see habitually more round, full and continuous. Nature, the evolutionists believe, often attempts frauds upon our sense, trying to abolish the signs of roundness. Thus the bellies of animals are often white, and at a little distance the light tone of the belly plus shadow is equal in value to the darker tone of the back plus the light that falls upon it so that the shadow tone is cancelled by the local. But this is only a gross instance of the deceptive action of light as an interpreter of form. In our vision of forms we are constantly checking and correcting the evidence of the accidental lighting alone, by what we know to be the character in the forms of an object. And the old science of drawing supplied this element in our impression of nature by almost insensible accommodation, strove to make form more lucid to the vision than the account of it given by a single chance illumination. Not only did it rule out innumerable positions of a hand, let us say, that would be puzzling or incomprehensible if photographically rendered, but even in the intelligible positions it made contours more clear, roundness more appreciable, the connections more easy to grasp than the signs of light and shade make them in the camera image.

But in the second half of the nineteenth century, concurrently with the rise of photography, there came a certain break with this tradition. Even if there had



been no photography this would probably have been the case. The growing interest in the beauty of aerial values, in forms lost as well as found, which was one of the chief concerns in the art of the century, led painters to draw by light, as photography does exclusively, rather than by the compromise between this and a knowledge of the forms which represents our habitual vision of things we know. Thus Raeburn, who belongs to the period before photography, modelling by light, arrives often at the papery flatness and dryness of contour in the photograph, and then, dissatisfied with the effect, seems to fling himself back on an extreme of slippery roundedness. Yet with all this taking of the guidance of light only, the old tradition of the ample contour favouring and suggesting roundness of form persisted down to Manet. In his painting it asserts itself still in the strong general silhouette of the forms.

After him, in the plein-air school of Bastien Lepage and his followers came the nearest capitulation of painting to photography. The schools eagerly pursued the method for a time, but the resulting flatness, dryness, angularity quickly discredited the fashion. So far, then, is Mr. Shaw's view from being true or advanced that painting is a clumsy and impotent effort to get something given perfectly by the photograph. The photographic vision was tried and found wanting twenty years ago.

The same thing may be proved even more strikingly, if we consider the case of sculpture. The cast is to sculpture what the photograph is to drawing. It is documentary to an infinitely higher degree in the visual appearance of a form. It can be turned about so as to

display the round form. And yet with all this advantage, the cast never conveys to us the full impression of the living form. Its forms require a filling out, an insensible exaggeration to make them seem even as large as life. If this is true of what I have called the still-life ideal in sculpture, that aims only at giving forms in animated repose, how much more of the school that aims at a greater suggestion of movement and the expression of extreme emotion. But I have dwelt on this element of heightening or exaggerating in modelling so recently in speaking of Rodin that I need not recur to it now. As Delacroix, who was a draughtsman of the same passionate school, puts it; '*Comment le peintre, en copiant tous ces morceaux d'après des objets réels comme ils sont et sans les modifier profondément, pourra-t-il ôter ou ajouter, donner à des objets inertes en eux-mêmes la puissance nécessaire à l'impression?*' Hence his drawing, which Mr. Shaw very properly from the photographic point of view characterises as 'infamous.'



PLEASURES AND PAINS OF  
DRAWING<sup>1</sup>

TO the vast majority of our kind, who browse upon the 'picture' papers of a morning and the 'picture' films of an evening, how astonishing it must appear that anyone should still worry over drawing 'by hand' any more than over the dramatic part of drama. The photograph may be relied upon to give what an artist unaccountably leaves out; the film to leave out what he superfluously puts in, for since 'drama' (so miscalled) consists little in doing and much in talking, how satisfactory to cut the tedious conversations. The world is in love with the bastard arts: with photographs that imitate pictures, with the outside of stories from which the inside has been emptied. The cinema has still to disentangle its art from those of the book and the stage.

Yet the mad votaries of drawing linger as do the crazy lovers of drama, though the 'pictures' are steadily driving both from their public haunts, by intolerably raising the rent upon them. For those votaries drawing is an activity or a contemplation blissful beyond all others. 'The sea,' said Euripides, 'washes away all the ills of men'; and the draughtsman, like the swimmer, plunges into a kind, rhythmic element, a world remade for exercise of the eyes and wits. Exercise and medicine too: for the aches of the cranky body, for the megrims of the desperate mind. What was a threatening, boring, abominable spectacle

<sup>1</sup>*Drawings, 1459-1921.* Loan Exhibition at Goupil Gallery.

is suddenly a feast: instead of 'business' that was grinded through, here is a happy absorption for which daylight is too short, meals an interruption, 'recreation' a plague. Look at those unhappy holiday-makers, padding through 'nature' with lack-lustre countenance, hitting balls into bunkers they have contrived, or sitting about with their rags of newspapers, and persuading their watch and overloaded inside that it is time for another meal: while the draughtsman in the open or in his bare room is solicited by shapes come alive and lucid out of a stagnant mess: is perpetually hungry, perpetually fed.

He has his bad moments no doubt. He is sick till the mess clears up, or when it comes down like a fog; sick when eye and hand refuse control; bunkered when something unresolved in his matter blocks the way. Yet how much happier is his art than the writer's; physically, as against cramped exasperating toil with the pen, mentally, as against wrestling to traduce into a chain of word-counters an integral of vision and thought. Compare a Tiepolo, revelling in the joints and relations of limbs cocked upon a cloud, with Flaubert, agonising over conjunctions and relatives, nouns that will not fit, adjectives that contract or slop over, the cloud that cannot be embraced. Tiepolo, you say, is fluid ease and not a great deal more, and there are agonies for the draughtsman who goes deep enough: but he has not to fit a jig-saw from defaced and arbitrary symbols: he mirrors a vision fresh as Creation,

Herrlich wie am ersten Tag.

He may begin stickily enough. I have never seen a description of the process. The novelist and vague



writer lead us to suppose that the great artist pierces at a glance through superficial appearances to the soul, and draws its shape. No, if you please: the graphic artist is first and last superficial. He draws a man's head, and what of the soul is written there, exactly as he draws a potato, by drawing the skin. By trial and re-trial he finds, beside what is merely cosmetic, indications of the muscles below, the bones below them, the rhythmic structure behind the bones: but it is the skin he is drawing. And it is in the skin he finds traces of the action and suffering and habits of sense and spirit, puckerings, wrinkles, folds about eyes and mouth, puffings out and emaciations. At the end of his exploration he may stand back to determine his interest in all this, as in the simpler potato; what to take and what to leave: but if he be an explorer and not an imposer, he has lost himself meanwhile to find the thing. Stroke by stroke follows glance by glance, and builds up what may astonish his preconceptions, or confirm. Each stroke has something willed and not willed, going the way of eye and hand.

There is half the battle; the original structure of the thing, with its deflections, reached by patient exploration, then broadly presented, all hamper cut away. But meantime a geometry has been defining itself, compounded of the picture-shape and the main lines and masses of his object, affecting his copying, insisting on a subtle give-and-take, or rendering the whole process miserable and spiritless, because an initial mistake of placing or angle has been made. When the standing-back moment comes the revision and abstraction of forms in favour of geometry may be drastic; as it was from the claims of interest: but it

should be expressive: furiously to substitute cylinders and cubes for organic shapes is a demented plumber-engineering, not drawing.

There is a third element implicit in drawing, the sweep of the hand, the 'touch' and 'handling' of the fingers. With the bit between its teeth it is the calligraphy of the writing-master: it is to be distrusted or even fought and mortified when exploration is going forward; yet it is part of the integral, first in the order of time, and also a last grace, and personal seal.

From the infinite mixtures and balances possible to these three impulses springs the fascination of the drawings, ancient and modern, at the Goupil Gallery, and of drawings anywhere. One might examine them first on their ease or difficulty in the initial business, 'finding the place' of features and other shapes. Even good draughtsmen make wild shots at the place of an ear. For a Sargent this part of drawing is child's play, and he is contemptuous of anything beyond, his interest lying with painter's values. An Ingres measures and plumbs, and refines upon inflections, pursuing them from the appropriate pencil-scale in the drawing of a coat to sub-visibility, almost stipple, in a head, uncomfortably near the miniature style which must be looked at through a lens. Van Dyck draws fatly, to give roundness and carry across the room. Ingres must draw from the present model; Daumier cannot, but proceeds by throwing out wavering casts over his memory of a face, like an angler over a fish, till he can strike. Other contrasts are provoked by Ingres: against his elaboration, the inspired shorthand of Rembrandt, Poussin, Claude and Steer. Against his design, only happy in feminine ovals and ellipses, the



architectural square build of Veronese. And against the 'keep-sake' ideal of his *Cockerell* the turbulent laughter of Rowlandson, whose balustrade and steps interchange their lines with tumbled blousy bodies and the flourish of inverted legs. Or, again, the irony of Degas, devoted admirer, but unable to get sting for his drawing from classic nude or traditional composition: for him the indiscretions of the key-hole, oddly cut and balanced scenes, the beauties of the 'ugly.' Drawing is justified of them all.

1922

# PRETTINESS, BEAUTY, UGLINESS

WORDS are deceitful things, desperately dependable. They change their colour like chameleons, die out though they are needed, get worn out and obliterated through over-use till they mean nothing—who troubles to look twice when he sees a ‘tragedy’ announced in the newspapers, or a ‘grave’ situation. On the other hand an extinguished or smouldering old word may suddenly become inflamed and volcanic, or a quiet, easy-going adjective that has ‘known its place,’ as the servants say, for centuries, may take to annexing neighbouring allotments, and contend for promotion to the Honours List. Brilliant writers, and who is not, nowadays, are fast ruining the vocabulary of poetry. I listened the other day to an interminable lecturer on Persian art. He used all the best words, to no effect whatever, and left them tired. Under such handling a word comes in time to mean the exact opposite of what it meant at first.

Take one example which bears on the subject laid down for me to-night. There is no more English word in the language at present than ‘nice,’ because in its cool, non-committal, no-nonsense-about-it character, it saves the speaker from the pretensions of ‘beautiful’ or even from such definiteness as ‘pretty’ can claim. More agreeable than not, is all it asserts.

What is its history?

It is the Latin ‘nescius,’ *i.e.* ignorant, and has so far,



in French, stuck to the neighbourhood of that sense: 'niais' means stupid from ignorance.

That was its first meaning with us. It meant 'stupid,' 'senseless.' Then it took a moral twist, and meant 'wanton,' and even 'lascivious,' or, with a turn for the better, merely 'extravagant,' 'flaunting.' From that the transition was easy to 'elegant,' 'smart,' 'strange,' 'rare,' 'uncommon'; but there was the other tendency that made it mean 'slothful,' 'indolent,' and from that 'effeminate,' 'unmanly,' 'over-refined,' 'luxurious.' Here was a chance again for the better life, and 'nice' emerged from the shades as 'tender,' 'delicate,' 'coy,' 'shy,' 'modest,' 'reserved' (the wanton!). There the circle was complete, and from that to 'fastidious,' 'dainty,' 'particular,' 'precise,' was but a step. 'Appetising,' of food, agreeable of everything else, it has now covered the landscape. But do not suppose that the story is ended. Irony waits on all eulogistic words to send them to the bottom of the class again. We say, 'This is a *nice* predicament,' 'You're a *nice* fellow,' and before long 'nice' may once more be where it started, mean 'blundering,' 'senseless,' even 'disgusting.' Even so, 'black' was 'white' according to the old philologists: was there not 'bleak' to prove it?

And now for our three words. I think it may be laid down as a general law that the words which have come to be used in an 'aesthetic' sense (I must use a word I try to avoid) won their way to that position as moralists.

That is so with 'pretty.' In Old English it meant 'tricky,' 'wily,' 'crafty.' After Old English it had something of a rest till the fifteenth century, when it

bobbed up again meaning 'canny,' 'clever,' but also 'cunning,' from which evidently the transition would be easy to our usage, since the Americans use 'cunning' or 'cute' very often when we say 'pretty.' A 'pretty thing' was something cleverly made. But though we get 'a pretty fellow' in the sense almost of 'handsome,' which means good work of the hands, 'pretty' was not allowed to go up into Class I; perhaps from the trivial sound of the word there clung about it the idea of dainty smallness, a diminutive of beauty. Henry More the Platonist, quoted by my authority for those changes, the New English Dictionary, says:

'There being that Majesty and Stateliness, as in the Lion, the Horse, the Eagle, and [surprisingly] in the Cock; or that grave awfulness as Mastiffs, or Elegance and *Prettiness* as in your lesser Dogs and most sorts of Birds; all which are several modes of Beauty.'

There, so far, 'Pretty' has stuck. 'Beauty' is the transcendent word; 'Prettiness,' like 'Grace,' like 'Comeliness,' is subordinate. If we are thinking of what is less than pretty, 'pretty' is praise; if we are thinking of what ought to be more than pretty, 'pretty' is detraction. But irony and loose usage lie in wait for this as for all words. 'Things have come to a pretty pass when, etc.,' and as an adverb 'pretty' has no more force than 'fairly'; 'pretty good' is not very good.

'Pretty,' it is interesting to note, does not occur in the English Bible. The Hebrews were too stern a people to reckon trifling beauties, or to note beauty itself very much unless as the beauty of holiness. They were hostile to imagery, to the lusts of the eye; all for inner virtues. German, also, is not well-off for names



of the minor beauties and graces: 'hübsch' is vaguer. French, as one might expect, is better off, though curiously enough it is doubtful whether the chief word for prettiness is of native Latin birth. They used to say that 'joli' (jolif) was of German origin. But possibly it is Latin 'gaudivus,' and in any case means 'festive,' so that we have kept the old meaning more closely in our 'jolly.' There is, however, in French the other word 'gentil,' meaning originally of gentle breeding: again, we have kept that sense in 'gentleman.' In French 'gentil' means, of appearance, pleasantly passable, almost 'nice,' and morally, well behaved. 'Sois gentil' to a child is 'behave nicely.' But the nearest word to 'pretty' in the constant sense of 'daintily small,' with a little more of the lover in it, is 'mignon.' 'Mignonne' is 'pretty sweeting.' Ronsard's 'Mignonne, venez voir si la Rose' is Shakespeare's 'Trip no further, pretty sweeting.'

Let it be clear that prettiness has its own delightful place, whether in nature or art. It is almost as bad a mistake to pervert prettiness into something of heavier pretension as to degrade beauty into prettiness. And here let me hope, not too confidently, that no one to-night will fall into one of two very common traps.

The first of these is implicit, I am sorry to say, in the title laid down for us. 'Prettiness, Beauty, Ugliness' *in Art*! Why 'in Art' only? These conceptions apply equally to our view of Nature. When we apply those discriminations to anything seen, we are already composing, out of what we see, a mental picture; the transferring of the image, so selected, to canvas is the art of painting and that translation implies additional elements of delight as well as limitations. But pretti-

ness or beauty belong to the natural forms as already determined in our visual image. The process of imagination, image-making, may be more complex when inventive arrangement takes place; but observation, determined by the sense of Beauty, is already imaginative picture-making.

The second trap is to suppose that Art is concerned only or necessarily very much with Beauty. The part in it of beauty may be very slight indeed. But on that pitfall I have dwelt sufficiently elsewhere.

Well, to return, I think we have settled the hash of *Prettiness*. There is really no dispute about its relations with Beauty. It is either a charming subordinate or a usurper, a pretender. The tug-of-war is to come. But first a word about the supremacy of the word *Beauty*. It is not quite unchallenged. There is a word, the *Sublime*, which threatened to over-crow it.

Kant and other philosophers—the philosophers always seem to legislate about Beauty with their eyes shut—they distrust it from Plato onwards as superficial, and sensuous and phenomenal—the philosophers define the *Sublime* as intellectual, divorced from the senses to which *Beauty* clings, a creation of the soul unvexed by the understanding, and a once famous Catholic philosopher, Gioberti, of the early nineteenth century, reclaimed the *Sublime* as ontological. But the artist will rather say that the *Sublime* is one kind of the Beautiful, the lofty kind, the terribly, tragically beautiful, the Titanic as opposed to the Olympian, the Romantic as opposed to the Classic. Sublime means literally that you hit your head against the lintel of the door, a painful experience that the physically tall among us too often suffer; metaphorically it belongs



to those who are intellectually and morally as well as sensuously tall—to the Michael Angelos and Beethovens—of that kind, at present, we are quite contentedly free.

And now for the 'Beautiful' and 'Ugly.' But, alas, there is a third trap for the unwary. It is convenient to pretend that in the two-sided business in which Beauty sets up with Significance, we can limit Beauty to the sphere of rhythm in proportion and pattern in form, relations of tone and colour, to all that is grouped under the word Design. But that is not so. We habitually speak of an object as beautifully made, in the sense of made efficiently and cleanly for its purpose. And we also speak of actions as morally beautiful. Most of the words we have been dealing with begin by meaning well-made, pass on to a moral meaning and only in the end mean aesthetically pleasing. So that when we apply 'beautiful' to anything in a picture there is apt to be a blur, the aesthetic and the moral are mixed and Beauty invades the place of Significance. Let me break it to you that this transcendently aesthetic adjective, Beautiful, Latin 'bellus,' is merely an alternative and diminutive form of 'bonus,' 'good,' so that 'beautiful' originally means no more than 'pretty good.' I conjecture that the sound of 'bellum' got mixed with it, so that it came to mean conqueringly fine as we use 'brave.' The Scots have kept and we have lost 'braw' in this sense. From 'bonus' the Scots take 'bonny' for pretty.

'Ugly' sets out by meaning physically foul, and through most of its history has stood for that foulness and for moral squalor. The German for ugly is *bässlich*, hateful, and the French have gone to German

sources for their 'laid,' which has the same meaning. For want of another word 'ugly' stands now for what is aesthetically displeasing: for example, bad proportions in architecture, awkward placing on a canvas, absence of harmony in colour or sound.

Now the first confusion or ambiguity we have to deal with is one that arises merely from what is novel or unaccustomed in a work of art. 'Ugly' is a hasty reaction, meaning, 'At present I don't like it.' Or it is the necessary judgment of those who really only like the Pretty. I remember a conversation with an eminent statesman, who enjoyed theorising about visual art, but had very limited instinct for it. I had induced him to sit for a portrait-drawing to Augustus John, when he really would have liked to go to Lady Granby. He called the result 'ugly' (it was a little dull, actually, from want of contact). I said to him that the Ugly was frequently the Purgatorio of the Beautiful, and he liked the phrase so much that he began to think there might be something in the drawing.

Those who are capable of conversion are in time converted. That dispute is not of real importance. The man who is colour or form-blind cannot be converted, and it is not desirable that he should pretend.

The real tug-of-war is at another point. It arises from the fact that objects and situations which *are* ugly in one sense may become beautiful in another. A dwarf, for example, misshapen as a man, we call 'ugly': but as a subject for art the logic of form that runs through his distortion makes him a fascinating subject, and in pictorial design a beautiful, as Velazquez proved.



At this point I will ask your indulgence if, instead of saying the same thing in other words I refer you to a twenty-year-old article in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, which it is unlikely many of you have read or remember. The occasion was an article by Frederic Harrison called 'Aischro-Latreia, or the Cult of the Foul.' He began with Literature and went on to a denunciation of Rodin, and very conveniently set out the chief sillinesses which crop up in discussions on art.<sup>1</sup>

I will only add this. Since that article was written, the danger is rather in another direction, in the equally unfortunate belief that if a painting or sculpture is in one of the two senses 'ugly' it must therefore be, in the other sense, 'beautiful.' We are affected by a terror of the lovely, a superstition that gawky nudes in ungainly attitudes, ill-drawn and distorted forms have a value in themselves. Or perhaps we begin to see the end of that tyranny. We have been through all the stunts, and their practitioners are sadly returning to naturalness, as dull for them as it ever was. The prodigals have returned, and the calf is not very fat. They are assured, it is true, that a diet of husks has been good for their constitution. But whether that be so or not, the way of Beauty is narrow, between the wrong prettiness on one side, the wrong ugliness on the other.

<sup>1</sup>The article referred to follows.

'FOULNESS,' 'BEAUTY,' AND  
MR. FREDERIC HARRISON

I SALUTE in Mr. Harrison, before I go into action, a veteran of the Old Guard, one of the original band who gathered round the mast when *The Nineteenth Century* was launched just five-and-thirty years ago, in the 'roaring moon of daffodil and crocus.' On his own field of legal history I should not venture to challenge him; in that of the morals and methods of art his authority is more questionable, and I venture to dispute the reasoning and conclusions of his recent article.<sup>1</sup> I will not linger over some more than doubtful literary history<sup>2</sup> in his opening pages, nor stop to discuss the judgment that dismisses Wagner as unmelodious, that brings Doré the illustrator and the writers of *feuilletons* about millionaires and motors into the discussion of great art. My business is with his general attitude towards what he stamps as foul or ugly in the arts, and more particularly in the art of one sculptor.

It would take me too far to deal with all the writers who horrify Mr. Harrison: but his list of the openers of the gates includes Tolstoi, Ibsen and Zola.<sup>3</sup> These are all what may be called 'uncomfortable' writers, and

<sup>1</sup>'Aischro-Latreia: the Cult of the Foul,' *Nineteenth Century and After*, February 1912.

<sup>2</sup>E.g. his tracing of the extravagance of *Monte Cristo* to the example of Hugo. Hugo was undoubtedly an influence with Dumas; but they were exactly contemporaries, and *Monte Cristo* was nearly twenty years the senior of *Jean Valjean*.

<sup>3</sup>Gorky also, who, it must be remembered, has come up from the hell he describes, as did Dante, who went down into his.



it is this quality, perhaps, rather than the grossness of detail that might be urged against one of them, that links them, in Mr. Harrison's mind, with so different a writer as d'Annunzio. They are uncomfortable writers for the sentimentalist, and it is the revenge of reality on the sentimentalist that he ceases to be able to recognise a moralist when he meets one. If a critical case is to be urged against them, it is surely not that they are servants of foulness, but that they are haters of it so fervent that their view of life becomes distorted. Their analogues in English literature are Mr. Harrison's friends, Carlyle and Ruskin. The grave moralist and puritan Tolstoi, the ironic moralist Ibsen, the furious moralist Zola describe ugly things, but they certainly do not love them; and if boys and furtive readers of more advanced years go to Zola for his grossness, it is exactly as these boys go to certain pages of the Bible. They would not go in that spirit if a shameful secrecy were not maintained about matters every human being ought to understand. That the spirit rather than the matter of these writers offends Mr. Harrison becomes clear if we put beside this list another, which he has himself furnished in a gossip about the books to which he turns by preference in his library.<sup>1</sup> He does not condemn writers because they deal with the erotic or the scabrous side of life; for among the ancients he singles out for eulogy Petronius, Apuleius and Longus, the author of *Daphnis and Chloe*. These are writers whom Mudie would not circulate in a complete translation; writers who describe what is forbidden to the libraries not with the puritan's re-

<sup>1</sup> 'Among my Books,' *English Review*, January and February 1912.

pugnance, but with complaisance and zest. To this list are added the authors of the *Fabliaux*, Boccaccio, and Rabelais. So Mr. Harrison's surprising position is that writers who enjoy this element are praiseworthy, writers who detest it are 'foul.'

There is no question here, be it remembered, of pornographers; they are more often to be found in the ranks of pseudo-scientific writers than of artists. Nor does Mr. Harrison, it is clear, object to plainness of speech. What is considered indecent in spoken or printed language varies with time and place. In polite American circles the word 'leg' is said to be taboo, just as for a short period 'trousers' were 'unmentionables' in ladylike English. In our own day some dozen direct words at most are unprintable, and that not in all cases because they are unwanted in literature, but because the simple words have become, on the lips that habitually use them, *malhonnêtes*. Hence the need of periphrasis. But there is nothing human, given the imaginative necessity for its expression, that literature cannot decently handle, however wary the handling must be in a region devastated by the leering habit. Mr. Harrison allows, if I understand him, that Boccaccio and Rabelais have a right to this region on their own terms: what is difficult, in the face of prudery, is to maintain for poetry its greater right, the right to treat as clean and sacred the passionate climax of life.

Mr. Harrison's idea that the three modern writers enumerated represent a mere reaction against the blamelessness of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and their period is untenable. Rather the convention of these last is an interruption in literary tradition; the con-



vention, namely, that nothing should be printed for grown-up people that could not be read in the nursery. For Scott and Dickens this very likely meant no constraint; indeed, for Dickens it meant an inspiration, since each period of literature has the great writers proper to it.<sup>1</sup> But Thackeray was not so happy; his themes required a greater freedom, and we know how he chafed under the restriction of the libraries. The code, already infringed in different ways by Byron and Shelley, was short-lived. Later novelists, from Meredith and Hardy onwards, have sacrificed the wide nursery audience to the demands of a more masculine conscience, and have left the provision of nursery literature to those who are happy within its boundaries. I do not deny that the change from one convention to another and the growth of free speech have been the opportunity for uncomfortable writers of another cast, who found an ambiguous pleasure in breaking in upon the nursery for the sake of shocking the nurse. Such incidents are the toll we pay for the Mudie period; but even if the nurse is as much shocked as she is taught to appear, it takes a very great deal, I believe, really to shock our grandmothers, which is the aim, Mr. Harrison

<sup>1</sup>I do not know whether it has ever been observed, and if not I add the observation as my trifling contribution to the subject of the day, why Sam Weller was created. He was brought upon the scene to reassure timid readers on the propriety of Mr. Jingle and Miss Wardle when Wardle caught them at the inn after their elopement. It had to be unobtrusively established that they had occupied separate bedrooms, in the situation that is the nearest point to tragedy permitted in the histories of our stage, that of a night spent blamelessly together away from home by members of the opposite sex. Dickens ingeniously brought a character on to prove this by his comments on the boots collected from the different doors, and out of this trifling occasion sprang the immortal Weller!

says, of much recent art. Our grandfathers, perhaps, are more frequently shocked; but what in them is rendered uncomfortable is less often a tender than a guilty conscience.

If the free handling of life by moralists like Tolstoi, Ibsen and Zola is not the obscene in art, what is? I, for my part, find it in the sort of thing the sentimentalists usually admire. That lascivious prettiness which pervades our library literature and popular drama is also a characteristic of the painting and sculpture usually called 'academic.' This admixture of the sensual and seductive with sacred and heroic themes and persons is what made classic sculpture from Praxiteles downwards a popular tyranny of fashion till the other day. It was this that tainted the art of Perugino and Raphael, was gradually corrupting the art even of Leonardo, and makes the painting of his followers noisome; this that affected the middle period of Titian; in later times reached a climax in Greuze, and later still struggled with the ascetic draughtsman's impulse of Ingres, winning a ludicrous triumph in the *Turkish Bath*. This same mixture forms the staple of the 'ideal' pictures in our academies, rendered the painting of so considerable a designer as Leighton nauseous, and became comically indecent in Calderon's *Renunciation* and many other specimens of Chantrey art. This same mixture makes novels popular, and, blessed by the Censor, fills our theatres with close-packed rows of matrons, curates, young people and old gentlemen, who murmur, while the little dressmakers' models on the stage languish, display and undress themselves, 'Beautiful scenery!' York Powell used to tell how he went to a music-hall with a certain High-



land professor of history. There came upon the stage a planturous lady in tights, who sang about the hymns she had learned at her mother's knee. 'Hymns and buttocks!' moaned the Highlander; 'Hymns and buttocks, Powell! What a nation!' Neither the Highlander nor the Frenchman condemns one or the other of those things in their own place, but he does not so often mix them; and what shocks both of them in the British (I reserve 'English' for a cleaner tradition), is just their complacent adoration of the mixture, which is what, in this country, is usually described as 'pure.' The quality of this 'purity' is brought out in the incomparably British legend (dear to academics) of Lady Godiva, who is said to have ridden naked through Coventry, but did not do so because every one was shut up indoors. Neither side could trust its pride and modesty to such an ordeal. The hero and martyr of the occasion was Peeping Tom, who was obliged to look through a keyhole. The British and the French, like Blake's angels and devils, shock one another, and what the foreigner observes with wonder in Mrs. and Miss Grundy is an extraordinary gift for affecting to be singing a hymn, while—but I had better follow Mr. Harrison no further.

Mr. Harrison's main theme is Auguste (not, by the way, 'Augustin') Rodin, and his art, and this introduces us to a tangle of ideas about sculpture, and its relation to the other arts, that we must try to clear up. First, however, a word about Rodin's place in history and influence. He is not, as Mr. Harrison seems to think, a very recent influence, and he is no longer a fashionable one. The school that is now occupying critics and youthful artists is a different one—a school

of simplified and massive forms, more architectural than Rodin's, represented by the Frenchman Maillol, the Serbian Mestrovic and the semi-English Epstein. This by the way. Rodin is a veteran, born nine years later than Mr. Harrison himself, who, after untold struggles, first emerged into recognition with *L'âge d'airain* in the year 1877. This figure at least Mr. Harrison would admire; it is so close-modelled on life that it was rejected from the Salon as a cast from the model. The phase that Mr. Harrison detests began with Rodin's study of Dante, the book that of all others Mr. Harrison admires.<sup>1</sup> The effort to express the passions of the *Inferno* in terms of another art took the shape of the *Porte de l'Enfer*, a project several times remodelled and never completed; and the *Ugolino* (a subject, by the way, handled by Reynolds also, properest of academics) is but one episode from that whole, as is also *Danaïde*, and many other pieces, which have been detached and carried out separately. The source and subjects, then, are not themselves corrupt; but here, Mr. Harrison says, is the radical error of Rodin: the attempt to give plastic shape to what can only properly be treated in literature. I will deal with that general question in a moment, but first let me remark that if Rodin is wrong, his error is by no means a new one; there is an unbroken mediaeval tradition in sculpture and painting dealing with the torments of the damned that is continued at the Renaissance and reaches its climax in the *Last Judgment* of Michael Angelo. This tradition was brutal and

<sup>1</sup>'All of us to whom Dante is the new Bible.' 'To me Dante has ever been the source and foundation of my love of great imaginative thought.' *English Review*, January 1912.



somewhat farcical, one of grotesque devils pitchforking unhappy souls into the jaws of Hell, or playing various obscene tricks with them, an external and physical idea of damnation. What Dante did was to combine with the lingering horrors and foulness of that conception the idea that had been gathering substance from Homer to Virgil of a world in which unhappiness was not a punishment but a state, in which souls were 'themselves their own fever and pain'; and what Rodin did was further to free the conception from a shallow and grotesque externality, and present it in a series of typical episodes of creatures self-tormented by appetite and lust. There has therefore, from first to last, been a give-and-take in this theme between sculpture and literature, in which sculpture has had nearly as much to say for itself as literature.

Was this a mistake, as Mr. Harrison thinks? We must at once allow to him, though he gives entirely wrong reasons for the view, that in representing the terrible, the horrible and the pitiful, it does make a difference whether the art be that of words, of painting or of sculpture. One difference is that of immediacy; words do not render the thing seen, but refer to it only and can therefore pass at once from the material fact, half visualised, to its moral implications, with just as little or as much pressure on the image evoked as the artist chooses. The painter's image, or the sculptor's, on the other hand, does necessarily fix the eye and mind on the material fact, on the terrible or pitiful figure; and there is a difference also between the painter's and the sculptor's image in this respect: not the difference Mr. Harrison sets up, that one is an art of surfaces and the other not, for both are arts of

surfaces, tangible as well as visible in sculpture, visible only in painting. The difference is that painting can use much more freely than sculpture means of attenuation. Painting, rendering only one point of view, differs in that respect from sculpture in the round, though not from sculpture in relief (which is half drawing, and which Rodin used in the *Gate of Hell*); but painting has the resources also of fixed shadow and of atmosphere, as well as the devices of an immensely freer composition to cover up, to veil, to work by suggestion rather than by complete presentation. It is, by the way, an extension of some of those devices, already employed in relief sculpture (compare the 'stiacciato' of Donatello's almost vaporous *Christ's Charge to Peter* at Kensington), to sculpture in the round that Mr. Harrison objects to; the emergence of half-veiled shapes from the marble, the leaving parts of a figure or group engaged in the block. Rodin is here meeting Mr. Harrison half way, but gets no thanks for it. I point this out, but do not insist, because I do not think those are Rodin's happiest works; his best work is not in marble, but in bronze. I come back to the crux of the argument. It is admitted that literature, with a Dante, may treat of the horrible and pitiful; it is admitted that if sculpture so treats, the impression produced, being solid and material, is visually more intense. What, then, are the demands of the imagination on the sculptor, if he take up responsibilities admittedly so heavy? We may answer generally that the image created must justify, in its beauty and significance, the horror that it brings before not only our mind but our eyes, justify to the eyes in beauty, to the mind in significance. Let



us take the second of these demands first, and ask what it implies in the sculptor's art. He is required, evidently, to find, in terms of modelling, what will convey to us not merely the brute fact, but his attitude towards the fact; his horrible or pitiful figure must become not merely visible to the eye, but expressive to the imagination, carry with it a sentiment of pity, awe, repugnance or revolt. The thing must cry out its meaning; such tame scientific enumeration of facts as is proper in a text-book of pathology will be disgusting in a work of art. The artist must minimise the insignificant facts, underline and emphasize the significant, so that just as the humane spectator of the fact, unless he be a doctor, will not set to work to catalogue to himself what he sees, but will exclaim 'How terrible!' so will he on seeing the sculpture, and pass on with a mind 'purged by pity and terror.'

But the odd thing is that just at this point of the argument Mr. Harrison becomes unbelievably wrong-headed, and denies to the art of tragic sculpture the means of justifying its existence. He goes farther; he denies to sculpture any means of expression whatever. It is his incredible belief that sculpture begins and ends with the exact reproduction, as by a cast, of the human form. If that be so, why do we have sculptors at all? We have, indeed, very few; most so-called sculptors are content with imperfect casts of the human form, just as most so-called painters are content with bungled photographs. But the art of the painter or sculptor only begins where the photograph or the cast leaves off, begins with the choice and emphasis of forms that make lucid, in the outer image, the inner spirit. But then, says Mr. Harrison, you turn sculp-

ture into an art of caricature. Certainly: or more precisely caricature is an expressive image for the purposes of comedy or farce; but the tragic image is arrived at by the same processes of elimination, emphasis, and creative remaking that satire uses with another intention. Portraiture itself gains its object by this process; but what we call 'caricature' in the comic image we call 'character' in the serious portrait; and Rodin, in his *Balzac*, his *Hugo*, his many splendid busts, is a master of portraiture, because he there works to bring out in his modelling the essential character that in the photograph or the cast is covered up and disguised by a hundred casual and trivial details. The two processes, that of getting the tame facts and that of modifying for expression, are, as it happens, very distinct in Rodin's practice. Mr. Harrison calls him an 'impressionist' sculptor. I do not know what that means, unless the method of working for an effect from one point of view only—a method fatal if the point of view is altered. Rodin's method is the reverse: he arrives at his facts by studying the profiles of a form from endless points of view. When this process is complete, the bust or figure exists as Mr. Harrison would have it, save that it has those 'movements' of life impossible to the relaxed muscles of the cast. On this he then works for 'expression,' amplifying here, reducing there, bringing out the latent character, till the form tells the story he has read in it. It was a long time before he would admit that there was any such modification: the process was so half-conscious that twelve years ago he held out that all he did was to amplify contours a little to allow for the irradiation of light. But in the book Mr. Harrison



quotes from,<sup>1</sup> Rodin, or his interpreter, concedes all that I then contended for, the exaggeration of traits and gestures for expressive purposes. I may add that to one who can read between the lines it is evident that M. Gsell, the amiable reporter, has 'amplified' in places what Rodin himself is likely to have said. There is a sentimental filling out of the text that should be received with caution. Rodin arrives only gradually at the theory of what he has been doing, and catches often at an explanation offered, just as he waits for a title to be proposed for something he has created by a plastic inspiration.

So much on the side of significance and expression. But those embodiments of horror might still be intolerable if they were not beautiful as well as expressive, since beauty is the medicine of art for wounds to sensibility. And here we come to more difficult ground. It is usual to bilk the discussion by the assertion that the 'ugly' as well as the beautiful has its place in art. But that is to talk nonsense, and give the case of tragic art away; and I propose to pursue the argument further. This use of 'ugly' and 'beautiful' rests upon ambiguity and confusion; we employ the words in two senses. When we speak of a 'beautiful' woman we mean not necessarily that she is a 'beautiful' object to draw, for most of her poses will be useless to the artist; we mean partly that her shape and colour and movement are beautiful, but we mean also that she is to us as men admirable or desirable: admirable for the qualities of health, youth, perfection of structure, for the harmony of nature and promise of womanly virtues of which we find an index in natural

<sup>1</sup>*L'Art* par Auguste Rodin. *Entretiens réunis* par Paul Gsell.

physical signs; on the other hand, we more frequently mean that she is seductive to the senses, and people who use 'beauty' chiefly to mean this are completely puzzled when they hear others call the face of an aged crone as painted by Rembrandt 'beautiful'—more beautiful than a pretty face by Greuze or Bouguereau. The seduction, the youth, the associations which they have included in the word 'beauty' have passed away from Rembrandt's subject, and even the moral associations of a fine character, to which the face is an index, may also be wanting: associations for which once more we use that hard-worked word when we should use 'noble.' But if we limit 'beauty' to the elements of rhythm in line, proportion in parts, harmony in colour, the crone's head as painted may be as beautiful as the lovely girl's, or more so. This is what 'beauty' means to the artist, and those other elements belong to the side, not of beauty, but of significance. On that side they have their enormous importance: the significance to us of loveliness is so great that artists will constantly sacrifice more beautiful subjects for its sake, but if we wish to be clear-headed we shall call it 'loveliness' and not 'beauty.' The truth is—and here I shall be accused, no doubt, of paradox, but I must follow where the argument leads—the truth is that the element of beauty in a lovely woman is small compared with the attraction she exercises by her perfection as a woman. A human being, considered rhythmically, is at the best a spoiled animal, distorted by standing on its hind legs. We condone the loss of beauty for the sake of the measure of divinity which the animal through this loss has attained; but in beauty, pure and simple, a toad is more complete than



Apollo or Venus. This is the reason why an element of silliness clings to classic sculpture in which the human figure is posed as an object of pure beauty, and why such efforts so soon decline into voluptuous prettiness. The human figure is hardly beautiful enough for unoccupied pose as a pure ornament, and sculpture must engage it in block-like shapes, as did Michael Angelo, or give it the rhythm and significance of action, as does Rodin, to relieve it of this haunting insufficiency.

We are now ready to confront Mr. Harrison's crowning example of the horrible and foul in Rodin's art, for I do not think I need defend his *Bourgeois de Calais*. That splendid piece of character work solves a problem in design never before attempted. For Rodin here is not dealing with the composition of one single figure to be seen from all the points on a circle in succession—the ordinary and difficult enough problem of the sculptor in the round—but with six figures at once, that move among themselves as the spectator moves, an infinite, almost, of design. I will pass from that and come to *La Vieille Heaulmière*. Mr. Harrison tells us that the title means, in antique French, 'The Old Strumpet.' His obsession here has obscured his scholarship, for the words mean simply 'The Armourer's (helmet-maker's) daughter grown old,' the subject of Villon's poem. I have heard an eminent Academician say of this figure that 'no gentleman could have done it.' Certainly no mere gentleman could, but the phrase seems to point to a confusion of two arts. If we were to bring into a room to be stared at an old woman such as is here sculptured, the effect would be shocking, because whether she minded it or

not, we should imagine it for her as a personal outrage, and therefore be uncomfortable. But we must not be frightened by being told that she is 'ugly.' She is far from lovely, but any artist who can free himself from the enthralling attraction of loveliness will tell you that the deeply marked character, the engraving of Time in fold and wrinkle make her as much more ready and rich material for drawing than a smooth pretty girl, as a gnarled tree is more beautiful than a slip from the nurseryman. To this beauty in the subject the artist has added the rhythm of the pose, which at the same time expresses the tragic appeal of dejection, weariness and feebleness in the decrepit being. We are weak creatures; we cannot stand a great deal of knowledge about ourselves; we must, for the most part, pass easily, without looking or thinking, on one side or the other; a figure like this is not an ornament for the dining-room or the drawing-room or the street; but either the *Triumph of Time* was a morbid deviation of the poet, or the sculptor also has his right to compose a *De Senectute* less comfortable than Cicero's. And if this be permitted, the particular subject here treated calls for realism, since that is of its essence.

So much for the tragic side in Rodin's work, but there is another count in the indictment. Rodin is also erotic. We are, all of us, in our degree, erotic, except a few unfortunates. Not all the great creators have given in their art a special expression to this element; but the most various and healthy, as well as the most narrow and morbid are apt to do so. The Eros of Rodin is not the green-sickness of the *Venus and Adonis* of Shakespeare, nor the conventual gauloiserie



of the *Contes Drôlatiques*; nor is it one of the deviations that afflicted some of his great predecessors in plastic art; it is not the compromise of a Leda or a Danaë, still less is it the perversion of British prudery. He touches more than one point in the poetry of love, that ranges from *The Song of Songs* to Dante. And he is found, at times, among the Fauns and Satyrs, as how could he fail to be, having himself their form? His Satyrs are Satyrs unashamed; the Frenchman, when he joins the Bacchants, does it almost as frankly as the Greek Brygos who painted ithyphallic riots on his vases. But, the Dionysus of Rodin being Dionysus, his Apollo also is Apollo.

When sculptors use tragic realism, Mr. Harrison calls it 'foul'; when they set out to render 'dreams,' he tells them it is impossible. Let him ask Donatello and Michael Angelo what they think of the domain he would allow their art.

A YEAR OF  
'POST-IMPRESSIONISM'

WHEN, a little over a year ago, 'Post-Impressionism' burst upon the town, I was in no condition to take a hand in the vast discussion that followed; but I did just stagger round the Grafton Gallery before I was despatched to a safe distance from work. When I left London the critics were disconcerted, but nervously determined, after so many mistakes, to be this time on the winning side. A few bravely, if wistfully, declared themselves fossils; some were uneasily upon the fence; the rest were practising, a little asthmatically, the phrases of an unknown tongue. As it happened, one of the few critics on the Press with anything that can be called a mind, one of the fewer with a gift for persuasion and for writing, Mr. Roger Fry, had declared for the new aesthetic, or religion, and the impressionable could but wheel desperately after him on this sudden tack. Three months later I found the new religion established, the old gods being bundled without ceremony into the lumber-room, and the ardent weathercocks of the Press pointing steadily for the moment into the paulo-post-futurum. So easy a victory for a new creed is delightful, if it is deserved, but it tempts the obstinately critical mind to ask a few questions. I propose, after the fair run that the new faith has enjoyed, to look a little closely at its theories and its productions.

The Grafton Exhibition was not quite the beginning of things. Mr. Fry had played with the very reason-



able speculation that the explorations in colour of the Impressionists might be employed by imaginative decorators not limited to a scramble for effect. It may be said, by the way, that this was precisely the programme already carried out by Puvis de Chavannes in wall-paintings like *L'Hiver*. But Mr. Fry, up till half-past eleven before the noon of the Exhibition struck, did not appear to have convinced himself that the expected method and the masters had been found; for he exhibited in Suffolk Street a ceiling that looked back to Guido, of all the Pre-Impressionists: there had been indications, however, that his vote was nearly cast. In the chaste pages of the *Burlington Magazine*, barely tainted with modern art, there appeared, with Mr. Fry's editorial blessing, a startling rhapsody on Cézanne. Its author affirmed a faith already orthodox in Germany, where the enthusiastic Meier Graefe leads the song. The Germans, so enviably endowed for music, for science, and for business, are eager for all the arts. Denied almost entirely an instinct for the art of painting, they study it, they 'encourage it,' egg it on, adore, and even buy. Nor do they stop there. They have town-planned out of the back-pages of *The Studio* in styles that put to shame the cosiest corners of our architects. They dine, they sleep, they commit every act of life in 'Art Nouveau.' And to their serious bosoms they have taken each extravagance of Montmartre and added an 'ismus' to its name. Wonderful Montmartre, that seethes and blazes for the duller world with the fire and fevers of youth and art! I remember, one summer morning in the early nineties, climbing the sacred hill. At the summit was a little shop that was a symbol of the place. There

stood, with ancient *bérets* on their heads, 'le père' and 'la mère Tanguy,' like two figures in the old Box-and-Cox barometers. They sold colours and canvases, if selling it could be called, since they were seldom paid. It was reported that they had long ceased to eat, so that there might be more colours for the young ferocious of that day, whose methods called for a huge quantity; and there, under their hands, was piled a heap of canvases returned with the colours thick encrusted, waiting in patient faith for the rare customer. There were flowers by 'Vincent' (Van Gogh), and landscapes by youths from Pont-Aven, who announced day by day that 'black was red' or 'violet was green.' Then we went from one house to another, of artist and collector. We had begun in another quarter with Comte Camondo. He had just bought the picture by Degas that so shocked Sir William Richmond and all the professionally and periodically *scandalisables* of London who write letters to the papers. Two people were drinking absinthe and coffee: had the scene been laid in London and called 'Afternoon Tea' no one would have been shocked; as it was, the picture was hooted out of the country and is now, by the Count's bequest, one of the treasures of the Louvre. On the hill we found Degas fuming because he had been written about in the papers, 'like Whistler,' and said to paint 'comme un cochon.' Last we visited the rooms of an ancient Jewish collector, and, when we had gone through them all, we crossed the street with him and plunged into a 'dive' like Mammon's, a cellar in which he had 'laid down' hundreds of 'Impressionist' pictures to mature, and pictures twenty years later to be 'Post-Impressionist.' There they



were, stacked on trucks, and he was hoarding them. Manet was then beginning to sell at Durand-Ruel's; Monet was dribbling through to America; the day of the others was to come later, when Vollard opened shop in the Rue Laffitte and held up to admiration scores of still-lives by Cézanne, sparsely constituted of an apple or two and a metallic napkin. Anquetin had just abandoned his 'synthetic' manner, that of strong outline and flat tint, and that master of the Japanese convention, Toulouse-Lautrec, was terrifying the hoardings.

But I must return to the *Burlington*. In its numbers for February and March 1910 appeared the eulogy on Cézanne by M. Maurice Denis, with reproductions of the artist's work. The main line of M. Denis' argument was that Cézanne is a 'classic,' because in his painting the spectator is not preponderantly moved by the object itself, nor by the artist's personality, but by a balance of the two. This sounds a promising description of classicism, to which I will return. But M. Denis goes on to affirm, of this 'classic' painter, that his painting is painting and nothing more, that it 'imitates objects'

'without any exactitude and without any accessory interest of sentiment or thought. When he imagines a sketch, he assembles colours and forms without any literary preoccupation: his aim is nearer to that of a carpet-weaver than of a Delacroix, transforming into coloured harmony, but with dramatic or lyric intention, a scene of the Bible or of Shakespeare.'

Sérusier is quoted in support:

'One thing must be noted, that is the absence of

subject . . . The purpose, even the concept of the object represented, disappears before the charm of his coloured forms.'

After these explanations we seem to be already in difficulties with our 'classic' painter. The balance of object and subject we have just heard about means that the object is inexactly rendered, and that there is no subject at all. And M. Denis, a painter himself, in a pretty convention, shallow sentiment and unfortunate colour, of religious and legendary 'subjects,' adopts, for his eulogy of Cézanne, the theory of poetry attributed to Mallarmé, that its beauty consists mainly in sound, of painting that its beauty is limited to the 'carpet' aspect of it, and of imagination that it works properly in the vehicle of words. The name alone, 'imagination,' might have stopped him. A scene such as is recorded in the Bible or in the pages of Shakespeare is only 'imaged' when it is seen; that is to say, when it lends itself to the art of vision, which is painting: it can only be referred to and evoked, not rendered, by the symbols of words. A scene, therefore, in the Bible or Shakespeare is at least as much the natural subject of painting as of writing, and there is nothing 'literary' in painting it. The real distinction between literature and painting is that writing, being indefinitely continuous, can evoke a chain of successive actions, and is therefore the fit medium of narrative; but it cannot represent those actions or any one point of them; painting can actually render a fixed point. The stage, within narrow limits, can reproduce the chain that narrative evokes and comments upon.

So much for the general confusion. If we take the two arts separately we shall find that their virtue is



never a simple thing: it depends on a union of two elements, beauty and significance. This is easily tested, because in the case of poetry we can cut off significance and retain the mere beauty of sound. We have only to ask a good reader to recite a poem in a language known to him and unknown to ourselves. The result, if the language is sonorous, is gently pleasant for a very short time; soon, even for the most poetical, it becomes unbearably monotonous, so much is the virtue of poetry a combination of sound-beauty, fit and ingenious arrangement of words and ideas, weight of feeling and significance. The same is true of painting. The most decorative of our oil-paintings, if we see them at such an angle that the 'subject' is not grasped, are poor things beside a rich carpet or enamel, and the really good carpets themselves are a kind of picture, dependent for the sting of their beauty on the remote 'subject' that went to their design. If, then, Cézanne had ever succeeded in getting rid of subject, he would not thereby have become a 'classic' painter, or anything like it; he would have ceased to be a painter,

But that is not all of this queer eulogy. Cézanne, it appears, abolishes tone in favour of colour,

'substitutes contrasts of tint for contrasts of tone. . . . In all this conversation he never once mentioned the word 'values.' His system assuredly excludes relations of values in the sense accepted in the schools.'

Unfortunately this is not Post-Impressionism at all, but the Impressionism of Turner and of Monet. It depends on the fact that no one, even if he wish to, can render the values truly of a sunlit landscape, because pigments do not cover so great a range. The

upper notes must be sacrificed in any case, and the convention Turner and Monet adopted, to gain a general brilliance, was to omit the lower as well, to leave out not only the real sun, which no one could put in, but also the shadows, the tones, of the lower notes, rendering only their difference of colour or tint, and that in an exaggerated way. Monet's 'purple shadow' is as famous as Turner's vermilion. Our 'classic,' therefore, is on this ground a pure impressionist.

But there is a more mysterious business. By his modelling (or 'modulating,' for the first word is not permitted), Cézanne arrives at the 'volumes' of objects, and puts their contours in afterwards. These 'volumes' are an 'abstraction' from objects. That is intelligible enough, but something comes in at this point, some sort of bee in the bonnet of Cézanne or of his admirers, that was to play havoc later, and produce whole 'schools' and sects. 'All his faculty for abstraction,' we are told,

'permits him to distinguish only among notable forms "the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder."' All forms are referred to those, which he is alone capable of thinking. The multiplicity of his colour schemes varies them infinitely. But still he never reaches the conception of the circle, the triangle, the parallelogram: those are abstractions which his eye and brain refuse to admit. Forms are for him volumes.'

On a first reading this would appear to mean that by some lesion of his classic brain our painter could not conceive a parallelogram, and that of solid bodies he could only cope with three. But probably the author



expresses himself badly or is ill translated. What he means is that Cézanne thinks in the solid, not in the parallelogram but in the cube—or am I wrong, and was the cube, afterwards to be so sacred, anathema at this period? If so, the less painter he! for the complete painter must think in both. He must imagine, extending back behind his canvas, a space containing solid bodies; and this space and these bodies he must render on the flat surface of his canvas. But he must also remember that these solid shapes, projected on the flat, will set up a certain pattern among themselves of forms in two dimensions, and that this pattern and its relation to the frame constitute the 'decorative' side of his art. Since the frame is normally either a parallelogram or a circle, he is a strange artist who cannot conceive of either; and we are more puzzled than ever by Mr. Fry's announcement, in his preface to this article, of an art 'in which the decorative elements preponderate at the expense of the representative.' The apostle of the new art is absorbed, according to the other prophet, in the 'representative' side (the rendering of depth), and knows nothing about the 'decorative' (the planning of the surface).

Mr. Fry himself speaks of Cézanne's 'compact unity' built up by 'a calculated emphasis on a rhythmic balance of directions.' But M. Denis describes one of these figure-landscape pieces in the making:

'The dimensions of the figures were often readjusted; sometimes they were life-size, sometimes contracted to half: the arms, the torsos, the legs were enlarged and diminished in unimaginable proportions.'

Calculation was missing or erratic here: and with every variation in size the 'rhythmic balance of directions' must have altered.

But it is needless to pursue farther these rather elementary confusions; let us take farewell of the article with a touching little phrase of the painter himself. He spoke, not of any of the great things enumerated, but of his 'petite sensation,' the little *sensation* that he was trying to preserve and render. I remember, in those same early nineties, a discussion among a group of American short-story writers, very earnest, constipated artists. One of them had been out for a walk, and his contribution was the statement that in coming home through the trees he had 'quite a little mood.' 'I did not write it down at the time,' he said, 'but perhaps I ought to have done so.' Cézanne was not a great classic: he was an artist, often clumsy, always in difficulties, very limited in his range, absurdly so in his most numerous productions, but with 'quite a little mood,' and the haunting idea of an art built upon the early Manet, at which he could only hint. He oscillated between Manet's earlier and finer manner, that of marked contours and broadly decided colour, and a painting based on the early Monet, all colour in a high key. In this manner he produced certain landscapes, tender and beautiful in colour, but the figure was too difficult for him, and from difficulties of all sorts he escaped into the still-lives I have spoken of, flattened jugs, apples, and napkins like blue tin that would clank if they fell. What is fatal to the claim set up for him as a deliberate designer, creating eternal images out of the momentary lights of the Impressionists, is the fact that his technique remains



that of the Impressionists, a sketcher's technique, adapted for snatching hurriedly at effects that will not wait. Hence his touch, hence those slops of form out of which he tries to throw a figure together. No one was ever further from logical 'classic' construction, if that is what we are looking for; none of the Impressionists was so uncertain in his shots at a shape. And when we come to fundamentals, to rhythm, whether it be the rhythm of the thing seen, or the rhythm of the picture imagined, or these two combined, as they are in great art, Cézanne is helpless. We have only to turn to the illustrations to appreciate this. Cut away the theories and the verbiage, and what is actually before us? A forcible head of the painter is the best of them; but even that has only one valid eye; the other portraits are blocks of wood. The vaunted landscapes with figures, the *Bathers* and *Satyrs*, are the work of a man who could not command the construction or the expressive gesture of a single figure, could not combine them together, or fit them reasonably into a landscape setting. What a blinding power has theory for the ingenious mind!

The Grafton Exhibition included many things. There was Manet as well as Cézanne. There was a group of the more tiresome 'Neo-Impressionists,' not including the inventor among them, Seurat, who introduced 'pointillisme.' The others turned the infinitesimal dots of primary colour that the theory required into large bricks of colour that could not possibly fuse at any distance. I suppose, by the way, it will be impossible to the end of time to persuade people that Monet never at any time used 'divisionism,' the splitting up of colour into its 'primary' or

its rainbow constituents. Even so careful a writer as Mr. C. J. Holmes asserts this, against the evidence of all the pictures. I endeavoured years ago to explode the supposed scientific basis of the pointillist theory of painting, but all that came of it was a conviction among my critics that I was myself an Impressionist and advocate of pointillism. I perhaps deserved this for trying to give 'Impressionism' a wider than its historical meaning.

But this by way of digression. Next after Cézanne among the painters new to London, and whom London was grateful for seeing, came Gauguin, who was well represented. This painter, beginning as a rather dull Impressionist in the wake of Pissarro, developed, for the handling of exotic scenes, a more nervous drawing and vivid colour, reverting to the Oriental decoration that was already implicit in Manet, Degas and Whistler. There is nothing revolutionary in the drawing of the Tahiti figures; it is the drawing of Degas, stiffer and less flexible, as might be expected from the painter who began work at thirty; and there is an illogical modelling of the figures in light and shade that does not extend to other parts of the picture. But the pose and grouping of the Tahiti pieces is finely felt, and his colour in these and certain still-lives has original character and splendour. The fine period was short; it is a drop from *L'Esprit Veille* to fantastic rubbish like *Christ in the Garden of Olives*.

With the third name we come, I was going to say, to the real thing; but that would be unfair; to one of those spirits who break through the ordinary moulds, who survive, like the salamander, in a fiery element. Blake is the one English artist who did this and lived



undestroyed at a perilous exaltation. Van Gogh had neither Blake's mental range nor his endurance, but in the short period of balance between the lethargic Dutch art of his beginning and the fatal madness of his end he is very like the Blake of Thornton's *Pastorals*. The hallucination of a reality more intense than that of every day comes to some men by way of wine or drugs, to some by bodily fever, to others by the fever of the mind that production itself induces. Beginning like Gauguin flatly, Van Gogh worked up, like him, through Impressionism, and then, before madness destroyed him, snatched at his startling landscape visions. Rain, a cornfield, a sunset, are discharged at us with heightened, hallucinatory intensity. The colour of flowers, too, thus excited him, and the portrait of himself, shown at the Grafton, the exasperated blondness of the tormented mattoid head against a flame of blue, was a masterpiece in its kind. Then he fell over on the other side, and paid the price for a super-lucid interval.

But this was not all. We were asked to regard these three men as the initiators of an art which was carried a stage farther by later artists, of whom two were the chief, Picasso and Matisse. Picasso appeared mainly in his early phase, as a Whistlerian, less certain even than Whistler in the construction of a painted figure, but with a delicate sense of colour; an etcher, too, of subtle line. But a portrait was shown in the sleeve of which (not yet in the face) some geometrical mania was at work. Of this more presently. Of Matisse there were only three small pieces: two insignificant landscapes and a silly doll, *La Femme aux yeux verts*, in which we were invited to find marvels of rhythm and

harmony. I have seen pictures by Matisse which had a barbaric strength of colour; I have not seen enough of his work to trace his history, and I am prepared to believe that he has given pledges elsewhere of good faith in such preposterous experiments; but I see no force in the argument that because drawing is very bad indeed, it must be very good because it is by a clever man, one who has been known, at other times and places, to draw pretty well.<sup>1</sup> I pass over Herbin, Friesz, Vlaminck, and many more, all of them, like Baal's priests, cutting and maiming their forms in a desperate incantation of the fire that had touched Van Gogh. I return from the pictures to the theories.

The catalogue was prefaced by a brilliant piece of writing, unsigned, more closely knit than M. Denis' apologia, and a lecture was given during the exhibition by Mr. Fry, and printed in the May number of the *Fortnightly Review*. The writer of the preface tacitly showed M. Denis' theory about Cézanne to the door, and advanced a directly opposite account of those he christened 'Post-Impressionists.' M. Denis had claimed for Cézanne that he was 'classic,' meaning, as we may put it, that there is a fine balance in his painting between the desires of the painter and the rights of the object painted; that he renders the object justly but finely seen. If this is not a plausible description of Cézanne, it is a possible definition of classic painting. But now we were told that the methods of this school 'enable the individuality of the artist to find completer self-expression in his work than is possible to

<sup>1</sup>Matisse turned from extravagant distortions to a kind of poster-painting, attractive in its colour, but hit-or-miss in its drawing, and monotonous in its multiplication of the odalisque in hotel bedrooms (1931).



those who have committed themselves to representing objects more literally.'

The school, in a word, render their emotions about objects rather than the objects themselves, and it becomes the definition of all drawing that it distorts the object. Personal feeling, then, is the note of the movement, and the 'Post-Impressionists,' therefore, are not classic at all, but extreme Romantics. I was met by several ghosts of old controversies in this discussion. The 'rocking-horse' of the preface reminded me of the 'Noah's ark beasts' of the Glasgow School, 'better than Sidney Cooper,' and another old phrase, 'There is no such thing as correct drawing,' played its part. By that I meant that just as in literature writing can never be said to be finally 'correct,' nor even grammar, but only to approach perfection of expression, so with drawing. Imitation may be a large part of drawing, but the initial impulse is gesture, and 'correctness' of imitation by way of tracing is not only impossible, because contours must be amplified to suggest a third dimension, but the design of the picture, simplification for decorative breadth, sacrifice and emphasis for expressive force, also affect 'correct' copying. Again I am entirely with Mr. Fry in the stress he lays on the rhythmical basis of design. Perhaps I may be allowed to refer to an article that made people very angry twenty years ago.<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, is common ground; but as they say in disputations at the Propaganda, *Distinguo*. When I came to work at the history of a period of drawing, I

<sup>1</sup>See the passage beginning 'Drawing is at bottom, like all the arts, a kind of gesture, a method of dancing upon paper,' in No. x, *Painting and Imitation*.

saw that there is a strong dividing-line between two schools, each of them great, by the degree in which they admit freedom of modification; and Mr. Fry's definition, and my old one, are not the account of all drawing, but of one school only. I have endeavoured elsewhere to bring this out,<sup>1</sup> but must risk a repetition here. 'Classic' drawing, conveniently so called because it is the drawing of Greek fifth-century sculptors, follows the model or 'nature' very closely, with a minimum of sacrifice and distortion for the sake of emotional emphasis, the expression of action, or the imposition of a rhythm conceived by the designer. It is realist among choice forms, aims at searching out the rhythm implicit in an object, and entrusts to a lucid statement of that rhythm the task of exciting in the spectator's mind the feeling already aroused in that of the artist. It sinks personality and renders the object.

Romantic drawing is not satisfied with this: it emphasizes, caricatures, elongates, abbreviates, reshapes the form in accordance with a more violent emotion, a more tyrannic imposition of rhythm, a rhythm of the artist's excitement. The problem of both schools is at bottom the same—namely, to fit into the rhythm of the picture or of the sculptor's block the rhythms of the objects included; but classic art more humbly, more patiently and subtly waits upon the secrets of the object: it discovers a rhythm rather than invents. Romantic drawing shatters and reforms the object with its own passion and gesture, and introduces incidentally all manner of 'personal' elements of temper and touch. It follows, naturally enough, that

<sup>1</sup>*Nineteenth Century Art.* (MacLehose, 1902.)



classic art works, by preference, in presence of the object; romantic art tends to remake from memory. 'Nature puts them out,' these artists say; they borrow from her a shorthand of form, a scaffolding on which their system of expression may be hung.

These two tempers and systems exist side by side in varying force at all times.

Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Donatello, Dürer,<sup>1</sup> Holbein, Leonardo and Raphael, Titian till his later days, Velazquez are in the main classics. Giovanni Pisano and Michael Angelo are the great Romantics; Tintoretto, Rubens, and Il Greco are some of the followers. In the modern period Ingres and Stevens are classic; Goya, Géricault, Delacroix, Daumier, Millet, Rodin are Romantics. Almost all Englishmen of any account are Romantics; a contemporary classic is hard to find, except Mr. Havard Thomas, who is the extreme case (I am not now discussing relative merits but the completeness of the type).

But if the writer of the preface started out with the thesis that his artists were Romantics expressing less objects than themselves, he suddenly abandoned this, and threw out an entirely new and incompatible third

<sup>1</sup>A check upon classic drawing is obedience to a normal form or canon of proportion. Some years ago Mr. Sturge Moore published a book on Albert Dürer, in which he laid it down that Dürer's canon was used only to be departed from. He showed no acquaintance with Dürer's own writings on the subject, except a short passage translated by Sir Martin Conway, and that he had misunderstood. His view was accepted by the critics, who evidently had not read Dürer's book. But a patient German, L. Justi, at the same time was publishing a treatise, showing that on the back of some of Dürer's drawings the construction from the canon was to be found and was followed. It is a blot upon English scholarship and a blank in the labours of the Dürer Society that no translation of his work on Proportion has been undertaken.

theory, namely, that they painted not appearances, not even emotions about appearances, but the Thing in Itself. They paint, he says, 'the treeness of a tree,' and elsewhere, 'they draw a line round the concept of a thing.' Now, if there is one feat beyond all impossible for painting, it is this. You can *think* the concept of a tree, and you can talk about it, since words allude to ideas they do not represent, but you cannot imagine it, and you cannot draw it. The concept includes every kind and size of tree, the drawing must represent one. So, to take a simpler case, you can *think* the general idea of a triangle, which includes equilateral, isosceles, and scalene triangles of all sizes; but you cannot draw it, because any triangle you draw must be one kind or another, one size or another. And the thing-in-itself, or 'substance' being, by its nature, relieved of all particular appearances, cannot be drawn, because drawing is the art of visible appearance, not of invisible substance. It is true I can pick and choose among appearances those that, for my purpose, are most important; I can abstract from the total appearance of a tree; I can abstract its greenness or brownness, and draw it black; I can abstract its roundness, and draw it flat; I can abstract its leaves, and draw it bare; I can abstract its branches, and draw it a stump; but some part of the 'treeness of the tree' goes with each abstraction and resides entirely in no one of these particulars. A tree may, for the imagination, present forcibly one of its qualities at a time; it may be a green dome of shade on a hot day, a ladder of retreat for a man from the attentions of a mad bull, a peg on which an apple hangs, a screen for an assassin, a choir for birds; and its own business of spreading out its



million pores to the air and propagating its kind, which comes nearest to being its 'treeness,' may be what occupies the artist least and bores him most. He deals with the accidents of its life that serve the purposes of his own kind. But if, because of this, he scorns the tree's own idea of its main business, misunderstands and cramps the rhythm that mysteriously arises from the strains and expansions of its anchoring, its feeding, and its breathing, he loses, not perhaps the significance for his story that the ladder or the peg or the umbrella would sufficiently furnish, he loses beauty, the beauty implicated in the processes of life, and cannot replace it however he may cudgel his invention.

Mr. Fry, as one would expect, produced a more coherent theory than the other writers: he declared, as the object of the 'Post-Impressionists,' the 'discovery of the visual language of the imagination': a language analogous to music, and on this quest the abandonment of 'naturalism.' The 'distortion' already conceded to the Romantics is a part of this, but he goes on to demand the suppression of natural perspective and chiaroscuro. Naturalistic perspective, he contends, prevents a painter from giving the significance, say, of a pageant, because the policeman near at hand obscures by his comparative bulk the really important figures. That is so only if the painter takes his stand immediately behind the policeman. There is no reason why a more distant point of view should not be chosen, and Gentile Bellini, Carpaccio, Titian, and Veronese solved this difficulty without trouble. Chiaroscuro can also, within the limits of naturalism, be minimized and almost excluded by the lighting of the picture

from the front, or reduced, for decorative breadth, to one step between light and dark, as by Manet, and for the matter of that Maurice Denis. But no reasonable man would deny to the artist, for special reasons of expression or decoration, a break with strict perspective, which, indeed, is seldom to be found in good pictures, or complete abstraction from shadow. What Mr. Fry seems to forget is that perspective and shadow are not mere science: in the hands of great artists they are instruments of expression, perspective a threatening power in the hands of a Mantegna, shadow an instrument of reverie and pathos in the hands of a Rembrandt; they also, like linear form, are matter for design. What we may well concede, and what I for one have often asserted, is that the full accumulation of natural effect, the total instrument of painting, is not only unfit for certain purposes, but is beyond the strength of all but very great artists. Many can play on the pipe who cannot control to purpose all the keyboards of the organ. If that is what Post-Impressionism means, the greater part of recent painting in this country has been Post-Impressionist, deliberately or less consciously throwing overboard one or another element in the full range of representation so as to keep the ship floating. There are many varieties of such sacrifice. The sacrifices may be necessary, but the danger of any deliberate stereotype thus adopted is that an artist who once limits his traffic with nature not only cuts himself off from fresh sources, but is in danger of losing even that which he hath. If out of the whole alphabet of appearances he limits himself to A B C for the sake of A, B and C are apt to grow insolent and make an end of A. Mr. Fry, if I under-



stand him aright, welcomes the possibility of 'genius' being no longer called for. He speaks of the possibilities of recovering an 'anonymous' art, as if that were the same thing; but in the anonymous mediaeval times it is easy to trace the points at which genius came in. He looks for the creation of a common language of imaginative expression which all might use, without any arduous training, without any wrestle with natural appearances, a language as direct as a child's in drawing. I agree that for such purposes laborious imitation is irrelevant, that the point of imitation reached in a thousand art schools is useless, because it will never be turned to imaginative use; but I hold with Blake against Mr. Fry that a man must learn to copy nature if, to any high purpose, he would copy his imagination. The odd thing about this new language of the imagination is that once acquired it seems not to widen the imaginative range, but to limit it to an orange, an apple, a napkin, and a pot. These are subjects which of all others surely call for the full texture of vision to render them interesting, for the art of a Chardin or a Manet. Nature seems to revenge herself by allowing to the rebels not even 'nature morte!'

In the matter of Cézanne Mr. Fry holds, as does his able seconder Mr. Clutton Brock,<sup>1</sup> that we have 'classic' art. I have already dealt with this claim, but Mr. Fry has an obsession under this head, which calls for a word of examination. He appears to think that the residual element of reality, which renders painting 'classic,' is the expression of solidity, and that solidity is most fully expressed by the elimination of light and

<sup>1</sup>*Burlington Magazine*, January 1911.

shade and the addition of a thick contour. We are reminded, at this point, of Mr. Berenson's famous 'tactile values.' The expression was ill chosen, because Mr. Berenson did not mean values of touch at all, but the sense of energy put forth and of resistance, which are different things; or else those appreciations of depth which (*pace* Berkeley) depend not on tactile but on visual machinery. The Florentine School of painting sprang from sculpture; hence its preoccupation with solidity; the Venetians made painting more distinctly a painter's art by their preoccupation with colour. This by way of parenthesis. Cézanne often 'blocks in' his forms with thick lines which give them a certain brutal force, but he does it indiscriminately with a flower-pot, which if solid is fragile, and with table-cloths, which are as little solid as objects may be. And Mr. Fry finds this magic of solidity in the most unlikely features. Cézanne sometimes draws the mouth of a circular vase or flower-pot seen in perspective not as an ellipse, but like a gutta-percha ellipse that has been squeezed till its sides are parallel; producing, Mr. Fry says, a greater effect of solidity. Why Cézanne did this it is idle to conjecture; in one piece he draws three flower-pots side by side, and their lower contours range from a straight line to a lop-sided curve. It is probable then that the flattened forms arise rather from thoughtless or clumsy shots at form than from an intention;<sup>1</sup> but if intention there

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was, it must have been an intention to flatten the shape, not to expand it. The true shape of a circle in wide perspective has so straining an influence on the picture-field that designers are tempted to attenuate it; thus Puvis de Chavannes, in the foreground of one of his best-known mural paintings, draws a fountain-basin in the shape of Cézanne's flower-pot mouth. He, and perhaps Cézanne, was really flattening his form for decorative reasons. Mr. Fry finds the same 'classic' merits in the still-lives with which Picasso has been rewarding the devout fervour of disciples. One of these I was privileged to see in Mr. Fry's company. In a 'design' that looked like fragments of stained glass pieced together could be made out the contours of a bashed flower-pot and a lemon, and other objects were explained to be a curtain and a piece of paper. In this case the mouth of the flower-pot reversed the formula of Cézanne; it had the shape of an irregular almond, with sharp ends; but was still affirmed to increase the solidity of the pot's reality: a sufficient *reductio ad absurdum*, one would think. The 'paper' was indeed solid, solid as iron; but then 'one must not look for imitation of nature.' Why then have paper at all? If my classic emotion before an orange may lead me to represent it, not as a sphere of orange-colour, but as a cube of green, need I look at oranges at all? And if the 'balance of directions,' as I was told, requires that the flower-pot should be mutilated, why take this 'direction' at the expense of a flower-pot? If all we want is a play of 'directions' leading nowhere, why do the flower-pot and lemon linger on the field, like indestructible properties saved, in the wreck of the universe, from the old still-lives? The truth is that

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like this: as there is a Classic and a Romantic drawing, is there also a Mystic drawing? Can we trace the laws that govern the artist who attempts to render the superhuman in some sort of visible terms? Symbolic, evidently, the drawing must be; that is to say the image given will be there not fully to represent anything, but to mediate with the Unseen, as Incarnation with God, to stand for something beyond itself. In what ways will the drawing suggest this?

The modern romantic temper tends to confound with mystic vision two words whose sound favours the confusion, 'mystery' and 'mist.' The first of these was originally the mystic's drama, the rite of initiation, but it has been worn down till it means little more than something misty; and mistiness is the romantic evasion for mystic vision. But this is the reverse of the character we find in the images of really religious times. Definiteness of outline, massive form, are their characteristics, as of forces imperishable and unchanging. And we may put this more generally by saying that as much as possible every element of contingency must be excluded, all those features that made Plato distrust the art of painting because they render the idea a shifting thing. For this reason perspective will be minimised, for this reason changing light and shadow, the mirage of atmosphere, the decomposition of reflected lights; in composition the studied confusion of the picturesque, in expression all transitory emotion will be banished for severe symmetry and solemn calm. The illusion of the passing world will be reduced to its lowest term of abstraction, and for this reason sculpture, in what is obviously not flesh, will be preferred to painting. Detail and acces-



sory will be as rigorously dealt with; such incident and detail as is admitted will be admitted reluctantly only because it is forced upon the artist to enhance significance. And symbolic realities thus admitted will wear some mark of strangeness, as by the faint tradition of religion people still 'dress for church.' It shows how far this idea has been perverted that the modern does not put on a dress, like a surplice, that would sink his individuality; Mrs. Brown does not wear a veil, but affirms herself not Mrs. Jones by her competitive hat. That is not surprising, since for so many centuries religious art has been lost, has been ebbing with the receding wave that withdrew religion itself to the East from which it came. Just as in Greek art the 'classic' period is too realistic and human to be religious, so in Gothic art figures like *Le beau Christ* of Amiens are already outside, and in painting we must go back to 'primitives' behind Titian for examples of what we are in search of. In early Greek and Gothic blocks, in mosaic on non-illusive golden grounds, in Egyptian granite, in oriental wood and bronze, something of the divine and eternal was communicated. And the drawing of such images differs from the choice realism of classic art, the curiosity and personal emphasis of romantic; it sweeps over the minor points of representation that in portrait, in the drama, in genre and still-life are properly sought out and enforced. In the native lands of religion this synthetic drawing has extended itself beyond the religious subject, has checked the portrait-painter when he deals with the individual, and even the landscape painter, tied to symbols when he seeks the freedom of clouds or sea.

That only a religious revival could restore the conditions in which even the other great kinds of painting might grow again to their highest stature is, I think, an inevitable conclusion from history; and monumental art of any kind calls for 'sacrifices' of small imitation. But the 'sacrifices' of the 'Post-Impressionists' seem to me to be sacrifices in the wrong place, and not to be laid on the altar of even an absent god.

1912



THE EVACUATION OF THE  
PICTURE

MATTHEW MARIS<sup>1</sup> for half his lifetime had become a legend, a recluse whom no one saw but his friend John Swan and his other friend and agent, Mr. Van Wisselingh: the small group of works that Daniel Cottier had planted out among Scottish collectors made up his fame; Henley, a friend of one of these and of Cottier, had been his prophet, and the fame loomed like a fog-wreath all the greater, because he did nothing more. From time to time, indeed, Mr. Van Wisselingh, a fine type of dealer who sacrificed to his admirations, would drag out from the studio some adumbration, show it in Brook Street, and call it a *Bride*; but the *Four Mills*, the *Outskirts of a Town*, the *Souvenir of Amsterdam*, the *Montmartre*, the versions of a *Child with Butterflies*, the so-called *Lady of Shalott*, the *Girl at the Spinning Wheel*, and a few other things were all that had escaped from the painter's hand. He had been a fellow-pupil with Alma Tadema at Antwerp, had drifted to join his brother James in Paris in 1869, but was 'humiliated and jarred'; had been spirited to London and after some fashion employed by Cottier, but irked again by those restraints had gone into the retreat of first one, then of another obscure lodging where he avoided all that it is possible in life to avoid. The delicate impulses that had stolen a little activity from him were exhausted: he pottered,

<sup>1</sup>*Matthew Maris*. By Ernest D. Fridlander. Philip Lee Warner and Jonathan Cape, 1921.

indeed, daily over his canvases; but the nineteen years in one lodging and eleven in another were spent in obliteration; in rendering fainter and murkier the beginnings of a few pictures in his stack. One of them the *Vanished Illusions*, had begun to vanish in the early Paris days; it was vanishing to the last. After his death a number of those obliterations were taken from their long twilight and exposed: they should have been sealed up or finally extinguished.

To the first of the lodgings came a hero worshipper, breaking wonderfully through the hedge of inhibitions and thereafter regularly worshipped. Vague himself as the master, delightfully warm-hearted and idolatrous, he set himself to catalogue even the tiniest part of the surroundings and to catch any crumb of wisdom that fell from the venerated lips, though the speaker, in his progress towards complete exclusion, tended to bar wisdom itself, mocking at all analysts as 'wisdomers.' Only a little compression and 'development' are needed to make out of those innocent pages a notable fable, a pursuit of the filmy absolute, a dream of painting uncontaminated by being looked at or sold or even painted, the quest of a mildly dolorous Knight and of his Squire.

It was no comfortable occupation for Mr. Fridlander. Matthew Maris held life so much at arm's length that a visitor had need of all his internal warmth.

'The year round his grate was destitute of fire, and through all wintry weather he would keep the upper part of his north window opened wide, creating thus an atmosphere in which his friends, less hardy, sometimes paid dearly, if with willing fortitude, for happi-



ness in his society: and sometimes he would say with evident enjoyment as icy currents swept about the room, how much he liked to feel the free air blowing overhead.'

It was one of his 'refusals' not to sit: he stood up for meals and mostly for reading, he knelt on the floor to paint: there must be no flicker of fire to disturb him, no reflection of light from the roof, a perfection of still and dusky conditions for the picture that was not to come. Unhappy in his first quarters, he was incredulous of finding others and incapable of going to find them: indeed he hardly crept out except at night-fall to a tobacconist's, chemist's or news-shop. But his friends found a propitious haven for him and there was a little interval when he was lured to Frithwood House by the Van Wisselinghs. Frost went with him.

'Even to this temporary haven of beauty and repose must Matthew Maris bring his spartan rule! Well do I remember a small tea-party at which, in the absence of his hostess, he was presiding genius. It . . . was very cold, the fire at his command had vanished, a window was pitilessly open, and the tea to his desire was much too strong—and not without difficulty did the spirit's satisfaction rise above the discomforts of the flesh.'

A visitor, secretary of the Bible Society, used a word of Greek. 'Maris, furious, vanished from the room,' but returned to the window to ask in a loud whisper, 'Have those people gone?' They had not.

Some idea of the conversation is given. The dis-

ciple learned how Maris had become embittered in Paris, embittered under Cottier, embittered with painting for money, embittered fundamentally with painting itself, and of course embittered with 'Nature.'

'Deep as had been his love and reverence for Nature—so deep that the mere thought of copying in paint fragments of her wondrous handiwork at times had been repugnant to him— . . . yet he would dwell upon her seeming cruelty . . . and often he would ponder and converse upon the strange conflict between Nature and the soul of man. "Nature never ceases to pursue us," he would quote, "until she has made us sin."'

The real conflict and root of bitterness was between the temporary artist in him and the encroaching upon that active element of a gentle, not unhappy Buddhist, withdrawn into himself.

We must not, before this picture of the withdrawing soul, forget the exquisite faint impulses that had stolen an expression for themselves, the little salvage he denounced as 'pot-boilers.' It is a kind of 'ectoplasm' no doubt, an exhalation from inner consciousness as removed from outer models as he could contrive—he hated to have 'bones' in it—but Nature had a little bit of her way, dropped just enough of her grit into the cell of this recalcitrant oyster to furnish a few pearls.

That duly acknowledged, we may admire how Matthew Maris illustrates for us almost the last stage in 'Independent Art,' the state of the artist who paints 'only to please himself,' the state of the picture all-



but evacuated. The artist who works only to please himself ceases in the end to please even that one patron. In the vigorous days of painting the triangle was solid and complete of patron, subject, artist; the patron who commissioned a subject from the artist, a subject rich in content, with an imperative dogmatic core to it, an artist challenged and stimulated to his utmost by the thing commanded. With the crumbling of religious belief and also with the spread of printing the imperativeness of the art declined, but the revived knowledge of an older religion enriched subject with not a creed but an imagination. Christianity and classic mythology alike became romance, and could live for a time by their own heat. A King of Spain commissioned the 'poesies' of a Titian. Then romance, with a revival here and there in painting, faded away into the illustration of books: illustration and portraiture remain to us as the only graphic arts that are an honest trade as between artist and patron. The rest is private fancy indulged on the chance of some other person being pleased as well as the producer. The foreground went out of painting and the background remained, the landscape that counted for less even than portrait in mediaeval art. Then the subject of landscape went out, the place portrayed, to leave us with the accident of light. That, in broad outline, is the history of modern painting, only strong individuals resisting, who, like thunder, could work up against the wind. The more nervous, if gifted beings, a Cézanne and a Maris, recoiled from 'Nature': a Whistler existed on the margin of tenuity; Maris disappeared into the mist. Then followed, yesterday, a reaction, as faint as the movement. Against the art of accident reap-

peared the claim of design. The canvas was bare, subject and significance emptied out: it remained to play geometry with fragments of the object.

So far has the tide ebbed.

1922



## DRAWING, NEW AND OLD

## I

TWO articles by Mr. Roger Fry on modern drawing,<sup>1</sup> with their illustrations, provoke many questions and comments; I will limit myself to a few. But before I proceed I must lay down the general assumption on which my criticism is based. I do not wish to assume what I am not entitled to, and if I am wrong Mr. Fry will correct me. His exposition on the point has been casual and by implication rather than clear, but I think I am justified in saying that of the two elements which make up the art of the drawn or painted image, namely, significance and beauty, Mr. Fry regards the first as non-essential, as something which may have brought about the work of art, but which, once it is created, becomes irrelevant; that 'aesthetic' appreciation has to do only with the formal elements of design, and not at all with their content or meaning. Artistic judgment, therefore, does not concern itself with the ideas and sentiments of the artist, that is to say, with the interpretation of his designs as subjects, and not even with their interpretation as objects (representation). Thus Mr. Fry counts for nothing over against the superb draughtsmanship of Ingres the nauseous element in his mind and pictures, and thinks it a derogation from Rossetti's powers and Gauguin's that one is inspired to paint by romantic, the other by exotic subjects.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the praise of

<sup>1</sup>*Burlington Magazine*, December 1918; February 1919.

<sup>2</sup>*Burlington Magazine*, xxix. p. 100; xxxii. p. 85.

'plasticity' is reserved for figures like that of Matisse, in which one gluteus major is more than double the size of the other in defiance of nature;<sup>1</sup> and the ardent following of natural form by Ingres is surprisingly praised for its 'distortions.' In a word, pictorial art is all beauty and not at all meaning. Thus in an article on 'The New Movement in Art and its Relation to Life'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Fry writes:

'In proportion as art becomes pure . . . it cuts out all the romantic overtones of life, which are the usual bait by which the work of art induces men to accept it. It appeals only to the aesthetic sensibility.'

'Pure' art, then, in drawing must be judged solely by the degree of beauty the lines set up among themselves, independently of the objects they represent, or the ideas and emotions they convey. On this assumption I will examine what Mr. Fry has to say of drawing, and test its consistency.

And first, I should like to repeat a question which I asked seven years ago without an answer.<sup>2</sup> It is this. Since Mr. Fry's general theory of drawing pours contempt upon representation of the object, why does he so constantly make it a merit of drawings that they insist on solidity, on 'mass,' 'volume,' 'plasticity,' and so forth? I am not by any means suggesting that this is not a virtue; but since representation is not a virtue for Mr. Fry, and solidity is but one among the features of a natural object, why may not this feature be as freely discarded as the silhouette is distorted? His respect for the third dimension, when the other

<sup>1</sup>*Burlington Magazine*, xxxi. p. 168.

<sup>2</sup>'A Year of Post-Impressionism,' *Nineteenth Century*, Feb. 1912.



two are so cavalierly treated, is puzzling; indeed, we hear far more about it than about the beauty of lines as such: Mr. Fry makes almost as much of this feature of drawing as Professor Tonks.<sup>1</sup> He may, of course, say: 'My "solidity" has no relation to actual solidities; I treat the third dimension as freely as the other two.' But that does not really touch my point, which is that the third dimension has nothing whatever to do with the merit of lines as such, with their design, the pattern they make on the paper, which is all Mr. Fry has left himself a right to consider. I am aware that the phrase, 'designing in depth,' has been freely used to describe and excuse some uncommonly poor designs in the flat among recent work; and the parrots of the press frequently repeat this incantation, just as they repeat Mr. Clive Bell's 'significant form.' Mr. Clive Bell sets out to be paradoxical, or, in any case, succeeds in saying the precise opposite of what he may be presumed to have intended, namely, 'insignificant' or 'meaningless' form. We expect something better from Mr. Fry. When he deals with an old master we get brilliant analysis, like that of the drawing of Rembrandt in the article last referred to: but his eyes dazzle when he looks at contemporaries, and his thought and language relax. Now solidity is not given in a line, but can only be inferred from it as its meaning. Solidity does not appeal to our sense of visual beauty, since we can never see, but only infer it; though it appeals to many other feelings that Mr. Fry has ruled out. The draughtsman or painter who takes on the responsibilities of representation has a reason for using the means that suggest a third dimension: for

<sup>1</sup>*Burlington Magazine*, xxxii. p. 52.

Mr. Fry depth is an 'association' of reality that has no claim on the artist. He has to do with the play of contours and enclosed shapes on the flat of the picture-plane: nothing more enters into the decorative design of a drawing: the rest is significance inferred from these. I invite, therefore, an explanation of this fondness for a realistic accident, attached by association to the contours of a design.

So much for a general inconsistency. But still more striking is the gap between Mr. Fry's theories and the examples he puts forward to illustrate them. Of two idols, Picasso and Matisse, Mr. Fry gave us specimens,<sup>1</sup> and his reasons for admiring them. It is impossible to prove a case against an admiration; but it is possible to discuss reasons. Of Picasso, Mr. Fry says:

'Picasso is essentially a realist. There is no willed imposition of a preconceived scheme of form upon the object. The form is arrived at inductively by the successive elimination of all accidentals, until the pure substance is revealed.'

There is a preliminary objection to make against this statement. It employs the language of a philosophy according to which all the sensible qualities of an object are 'accidents,' and among them all its visible qualities. 'Pure substance' is arrived at when these have been stripped away; it is something which cannot be touched or heard or smelt or seen. If Picasso were a 'realist' in this sense he would be a follower of John Scotus Erigena. Such a theory had its merits for a schoolman; for example, it explained

<sup>1</sup>Plates I and II.





PLATE I: DRAWING BY PICASSO



PLATE II: DRAWING BY MATISSE



trans-substantiation; that which had the accidents of bread in touch or taste might have the substance of flesh. But for a draughtsman it will not do: substance is invisible; it cannot be drawn; only 'accidents' are visible. Plato, from whom the doctrine descended, accepted its consequences. The painter could only render the unreal, shifty appearance, not the true idea; therefore the painter had a low place in the Republic. Mr. Fry, then, cannot possibly mean what he says. The visible 'accidents' have not been eliminated, nor has there even been abstraction of these up to the extreme limit or anything like the limit. If we are successively to eliminate visible accidents we must begin by stripping Mons. Massine (Picasso's subject) of his clothes, the most superficial of all. In the second place we must strip him of the accidental position in which he appears, seated on a chair, with legs crossed, profile mixed up with three-quarter face, and so on. Then from the point of view of 'pure substance' it is an accident that he is an individual, that he is of a particular height, age, sex or species, that he is an animal of any one class, or an animal at all. We arrive, in fact, at God, in whom all these differentiations are potential, or at nothing. We had better, then, drop those more than doubtful philosophical categories. In all line drawing there is abstraction; abstraction from colour, tone and texture; and in all drawing there is necessarily simplification from the infinite variation of form in nature. All that Mr. Fry means is that in Picasso's drawing there is a great deal of simplification, and we are left with this fact and the statement that he is a realist who does not impose a preconceived scheme of form. But when we turn to

the drawing we rub our eyes, for this is glaringly not the case. For one thing the sitter, like the angel in the story who was invited to sit down, 'n'a pas de quoi.' If this was intended it is clearly the case of a preconceived scheme of form imposed; the object is not so clear; but on this part of the frame the modern movement is apt to impose excess or defect. Again, the anomalous setting of the eye neither in its natural place nor even in the face, if not merely a bad shot, must be a matter of preconception and imposition. Altogether it is obvious that we are dealing not with a realist, but with a caricaturist. Now the essence of caricature is distortion, but distortion not primarily for the sake of formal beauty, but for an emphasis of the artist's ideas about the subject; its root, in a word, is significance; and for the second time Mr. Fry is tripped up by the element he despises. But so he would be if the drawing agreed with his hypothesis; if it were not a caricature, but a realistic, though simplified, portrait. Whatever other draughtsmen may do, the realistic portrait draughtsman sets out to represent his sitter and render a likeness; he is not free to be a 'pure artist': he must accept the forms of his subject.

And now let us turn to the examples of Matisse. We are told that he has two manners, the 'caligraphic' and the 'structural.' The first we may pass as a fair description of the bunch of flowers in a glass. It is a pretty enough scribble, and that is all that need be said about it: nothing new emerges. The woman with the cat is of the other kind, 'structural.' In Mr. Fry's use of this word there is an ambiguity. Structure of what? For the artist who is concerned with representation (*i.e.* with the meaning of his forms) structure



has two senses: there is the structure of the object to be represented (the despised 'anatomy' is a part of this for beasts and men), and there is the structure of his design, the pattern<sup>1</sup> into which that other structure must be fitted; or the pattern is discovered in the first and emphasised in the drawing. And the triumph of art is to combine these two as at a flash-point where two elements unite to make a third. But if, with Mr. Fry, we regard the object as base material with no rights of its own, like a sheet of paper to be cut into any shapes we please, the high ingenuity that so delights us when natural forms are humoured into a picture-pattern has no longer a resisting element to exercise itself upon, and the picture structure is left to work flaccidly in vacuo, attempting to create 'pure' beauty. There are two structures, then, to be analysed in the making of a drawing, not one. What is their fate with Matisse? When we look at the drawing we see that he fixed upon a particular series of curves and correspondences in the sitter as his picture-motive; the oval of the head is echoed in the curves of the shoulders and thighs, the back of the pussy, the rail of the chair. But the accommodation of the sitter's structure to this pattern-structure is violent or flaccid. The lines of head and features are tentative and poor; the line of the chair stumbles unhappily round the shoulders; the arms serve neither structural purpose; the hand is not only meaningless but weak and ugly as form, and there is fiasco in the passage about the waist; coherence here is completely lost. When an artist accepts natural structure at all, but cannot play

<sup>1</sup>I use the unsatisfactory word 'pattern' for want of a better. 'Motive' is too partial.

the game of the two structures at once, he spoils both; his work has no interest, and if it has novelty it is the novelty of not solving the problem that all good artists have solved. If bald simplicity was the object, minimising nature so as to produce a symbolic diagram in geometrical shapes, then Matisse should have simplified more thoroughly; as it is he falls between two stools; his model has been too much for his geometry and his geometry too much for the model.

It would be cruel to proceed with the other examples. The word 'caligraphic' is applied to a drawing that proceeds from point to point with uneasy jerks; 'unself-conscious' is peculiarly inapplicable to those feeble but mannered specimens.

And now, in the light of these examples, what is the novel kind of drawing we are asked to recognise and admire? Caligraphy, structure-of-design, simplification for either, caricature, or more generally, expressive distortion, symbolic geometry, insistence on solidity, none of these is new: in all ages the artist claims these liberties with nature, and in the age of the camera and camera-painters has to press the claim. To what new prospect do Picasso and Matisse open the window? All I can find in Mr. Fry's articles is the reference to a 'new quality of rhythm' and a treacherous analogy taken from literature.<sup>1</sup> 'Quality' in this connection I do not follow: I take it what is meant is a new rhythm. And this, so far as it is expounded, depends on the use of 'a larger unit.' There is no merit in a large unit as such: nor is the rhythm neces-

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Fry still uses 'literary' to describe and depreciate the element of thought and feeling associated with the visible. The fallacy has been a score of times exposed.



sarily altered by its adoption, e.g. by writing in semi-breves instead of quavers. The surface of a sheet of paper may be squared up into units measuring one inch by one and a half, or two by three, or in other ratios; and happiness of scale depends on the proportion of this unit to the size of the sheet. But I doubt whether Mr. Fry means 'unit.'<sup>1</sup> He is more probably thinking of 'motive,' the geometrical form, circle, oval, square, triangle, rectangle and so forth, which is echoed in different sizes throughout the design. The motive is not a metrical unit but a phrase, if we are to use a musical and literary analogy.

To such an analogy Mr. Fry has recourse: he says:

'The change in the general quality of rhythm in modern drawing might perhaps be compared to the change from regular verse to free verse or poetical prose.'

There are two things to say upon this. 'Free verse or poetical prose' will not do. 'Vers libre' is either verse, in which case it is not 'free,' or it is 'free,' in which case it is not verse, but prose; or, as very commonly, it is a mixture of the two, in which case it is a mongrel. We are left, therefore, with 'poetical prose.' Poetical prose, so-called, is frequently verse. But I conjecture that what Mr. Fry really means is that modern drawing does not, like the stricter forms of verse, take the shape of repeated pattern. That is true enough; but it

<sup>1</sup>He says of Modigliani, 'all relief has for him the same geometrical section, and his effect is got by the arrangement of a number of essentially similar units.' Now a unit must be the same as another unit, not similar to it. An inch is not essentially similar to another inch, but identical with it. The system attributed to Modigliani would mean composing with a series of uniform sausages. He does not go quite so far.

is not true only of modern drawing; it is equally true of Renaissance and more ancient design. Repeated pattern belongs to things like wall-papers and textiles. These are the analogue of strict verse, in which metrical design takes the upper hand; though the analogy is not complete, since the repeated units in verse take on, with words, a changed meaning. But painting and pictorial drawing have never had this strict constitution; they have only approached it in frieze composition, or in closely symmetrical composition, which is one special case of the general law of rhythmical balance. The analogy throughout for drawing has been with the structure of prose, that is to say a structure in which metre is in the background and phrase rhythm<sup>1</sup> takes the lead. And this brings us up once more against the element that Mr. Fry and his friends exclude from the art of drawing. Prose rhythm is moulded upon meaning for its shapes as strict verse metre is not. Its aim is the expression of ideas, of emotions, of 'sentiment,' of 'associations.' It takes on the object as its motive, and with the object what the object means, and it makes this sacrifice, that if the

<sup>1</sup>I use this expression, though no one has made out the laws of such a rhythm. What is clear is that balance of weight about a centre of gravity is involved, and the balance of forces (Mr. Fry's 'balance of directions'). Once more, all this belongs to our interpretation of forms, to significance. The balance of shapes produced in the picture-plane, the grouping or 'phrasing' of metrical units, introduces problems of rhythm that baffle analysis. An interesting essay by Mr. Denman W. Ross deals with the laws of balance in 'Pure Design.' From this source, I think, comes Mr. Fry's 'balance of direction.' But the conception of 'direction' belongs, not to 'pure design,' but to representation. If lines meet in a point, we do not know whether their direction is towards the point or away from it unless we know whether the force acting at the point is one of attraction or repulsion; a magnet, say, or an explosion.



meaning is emptied out of the pattern, leaving only its geometrical skeleton, that pattern reveals itself as, independently, a very poor and uninteresting affair. If the secret must out, there is in drawings very little pure beauty: there is just enough to excite us hugely when it is combined with significance, what Mr. Fry contemns as 'illustration,' but finds constantly bobbing up to trouble him, as with his latest protégé, Monsieur Larionow.<sup>1</sup> I invite Mr. Fry, therefore, to feel the joints of his argument and point out in his turn any fallacies in mine. By this process we shall arrive perhaps at closer quarters with one another and with the truth. But if the editors and readers of the Magazine will bear with me further, I should like to set out my own analysis of drawing and its bearings upon modern experiment.

## I I

If we ask, What is drawing? we shall find that in its full development it is not a simple act, but that several *drawings*, so to speak, are combined in the final stage.

Give a child a pencil and piece of paper to play with. Its first impulse is not to make a picture, to represent anything, but simply to make a mark. These marks are at first vague, accidental, timid or violent: but through them runs the effort to arrive at freedom and precision of gesture. This first process repeats that of the early movements of the limbs; the child is learning to move or gesticulate on paper—to make gestures of which the record is a trace. To do this it must learn to exert a steady pressure, to move regu-

<sup>1</sup>*Burlington Magazine*, xxxiv. p. 118.

larly in a given direction, to turn at a given point. An exacter parallel than my old analogy of dancing, which Mr. Fry adopts, is *skating*. The first movements in skating are awkward, stumbling dashes and scrambles. Gradually the learner becomes able to strike a clear, continuous line with the blade, and finds that the natural balance of the body, if yielded to, allowed to act freely on a given impulse in a given direction, produces curves of a regular and beautiful character. From helpless, floundering gesture the advance has been made to controlled gesture, and the trace of these gestures on the ice has the metrical constitution of *rhythm*. The goal, then, of this stage in drawing is *rhythmical* gesture. It has no purpose outside of itself: it represents nothing; it is merely the graphic trace of a point moving under the laws of balance. The child does not often arrive, undisciplined, at perfect freehand gesture; but this is the aim of its vague scribbles. Here is one of the fundamentals of drawing; when the others have been added it persists, and what in fine drawing we call 'swing,' 'freedom,' 'go' is this underlying gesture of hand and arm. It is called 'calligraphy' in so far as it attains beauty; 'the handwriting of the artist' in so far as it retains personal tricks and habits.

But before this element is perfected another purpose comes in to complicate the business. Accidental crossings of the lines have produced shapes, and the 'infinite' curves have approximated here and there to stricter geometry, to the straight line and circle. Just as speech must have begun with gestures of the lips and throat and tongue that incidentally produced sounds, and these sounds were seized upon as means of



communication and became speech, the 'pa,' 'ma,' 'ba,' 'na' of the sucking infant being distributed as words for father, mother, itself, and the nurse; so the marks on paper are presently turned to the purpose of conveying ideas. The connection with ideas or things is direct in drawing, instead of arbitrary, as in the case of speech, because the graphic form *represents*. At this stage the representation may be called *symbolic*. A man is represented by a circle for his head, another circle or a rectangle for his body. There is no close following of structure in the lines: there is a hurry to express in the most summary way, to make a sign, with a minimum of copying, that will communicate the idea. Drawing has passed from gesture to language; its purpose is to convey a meaning. I noticed the transition in the case of one young draughtsman who made marks and shapes, and came to me to ask what they meant.

Here, again, are elements that persist. We have arrived at what remains to the end in complete drawing, namely, the *convention* by which a line represents the boundaries of the toned and coloured patches that make up objects. Further, the element of *simplification*, extreme in those rude symbols, persists, since no drawing can follow out the infinite flexions of a boundary in nature; and the geometrical element, so marked at this stage and so often lost in the next, is another fundamental of fine drawing. At this stage there might conceivably have been an arrest: a use of drawing merely to give a general reference to ideas, without closer imitation of objects; and for special purposes the art may return to this phase, or something like it.

But now supervenes what is usually called 'learning to draw,' the climax of which is reached in the schools of art, the effort to get closer to the natural forms, to make the drawing less of a *symbol* and more of an *image*.

At this stage every other motive of drawing is apt to be forgotten in the effort after realistic copying, and if the pupil is not well guided, his exertions are spent upon imitation of lesser detail and the painter-elements of tone, local colour as tone, and texture. On this I need not delay. But he is also apt to lose, in piece-work, the general 'movement' of a figure. That word covers the re-entrance of rhythm. We have already met with it as the draughtsman's rhythm, the gesture of his hand; this is now complicated. We have to draw not only in accordance with *our own rhythm* but with that of the objects we represent; for each of these is a system of rhythm, whether the stem of a flower or disposition and shape of its petals, the build of land and mountains and course of rivers, the forms of waves and clouds, the limbs and bodies of man and animals; and the better we grasp them the richer is our drawing, because in these rhythms is the root and flower of life. Yet the personal rhythm persists and asserts itself in the quality of our line, a line not only obedient to the form imitated, but drawn with a suave continuity, a nervous decision, a sweeping or rigid movement. Among draughtsmen a distinction may be made between those who show more humility and tentative research in the rhythm of the object, and those who sweep the object up in the wind of their own movement. A problem of fine drawing is the adjustment and fusion of the two.



But we have not yet exhausted the elements of drawing. We have included the impulse that comes from the draughtsman, the impulses and checks that come from the object, and we have assumed those that come from the pencil and paper, the affair of the tools, what is properly called *technique*, a word commonly abused to include much else. The grain of the paper, the breadth of the point, the texture of the marks affect the result, and add a beauty of 'quality' to those already enumerated. But this is not all; rhythm makes a third entrance, in what we call more specially *design*. If rhythmical gesture is fundamental in order of time, the rhythm of objects fundamental for intimate significance, that of design or composition is fundamental because it controls all the rhythms. You have no sooner put a single mark on a sheet of paper than you raise this question. It divides up the paper in a certain ratio, and all the succeeding marks will either make a comfortable proportion and pattern with the first and with the whole space, or an uncomfortable and annoying pattern. Well placed on the paper, neither too high, too low, nor too much to one side, and balancing with the blanks, the figure takes its place as a cat settles on a rug. But that is only the beginning of design. If you are drawing within the bounds of a rectangle its lines as well as its space may affect the image; the boundaries are not asleep, they call actively for an answer from the lines of the drawing. If these do not respond by parallels or effective contradictions, the figure is still something of an outsider. Take another example. Let the boundary be a circle, the circle of a medal or coin, into which a head has to be modelled. A good designer, instead of looking out

for small prominences, will emphasise the concentric outline of the skull, will lean on the curves of the features and the hair, so that these play the shape of the circle as well as their own. Insensibly he picks out these concordant lines, so that the head becomes more forcibly a head because the frame is implicit in it; the circle more forcibly a circle because of the echoes in the head. Designing, therefore, is not only a source of beauty, but of emphasis and expression.

This principle of design ramifies in all directions. It affects, for example, the character and distribution of the touches in a drawing; the groups of these should pattern harmoniously among themselves, and the quantity be pleasantly related to the whole space. The reason why retouching usually spoils a drawing is that the additions do not flow from the original impulse.

In this compound rhythm of design three elements have already been implied. There is first the geometrical and architectural motive of the frame. Crossing this there is another motive or motives of the picture, also of a geometrical character; frequently, in rectangular spaces, a triangle, symmetrical or non-symmetrical. And, lending themselves in part of their course to one or the other of these, mediating between them and enriching the skeleton with life, is the series of 'infinite' curves that belong to the rhythms of living objects, or to dead matter under the play of forces. The artist who presents us with a geometrical scaffolding, stripped of all this subtle curvature which plays across it, partly affirming, partly disguising the framework, leaves out more than half of drawing. Even in architecture, when it is refined, this element appears, in the 'entasis' of columns and towers and other



features, and rhythmical gesture comes to its own again in following these curves.

To this I shall return; but to sum up what precedes, drawing begins as an exercise in rhythmical gesture; proceeds to represent objects in a rude symbolic way, then applies itself to learning and reproducing their rhythms. The reason for this close study is not only the beauty of these rhythms, but the significance that lies in them, and hence the power of expression gained when we have not a mere symbol of a man, but can render his attitudes and looks. Finally, these rhythms must concord with one another, with the spaces and boundaries in which they are drawn, and with the main motive of the design. All this involves much insensible adjustment of natural forms, and the extent of the liberties taken has a very elastic limit, according to the purpose of the artist.

I have left out, what would require a long analysis, the means by which solidity and depth may be suggested; namely, the perspective of lines and planes, the development of interior curves as they sweep into the boundary lines of a figure or object, the amplification of those boundary lines beyond photographic measurement: all these lines, beside their interpreting function, must fall to be judged as design in the flat network of the picture plane. My object has been to point out that between Mr. Fry's 'caligraphy' and 'structure,' the flourish of the hand and what element of geometric motive the artist may supply, he and his school tend to leave out or minimise the immense middle field from which spring all richness and subtlety of invention and discovery in design itself, let alone the matter of significance. To substitute for the

research of natural rhythms a violent or arbitrary 'distortion' as the general principle of drawing is to caricature without the caricaturist's motive, and threatens sterility in design.

## III

Theory should be brought to the test of example, and I take as a fairly simple illustration the *Vision of S. Helena*, by Paul Veronese, in the National Gallery (Plate III). Here the geometrical picture-motive is a cross, motive and symbol in this case coinciding. This cross is set diagonally to the picture-frame; the vertical and horizontal of the frame also form a cross when echoed at the axes or elsewhere in the picture. Look now at the group of cherubs and cross in the upper left-hand corner; it is almost absurd how strictly the limbs, wings, bodies, and even heads of the cherubs are disposed so as to take the lines of the diagonals, of the vertical and of the horizontal. This pattern is not so explicitly made out in the other three corners, but it is indicated in each of them: by the lines A B, B C at the bottom; by the lines D E and F G suggested by the strongly marked points of the cross-end and wing-tip. Across these diagonals at their intersection falls a group of verticals and horizontals in the upper left-hand group, and this is balanced by verticals in the folds and the horizontal of the seat in the lower right-hand corner; the verticals, if produced, would cut the intersection of the suggested diagonals in the upper right-hand corner. The horizontal axis is strongly marked by mouldings; the vertical axis, as is usual in picture design, is less obviously indicated by the corners





PLATE III: PAUL VERONESE, *The Vision of S. Helena*

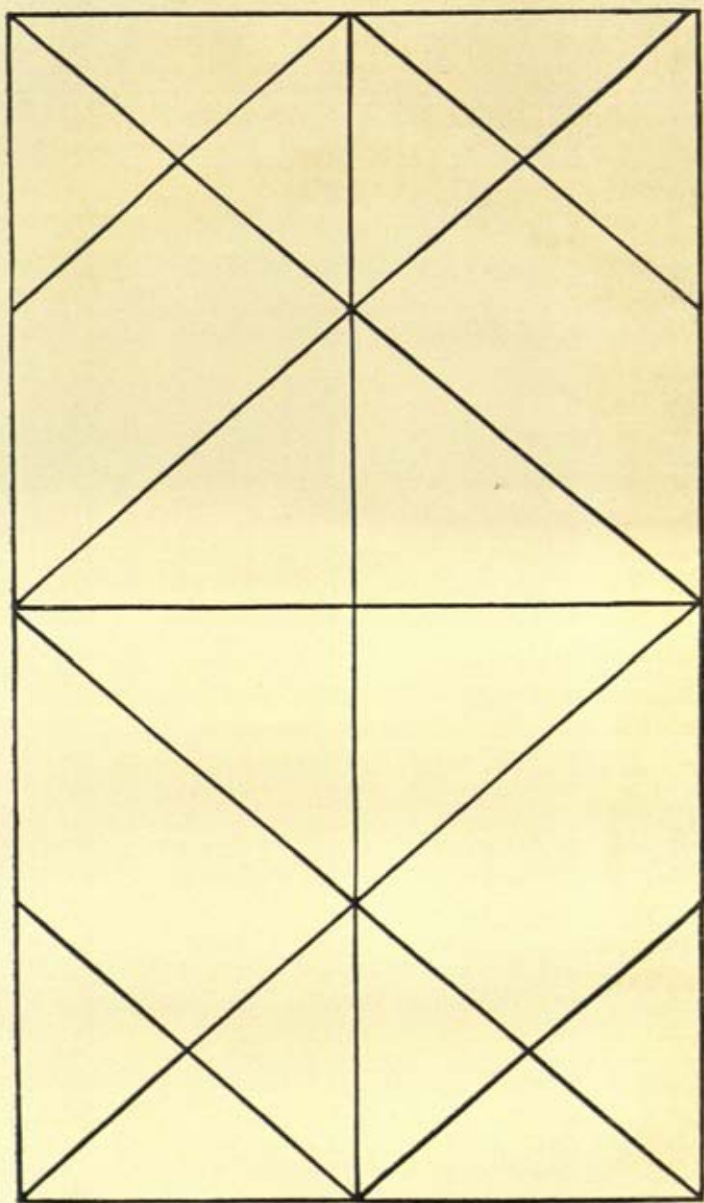


PLATE IV

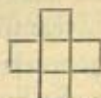


of the cross, the left foot of the saint and vertical fold above it, the piece of drapery under her arm, the elbow and the hand. The drapery is placed there not only to soften the support to her elbow, but to pick up the verticals and fill in the diagonal of leg and arm. In the same way her foot had been raised to the point where it rests not only as the action of a sleeping figure, but to set up the diagonal and the horizontal of the leg. It is needless to enumerate the many echoes of the diagonal in arms and neck and shoulder; the figure has yielded itself very closely to the geometrical motive, but not so strictly as in the case of the cherubs; life makes its claim in a partial escape from metrical and symmetrical tyranny, and a system of angles and curves mediates between diagonal and upright or diagonal and horizontal. We can therefore look at the figure as a free representation of a dreaming woman, rich in life, or abstract from it the geometrical ground plan which plays hide-and-seek with the human forms; the ground plan makes the representation visually striking; the images make the ground plan fascinating; that interplay is the art of the picture.



Reduce the design to abstract geometry, and how little remains! If strictly carried out as symmetrical pattern, its leading lines, leaving out all manner of reticulations, would be something like PLATE IV, a thoroughly banal affair. Reproduce instead the actual filling out and leaving blank of the geometric scheme by the picture, and the result has a little more interest, but the interest of a puzzle, because the logic of pure pattern has departed, and the significance which disturbed the pattern and determined the choice of its parts has been emptied out. Such ghosts of pictures,

abstracted into triangles and squares and rhomboids, border on the inane.

Geometrical abstraction of this sort plays a part in the work of the 'Cubists,' of Picasso,<sup>1</sup> Gleizes, Metzinger and the rest, combined with queer scraps and relics of realism, which mix with it very badly. But there are two bees in the bonnet of those gentlemen which must be distinguished from the process referred to. The accounts of what they are 'up to' are verbose and evasive—Mr. Fry himself has never been more than vague on the subject—but from writings and examples I make out two ideas. (1) That the solidity of a cube can be expressed by placing the unseen sides in juxtaposition with the one actually in the picture plane, e.g. the cube of which the visible face is the central square becomes



That such a convention should ever be accepted by the eye is surely impossible; receding and invisible planes thus expressed must be confounded with shapes in the picture-plane. (2) The second idea is to apply the despised perspective at the wrong point.

Thus to demonstrate that  represents a cube, half of the surface is cut away, and the result is 

<sup>1</sup>I mean here Picasso of the diagrammatic pieces. His admirers enumerate as many as a dozen 'periods.' An artist so richly enumerable is convenient for the purposes of the Chautauqua lecturer, but the main variations are from emaciation to bloating of forms, the 'cubism' described above, and the dislocating and geometrisings of forms: in the earlier of these there was some delicacy of flat tints. In the language of 'blurbs,' 'like a god he destroys Nature itself when the impulse seizes him, or recreates it in a new and more wonderful form' (1931).



For example, half of a forehead is drawn as we see it; for the other half is substituted a demonstration in perspective of the depth of the head. This method, like the other, is destructive of the picture plane, and with that destructive of design; the patterns those people produce are deplorable as patterns. The whole thing, in fact, is pseudo-science, more glaringly so than the 'divisionism' in colour of the 'neo-impressionists.' If your object is the scientific one of demonstrating one of the features of space, the third dimension, you must not wreck the constitution of the other two; if it is a quarrel with the nature of space you are pursuing, the demonstration is impossible and unmeaning. In either case the confusion disintegrates the image into a flicker of incoherent planes.

Another group of experiments has an artistic aim as opposed to this pseudo-scientific dissection of the image. The idea is to invent form that has no representative character at all, a creation as free as music. The idea is one with which most designers must have toyed. But there is this difference between the fields of invention in sound and space, that in nature, save for a few trills of birds and the quavering intervals of human speech, there is no melody, and there is no harmony: sound, for the musician, is almost a virgin field.

This is not the case with spatial form. On the one hand creative evolution has so much exhausted the possible rhythmic motives that it is difficult to imagine a new animal or plant, and even the most abstract system of curves we may design inevitably suggests waves or flames, vegetable or animal shapes. On the other hand, rigid geometry has embodied itself in

crystals, and human design has developed it in the various arts of use, in architecture and in the machine. Here, too, the possibilities have been pretty well exhausted. The result is that when Mr. Wyndham Lewis and his group turn from the old-fashioned pattern to the less hard-worked mechanical types, their ingenious essays inevitably suggest to us dislocated architecture, or machinery to whose working we have no clue. And when those ghosts of the building or the machine cease to control the design, there is a rapid deliquescence towards the bosh of Kandinsky.

The general effect of the movement upon form is a kind of inverted baroque. As baroque designers substituted the curves and rhythms of life for those of architecture, so the cubist substitutes the mechanical forms of geometry for those of life, and the Futurists, absurd enough in their own procedures, are justified in criticising the static character of the cubist art.

It is claimed for those who emerge from flirtation with those systems that they do so strengthened in their grasp of drawing, in possession of what Mr. Fry calls a 'canon of form.' I am more struck with the sterilising effect on some men of promise. There had been a hopeful revival of drawing in this country, but it was unaccompanied by any strong intellectual impulse and direction. Poverty of content, the absence of a compulsion to expression, left the artist with the formal element of his art to play with, to pull to pieces, a making of nonsense pictures which leads nowhere, like the making of nonsense verses. And the literary sponsors of the movement, Mr. Clive Bell and Mr. Fry, have fallen into one of the two recurrent heresies about representative art, namely, that the art of it is all



Beauty (disguised as 'significant form'), just as Tolstoi had proclaimed that it was all Significance. I should like to go on and argue that these two elements have a common condition of their being in Rhythm, but I have trespassed too far on your indulgence.

Mr. Clive Bell's intervention calls for a word in reply. He demands attention for two other elementary confusions in his book (of which I was not ignorant) in addition to the one I referred to. (1) He says that the emotion excited by the beautiful forms of nature differs *in kind* from the emotion excited by the forms of art. But it does not. My appreciation of the form of a flower is precisely the same in kind as that of the artist who draws it. The difference is that in one case I pick out the form for myself: in the other it has been picked out for me from the profusion of natural forms, and I enjoy at second-hand the delight the artist felt in recognising and singling it out. The beauty of form, the rhythmical constitution of the line, is the same in both cases, and the significance, what the form stands for, namely a flower, is the same in both cases. Mr. Bell has decided that 'significance' in this plain sense of the word, is irrelevant to the art of the image, but having discarded the substantive he smuggles it back as the adjective 'significant.' (2) In the vacuum he has produced he casts about for a recondite application of the word, and finds it in a 'metaphysical hypothesis.' According to this, 'pure forms,' divorced from the ordinary significance, are 'ends-in-themselves.' But an 'end-in-itself' cannot be significant of something further, or it would cease to be an end, and become a means. Undeterred by this contradiction, Mr. Bell goes on to surmise that

his forms are significant of the 'Thing-in-itself,' or 'Reality.' Now the only 'Reality' of which the 'pure form,' say of a flower, can be a sign is all those other elements which, with the form, make up 'flower.' We therefore come back, by this metaphysical circuit, to the significance which had been thrown away: the form of a flower means a flower, or in abstraction, as a pure form, it is a form, and nothing more; it has beauty, but no meaning. That 'thousands of people' have been convinced by this kind of reasoning is possible; but I cannot regard it as an example of the 'clear thinking' promised by the author at the outset of his book. Mr. Bell is a lively writer, but an impatient one. When, quite early in the argument, he discovered that he had omitted colour from his two-word formula for art, he tried to cobble it in, when he should have scrapped his formula. So, when he discovered that of the two words of the magic formula one contradicted his theory, he should have scrapped either the theory or the formula.

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Mr. Fry, in the number following, made a brief reply. He had never, he said 'denied the existence of some amount of representation in all pictorial art,' nor did he 'admire distortion for its own sake and in all circumstances.' No doubt: but what we are in search of is a principle of admission and exclusion. His attempt, he said, was 'to make shots from different angles,' so as to arrive at 'some idea of the fundamental aesthetic reaction,' and he objected to my analysis of that reaction as depending on beauty and significance, terms which he had not employed. But



that was precisely my quarrel with what I could make out to be his drift, namely to reduce a double-sided reaction to a single, to make of drawing a 'pure' art, independent of meaning, to allow no rights to the objects or the subject of the draughtsman's aesthesis. One paragraph to which he made a reasonable objection I have omitted.

CEZANNE AS DEITY<sup>1</sup>

## I

MR. FRY acclaims Cézanne as tribal deity and totem, and speaks of him at an accordingly exalted pitch of rhapsody. Fascinating as are some of Cézanne's pictures, I cannot but feel that the subject of so many superlatives is indeed a painter in heaven who was only occasionally Cézanne upon earth: the ecstatic descriptions and the pictures do not fit. The writing would not be Mr. Fry's if it had not persuasiveness of manner and many felicities of phrase; but the strain tells, and there are lapses that speak of an absence or distance of mind. For example, 'he happened to lack the comparatively common gift of illustration, the gift that any draughtsman for the illustrated papers learns in a school of commercial art.' No one can learn a gift.

Divinity reveals itself first in a mastery of lucid and coherent spatial structure, of 'simple and logical relations.'

'One has the impression that each of these objects is infallibly in its place, and that its place was ordained for it from the beginning of all things, so majestically and serenely does it repose there. . . . Each form seems to have a surprising amplitude, to permit of our apprehending it with an ease which surprises us, and yet they admit a free circulation in the surrounding space.'

<sup>1</sup>*Cézanne: A Study of his Development.* By Roger Fry. Hogarth Press. With 54 blocks.



Again:

'That vigorous logic in the sequence of the planes, which evolve in an unbroken succession throughout every part of the picture, enforcing irresistibly upon the spectator's imagination their exact recession at each point and enabling us to grasp the significance of all the interplay of their movements.'

These passages are taken from descriptions of pictures belonging to Cézanne's mid-career. Before coming to that, let us go back to see whether an apprehension of space was instinctive with him. Among the earliest pictures reproduced here are *L'Après-midi à Naples* and the *Pietà*, or was it *Autopsy*? In the first a face behind the recumbent figure is given such monstrous proportions that the place ordained for it from the beginning of all things must have been not behind but well in front. So in the *Pietà*, the man behind the corpse is just as fallibly and grotesquely out of place, and the third figure has neither room nor wherewithal to sit as she affects to do. Cézanne, therefore, begins by wildly contradicting the structure of space. But these, it may be pleaded, are attempts at invention and memory by a painter who had neither. And here it may be parenthetically observed that we are no longer taught to accept 'deliberate' and 'learned' distortions in Cézanne's imagined figures earlier or later. 'Incompetence' and 'outrage' are now admitted (Daily and Weekly and Monthly Press, please copy). But Cézanne's memory failed him even in turning from the model before his eyes to his canvas; painting from the model is to that extent memory-painting. An early example is the portrait of his father. Mr. Fry says of this that

'he has known how to place and establish his volumes with a surprising assurance and authority. He gives to the figure already a monumental air which is new in the art of the nineteenth century, something which recalls the great Primitives.'

I see nothing newer or more primitive than some reminiscence of Daumier, and I should not describe as monumental so uneasy a disposition in the chair. But what of the 'volumes'? The legs of the sitter have more assurance than authority in their voluminousness, projecting out of space so that the circulating imagination trips over the feet. And this incoherency persists. In the later picture of two men walking their relative position is determined by the fact that one is taking the arm of the other, but this is contradicted by his feet, which are dangling in the air or resting on the ground some distance behind himself. Nor to the end could this Deity induce a full-face figure unambiguously to sit down.

Mr. Fry says that Cézanne's was a 'genius that could only attain its true development through the complete suppression of his subjective impulses.' I do not know in what way 'subjective impulses' differ from impulses, or how even a genius could carry on at all after their complete suppression; but we have to ask now whether in the main body of his production, still-life and landscape, he succeeded in overcoming a natural tendency to dislocate space. To forestall a possible misunderstanding let us agree that an artist, for his own purposes, might systematically pervert or distort space. Such distortion would have a 'logic'; but I do not understand that any such claim is made for Cézanne. We have to do with the ordinary three-



dimensional space as it reveals itself in perspective. Artists properly take certain liberties with strict perspective, but such humouring would cease to be effective if there were so violent a contradiction that we should not know where we were or where the objects were. Now in the still-lives the elementary 'planes' on which the constitution of space depends are the floor, the wall or walls, and the table-top. The inclination of these planes as defined by the direction of their limiting lines determines whether the table is standing on the floor, whether even it is in the same space as the room. That being settled, we may go on to inquire whether the lesser objects are standing on the table, or standing at all.

Turn to Fig. 17.<sup>1</sup> A glance shows that the table is not standing on the floor. The effect is like what happens in a ship's cabin when, the table remaining level, the floor swings up like a wall beyond it. Nor is that all: the lines of the table-top prove that it is not in the same room with the mantel-piece, screen and chair which define the room's shape. It floats in a space of its own and is rudely dislocated on the near side. Take now the objects upon it. The chief of these is a basket, heavy with fruit. This is so perched that its centre of gravity is well over the edge of the table; indeed it must be already falling backward, compared with the ginger-jar, and that, again, must be toppling forward, unless the coffee-pot and sugar-basin are also falling back, as they certainly are falling sideways. So far then from each object being infallibly in its place, ordained from the beginning of all things,

<sup>1</sup>The picture is now in the Louvre as part of the Pellerin bequest (1931). The references are to illustrations in the book.

and majestically and serenely reposing there, everything is falling about (is this the 'interplay of their movement' whose significance we are to grasp?) and instead of a vigorous logic in the sequence of planes which evolve in an unbroken succession enforcing irresistibly their exact recession, we are faced with complete incoherence, with several spaces in conflict.

That example of a still-life is typical; let us turn to the landscapes. It is more difficult here to check the hypnotising, the ritual effect of the word 'planes,' since in pure landscape the only plane of large extent is a lake or sea-surface (which Cézanne never succeeded in getting flat). But landscapes with an intermixture of architecture offer planes which can be definitely argued about. The *Quais* (Fig. 9) Mr. Fry accuses of 'romanticism.' I do not know why, for it is a prosaic occurrence of awkward forms. But he admits a 'realistic' treatment. 'All is based on the actual scene. These barrels and warehouses, though summarily expressed, are evidently studies from nature and executed with a certain literalness.' But not with logic; the barrels must be the romantic element, for they are employed to contradict instead of developing and confirming the perspective of the shed and containing wall. A riper example is the *Gardanne* (Fig. 23). Mr. Fry says: 'It has to a supreme degree that impressive pictorial architecture, that building up of sequences of planes, which has a direct "musical" effect upon the feelings.' Cézanne knew better than his admirer. He must have felt that all was not well; once more he had been betrayed into an ungainly break of curve into straight (compare Fig. 38) and other defects of arrangement. At least twice he corrected his major



misfortunes by re-cutting the subject as an upright. But we have to do with that 'sequence of planes.' The foreground buildings are incoherent enough; the mid-distant vague, but the church and tower and houses on the hill challenge and defeat any attempt to explain their relative positions. The church-front, which is intended to be in a plane parallel to the side of the tower, has faced round in one direction; the house below to the left seems to face round both in that and in the opposite direction: space, in fact, has been doubly twisted.

Cézanne, then, when painting from objects and scenes before him, forgot their shapes and spatial interconnections almost as freely as when he drew figures 'out of his head.' His intense application to nature, whatever it resulted in, did not produce a coherent space with objects precisely fitted into its recession. And Mr. Fry, having made that claim for him, suddenly throws it overboard and starts a radically different conception. In a paragraph about a portrait of Madame Cézanne, in which he still speaks of Cézanne's desire to be absolutely loyal to visual sensations as an obsession, the result is said 'to be as far from the scene it describes as music.' Mr. Fry of course cannot mean anything so absurd. The reproduction of nature is near enough in its clumsy way for Mr. Fry to have been struck by a deviation in the dado, a 'refraction,' he calls it. It is merely a break in attention on the painter's part, like the grosser dislocation in a panel of the door which takes place behind the other portrait of a servant. Such a deviation, or the fact that Madame Cézanne is made cock-eyed, takes us a very short way across the gulf

between painting and music. 'This picture,' says Mr. Fry, 'belongs to a world of spiritual values incommensurate but parallel with the actual world.' Parallels cannot be incommensurable, and this kind of transcendental slang obscures our problem, namely, what it was that Cézanne looked for so obstinately and recklessly in 'the actual world' and sometimes transferred happily to the other actual world of his painting. But, like Cézanne, I am outraging space, and must postpone a further excursion in Mr. Fry's provoking company.

## II

If Cézanne's painting does not exhibit a coherent structure in space, is it based, as Mr. Fry claims, upon a strong 'geometrical' scaffolding of design? The landscape taken from his Pissarro period does not speak for an instinct of that sort. It is a casual assemblage of forms, and the combination of tree trunks and roots with the road-line to the left is particularly helpless. Nor do the feeble drawings on which Mr. Fry wastes a brilliant image of crystallisation reveal, as they ought to do, such a foundation. What we can say is that his material did shake down sometimes into a comfortable pictorial balance, for example in the landscape (Fig. 22) and the still-life (Fig. 16). The 'geometry' really amounts to a firm circumscribing of objects and of their colour areas lit and shadowed; in this he leans to Manet, as in his colour discrimination to the impressionists. His difficulties with composition drove him steadily from pictorial balance towards



architectural or heraldic symmetry, a rather desperate solution. This is the tendency which Mr. Fry labels variously as 'Byzantine,' 'primitive,' and 'classic.' Let us take as an example his picture of *Cardplayers*. This exists in several versions. In the fullest three men are seated at a table, and their bald symmetry is varied by a seated and a standing figure, who dangled in the air above the skirting. Difficulties with these led to their suppression, leaving three. The middle figure then went, leaving two, opposed about the inadequate centre of a bottle, and just missing the complete balance of heraldic supporters. On this picture Mr. Fry lavishes extravagant eulogy. He supposes it to have been painted from life; it was more probably done from the drawings and studies which exist, for its leathery colour has none of the inspiration Cézanne found in visual collision. As for 'life,' these poor figures have no limbs inside their clothes (consider the line of an arm along the table); have not even their hats upon their heads. Cézanne was 'romantic' to the end in his desires—witness his figure projects—but his inability to deal with moving things, figures, clouds, shifting weather, or ephemeral, like flowers, anchored him to the static, and the simplest disposition of these. In the portraits described as 'monumental' he was probably haunted by Millet's *Peasant Family*, of which there is a small version at the Tate. The *Geoffroy* is the happiest in disposition of his portraits; it perhaps owed its conception to Degas' *Duranty*; but the inclination of books on the shelves is (*pace* Mr. Fry) less a matter of subtle design than of commodity; they follow down obediently the angles of the head and chair. Where, as in studies from himself, Cézanne

revels in a rich texture, the flesh and waistcoat of the *Bon Bock* were in his mind.

I have at last touched upon colour and we must now tackle its relation to the forms. Mr. Fry speaks of 'the profound science of plastic colour which Cézanne elaborated,' and even of 'geometrical colour.' Without being tempted into a region of angular tints let us ask, What is 'plastic colour?' The phrase is ambiguous, suggesting that plasticity, *i.e.* solidity, can be obtained from colour only, without tone (which is neglected in Mr. Fry's exposition). Now it is obvious that of the two elements, colour and tone, which are combined in the light-and-shadow constitution of a solid form, tone is the plastic partner. Solidity can be rendered by tone independently of colour, and cannot be rendered though it may be deduced without it. Imagine two sides of a white cube, seen in perspective under a warm side light. One of those 'planes' is lighter than the other and golden white; the other is darker and bluish. If I lighten the shadow-colour, there is less solidity and a tendency to read the shapes as parti-coloured patches of a flat object. If I paint the blue side lighter than the other, there is an end of solidity. If the cube is not white but parti-coloured, the 'local colours' may tend to confuse plastic lucidity by an approach to 'camouflage.'

Now the novelty of impressionism was its notation of the charm of the complementary light and shadow colours, and to bring out the colour contrast and pleasure the impressionists minimised (without abolishing) the element of tone. In so far as they did that they reduced solidity; colour became more consciously colour and less plastic. Cézanne followed them in that



respect, and attended less than they did to the changes in colour that arise from atmospheric recession in space (see Miss Davies's very beautiful Landscape at the Tate Gallery). In such atmospheric changes colour plays more definitely a plastic part, and Cézanne's insistence on 'local colour' favoured the assertion of objects as such rather than general plasticity. Yet it is on tone, not colour, that his plasticity depends, and there is sometimes a conflict, as in the very solid rocky foreground of the Landscape belonging to the same gallery. The solidity does not extend to the other parts, for the trees of the receding planes are confused and the hillside breaks down into a diagram of straight lines which make havoc of its mass. And the solidity of the foreground, its comparatively black-and-white constitution, has been obtained at the expense of Cézanne's colour faculty: muddy hues here lead on to shrewish notes of green and red.

At the risk of being tedious I must here insist once more on a confusion which besets this point in the discussion. English writers on the subject of impressionism and Cézanne's relation to it make of Monet a 'divisionist.' This assertion has all the conveniences of sharp labelling; its one defect is in not being true. Those writers, if they associate any definite meaning with the word, have not really looked at the pictures. Mr. Fry uses the word, but in another sense. Dealing with Pissarro's influence on Cézanne in 1873 he speaks of 'the fully developed *plein air* doctrine, with its divisionism or method of breaking up the colour of a mass by means of touches of comparatively pure colour.' Now 'divisionism,' which is the attempt to effect optic mixture by dots of 'primary' colours, was

not introduced till more than ten years later; Monet had nothing to do with it; it began (and ended, and failed) with Seurat. Mr. Fry seems to mean not divisionism but broken colour, and what hasty observers call 'divisionism' in Monet is not even that. They see, for example, dabs of rose and dabs of blue or violet or green in a rendering of the pinnacles of Rouen Cathedral, or other dabs rendering the tufts of foliage and herbage. This is not 'divisionism'; the tints are not primary or 'pure,' and they are not intended to mix in the eye to produce a third. Nor are they 'broken colour,' such as interlaced touches of allied tints, red and yellow, to produce orange. They represent the lighted and shadowed facets of the stone-work; they are small 'planes' endued with 'plastic colour.' That Cézanne broke away from Pissarro's reduction of this procedure to very small stitches is true enough; that in his latest development he reverted to something like it leaves Mr. Fry a little disconcerted, but convinced that what was a vice in others was a virtue in Cézanne.

Before quitting 'plastic colour' I must quote yet another passage from Mr. Fry, because it gave the starting point for a remarkable fantasia in *The Times Literary Supplement*:

'We may describe the process by which such a picture (Fig. 22) is arrived at in some such way as this: the actual objects presented to the artist's vision are first deprived of all those specific characters by which we ordinarily apprehend their concrete existence—they are reduced to pure elements of space and volume. In this abstract world these elements are perfectly co-ordinated and organised by the artist's sensual intelli-



gence, they attain logical consistency. These abstractions are then brought back into the concrete world of real things, not by giving them back their specific peculiarities, but by expressing them in an incessantly varying and shifting texture.'

The writer in the *Supplement*, if I understood him, took this to mean that a painter could render the coloured planes in a landscape, and yet empty out the 'Nature.' Now it is obvious that if a painter renders the planes (or other surfaces) with their colour-and-tone values, he renders the whole of 'nature.' And, to go back to the text, since the shapes, tones and colours of those surfaces are the only 'specific characters' of objects with which painting is concerned, if specific characters are left out, nothing remains. Strictly the passage would mean that Cézanne constructed 'volumes' without line or tone, and made them recognisable by texture without colour.

Apart, however, from looseness of logic in the words quoted there is a hint which brings us nearer to the heart of the matter, from what a Deity might conceivably do to what the Totem actually did: the sober sense about Cézanne. The picture in question has in its plotting and 'texture' a good deal the aspect of a rug, whose colour patches can indeed be referred back to objects, their lights and shadows, but, as against a colour-photograph of reality, tell with a strong immediacy. Moreover, in place of detail-elaboration the patches are wrought with a handling like stitches translated into oil. A degree of spacelessness was the condition of this art, and Cézanne's very disabilities in that direction served his turn. He hankered after

pictures whose singing colours should approach the intensity of tiles and enamels and carpets, and in carrying his precious gift home he surrendered proportions and shapes and directions with something like the liberality of a man who flings his companions to the wolves. In his Provençal hill-sides and still-lives he found subjects free from the small tufty matter in which Monet was too often (but by no means always) involved. His peculiar harmony is a variant of the general impressionist blue envelope with emergent lights of orange, citron and tawny, and reliefs of golden and viridian green. And so rare is his colour sense that Europe has been busy in making a present to him of all the pictorial qualities he did not possess.

1928



WHAT IS ARCHITECTURAL  
DESIGN?

IT is mere good manners on the part of a guest to drop into whatever conversation is going on in the house, and even if he is permitted a monologue, it will be best conceived as part of a conversation, related to what has gone before. What the last topic is among the architects the outsider cannot be certain; but he observes that there is usually someone, inside or outside of the profession, who is a worry to them, whose pronouncements they regard with a mixture of impatience and interest, a thorn in the side, a spur in the flank, in any case an irritant, a stimulus to discussion.

In the years before the War one such disturber of the peace was Mr. March Phillipps. Mr. Phillipps's dominating idea was the influence of race in architecture, and his foible was to ticket the character of races very definitely and neatly, and in search of this label and devotion to it when found, to leave out many other factors. The Greeks stood for intellect and reason: the Goths for spirituality. When it was pointed out that if reason means constructive logic in building there was more consistency and daring in Gothic than in Greek architecture, and that a higher reach of the spiritual means a higher reach of thought as applied to religion, Mr. Phillipps's reply was very much that of the coloured preacher who said to an interrupter: Brother, questions like these would upset any system of theology.

Just before the War there appeared a new troubler

of the architectural pool. This was Mr. Geoffrey Scott, with a book called *The Architecture of Humanism*. The special new impulses behind the book were two; German psychology embodied in the theory of empathy by Lipps,<sup>1</sup> and a revived interest in the Baroque period of the Renaissance embodied in the book by Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*. It is a sign of the laziness about general speculation characteristic of our people that neither of those writers has been translated into English. It was therefore a good thing to have their ideas brought into the discussion even at second-hand. But while Mr. Scott's book led up to those ideas, the greater part of it was given to a review and trenchant criticism of the general stock of ideas and an attempt to define and rationalise what is primary in architectural design. Mr. Scott is a lucid and forcible writer; he has a really analytic mind, and is unusually alive to the considerations an opponent may urge: the critical part is therefore extremely well done and worth following in some detail to discover whether he has left any joints open.

He starts with a text from Sir Henry Wotton, 'Well-building hath three conditions: Commodity, Firmness and Delight,' or as we might put it in different words, Use, with its planning and other contrivance; Construction for stability and endurance, and the Satisfaction of the eye and mind. Wotton's text is really a rendering of Vitruvius; *ratio firmitatis, com-moditatis, venustatis*. It sounds beautifully clear, yet in practice to watch anyone dealing with those ideas is like watching a thimble-rigger. Mr. Scott accepts the

<sup>1</sup>T. Lipps, *Asthetik*, 1903. See, for another development of the doctrine, the paper, *Pneumatic Values*, which follows.



description. 'Architecture,' he says, 'is a focus where three separate purposes have converged. They are blended in a single method; they are fulfilled in a single result; yet in their nature they are distinguished from each other by a deep and permanent disparity'; and criticism, he says, has sought to force upon architecture an unreal unity of aim. 'It has leaned now to one of the three, now to another, and struck, between these incommensurable virtues, at different points, its arbitrary balance.'

Now I think this is a true bill against criticism. Critics frequently proceed by attempting, in the interest of unity, to suppress one of the terms in the complex of an art. One of them will say that the art of poetry consists really in the beauty of the sound of words. That is nonsense: if it were true we should get as much pleasure from listening to verse in an unknown tongue as we do from listening to verse we understand. The art is the combining of beauty of sound with significance. Another will try to banish the words Beauty and Proportion from the discussion of architecture and insist upon commodity or firmness as the whole matter. That also is nonsense: if it were true a blind man, who found himself comfortable and safe in a house, would be as fully appreciative of architecture as the man who can see, and is affected by what he sees. How it looks is a test of architecture as well as How it works and How it wears.

Yet Mr. Scott himself, while admitting the three-fold purpose, is tripped up, a few pages later, by this very stumbling-block. He fastens on the third of them, the element of visible Delight, as being alone the *Art* of architecture. He admits that it has to come

to terms with the other two, but thinks of it as an independent element, which has to compromise itself and come limited or diminished out of bargaining with the other two. Art, in fact, is only concerned with Beauty, which comes in to look after herself when the others have made their necessary arrangements. She will get no help from them, and may have to conceal their working to arrive at her own satisfaction.

That this has frequently been the attitude of architects is not in dispute; that they have pursued their own satisfaction in designing a face more or less disconnected from the bones behind it. But need we assume quite so easily from the first that the three elements are 'incommensurable,' as Mr. Scott calls them, that the pursuit of one of them will not result in a solution under the other heading: that only a compromise is possible and not a solution? Are they inimical?

Mr. Scott says the three purposes are 'separate': 'in their own nature they are distinguished from each other by a deep and permanent disparity.' Thus, if we take 'firmness' or construction for our criterion, 'architecture will be judged by the exactness and sincerity with which it expresses constructive facts, and conforms to constructive laws. That will be the *scientific* standard for architecture: a logical standard so far as architecture is related to science, and no further.'

Before accepting that, accepting the idea that construction runs its separate scientific or mechanical course and has nothing to do with beauty, till beauty comes in from some other sphere and is applied to it, let us ask what happens when construction and commodity have been chiefly at work in fashioning some



object. Take a sailing-ship. Here is a very complex structure, formed to meet more difficult conditions than a building. It must be stable, but also buoyant: it has not merely, like a building, to stand by its weight firm on the ground and resist by its mass the pressure of the wind: it must move through one shifting medium under the shifting pressure of another, and having paid toll to security and swiftness it must provide space for crew and cargo. The shapes and proportions are from beginning to end determined to meet a system of strains and pressures; the invention of the shipwright turns a threat to stability into a means of swifter progress, and he moulds his shapes almost as closely upon commodity as a suit of clothes. Some element of play with form doubtless remains over when construction has said its word to the last detail; but the margin is a narrow one: it is the necessities of construction out of wood and hemp and canvas pitted against the forces of wind and water that have done the main designing: the invention is better described as a discovery of the forms that will best solve a problem of stability, living and storing room, and motion. The place for arbitrary design, for a 'free' production of beauty, is almost wanting. Yet a sailing-ship is one of the most beautiful structures made by man. I have spoken of clothing. Clothes have a large element of fantasy in them; they set out to exaggerate now one, now another feature of the human frame; but there is a kind of clothing which when it is shaped for use is moulded as closely upon necessity as a ship: I mean armour. When it came to be shaped for show it suffered degradation; but when it was shaped by the imagined point of the lance or

edge of the sword feeling for a weak place, shaped to resist or turn aside the blow as the ship was shaped by the imagined blast of air against spar and cordage and sail, then from this play of forces the human body grew a shell for itself from the necessities of the case as strict as that of a mollusc or a beetle, and as beautiful.

In both these instances, beside commodity and firmness, there is another element at work, namely economy. In building a ship that has to float there is not the wide margin of resistance to weight that any reasonable foundation for a building offers, and in constructing armour there is the limit of what the human body can bear of weight and encumbrance. But all the more, because of that, invention is seen with its back to the wall, less free to import beauty, more under absolute pressure to find a solution for needs. It looks then as if in construction for needs there were forces at work wider than our own taste, deeper than our free invention, that make for beauty; and it would be strange if it were not so, since the beauty of natural forms, including the human shape, has come about under those same constraints and pressures of commodity and security. A work of useful art is the attempt to construct out of dead matter something as efficient for its purposes as are plants and beasts and birds for theirs. Under this one word efficiency we may group the two, commodity and firmness, and the friendly relation between efficiency and beauty appears to consist in this, that the thing efficiently done or made is rhythmically done or made, and rhythmic relations are what excite in our eyes the sense of beauty.



A building, as I have said, is not so necessarily and absolutely shaped as a ship, there is a wider margin for solidity, and a pleasure may be taken in widening this beyond challenge, as against economy. But pleasure in economy, in a daring bare structure of strains and pressures, has had its turn as a leading factor in architectural design also. The notorious case is that of Gothic, where the solid wall was reduced to a screen pierced with window-openings between the points at which was concentrated the thrust and counter-thrust of vault and buttress. This relentless following out of logic in construction results in one kind of beauty, at the sacrifice, no doubt, of other kinds. You cannot make fretwork screens of your walls and also have plain surfaces; but that is true of the tyranny of windows wherever they enter in force. More damaging is the effect on the interior, the multiplicity of lights cutting into and across one another. For this reason a painter will almost always be in difficulties with the interior of a cathedral, whereas he will always be happy in a great barn, where the light strikes in from a single source.

But to pretend that everything in architecture is, might be or ought to be the outcome of construction for commodity and firmness would be to ignore a great deal. It would be to ignore the impulse which since the days of the Tower of Babel has impelled men to build up into heaven, the germ of which is present in every child playing with a box of bricks. There may be secondary reasons for the existence of heaven-assailing towers; they may serve to swing bells in or to look out from: that will account for towers at a pinch, but not for spires. And if, at the end of time, a good

reason has been found in the scanty spaces of New York for raising up skyscrapers, it is none the less a human impulse to scrape the sky quite apart from the possibility of accommodating a streetful of offices and clerks in the scraper. We must allow for a sheer fantastic delight in extravagant size and height.

I have argued that construction for commodity or for the purposes of a building is not necessarily a separate and alien thing from construction for the pleasure of the eye—that in the ratios of weight and resistance in brute matter there is a principle making for beauty. The slopes of a mountain and the course of streams are there to prove it. And we may go farther and say that coincidence between construction for delight and construction for stability and commodity gives us a high intellectual satisfaction. But to lay it down that construction for stability is never to be concealed and that all the commodities of a building are to be declared or advertised upon its face is another matter. There is no hard and fast rule to be laid down. It is clear that declared construction takes the lead with the Gothic designers and with what is called engineering to-day: it is equally clear that the Renaissance designers exercised a greater independence. But the separation is not always so great as the fanatics of construction allege. Consider, for example, the much debated matter of dome construction whether at St. Peter's in Rome or St. Paul's in London. No one I suppose denies that the dome of St. Paul's is a singularly beautiful and impressive piece of architecture: no one is going to argue us out of that conviction. But the theorist finds it difficult to digest the facts that the outer dome is of a different form from the inner, that



between them is concealed a constructional brick cone, further tied together by a concealed iron cable at its base. There is some confusion of mind about the first count. There is no reason why there should not be two shapes, an inner and an outer, since the idea is not the simple one of a vaulted ceiling like that of the Pantheon in Rome. There has been joined to that the desire for a feature like the mediaeval tower at the crossing of the transepts, which will play a part above the houseroofs in the landscape of the city. For that reason the outer dome is stilted up upon its drum. To complain that we do not see it from within is as reasonable as it would be in the case of the mediaeval tower to complain that we do not see its roof from the floor of the church. And the difference between the shape of the cone and that of the outer dome is after all only in degree greater than the difference between the gable outline of a Gothic roof and the vaulted shapes it covers. There is, by the way, in the Baptistery at Pisa a coincidence of the cone with the dome which is more than a curiosity, a very beautiful solution. The embedded chain is something of a fly in the intellectual ointment when you stop to think of it; if Wren's genius had solved stability and appearance in terms of stone we should have the satisfaction of a puzzle that clicked together completely; but when we regard the dome without asking questions it looks as comfortable as a dish-cover upon a plate.

Mr. Scott's position is that since construction for commodity and stability and construction for delight are disparate the Renaissance architects recognised the independence of the two and worked them out separately. The divorce is by no means so complete;

doors, windows, stages of a building are stubborn things; and perhaps the analogy of another art would more nearly hit off their attitude. Those who wish to condemn Renaissance practice often describe it as the 'dressing-up' of construction. It sounds a vicious practice, but when you look the accusation in the face it is not necessarily so bad as it sounds. For what is dressing? It is partly a concealment, partly a display and emphasis of the structure beneath. It may be a moulding of the human figure in tights, a closer following of its shapes even than armour. But usually it is a matter of give and take. A cloak or a skirt accepts certain starting points in the figure, and over that structure as a motive plays a variation of its own, now coinciding with the enclosed shape, now departing from it; and the fascination of dress consists in this hide-and-seek, an interplay of the folds produced by the character of the stuff in suspension and of the bones and muscles beneath.

The analogy is imperfect, because the dressmaker has to accept the bodies as shaped by another Creator and often to help them out: the architect designs body and dress alike. But he may claim a considerable measure of freedom in what he chooses to emphasise or to conceal of his bones, as the other Creator did with *his* bones and still more his viscera and bowels. And the degree of coincidence or declaration of structural form will vary with the craving he feels for an intellectual satisfaction, a visible solution of the puzzle or problem. But when Sir Christopher Wren binds his dome round with a chain he takes no more liberty than the dressmaker who supports a slack figure with a corset.



If one of the aims of dress is to conceal, another to follow and emphasise the forms of the body, a third to enrich them by subsidiary rhythms, the same is true of the Renaissance front; and the trimmings it borrows from Greek art are used to this end, the parcelling out of space to the eye, the reading and phrasing of it in the horizontal or vertical direction. As a cloak dropped from head to feet rends the whole figure as a single unit, so does a pilaster dropped through a whole front; and, as I have said elsewhere, something of the sort, a projecting strip of wall, would have had to be invented if it had not been at hand. The monotony in rows of window-holes and of superposed boxes of storeys would have called for some equivalent of order and pediment.

Mr. Scott, having dismissed to his satisfaction what he calls the mechanic and utilitarian fallacies, deals very brilliantly with other considerations which he calls the Romantic, Ethical, Academical, and Biological fallacies. He is aware that in the total of our thoughts and feelings about a building some or all of those considerations may come in: 'a fool sees not the same tree as a wise man sees,' and the man who knows the history of a country and of its religion cannot look at a temple or church as does the traveller who knows nothing: his view is to that extent impoverished. But the visible residuum is what Mr. Scott is after, the constant element when the rest is unknown or abstracted is what in a building would tempt an artist to sit down and draw it if he came upon it in ignorance of its history and functions.

We should expect Mr. Scott at this point to embark on the vexed question of proportion, of the

conditions of beauty as revealed by measurement. Some other troublers of the pool have been engaged in this field, and I will refer to them in another connection. But Mr. Scott takes a different line. He fights rather shy of beauty, and thinks of proportion as condemned by the fixed ratios of the Vitruvians.

So far, then, the negative part. Mr. Scott has paraded the views of others, and found them fallacious. Now comes the formidable moment when he must produce his own solution. What is it? It was forecasted in his title, *The Architecture of Humanism*, and is expounded in his penultimate chapter. So we have to ask, What is 'Humanism' in Architecture? We know the word in other connections. The Humanities, at the Universities, are distinguished, as studies, from Divinity, and embrace the literature and philosophy that were recovered at the Renaissance. Classic architecture, as well, was studied and became a model. That is in Mr. Scott's mind, and he also wishes to associate with the word the idea that Man had become the centre of men's thoughts and that the humanistic ideal is the taking possession of the world by man. But all this is rather in the nature of thimble-rigging, to suggest that the theory he is going to propound has something naturally and necessarily to do with Renaissance architecture. For 'human' rather than 'humanistic' would better have expressed his idea, as we shall see.

'Architecture,' he says, 'simply and immediately perceived is a combination, revealed through light and shade, of spaces, masses and of lines. These few elements make the core of architectural experience: an experience which the literary



fancy, the historical imagination, the casuistry of conscience and the calculations of science cannot constitute or determine, though they may encircle and enrich. How great a chaos must ensue when our judgments of architecture are based upon these secondary and encircling interests the previous chapters have suggested, and the present state of architecture might confirm. It remains to be seen how far those central elements—these spaces, masses and lines—can provide a ground for our criticism that is adequate or secure. . . . The art of architecture is concerned with their immediate aspect: it is concerned with them as appearances.'

There are some joints in that statement. What we immediately perceive are shapes of different outline and tone; the rest, empty spaces and solid masses are inferences from that perception. And if appearance is everything then a deceptive screen, the front of a building with no building behind it, a piece of stage scenery, would be architecture.

But let us go on. Enter, now, Lipps's 'empathy.'

'These appearances are related to human functions. Through these spaces we can conceive ourselves to move; these masses are capable, like ourselves, of pressure and resistance; those lines, should we follow or describe them, might be our path and our gesture. . . . We look at the building and identify ourselves with its apparent state. *We have transcribed ourselves into terms of architecture.*'

'Again,' he says,

'by the testimony of speech, arches "spring," vistas "stretch," domes "swell," Greek temples are "calm"

and baroque façades "restless." Here is a principle complementary to the one just stated. We transcribe architecture into terms of ourselves. . . . This is the humanism of architecture. The tendency to project the image of our functions into concrete forms is the basis, for architecture, of creative design. The tendency to recognise, in concrete form, the image of those functions is the true basis, in its turn, of critical appreciation.'

Note first on that, that having ruled out functional beauty under the mechanic fallacy, Mr. Scott is restoring it as an echo of human functions. But is the account of our experience a true one? When we use those images of the 'springing' arch and 'swelling' dome are we really thinking of our bodies and reading into the architecture anything in the least like our own movements? The 'spring' of which the human body is capable is very unlike the curve of an arch: the metaphor is borrowed rather from the spring of water in a fountain. To think, again, of our body being bloated out to anything like the swelling of a dome would be an extremely disagreeable notion: the metaphor, if metaphor it can be called, is rather taken from the swelling of a bubble. And our pleasure in the use of such images arises from a double consciousness. We know that the structure of a stone arch is very different from the gush upwards of water, which is completed by its fall when the impulse is exhausted. If we saw the line of that upward gush immobilised in stone without an equal and opposite thrust it would make us profoundly uncomfortable. We should know either that it must topple, or that some quite other material than stone was secretly supporting it.



More generally it is obvious that the conditions of stability in a human body are as unlike as possible to those of architecture. The body has a power of balance almost like that of a pyramid on its point. It can stand top heavily but sufficiently firm for its purposes on two narrow bases of support: even for a time, on one. It is made less for stability than for movement and proceeds by repeatedly falling forward. When we stretch out an arm we do it by means that have no counterpart in the rigid struts and ties of architecture. Architecture is a system of masses solidly based or held in position by leaning against one another, the essence of which is that they do not move.

It would appear, then, that the experiences we can lend to architecture from our bodies are of a very vague and general character. We know what it is to stand on the ground and to lean against another object, but we do not translate the pressure of a block of stone into the pressure of our body; we know it is something very different: the experience we go upon is that of lifting or supporting blocks of stone, and seeing them support each other.

What is more: suppose that the idea of Mr. Scott and his German psychologist were applicable in architecture: that we read it in terms of bodily experiences, why should this application be limited to the architecture of the Renaissance? Surely those conditions of springing and swelling and soaring, of pressure and counter pressure are more obviously and richly exemplified in Gothic than in classic architecture; 'soaring,' indeed, belongs to the vault. There is no reason to attach those images specially to the Renaissance: the

only connection is through the ambiguity of the word Humanistic.

But I think we best see the weakness of this conception as a specific key to the satisfaction we get from Renaissance architecture by going outside of architecture altogether. If the vague consciousness of potential bodily movement and resistance is the secret of the pleasure we take in architectural forms and the measure of their beauty, it is surely just as much present when we contemplate natural objects, indeed much more so, because we have actual movement to contemplate. When we look at the 'plunge' of a waterfall we see more forcibly what happens when a human body dives. The waves of the sea are another example of a visible rhythm of movement, and it is a pleasure for us not only to watch but to take a passive part, as a swimmer, in that movement, a movement the body as such has no power of making. The body, indeed, has such feeble and limited powers of movement that our desire is to *dehumanise* ourselves, by the use of machinery to take part in gliding and sweeping and undulating movement of which we are without it incapable. The power of spring in a man is contemptible compared with that in a flea. A turnip-flea, I see it is stated, can leap through a space that in relation to a man's size would be half a mile. Our attitude therefore is one of envy towards non-human creatures that can really leap and fly and undulate of their own motion, and even towards dead matter when it takes on such movement. Moreover this pleasure of movement and of watching such movement is a different thing from the pleasure of contemplating the path that the moving body describes. When we watch the water-



fall we are aware of the plunge of the water, but also of the unchanging curve that the perpetually renewed body of the water keeps. And it is that part of our double impression that we call beautiful, because it is the rhythmical trace of the movement, not the movement itself. In painting, sculpture or architecture the actual movement is cut away, but the track remains, to be contemplated at our ease from end to end, the immobile, rhythmical beauty of a form that might be generated by movement. When a man leaps, the eye may get some vague and fleeting impression of a curve: when a rocket writes its track upon the sky we get a hugely greater and clearer and less fleeting trace; when an Ionic volute is carved in stone the toilsome and tedious movement of the snail is abstracted, given to vision. Mr. Scott says, how is it that when we describe arches and spires we speak of them as springing and soaring, when the facts are against us: the force of gravity is actually pressing downwards through them. How is it we think of them as going upwards, unless through a metaphor from our bodies? Is it not rather because we think of them in the direction in which they are constructed, one stone laid on another. That is the root fact about architecture; that you must climb the sky from the ground; you cannot begin at the pinnacle and come down to the foundation.

The metaphors, then, by which we flatter either a building or a man, do not take us very far. We speak of a man being 'as firm as a rock.' We only mean that he is a little harder to push over than someone else: we know what a man is and what a rock is, and when we look at a building we think in terms of the pressure and resistance of stone, not of human tissues.

Man is made for movement, a building for immobility, and when we predicate movement of the elements in a building we are speaking of the play of the eye, not of our limbs, least of all any slipping or crashing of the building's parts.

One action of the whole human body does leave a visible trace which can be clearly followed and analysed; that is skating; a beautiful curve may be described and is cut by the edge of the skates upon the ice. And perhaps from that example we can disentangle the conception with which Mr. Scott is dealing. The skater is aware, while he is producing his curve, of two physical pleasures, the energy he puts forth, and the way in which he uses the weight and balance of his body to control that output of force. To do this by the mixture of immobility and turning of the body is the skater's art, but the curve produced has beauty as a purely visible rhythm, one made up by increments of angle and sector. We shall describe such curves to the end of time in terms of our physical sensations, but these by themselves could be experienced in the dark, and it would be just as true to say that these sensations were determined by the visible shape we are engaged in cutting, as to say that the shape arises from our pleasure in energy and in balance. The two sides are inextricably involved in our enjoyment of architecture, indeed of all the arts and of nature; but it is too easy a simplification to cut out or ignore one of them. An extreme instance will serve to mark the distinction. The Egyptian pyramids excite some of the architectural emotions. They have both mass and perdurable stability and excite wonder at the idea of energy expended and eternal strength; but their form is so



elementary that beauty can hardly be said to come in at all.

What, if not this substitution of the human body for wood and stone, is the humanism of architecture? Well, the pea has been put under the wrong thimble; it exists rather in the sphere of commodity than of delight. Architecture, like armour, is a shell for the human body, only a much bigger one, not to be carried about, made to enclose more bodies than one, and to allow them to move about freely inside it. But it is a shell in the sense that it is a protection against enemies and robbers possibly, in any case against extremes of heat and cold and of wet. While therefore it may be natural for the architect to think most of his building as it affects the eye from outside, his client, whether or not he is sensitive to such things, is concerned first of all in securing the shell for his indoor activities, and therefore looks at the building from the inside rather than the outside. The proportions must be human proportions in the sense that room is allowed for reasonable circulation, sitting or lying down. In a dining-room the table dictates the minimum size. The table must allow for a certain number of bodies side by side, the plates in front of them and others down the centre. Round the table there must be room for the chairs, for the service and so on. The door must not only allow for people passing in its width and height, but for furniture carried in and out. The corridor must allow two people to pass one another without crushing. And the windows? There is a feature where we can follow more closely the kind of wrestle that goes on between design for commodity and design for beauty. A

window may fulfil various uses. First of all that of lighting the room; second that of ventilating it; third that of providing a view. Extreme compliance with the first claim, that of light, says, Fill the whole space with plate-glass. But the architect inside, and still more outside the house says, No, you are breaking up my wall too absolutely with those bald holes in it, and depriving me of a useful smaller unit from which I can start my game of parcelling and enjoying space. If I have panes, then I can give the eye a smaller unit with which to measure my window-spaces and the spaces between them. But what unit are we to start from? Unless we are dealing with a cottage of small scale, commodity says, Let it be large enough for the person looking out to see comfortably through when he stands or sits near the window without a bar crossing the eyes: the size of the head then or a little more. Then comes ventilation, and here commodity has to make a choice. If the exposure or the climate makes it desirable to have the whole space thrown open we arrive at the solution called the French window, two leaves opening inwards, for one takes too large a sweep. It is a little awkward their opening inwards, but this is to allow for shutters outside which will fold back against the wall and can be pierced with upward-cutting slits. At night, in a blazing sun or strong wind these can be closed and exclude most of the light and a direct current of air. This system therefore is very complete for modulating light and air and very secure. Less secure and less complete is the English sash-window, what the French call the guillotine. It is true that it sets up a double in-and-out current and that the opening can be regulated up to



half the space of the window: it also gets over the awkwardness of the inturned sections with risk of broken glass. But it has a distinct advantage to the eye, because the panes can be divided into threes, with one in the centre, and that is the arrangement that gives most satisfaction to the eye. It is the same in hanging pictures: two pictures side by side are unsatisfactory: they must have another, or an equivalent centre, to balance about.

All this is pretty obvious, but in such discussions some part of the obvious is always being left out, and my point is that the way in which humanity imposes itself upon and moulds architecture is by this constant reference of spaces, their shapes and sizes, to the human body and its ways of using them. Without this reference architecture would be an inhuman design, a kind of crystal making. Mr. Scott deals with spaces as objects of visible pleasure, but leaves out of this visible pleasure the seeing that they fit, the keen satisfaction there is in their accommodation to human needs, the pleasures of planning and contriving.

Humanism, for Mr. Scott, means not this adaptation and division of space for human needs, but independence of these in the pursuit of visual design. And finding that independence most complete in Baroque architecture he is brought to his second special plea for a period that has met with small sympathy from our architects and critics.

The English character, except in a few instances like Vanbrugh, has resisted the Baroque tendency, and has, so to speak, stood that period in the corner or dismissed it with a warning. That is too summary a treatment for a style which gives its chief character to

Rome and other Italian cities. There are lessons for the Englishman in its scale and amplitude, its great staircases, town places and villa gardens. Wölfflin, a subtle observer and thinker, has worked out a psychology of the features in it that shock the scholar, and it is worth while to understand the reasoning, even if we do not approve the result. Briefly, he says the Baroque architects aimed at effects of massiveness and movement. The effect of compacted mass they worked for by heaping and pressing the wings in towards the central body, by interpenetration of forms through broken pediments and entablatures: with statues that burst their frames and so on. Movement from the two sides is involved in that, the collapsing of pilaster groups one within another; but because lateral movement must balance in architecture the movement is mainly upwards. To this end, he says, is due the conscious cramping and crowding of the lower façade squeezing the attention upwards so that, as in music, a discord at one point is resolved at another. The validity of all this would have to be argued out over individual instances, and I don't think he allows enough for the fact that Baroque is a kind of breaking-up day of the School of the classics, a weariness of being good that came over the designers, with impulses like that of schoolboys to kick their books and hats about the playground, a desire to see the canonised forms contradicted, pediments broken, sculpturesque curvature applied to architecture, walls undulating or setting to partners as in a dance. It is evidently the last fling of a style, in which fragments that once were construction are tossed about.



The interest of this period for Mr. Scott is that its architects are the most disdainful of construction, most free and independent to work up their material into an attack upon the eye.

Independence. We have heard the claim pushed much farther, the painters declaring that they were independent not only of a client's likeness but of the forms of nature altogether: that they design pictures, do not represent objects. There is no law against independence in painting or in architecture: the final test of the degree in which it is wholesome is whether the resulting forms are richer and finer. Independence of natural forms in painting leads quickly to the inane: in architecture independence of constructional expression can never be complete because the structure is subject to gravitation and our imagination is dogged by considerations of weight and symmetrical balance. When we examine Baroque detail we find that invention is not very free or fertile; its fancies are fragments and distortions of the old constructive elements, or, and this is a sad treachery for a critic like Mr. Scott, who has proved that the imitation of nature in architecture is a fallacy or a vice, recourse is had to that very imitation, grottos that take the form of rocks and fountains that deliquesce into the form of water. When that stage has been reached we have come to the end, and for fresh inspiration must return from the idea of water to the idea of the cup, to the pressure of construction upon a play that has become too vague.

And now I will leave Mr. Scott's chart of the subject and touch upon some considerations which do not seem to be recognised but which further affect

the architect's 'independence.' Commodity and construction exert their pressure upon him: are there other conditions that prevent him from having complete control of his design? Is the vacuum really an unhampered void? Suppose him as free from architectural checks as Mr. Scott would wish him to be, is he even then the tyrant of space, free to mould it as he wills, or is there in the constitution of space itself, as visible, a kink, a leak, a transformer that plays with his design an unintended part, whether friendly or inimical? In other words what are the conditions of three-dimensional design?

This phrase, 'designing in three dimensions,' has recently been freely used by the picture-critics. The power to do it is attributed to certain painters. I have endeavoured, without success, to get this mysterious character of design defined, and it appears to depend upon a confusion of mind. Painting is the art of representing the solid world on a flat board or cloth, and the lines we draw upon it and the masses we indicate, whatever their direction or their distance in reality and their supposed direction and distance in the picture, appear as lines and shapes in the flat of our picture, and as such, in the design of the picture, they have to be judged. Suppose, for example, that I draw a series of verticals, the height of which steadily diminishes, and also the intervals between them. That may represent a paling which is actually of that construction and set up parallel to the picture-plane, or it may represent a colonnade seen in perspective, at an angle to the picture-plane and going away from the eye. But whichever of these forms it represents the series of verticals occupies the same position and pro-



portion of the picture space and tells in the design as the same element. Our interpretation of the lines, the significance we read into them make a difference to our mind and our feelings; but so far as the beauty of the picture is concerned it is the way in which they cut the flat that affects us. The signs by which we arrive at this interpretation of the flat into the solid are perspective, light and shade, and atmospheric values; but each of these has a result on the picture-flat. The line which we interpret as the level line of a roof going away from us becomes a slanting line in the picture and has to be reckoned with in its design not as a horizontal but as a diagonal. The space which we interpret as a bit of distant blue sea or sky has to stand its trial in the picture as a shape and tint in its flat, side by side with a piece of cloth in the foreground. And the pleasure we take in a picture comes from the interchange in our consciousness between the solid world of objects at varying distances into which we interpret the forms, and the crazy quilt of shapes and colours which we enjoy for their own sake. But since the design of these occupies the whole of the flat there is no room for an alternative design in depth which is not a design in the flat.

Is such a design possible in any of the arts? It is usually supposed to be achieved in sculpture. Here a solid object is no doubt produced. It has a back as well as a front. It may be viewed, in fact, if it stands free, from an infinity of points. But it can only be seen from one point at a time. We cannot see the back and front at once, and if the view of the back were superposed upon that of the front we should get chaos. The solid figure, therefore, only gives us a

series of views, each of which is precisely of the sort an artist takes of a figure he is about to paint. It differs from the figure as painted to this extent, that the nearer and farther parts differ slightly in focus, and that the stereoscopic action of the two eyes somewhat increases a sense of solidity: but the painter has his own amplifying methods. We may say, therefore, that the free-standing statue, as seen and designed, is an infinite series of pictures in the flat. As conceived and felt it is, like the painted figure, an affair of balancing bulks; but that is an interpretation of the actual contours and planes which no single image can give us. 'Three-dimensional design,' then, is the choice of dispositions which will excite a plastic interpretation from what, in vision, is a graphic picture.

What is true of sculpture is true in a magnified degree of architecture. No one can see the front and back of a building at once; as we see them they form separate pictures in the flat. Like the statue, and unlike the painted picture, the building furnishes, if you can walk round it, an infinite number of these pictures, and yet another infinite of that infinite if it is seen from varying heights as well.

How many of those pictures in the flat produced by the solid can the architect be said to control?

He designs the front, back and sides of a free-standing building, and his drawing of each represents something that no one ever sees, what is called an orthographical projection, as if the eye were simultaneously opposite every point in the front. The difficulties about this are minor difficulties, so long as the front is approximately in one plane, and the Greeks, who liked a well-defined problem and dis-



liked the indefinite, preferred such simplification. Even so, any shifting to right or left at once sets up a totally different relation of lines. What was horizontal takes a slant: the skyline changes: near and far proportions are altered. Still greater is the range of variation when a feature like a tower or dome is set back from the front to a considerable distance. In the design he furnishes the architect has to choose one out of a range of positions from which the height of this tower varies in relation to the height of the front. What of the rest? Yet again there are the views taken from a corner when two sides are seen together at an angle, with fresh and possibly violent intersection of lines and foreshortening of façades.

In a word the architect is at the mercy of perspective: the constitution of solid space takes out of his hands the limited number of pictures, of points of view he has really controlled, and makes him a present of an infinite number of extra views.

I have never seen a discussion of the question to what extent perspective may be trusted to be merciful or to be helpful to the artist who has struck out a tolerable design for his front or fronts. If that is proportionate and pleasing can we reckon upon the constitution of space, when the design is thrown askew, boxed up or drawn out by change of position, to keep it proportionate and pleasing?

If there are these difficulties outside the solid, they are greater still inside. The front of a building can be seen approximately as it was designed. One wall out of four in an interior can be seen in that way if it is not too long, but the ground-plan never. It is necessarily seen in perspective, and not the whole of it, only

the part of it not cut off by the position the spectator occupies. We therefore never see the floor-space as it appears in a plan. And the whole room, as designed, can only be mentally put together, never set out as a view. From this it would appear that subtle proportions in a ground-plan would be thrown away: the eye and mind could not grasp them. Hence partly, as well as for constructional reasons, the comparative simplicity of ground-planning: the setting out in squares or simple multiples: the mind is sufficiently occupied in disentangling that relation from the pattern it takes in perspective. On the other hand, the eye resents anything so simple upon a façade. Foreshortening being nothing like so rapid in the vertical sense, storeys of equal height are felt to be dull: the mind demands more of hide and seek in the relation of parts.

The complaisance of perspective seems to be frequently assumed without question by the theorists who measure up the fronts of buildings or other solid designs and arrive at systems of proportion. Two recent attempts of the kind are vitiated by this assumption. One is Mr. Hambidge's theory of the proportions of Greek Vases. His measurements depend on the setting out of the vase shapes in the flat of an orthographic projection. But we never see the vase like that: in perspective one or other or both of the upper and lower boundaries is not a straight line but a curve, and the orthographic shape is distorted. Again, the author of *Ad Quadratum* measures towers and spires along with church fronts as they appear in an architectural drawing. But the spire being a receding form its height varies with every approach or withdrawal of the spectator, and it is never seen of its full height as



drawn. The proportion therefore only exists in the drawing, and we have to ask whether a spire, which pleases us by its proportions in the drawing, will by the mere action of perspective, acquit itself pleasantly for every position. That assumption seems to be rather a reckless act of faith, and yet architects make it every day in one of the chief features of monumental design. I mean colonnades and arcades.

The exterior colonnade of a Greek temple, as seen from the front, broadside on, is the simplest case of rhythm possible, the division of a space horizontally by uprights at equal intervals and of the same height. It is the same metrical foundation as we get in the division of time into equal bars of music or of verse. Now what happens when the colonnade is thrown into perspective? The intervals and the heights are no longer equal. They diminish regularly according to a law which is not a law of proportion as the mathematicians use that word. Indeed proportion is used very loosely by architects for relations which the eye finds pleasing, and they seem to have no word or theory to embrace this wider relation. Proportion means that among four objects the ratio of *A* to *B* is equal to the ratio of *C* to *D*, or among three objects that the relation of *A* to *B* is that of *B* to *C*. The relation of equal intervals thrown into perspective is none of these; it can be demonstrated by a geometrical construction, but not expressed by an arithmetical formula. The same sort of thing happens when in music or verse a regular quickening or slackening of pace affects the intervals, *accelerando* or *rallentando*. Here, then, we are plunged into intricate difficulties with the simplest case of perspective play. And this perspective play of

equal intervals, if it is a secondary consideration in the case of an outer colonnade, is a primary consideration when the colonnade is a long interior one, as in basilican or Gothic naves: it can never be seen as a whole broadside on: it is designed to be seen in perspective, and any expedient like Bernini's, to dodge what perspective does to the metre, would be defeated by the fact that it would not work both ways.

There is one mitigating circumstance. I have been assuming, so far, that we see forms thrown into perspective as a perspective drawing shows them. But that is not so. Either it is that we have a quarrel with space and consider that perspective increases and diminishes too abruptly, too sharply, or, as is more likely, we make a compromise in our mind between what we know to be the fact and what the retina tells us; in any case an artist always tempers his perspective, and a correct, a photographic perspective appears to us to be wrong.

The architect has a very imperfect control then of his design even in two dimensions, let alone in three. He may, from drawings or a model, satisfy himself that he has secured a good picture at certain chosen points, but these are few in relation to the total, and over the intricate play of perspective in features like a colonnade he has no control: he must fling himself on the constitution of space and hope for the best, trusting partly to the eye and mind not accepting what they see, but imposing a compromise.

Perspective is one of the visual signs by which we interpret our flat pictorial view of a building into solidity. Another is light and shade. In this respect also the architect has a very partial control. He cannot



design in shadows as fixed quantities, for the source of light keeps changing its position, the force of it varies; by its nature it is one-sided, and by the law of perspective it does not give to equal projections an equal shadow.

Such are some of the conditions of architectural design. For vision the architect produces pictures with the peculiarity that he cannot produce one without producing an indefinite number, and that these are again altered by every hour of the clock, and shift of the weather. The building has to be stalked round the circle and round the clock to yield one or more combinations that satisfy an exacting pictorial eye. But there is this compensation, that out of the contingencies of perspective and light groupings may arise better than anything that was consciously designed. The architect may anticipate one or another of the perspective groupings in a drawing, or obtain some approximation to reality from a model, but the paradox is forced upon us that the solid building can never be seen except piecemeal and subject to deformation; it can only be conceived as something floating in the mind between plan and projection on paper and the fortuitous in moments of perspective space.

## PNEUMATIC VALUES

AFTER the 'Tactile Values' of Mr. Berenson it is the turn of the Pneumatic Values. In the October number of the *Contemporary Review* two ladies, 'Vernon Lee' and Miss Anstruther Thomson, embark on an ingenious and elaborate discussion of 'Beauty and Ugliness.' Their object is to prove, experimentally, that the apprehension of Form depends on various organic changes in the body of whose existence we have ceased to be clearly conscious, the chief of them being respiration and the muscular tensions that go to make up the sense of balance; moreover, that aesthetic pleasure or pain consists in the agreeableness or disagreeableness of these sensations. The ladies invite criticism of their theory, and I will endeavour, in the small space here at my disposal, to examine its foundation with due gravity, though my criticism must be so briefly stated as to seem perhaps discourteous. In the course of the article many things are said that are striking and may be true; but the main thesis, it appears to me, will take an immense deal of knocking into shape before it can be pronounced critic-proof, and then will come out a very different thesis indeed, and a much less important.

The idea is, then, to establish that in looking at an object and taking in its form, and in being pleased or annoyed by that form, we all of us (it must be all of us or the explanation is no universal explanation) undergo special experiences of breathing and balancing, and that if we do not undergo these experiences we neither



apprehend nor enjoy Form. The authors appeal from their own experience, which they recount, to ours, and say, Look carefully into your sensations and you will find the same thing. Or rather, they ought to say this, since the validity of theory depends upon it, but they do not exactly. They say instead, if I understand them aright, These are processes we all undergo, but through repetition they may be blurred, or by habit they may even be jumped; just as, for a pianist, a number of adjustments have become mechanical, unconscious, or altogether dropped. Now note that this will do for a theory of apprehension; it is possible to say to the objector who denies the experience, You really go through a number of bodily states, but you have ceased to be aware of them; it takes the deliberate investigator to reinstate and note them all. But it will not do for a theory of emotion, the very point of which is that we are conscious of the bodily state and that this consciousness is our pleasure or pain. I do not propose to discuss Mr. William James's well-known theory of emotion, according to which the physical state is the cause of emotion, not its consequence; e.g. you are startled and jump, and have the emotion of fright; the fright is the consequence of the jump, not its cause. But this is the theory the ladies are assuming, and it follows from it that, once the physical reaction is suppressed, the emotion disappears as well. The man who controls himself so as not only not to jump, but not to have the feeling of wishing to jump, has ceased to have Fear; the woman who has no tendency to blush has ceased to feel Shame. So the person who is not conscious of those pleasant breathings and balancings of our authors, has, *ipso facto*, ceased to feel

Beauty. The pianist himself, if pleasure or annoyance is attached to any link in the habitual chain of mechanical adjustments, must become re-aware of that particular adjustment; e.g. if his wrist is stiff or his eyes strained. The initial objection, then, of the reader, viz. I do not experience these bodily states, holds perfectly good, and if it is proved experimentally that a single person who is sensitive to the emotions attached to beauty and ugliness does not, as a matter of fact, experience concomitantly those breathings and balancings, it follows that they are no essential part of the enjoyment of Form, but merely accompaniments of excitement in certain individuals.

So much for an initial objection: let us now take at close quarters a description given by the authors of what happens in a selected case of the apprehension of Form. Observe, the apprehension only is here in question, the enjoyment is discussed later; but if the account of the apprehension proves to be merely personal, the theory of aesthetic emotion based upon it also falls to the ground. Here is the description of what happens in looking at a chair:

'While seeing this chair there happen movements of the two eyes, of the head, and of the thorax, and balancing movements in the back, all of which we proceed to detail, following the attention (whatever the attention may be) which accompanies these movements. The chair is a bilateral object, so the two eyes are equally active. They meet the two legs of the chair at the ground and run up both sides simultaneously. There is a feeling as if the width of the chair were pulling the two eyes wide apart during this process of following the upward line of the chair. Arrived



at the top, the eyes seem no longer pulled apart; on the contrary, they converge inward along the top of the chair until, having arrived at the middle thereof, they cease focussing the chair. Meanwhile the movements of the eyes seem to have been followed by the breath. The bilateralness of the object seems to have put both lungs into play. There has been a feeling of the two sides of the chest making a sort of pull apart; the breath has been begun low down and raised on both sides of the chest; a slight contraction of the chest seems to accompany the eyes as they move along the top of the chair till they get to the middle; then, when the eyes ceased focussing the chair, the breath was exhaled. These movements of the eye and of the breath were accompanied by alteration in the equilibrium of various parts of the body. At the beginning the feet were pressed hard on the ground in involuntary imitation of the front legs of the chair, and the body was stretched upwards. At the moment that the eyes reached the top of the chair and moved inwards along the line of the top the tension of the body ceased going upwards, and the balance seemed swung along the top of the chair towards the right.'

Further observations follow at a length too great to quote; but enough has been cited to show their character and drift, and my doubts accumulate so fast that I will choose this point to halt and express them. Briefly, I doubt whether the account even of the action of the eyes represents anything that does or can take place; further, I think it demonstrable that breathing can in very rare cases be exactly concomitant with the action of the eyes; again, even if an act of breathing could accompany each act of sight, it could

not in any way serve as a *mark* of the form looked at, since the same act of breathing must accompany the most diverse forms; and, lastly, all these sensations of tension, of pressure, of balance, have nothing to do with Form.

Let us clear this last point out of the way before taking up the others. It is odd that the authors overlook the fact that considerations of balance and so forth, with which the greater part of the article is occupied, do not enter at all into the perception of *Form*, but of quite another matter, namely *Weight*. The sensations they describe are sympathetic mimickings in the body of what is estimated to be the poise of the object looked at. But to deal with the apprehension of Form we must isolate that quality of an object from other qualities. An arch has poise and weight and thrust, but the Form of an arch has none of these; the shape of a chair has no weight. Thus we may cut off the observations of the feet pressing against the ground (what happens, by the way, if one is lying on a sofa while looking at the chair?), of the 'lifting up' of the body, and so forth.

The ground thus cleared, we come back to the chair as a visible shape. I say visible because I think in the above description of seeing a chair one of those fanciful transpositions has taken place that are common enough in psychological theory. Let us begin, as the authors do, at the feet of the chair, though it is well to remember that we might begin anywhere; that there is no fixed order for the eyes in attacking a form (and therefore none for the breath). The first assumption of the description is that, because the object (like all visible objects, by the way) is bilateral, the right-



hand eye runs up the right-hand side of the chair and the left-hand eye the left-hand side, and in this division of labour the two are 'pulled apart'—*i.e.* squint out when the form widens and squint in when it narrows. This is a startling assumption, and appears to me to be borrowed from what happens when we pass the hands up the sides of the chair, and not to be the procedure of the eyes at all. Let the authors try the experiment again, *viz.* to focus, as they assert they do, two sides of the chair at once; they will find it impossible. When any point of the field of view is focussed, the two eyes focus it together. I use 'focus' here, as the writers apparently do, in the sense of focus *and fix with clear vision*. But what conclusively sweeps away all these personal impressions as necessary processes in the apprehension of Form is the fact that we can shut one eye and take in the form with the other; there are hosts of people, indeed, whose eyes differ so much in focus that this is practically how they see, arriving, by the use of one eye, at the apprehension of Form and its enjoyment.

But now, for the sake of argument, let us suppose that the two eyes work in this eccentric way, and that to the right-hand eye is attached the right-hand lung and to the left-hand eye the left-hand lung. (I jump this last assumption, but the author will have to prove that a man who has lost a right lung suffers in his apprehension of form on the right-hand side). And let us make, for the moment, another vast assumption which the theory requires, *viz.* that to each act or movement of the eye corresponds an act of breathing—how far should we be advanced by all this in establishing a correspondence between differences of

breathing? Only to this extent, that the *time* taken by the eye to follow a particular form was the same as the time of a breath. But the eye may follow the same form in half or double that time, indeed in any variety of that time; the breath corresponding to that form is therefore no fixed quantity, no measure; it covers an infinity of forms. In the case supposed by the authors, then, of simple straight lines in a certain proportion to one another, no ratio or proportion would exist in the breaths, since none exists between the times of the looks or glances. The impossibilities thicken if we imagine forms that are not straight lines; the account of a circle given by the breath will be the same as that of a straight line of equal length to its circumference, supposing always that the eye moves at the same pace. The breathing, in a word, has no means of registering or marking direction. The authors indeed seize on the analogy by which we speak of 'up' and 'down' in breathing; we have no doubt a tendency to inspire as we look up and respire as we look down. But this proves too little and too much. Too much, because, so far as form is concerned, the height of an object is the same as its depth; the eye may measure from top to bottom. Too little, because, although the authors have persuaded themselves that they have also a sensation of breathing 'across' from lung to lung to accompany horizontal lines, I must beg to think it pure pictorial fancy, like the shapes into which some people visualise numerals. Even they do not describe a sensation of breathing 'round' to accompany circles.

A word now as to the assumption that an act of breathing corresponds to each act of the eye. This assumption seems to me once more a complete misre-



presentation of what happens in vision and breathing. I do not deny that by careful effort it may be possible to let the eye follow round some shape in the time taken by a single breath; I do deny that anything of the sort commonly or frequently occurs, and for the sake of the theory it must constantly occur. The habitual action of the eye in apprehending forms is not a steady progress round a boundary. Its action is more like that of a fly on a window, that makes a thousand excursions, investigates a part, now slowly, now fast, returns to it, loiters, and speeds on again. Imagine the breathing that should keep step with these excursions, most of them so swift that no breath could be taken in the time. The breathing, as a matter of fact, goes on tranquilly, quickened, checked, or oppressed by any general excitement, but making no impossible effort to pant, yawn and hiccough after the eye.

I am driven to conclude, then, that the eyes do not act as our authors suppose them to do; that even if they did, the breath could not possibly keep company with them; that if it could a most distressing asthma must be the result, instead of a pleasing reinforcement of vision; and that even if this disturbance could be set up, it would bear no relation to visible proportion and shape.

Put the whole case negatively. We can apprehend Form with one eye, in such order, direction and rate of time as we choose; we can do so while holding our breath,<sup>1</sup> and while keeping our body still, thus nega-

<sup>1</sup>The authors say it is impossible to recall a form with the eyes shut and the breath held. It is surely only uncomfortable, not impossible, and the discomfort enters for nothing in our admiration or distaste for the form.

tiving all the conditions of Form-apprehension as stated in the theory.

These observations, then, seem to be merely a somewhat fanciful description of personal bodily disturbances in moments of introspection. There is one kind of Form and Art with which breathing has a direct relation. Breathing limits the forms of spoken words, phrases, periods, because it is the mechanism by which they are produced. In like manner it limits them when sung. This influence persists to some extent in the composition of instrumental music; but the general relation of breathing to music is that it has a tendency to fall in with the metre, not even in this native sphere coping with rhythm. The authors, by the way, would find a pretty puzzle before them in connecting breathing with vision, if they considered the common case of a man who, while intently examining the form of some object, whistles or hums a tune that someone is playing. On the theory he ought to become blind and indifferent.



X X X  
M E T R E

I

W H E N we repeat the first line of Tennyson's *In the Valley of Caunteretz*:

'All along the valley, stream that flashest white,'  
once we have caught the trick of the verse nothing will induce us to attack the strong accent on 'stream' till an interval of silence has elapsed between 'valley' and 'stream.' If anyone doubts the existence of the interval he may convince himself by inserting two short syllables and read:

'All along the | valley, *little* | stream that flashest white.'

And this is exactly what the poet has done in the following line:

'Deepening thy | voice *with the* | deepening of the night,'

where the long 'voice' takes the place of the two shorts in 'valley.' It is true that if we like to throw overboard sense and context we can force 'stream,' by a horrible distortion, into proximity with 'valley.' But what happens? The accent refuses to budge and now falls absurdly upon 'that,' which must be prolonged to fill the place of 'stream that,' thus:

'All along the | *válley* stream | *thát* flashest | *whíte*.'

'Stream' has lost its strong accent, and has now only the secondary accent due to its place in a four-beat measure.

Now this little fact, our obstinate recognition of the silent interval, has big implications. It means that, having marked the previous strong accents on 'all' and 'valley,' we know exactly *when* the next is due, and the next and the next again; we can tap their places on a table as certainly as when a bell is striking the hour. The spaces in between may be filled with what syllables and silences we please. The places of the accents are fixed; the intervals between them are regular, they are measured. This regularity, of which we are aware across all the variations in the grouping of syllables and silences, is *metre*, which means measure.

It follows that a prosody which does not account for this regularity with which we can foretell the coming 'accent' or 'stress' is no prosody at all. That little measured silence is fatal not merely to all systems based on syllables alone, but to the 'Stress Rhythms' of Dr. Bridges<sup>1</sup> and his followers, a system which counts accents without measuring the intervals between them. Accents by themselves are nothing: they cannot set up a rhythm unless they are definitely related in time. The stresses on words, apart from metre, have significance, that of logical emphasis: they do not become metrical stresses till they are *timed*.

If we are agreed that the intervals are in some sense regular, what is the nature of that regularity? Is it the most obvious one, equality, or something else? Professor Sonnenschein,<sup>2</sup> the latest adventurer on the

<sup>1</sup>I am speaking, of course, of his theory, not of his subtle instinctive practice. Theory does affect his 'quantitative' verse.

<sup>2</sup>*What is Rhythm?* An Essay by E. A. Sonnenschein. Oxford (Blackwell).



vexed field of English prosody, and one equipped by unusual width of reading, thinks that in 'refined' verse, as opposed to popular, the intervals are not equal but proportionate. Unfortunately, he does not give us a single example of those proportions; indeed, he could not very well establish them, because he has no unit of measurement: the 'longs' and 'shorts' of his system are only relatively long and short; they have no precise relation. Now, to compare two quantities one with another we must have a fixed common unit: the inches which measure a foot against a yard must be equal to one another. The possibility, however, of proportionate intervals is not one to rule out hastily. Theoretically we might have a metre such as

|  $\overset{''}{1}$  1  $\overset{'}{1}$  1 |  $\overset{''}{1}$  1 |  $\overset{''}{1}$  1  $\overset{'}{1}$  1 |  $\overset{''}{1}$  1 |

based on the proportion  $a : b :: c : d$ —in this case  $4 : 2 :: 4 : 2$ , and formed by suppressing the silent interval in the 'Cauteretz' metre. But to indicate this to the reader a special notation would be required, and a metronomic check to maintain it. Otherwise, as I think Professor Sonnenschein will find if he attempts to compose verse in this, the simplest of possible proportions, the first measure will coalesce with the second into a compound measure, or break up into two simple measures, in either case re-establishing equality. A proportionate system may exist as between *lines* of verse—for example, when four measures alternate with three—or in the internal structure of the measure—as, for example, in a series of trochees ( $2 : 1$ ) but our recognition of these proportions depends upon the equality of the 'measures,' the intervals which constitute the metre.

Another type of proportion ( $a : b :: b : c :: c : d$ ) may exist as a disturbance, for emotional effect, of the regular intervals. When these are progressively clipped or dragged by an *accelerando* or *ritardando*, and that process itself is regular, the intervals are actually reduced or expanded in a proportion. But, once more, this device depends for its recognition and effectiveness on our knowledge that it is a disturbance, that the changing *tempo* wilfully defeats our expectation of time equality; because we know when the accent is due, we know also that it has been hurried or retarded.

I perhaps spend too much time on this point, for I doubt whether Professor Sonnenschein uses 'proportion' in any sense that a mathematician would accept, involving at least three terms; 'ratio,' probably, would express his meaning better—but out of ratios without a pattern it is impossible to construct a metre. Before leaving the subject, however, I will quote his general definition of rhythm:

'Rhythm is that property of a sequence of events in time which produces on the mind of the observer the impression of proportion between the durations of the several events or groups of events of which the sequence is composed.'

Now, since the property which produces the impression of 'proportion' can only be proportion, and the supposed 'events in time' are 'durations,' the definition may be reduced to the statement:

'Rhythm is proportion apprehended in a sequence of durations.'

But when we apply that statement to the business in hand, the stream of sound in a line of verse, we see



that the amplifications were inserted to cover the omission of a fundamental in audible rhythm—namely, the means by which we determine the beginning and end of those ‘durations.’ Proportion implies measurement; measure must be from point to point, and if we cast aside the illusions connected with printed words and syllables, and *listen*, the only audible points from and to which measurement is possible are the accents in the line. To measure by ear from and to points between is impracticable. Without the accents we should only have a stream of incommensurable sounds and no metre. The real ‘events in time’ are the recurring accents; the ‘durations’ are the intervals between them.

Professor Sonnenschein’s definition, then, omits one essential of metre—namely, accent—just as the Poet Laureate’s ‘Stress Rhythm’ omits the other—namely, measure.<sup>1</sup> We should expect him, therefore, to adopt the system on which Dr. Bridges writes ‘quantitative’ verse—measures undetermined by accents. Of this system it is enough to say that it requires us in the ‘hexameter’

‘Magnificent Sirius his dark and invisible bride’

to accept | ble bride | as a spondee. Even if we force ourselves to make ‘ble’ a long equal to ‘bride,’ the accent on ‘bride’ would make this, not a spondee | ’ — — |, but a resolved anapaest | — ’ — |. This is not Professor Sonnenschein’s treatment of ‘feet,’ but to them and his arguments against ‘isochronism’ I must return.

<sup>1</sup>Prof. Sonnenschein is influenced by the old argument from the non-swell organ. But we ourselves supply the stresses to this music, just as we do to the undifferentiated tick-tick of a clock.

## I I

Professor Sonnenschein's abandonment of isochronism as the principle of metre was largely due to results obtained from a mechanical measurement of spoken verse. The records did not support the theory of equal, any more than of proportionate intervals; but it would have been strange if they had. As we have seen, a progressive *accelerando* or *ritardando* would oblige the machine to report a series of diminishing or enlarging intervals. But the intervals are affected not only by frequent variations in the rate at which they are delivered, but by other liberties taken with them in the interests of expression. There are slight pauses for punctuation, longer pauses of the kind called 'rhetorical.' The machine lumps those 'pauses,' which are extra-metrical, not affecting the structure of the verse, with 'rests,' which are metrical, like the break between 'valley' and 'stream.' Moreover, the system of measurement adopted is fallacious. It attempts to measure syllables, whose limits are difficult to define; and syllables are not metrical elements. Measurement must be from audible point to point; and the audible points in the stream of sound are the accents, for which the machine has no register apart from pitch. Now the accent does not fall at the beginning of a syllable unless the syllable begins with a vowel. M. Paul Verrier, taking this into account, arrived at the conclusion that the intervals are '*sensiblement egales*,' accepted by us as equal, or, as I have put it elsewhere, the accents are marked at equal distances on the string, but the string is elastic.



Professor Sonnenschein's other objections may be more briefly dismissed. The 'measurists,' he says, are faced with excess or defect of the number of accents in a line. Only if these are miscounted. For example, in Milton's famous line:

'Rocks, Cáves, Lakes, Féns, Bogs, Déns, and Shádes  
of Déath,'

there are not eight main accents, as Professor Sonnenschein marks the line, but, as he afterwards admits, the normal five. (The others are secondary accents in measures which have been resolved into duple time, with a drag of *tempo*.) An example of defect given is:

'To the last sýllable of recórded tíme,'

with three accents only as marked. But 'last' cries out for an accent, and everybody is aware that an accent is due at or about 'of.' The schoolboy reader puts the accent on 'of'; the good reader registers it internally, but shifts the unemphatic 'of' from under it. This 'syncopation' of an accent, to use the common musical term, accounts for most of Professor Sonnenschein's difficulties.

What does he give us in place of equal measures? He offers what he calls 'real feet.' Now the 'foot' has been the plague of English prosody, for one reason because it is not used in the strict quantitative Greek sense, but merely for the grouping of indefinite syllables about the nucleus of an accent, giving to the eye and to the printed letters an illusion of measurement. As an example Professor Sonnenschein takes the line:

'Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn.'

He begins by saying that it has only four metrical

accents; it obviously has a fifth on 'thro'.' As measured, therefore, it runs:

'Mýriads of r|ívu|lets h|úrry|ing thr|ó' the l|áwn.'

Professor Sonnenschein's analysis is:

'Mýriads | of rívu|lets húrry|ing thro' | the láwn.'

Now 'lets hurry' and 'ing thro' ' are not audible metrical entities; no one could measure by ear in this fashion. The scansion is unreal, only plausible on paper; but it brings out a second disadvantage of the 'foot,' which is spoiled as a measure because it tries to combine with that something else. What that is becomes plain if we leave metre out of account and divide up the line by another grouping, that of its sense. It then becomes:

'Myriads | of rivulets | hurrying | thro' the lawn.'

These are not measures, but 'phrases' or sections of phrases, and a feature of them is their varying 'movement,' according as they take off from a strong syllable ('mýriads') or a weak ('of rívu|lets'). This is the distinction between trochee and iambus, between spondee and anapaest. Phrases do not necessarily coincide with measures, except at the points of stress, the law of verse being that emphasis in a word becomes accent in metre. The creative melodic movement of verse is in the phrase. It has the wave character of rhythm, rise and fall, climax and cadence, and picks out its own patterns from among the stresses of the drumming ictus; but since it is moulded upon incommensurables, thought and feeling, the laws of its balance escape our measurement. Till these separate



entities, measure and phrase, are distinguished, there will be confusion in prosody.

Professor Sonnenschein's 'real feet,' then, are not measures; but, even so, they break down when applied: they do not cover the ground. Every now and then comes a gap between them, filled by a desperate device called 'isosyllabic feet.' We are to suppose that the poet drops his 'real foot' constitution, stops to count one or two syllables which have neither accent nor quantity, and then picks up the feet again; and yet to the ear there is no break in the metrical regularity. An example is the second line of the 'Cauteretz' already referred to. Professor Sonnenschein scans:

'Déepen|ing thy | vóice | *with the* | déepening | *of the* |  
n|íght,'

marking the italicised sections as 'isosyllabic.' But his recourse to those irrational feet arises from a failure to recognise the character of the metre, which is not, as the first line taken in isolation might suggest, in 3-time, but in the rarer 4-time, with secondary accent on the third beat. The scansion therefore is:

'Déepening thy v|óice with the d|éepening of the  
n|íght,'

with secondary accents on 'ing' (which Professor Sonnenschein has noticed), on 'with,' and on 'of.' This 'refined verse' is in the metre of the 'popular' 'Sing a Song of Sixpence.' Tennyson had that faintly in his mind—witness the echo of 'song' in 'along,' and of 'four-and-twenty blackbirds' in 'two and-thirty years ago'—but he also had the solemn theme of Lamb's 'All, all are gone, the old familiar faces,' which is also in 4-time metre, with a resolution of the last measure.

With all his learning and research, then, I must think that Professor Sonnenschein's patchwork system is no solution of our problem; but I regret that for lack of space objections have had to be stated with curtness, and obscurely, for want of illustration with time-symbols. I hold, as I have elsewhere argued,<sup>1</sup> that our everyday speech and written prose tends to or arrives at the equal interval between its accents. What other than an imperious instinct in that sense would account for our constant squeezing or expansion of syllables? This metrical regularity is further systematised in verse. Absolute, metronomic equality of interval in verse, as in music, is rare: expressive rhythm demands some elasticity in what would be a Procrustean bed, and for its own purposes wilfully defeats exact metrical expectation. But the expectation is there.

1926

<sup>1</sup>'Rhythm in English Verse, Prose and Speech' in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, vol. v. Clarendon Press, 1914.



## THE FORMAL GARDEN

MESSRS. Blomfield and Thomas have done a good work in putting this book together,<sup>1</sup> for it may serve to give burial to certain tiresome fallacies. The mother-fallacy in this matter is neatly challenged by the title of their book, *The 'Formal' Garden*. 'Formal' is the question-begging word that the landscape gardeners have used as a reproach, and nothing clears the air more than to accept the word of abuse, and, as in this case, to say: 'Formal! Why, of course. What else should a garden be but formal?' Then, while the adversary reflects, gaping, you soberly reason with him, remind him that a house is not a product of Nature like a tree, that its lines are a contravention of Nature's lines, and that, just as natural forms, when admitted to the decoration of a house, must put off half their nature at the bidding of architecture, so Nature itself, when admitted to the decoration of a garden, must still feel and confess that influence of the house, must play up to its design, and make a virtue of formality. For a house does not end where its walls touch the ground; as a statue has a pedestal, so has it a platform and a setting, and within the grounds of that setting, turf, and trees, and flowers become the stuff for floors and screens, so much green paint and coloured mosaic for the architect to handle.

The theory against which this book is directed was really based on a horror of the straight line, and its

<sup>1</sup>*The Formal Garden in England*. By Reginald Blomfield and F. Inigo Thomas. London: Macmillan and Co. 1892.

expounders, had they been logical, would have abolished architecture itself. Du Fresnoy, the Boileau of painting, was the prophet of those who might be called the Curly Masters, and his ideal in Nature and in Art was the dissimulation of geometry and the evasion of symmetry—

‘When squares or angles join,  
When flows in tedious parallel the line,  
Acute, obtuse, whene’er the forms appear,  
Or take a *formal* geometric air,  
This will displease, and the offended eye  
Nauseates the tame and irksome symmetry.’

Mason, the translator of Du Fresnoy, and jobbing poet of Nuneham (not referred to, we think, by Mr. Blomfield), applied these aesthetics to gardening in his poem, ‘The English Garden.’

‘Thy happy art shall learn  
To melt in fluent curves whate’er is straight,  
Acute, or parallel. For, these unchanged,  
Nature and she disdain the *formal* scene.’

This line, carried out in the garden by the suppression of avenues and fences, and the wriggling about of paths, ought to have led on to the suppression of buildings, but the author’s way was to ‘dare with caution,’ as he puts it, and he compromised with architecture by cultivating the ruin. Thus his model gardener, having to put up a dairy and an icehouse in his grounds, disguised the one as a ruined abbey, the other as a fortress with a portcullis. The whole theory seems absurd enough, and yet behind every system of wrong aesthetics there is an artist whom it is an attempt to formulate. The artist in this case was Claude, and



what the English landscape gardener really wanted to do was to reproduce in an English park Claude's dignified transcripts of the scenery of Rome and Tivoli. When Kent and Brown reduced this to an absurdity by constructing landscape pictures that would not reverse, and still more when the tiny plot of a London villa is handled on the assumption that it is a Campagna, the formula disproves itself. But if a landscape is to be handled, and not a garden, the Claudian can make out a good case for himself, and he can always make things uncomfortable for the architect-gardener at the point where the garden leaves off, and outside nature in park or landscape begins. The designer of big ideas will always be tormented by the desire to include and relate everything within the horizon; and, viewed from a neighbouring height, his formal boundaries, however well they fit with the lines of his building, may cut a very awkward patch on the landscape.

But, granted the garden (and it follows from the house), certain obvious consequences may be drawn out from the conception of this outer court of the house. It is a garden, and not a field. Hence we shall have not the winding path and the irregular turf, but the formal walk, the terrace, the level lawn. More especially in England will this last feature, one of the most beautiful distortions of Nature man has achieved, be made predominant. As the authors point out, the game of tennis has happily done much to restore our lawns to us that were once worried and chopped up by flower-beds. What is wanted is to treat them architecturally, like the old bowling-greens. And if lawns ought to be simple and ample, so ought flower-beds.

Geometry *per se* is not architecture; and here, as in housebuilding, ornament and ingenuity of device should be held in check by a sense of scale and total effect.

Again, a garden is a garden, and therefore enclosed. The landscape gardener replaced the boundary wall by the 'ha-ha,' which enabled you to imagine that the sheep were nibbling the lawn. The modern heresy is the still more tiresome iron railing, a compromise ugly in itself, and ineffective for both those inside and those outside.

Nor is a garden a museum. To collect within a narrow compass specimens of exotic and freakish plants may please a scientific curiosity, but is death to effect and design; and it is almost as bad to jumble native varieties. To look at an ordinary garden is to listen to a Dutch concert where each individual claims a hearing for a different song. How solemn and affecting a single motive may render a garden, those know who have seen the Giusti garden at Verona, where cypress upon cypress climbs the terraces like great obelisks built of night. And even to get an effect of variety and gaiety, reserve is as necessary, since variety is not the same thing as confusion and competition.

Our climate, that gives us so incomparable a green carpet, withholds some of the other elements of out-of-door architecture. What the fire is to the English room, that the fountain is to the foreign garden; you lie about the coolness and the glancing spring of the one, as about the warmth and shooting tongues of the other. Here the chill water is seldom seasonable, and the marble, too, is chill. But we may still have our



fish-ponds, our planted walks and arbours, our 'topiary work' and clipped hedges, vases and figures in gentle coloured lead, as our authors recommend and exemplify. No strip of London garden is too small for an effect of design in flowers, and grass, and garden wall, and nothing is more needed by our aediles than an artist to tell them what to do with our public garden-places. Think of the Embankment, for instance,—the walks of it, the beds, the cast-iron seats; and the whole *enjôlivi* by the monstrous trousers of the founder of Sunday-schools and others of the inappropriate great and good! A political economist, however much he may have added to the gaiety of nations, is no fit decoration for a garden; and in the matter of company, the designer must be as strict as in all others. From the symbolic garden we are all shut out; and in such poor echoes of that primordial type as our fancy can frame for princes, it becomes us to be ruthlessly select:—a few green gods and a poet or two, unproductive scholars and retired diplomatists, lovers and children, peacocks and duchesses.

## THE KING'S HEAD

THE Winter Exhibition at the New Gallery is singularly discouraging to the eye on a general glance, though a steady grind round the walls and cases reveals things of interest. Discouragement arises because the Monarchs of Great Britain and Ireland are here responsible for a great quantity of faked portraits, of weak, dull, or downright detestable painting. Holbein, Vandyck, Lely, Lawrence are not in sufficient force to counteract this impression, and even the archaeologist in painting will only find a few pieces like the Pembroke Diptych to challenge and warm his wits. The present is even less satisfactory than the past. Mr. Orchardson's *Four Generations* comes back spoiled in the happiest part of its grouping, the occupation of the King and Prince with the little child, by the repainting of the King's head in another pose. Beside this hangs a portrait of the King by Mr. Stuart Wortley whose description I must leave to pens more diplomatic than mine. The royal objection to painting in our time is an attitude it is very difficult to understand. It cannot be based on a desire for flattering or idealised portraiture, for royal persons expose themselves quite freely to the camera, and one sees in the shop windows every week photographs whose accidental ill-mannered observation not the most brutal of painters would approach. A royalist must be shocked by these concessions to the interviewer's taste of the time. They tell us that a modern king is forced to dress for ordinary purposes in the bourgeois



uniform. But on the royalist theory such a fact ought never to be published if it must be winked at, and now that the State Coach has been brought out again, it is time to search for a State painter able to make something of the King's head and the King's dress. He ought to be as frank-eyed as Holbein but to understand that for the pretensions of a King as of a priest or of a judge, bearing, dress and setting are an essential part of the picture, since it is the image not only of a person but of an office.

This view has no doubt been against the grain of an age that would just tolerate a King if he was sufficiently bonhomme and *négligé*, and took on a self-protecting mimicry of the middle class. Perhaps the idea is out of date, and a business-like chairman of committees the most exalted figure possible for an imagination fed on votes. But however modest the point at which we fix the boundary of royal pretension, it is a pity not to have recourse to art to adjust and reconcile that pretension to its frame. At the New Gallery, rebuffed by the pictures, I spent an absorbed half-hour over the case containing coins and medals of all the English monarchs, and for the life of me I cannot comprehend why our modern coins and stamps should throw away the dignity and beauty that are imparted to any head whatever by knitting it into some relation with the enclosing lines of circle or square. The art of design for the medallist is to think of the enclosing circle and of the enclosed head always together, and so to play with the main lines of character in the head that they definitely run with or beautifully cut and contradict the circle. No line should be admitted whose intersection with the circle, when prolonged, has not been

considered. Our modern medallists plank down a little modelled-up photograph of a head anywhere in the circle, a head composed of small naggy lines and ashamed curves: the result is meanness and insignificance. The ancient emptied out or reduced all fact except the essential lines, dodged the head in scale and placing till those were right, and amplified its intention when he felt it sliding into a pattern in union with the circumference, a union that gave him a hundred-fold of force and meaning for every trait he kept, in place of all he had discarded. When this trick has been accomplished how big and beautiful is the result! Quantities, spaces, force, direction come in like courtiers to recommend the royal portrait.

The English series has nothing so magnificent as the finest Italian models, to go no farther back than the head of Sigismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini. The art is smaller, but it is sometimes exquisite. Two of the most beautiful, in their delicate relief combined with decision of contour like the art of Holbein, are coins of Edward VI and Mary. Charles I, with an upright sword, is another fine design. Needless to say, from this point onwards there is steady degradation, culminating in the last coins of Victoria's reign. Dyce's florin of 1848 is the best of the recent designs. The modern coins suffer not only from poverty of design, but from their hard mechanical ground. The older coins show some play in the ground as well as in the head.

None of King Edward VII's coins has yet come my way, but I have been favoured with a good many of his stamps, and my fingers itch to do a little elementary cleaning up of their design. I will ask my readers to



examine it in some detail. A stamp is a piece of paper of oblong shape; our recent designers therefore begin by drawing the head in a circle, as for a coin or medal. When they come to fit this to the stamp-shape, surprise overwhelms them. The designer of the half-penny stamp of the last Victoria series put down his circle in the middle of the oblong, with a little gasp, perhaps, for he hastened to fill up the ill-proportioned spaces that are left, top and bottom. But he spurred his invention in vain for a device: all he could think of was an absurd cut-paper trimming with a pin at each corner. He surpassed this on the postcards by letting his circle drop to the bottom edge of the oblong, and thrusting it down more effectually by a top-heavy label. When he came to the penny stamp he had a flash of inspiration. He made his circle into an oval, thus filling up all of the oblong but its corners. The oval was a complete misfit for the head, but how could a distracted designer consider that? Nor could he consider that his oval shape, with the lettering following round it, made the legend of the stamp's use and value illegible except at the cost of some trouble. Now the designer of the new penny stamp has noticed this and determined that it shall not be. At least as far as the 'One Penny' goes he has secured legibility by printing the words in a reasonable way across the bottom of the stamp. He has put an ugly label round them, chipped and rubbed off at the corners, but we must allow for the strain on his invention. This has prevented his throwing the oval overboard, though it has no longer a reason for existence, since it does not occupy the whole space. But a whimsical fancy has seized him of making this oval space

not flat, as on a coin, but hollow, so that it is dark on one side and light on the other, to the destruction of all logic and simplicity of effect. He is so pleased with this device, and the shine it gives to the King's head that he applies it to the space above the oval, making its form quite unintelligible. But let us return to the oval. By its reduction in length it has also grown narrower and there is an awkward space to fill at the sides. The designer has imagined a wreath for this purpose, and to keep up the lopsided variety of the light-and-shade arrangement he has made its two branches of different leaves, oak and laurel. But he was not out of his difficulties yet: this wreath, continued in full force, would fill up all the room intended for the 'Postage and Revenue' inscription at the top. These words must be got in somehow, but also the gap between the ends of the wreath must be filled. Here another flash of inspiration occurred. The crown which would naturally be on the King's head is lifted off and suspended above the oval to join up the wreath which also would naturally have been on the King's brows. It is like arranging a selection of hats round a head that is left bare. But this device, ingenious as it is, still cramps the inscription sadly, which has therefore to be lettered in quite another scale from the first, and bent round into the shape the designer set out by avoiding. Even so there remained two awkward corners; and, tired of a too difficult world, the designer fell back on the old cut-paper and pin-hole device, and gave four other nicks with his scissors to make this silly trimming crawl round the wreath and label below.

I think I have given a full and sympathetic analysis



of the workings of our stamp-maker's mind. His head of the King is very fair material for a designer to go to work upon by selection and elimination, but no more can be said. Of instinct for fitting that likeness to the field of a stamp and using the necessary lettering as further material to be reckoned with, I can see no trace. The likeness-maker needs a colleague to do all this for him. As for the colour, the cherry of the new penny stamp is better than the poor lilac of the old, but a frank scarlet or crimson would be better still. The colour of the new twopence-halfpenny stamp is not nearly so good as the fine blue of the old. The green of the halfpenny stamp goes badly, as before, with the colour of the postcard paper. And all these colours are spoiled by being muddled and 'shaded' through the lighter parts of the impression. All this engraver's work of line is thrown away. The head ought to be left white like the letters, except for the markings of the features and hair, and the field of the stamp printed in full colour. The stamps imprinted on cheques and legal documents show how handsome is the effect of this simplicity. And the old penny stamps of the seventies, with the head well placed in the oblong field, their simple inscription top and bottom and their flatter red or black-red tint, were a much better model than anything we have seen recently.

# HOW TO CELEBRATE

Images? No: the Allegories wilt;  
 The painters sulk with cylinders and cubes;  
 Or colour, vague and crude as blood, is spilt  
 In wriggles from their tubes.  
 Altar anonymous, empty tomb alone  
 Will fit the vacant mind of this November:  
 Before the bleakness of unsculptured stone  
 We bow and we remember.

Music? That, for the inarticulate,  
 Might ease the hungry and divided heart;  
 But heavy the blockade on love and hate  
 Dressed in an alien art:  
 Nor yet, bedazed and sore from ceaseless stunts,  
 May the part-reconstructed British Lion  
 Accommodate his roaring or his grunts  
 To the old songs of Zion.

Speeches? The Mansion House, a mixture nice,  
 Minister, Labour Member, plutocrat,  
 Bishops, the indispensable Lord Bryce?  
 No: anything but that!  
 Therefore the King proclaimed, *O bush to-day,*  
*Parrot and owl, even you, my poet-linnets!*  
 The English, who have never much to say,  
 Were silent for two minutes.



THUS wrote an observer on November eleventh in the year of the Cenotaph and the blank altar and the silence. The English, whose carefully hidden heart breaks out only in supreme poetry, too humbly permit the busybody to traduce them in graphic and plastic art. Distrustful of a deep instinct, they hand such matters over to a committee, and the art hatched by a committee is worse than the joke on which a committee has sat; it is not trimmed and rendered innocuous; it is rather bloated and bedizened. On that occasion no poet spoke in any of the arts; but the habit of the people who in moments of strong emotion are dumb, stammer when called on for oratory, and when leave-taking nod or touch a hand, for once had its way, and reached a high negative expression. A bankruptcy of the imagination? Perhaps, but impressive in its contempt for makeshift and frippery. And what was banned in Whitehall was escaped by a like stroke of fortune in the cemeteries of the battlefields, through the staunchness and judgment of Sir Fabian Ware and those who worked with him. Spite of all clamour, led by the most unlikely people, for the individualistic anarchy that disgraces our churchyards, those gardens of the dead have been laid out as the fitting memorial of a 'decent and undaunted people.' No scrap there of shivering white marble and horrible polished granite, of squalid competitive shapes and degraded lettering; rows, instead, of modest headstones, uniform as were the ranks of battle, and two symbols of sacrifice in a plotted space of grass and of flowers.

Those who saw the freaks of untamed fancy that poured in upon the advisors know what we escaped, and those who have seen such a cemetery as Sir Reginald Blomfield's at Tréport, know what we have gained, a victory for sober English taste that ought to have its repercussion at home, and abroad also; for the ordinary French cemetery is more deplorable than our own.

In the same order of ideas was the homecoming and burial of the Unknown Warrior, an inspiration marred only by the literary word 'Warrior' (to cover the three services), and the jingling and poorly lettered inscription. For another point we are on the way to win through the efforts of Eric Gill and others is a reform of lettering, and if only the Generals and the Parsons and Mayors and their Committees, so uneasily concerned with War Memorials, would believe it, the way of dignity and beauty lies in accepting our poverty in high imaginative sculpture, and being content with well proportioned panel, brief epigraph, and list of names well formed, spaced and cut. I never pass the Quintin Hogg monument in Portland Place without gratitude for its shapely pedestal and well disposed inscription. But the organisers of monuments are unfortunately the last people to hear of such progress: they are unhappy about what they do, but timid; they succumb to the art of the shops, and men who would blush to give a public place to doggerel verse are obstructing the highways and littering the churches with a pious nuisance of doggerel sculpture and ornament.

A short code of what it is proper not to do might be



drawn up for the use of Committees, if Committees there must be:

(1) Avoid all the favourite materials. I have named two; slate is a third. Portland and Hoptonwood stone are among the best.

(2) Avoid all the favourite forms. The Cross itself is fundamentally bad for stone, being a wooden form. The attempt to cure its structural weakness usually leads to the worst type of all, the Celtic Cross: the famous Book of Kells is an orgy of demented ornament. Even Sir Reginald Blomfield's cross, in the attempt to win sturdiness for the arms, gives them something of the appearance of buffers. The best I remember is the old cross in the market place of Stirling, with arms reduced to a minimum. The second favourite is the Obelisk. At the best it is nearly as poverty-stricken a form as the pyramid, and all the worse for being stilted on a base. If tolerable on a plain with architecture or heights behind, it is as eminently wrong on a hill-top as a spire, because its thin convergence fights with the culminating ampler lines of the hill.

(3) Avoid, generally, monuments as such: only the presence of genius, equivalent to that of great poetry, justifies them. Mr. A. C. Benson, at the first meeting of the Civic Arts Association, was, it seemed to me, precisely wrong in his advice: he urged that utility should not be mixed up with memorials. On the contrary, emptiness and tedious ornament lie that way. Waterloo Bridge is a noble war memorial: bridges, gateways, fountains, buildings devoted to some public purpose of the town or village, with a bold

inscription and sparing sculpture in relief, are the right things, especially at a time when our architecture is healthier than either sculpture or painting.

1921



## AN INSCRIPTION

WHEN I referred the other day to the epitaph of the 'Unknown Warrior' in Westminster Abbey I was not aware that a new stone and inscription had been prepared. I propose to consider both forms.

The superseded version, in 'block' letter ran:

A BRITISH WARRIOR  
WHO FELL  
IN THE GREAT WAR  
1914-1918

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FOR KING  
AND COUNTRY

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*An, un, noun* of 'An Unknown British Warrior' in a still earlier version was thus avoided, but 'Unknown' was omitted, and that has become the very keyword in the celebration. The scale of the formula 'For King and Country' was wrong, being larger than the leading words; and the arabic numerals were both mean of their kind and not the kind for monuments. But worse than those defects in form were defects in wording. 'British' will not do; it is a sorry compromise for the noble and right word 'English,' adopted to meet the susceptibilities of silly people among my countrymen; if Mr. de Valera has his way, not even 'British' will suffice. Nor will 'Warrior' do. It is another compromise, because seamen and airmen would have been discontented with the natural word 'soldier,' to stand for fighter or combatant. But if these are too untechnical, 'Warrior' is too literary, and the conjunction 'British Warrior' carries the mind

inevitably to 'British Warrior Queen,' which is all right for the Icenian, Catieuchlanian, Coritanian, Trinobant, but not for Thomas Atkins. Moreover, 'Warrior' jingled with 'War' in the following phrase. 'For King and Country' is a fine old service formula, but not wide enough for this War.

If the earlier inscription was faulty in all these respects, it had a negative merit; it was plain and laconic, not florid or verbose, and such a plainness and brevity sorted well with the taciturnity and impersonality of the celebration. The Abbey has all variety of inscriptions, from the most copious to the most laconic; of the laconic notable examples are *O rare Ben Jonson* and *Jane Lister, Dear Child*. But such flowerings in a lonely word are not to be commanded; they spring from a sudden genius of affection.

The new inscription—which is here reproduced—is not laconic; it includes additional matter, some part at least of which had a good claim for record. The lettering and the disposition are not altogether bad, but dull and crowded, and predominance of size is given to the words 'For God,' which belong to a subordinate statement. 'His Majesty King George V,' as chief mourner, distracts the eye by equality with 'Of a British Warrior,' itself defaced by a preposition taken from an unnecessary phrase.

In addition to these vices of form the inscription has nearly all others that are possible. The English language, it is fair to remember, has many traps for the epigraphist. Its particles, its articles, prepositions and pronouns, in lieu of inflections, contrast with the mass and concision that Latin offers for the lapidary style; nor can English shift its words with the same



freedom from first place to last, and effect those *sforzandos* which are like the rumble of a muffled drum.

X	X	THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS	X	X
				X
X		BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY		
		OF A BRITISH WARRIOR		
GREATER		UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK		WE LIVE
		BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG		
		THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND		
LOVE		AND BURIED HERE ON ARMISTICE DAY		
		11 NOV: 1920, IN THE PRESENCE OF		
		HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V		
HATH		HIS MINISTERS OF STATE		DYING AND BEHOLD
		THE CHIEFS OF HIS FORCES		
		AND A VAST CONCOURSE OF THE NATION		
NO		THUS ARE COMMEMORATED THE MANY		
		MULTITUDES WHO DURING THE GREAT		
		WAR OF 1914-1918 GAVE THE MOST THAT		
MAN		MAN CAN GIVE LIFE ITSELF		
		FOR GOD		
		FOR KING AND COUNTRY		
THAN		FOR LOVED ONES HOME AND EMPIRE		
		FOR THE SACRED CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND		
THIS		THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD		
		THEY BURIED HIM AMONG THE KINGS BECAUSE HE		
		HAD DONE GOOD TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD		
X		HIS HOUSE		X
				X
X	X	IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE	X	X

Yet there are degrees, and this inscription is verbose without being sonorous: it is cacophonous, it is pleonastic; in part it touches the journalistic, in part it drops from prose into a jog-trot of verse. Awkward

liaisons cannot always be avoided, but for cacophony, consider the first line: '*Beneath this stone rests,*' for tautology and cacophony mixed the '*many multitudes*' with the excessive alliteration of its '*m's*' following upon '*commemorated.*' The enumeration of those present belonged rather to next day's newspaper, than to the slab; the mourners were the people of the English race.

For God, for King and Country,  
                     For loved ones, home and Empire,  
 For the sacred cause of Justice and the freedom of  
                     the world

are three verses, and a fourth is divided from them by the insertion of the superfluous gloss '*life itself.*' As for the content of those verses, '*God*' is out of place, because that word sums up all noble motives, and if used should be used alone: but what we want here is a definition of the proximate aims of the fighters, not of an ultimate sanction which might have been denied by many of the brave men who fought. '*For loved ones, home and Empire*' is like a parody of '*England, home and beauty,*' and in its concatenation calls to mind '*L'hôtel de l'Univers et de Portugal.*' '*Empire*' is new-fangled; '*sacred cause of*' needless; '*freedom of the world*' bigger even than the aims of this biggest of wars.

Now it is obvious that no one man, however clumsy, could have brought together so many faults in so short a compass; this must have been a joint composition; no theory save multiple-authorship will account for such discrepancy between the brains available and the result.

Having criticised, I may be thought bound to supply an alternative. I will not pretend to do that,



but it may be possible to illustrate how some of the obstacles might be turned. Let it be supposed that all the matter of the above inscription is to be included, and one other relevant fact, the foreign soil in which the nameless body was laid, contrasting with 'sands . . . dropt from the ruined sides of Kings.' Then we must detach, for the eye, from the total inscription, one more laconic. 'British' and 'warrior' will not do: we must get along, therefore, without a noun. Further still, though home and loved ones may have been in the foreground for individuals, the causes of the War were two: first, the immemorial ranging of the nation against any tyranny that threatens Europe; the other threat was to our own preservation. The exposition of motives must cover these two heads. We shall therefore have something like this, pivoting on the solitary adjective 'Unknown.'

HERE  
 MIXED WITH THE DUST OF KINGS  
 AND OF FAMOUS MEN  
 IN EARTH BROUGHT WITH HIM  
 FROM THE BATTLEFIELDS OF FRANCE  
 LIES  
 U N K N O W N  
 WHETHER OF THE SEA LAND OR AIR  
 FORCES OF THE CROWN  
 ONE  
 WHO FELL  
 IN  
 THE GREAT WAR  
 MDCCCXIV-MDCCCXVIII  
 FOR  
 THE LIBERTIES OF EUROPE  
 AND THE SECURITY OF THIS REALM

If mourners are to be mentioned they should follow after a space; for motto I suggest: 'This is my body broken for you.' It sums up the associations of sacrifice and communion that have gathered about the celebration, rendering it a mystic rite; not life only lost, but identity, so that one who may have been the humblest or most heroic, the most timorous or most fearless of the fighters, has become No-man or Every-man, 'in the ecstasy of being ever.'

I think 'Here' ought to be enough, without the phrases that follow, to point the entrance of the Unknown among 'the famous nations of the dead,' to sleep with princes and counsellors in the royal acre; but there is room for debate between shorter and ampler. Surely there is someone among us who could chisel the perfect form. The present inscription mars a finely imagined and singularly moving act.



## THE HAIG MONUMENT

'T's no every Man can be like his Bust,' said the Scottish sculptor, when they told him that his bust was not like the man. If only Committees and Family Councils and Writers to the Press would accept that high transcendental doctrine, would admit that the Phenomenal in Jones or Robinson feebly struggles to catch up with the plastic Noumenon, how happy would the sculptor be in the Heaven of his Ideas! The Scottish sculptor, it is true, however noble in his attitude of independence, was belated, the adherent of an outworn respect for resemblance, for the superstition of representation, believing as he did that it was the duty of the sitter to be like his portrait. Put into the hands of a really up-to-date sculptor, Mr. Jones would be happy if any hint of his presence survived; his absence rather, the curve of his departure, would be the artist's theme, his wake upon the shuddering air. And it would be something like a gas-pipe.

But no such peace and freedom are the sculptor's who obtains the commission for a public monument, as Mr. Hardiman is the latest to discover. A cloud of witnesses, with photographs in their hands, deny any likeness of form or character to the Man, and when he has been through the mill, veterinary surgeons and riding masters take up the song against the Horse; that, too, must be a likeness; and the army tailor follows in the matter of straps and buttons. Nor is the revolt this time (for there is regularly a revolt against sculpture) against anything 'advanced,' as they

call it, in Mr. Hardiman's model; it is denounced as retrograde. The sculptor has been a pupil of the School in Rome, and it is held that he has looked too well at antiquity, and particularly at the Colleone, so that his Haig is a Condottiere, and his horse a Great, otherwise a Cart Horse, such as carried knights in armour.

Now the army critic is so often in the wrong over monuments that it may be difficult for an artist and his friends to allow that for once he may be in the right. There is the terrible Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner, where the Army insisted on having a howitzer carved in stone: there is the Guards Memorial in St. James's Park, where they insisted on a Guardsman for each regiment; and some of us can remember the nightmare projects that were sent in by fond commanders before a blessed and decent uniformity was insinuated for the tombstones of the Graves Commission. But if Mr. Hardiman is a sensible man he will recognise that this time the critics are sound in principle; that those who commission a portrait are not unreasonable in expecting a likeness; and if he is an original artist in the proper sense of that abused word he will also find that closely defined conditions make for inspiration. The massive is ruled out, whether in its completest shape, the voidless stone-carved Assyrian Bull convention, or the still bulky barrel-shapes of the War Horse and his rider: but the designer for bronze can make his account even with the nervous spidery legs of the Arab charger and the slim khaki-covered horseman. History is an art, and that is the art he is called upon to practise.

It may be some consolation for Mr. Hardiman to



reflect that even the Masters with whom he has been to school had their tribulations; that the story of equestrian statue-making is strewn with conflict and frustration; that hardly one of the great enterprises has come through. Donatello, it is true, at the first attempt in modern times, was triumphantly successful with a greater creation than anything before or after: but he was Donatello, with so high a curb of measure upon the passion and variety of his genius that whatever he set his hand to was perfectly done. Yet, even he was hindered; only one of his equestrian projects was carried out. Verrocchio came through, but risked his head in doing it; his Venetian employers were dismayed by his braggart bandit, and wanted a 'safe' local man, Donatello's imitator, Vellano, to model their general. Leonardo's sketches survive, but the plaster model of his Sforza, the work of years, was shot to pieces by the French archers. Of Raphael's project not a drawing even remains. Nor of Michelangelo's. And here the parallel is amusingly close.

The widow of Henri II, Catherine de Médicis, approached the aged great man nervously but guardedly, begging for at least a design, but also 'that you will endeavour with all diligence and assiduity, so far as your years permit, to carry out this noble work, so that we may see and recognise my lord as in life. . . .' The first sketch was evidently too inexact in detail. Not having a photo, she sent a drawing, and required that 'the King's head must be without curls, and the modern rich style of armour and trappings must be employed'; not the Romanising garb he had given to the figures of her kinsmen in the Medici Chapel. Michelangelo presumably complied; but his design

was given to 'the slow and melancholy hand' of Daniele da Volterra to model and cast. In the end it was done; but the effort threw its maker into deeper melancholy and a violent catarrh, so that he barely outlived the making. And now it was too late: Henri II went without his statue at Blois and only the horse was used, adapted by Biard for his Louis XIII in what is now the Place de la Concorde, from which it disappeared during the Revolution. We do not, therefore, know what Michelangelo, up against the call for a speaking likeness and the adoption of French fashions, made of his problem: but in essence it was Mr. Hardiman's.

There is another consideration which should make the task of life-likeness not a burden but a privilege for the English sculptor. Sculpture survives with difficulty among us, and there is no reason why it should, if it cannot swallow the photograph and out-range it. How few Busts, after all, are so living as the death-masks of which an astonishing array has been recently published! There is, surely, something touching in the faith of the military critics that the snapshot is not an ultimate, that there is some magic of permanent art to be got at, if only the artist be badgered enough. But whether or not sculpture, in any valid sense, will survive the exactions of the camera, one thing is pretty certain, namely, that the Haig monument will be the last equestrian statue put up among us of a war Commander-in-Chief. Our leaders in the late war were cavalry men; what the leader in the future will be it is hard to say; perhaps a man in the conning-tower of a tank, or the cabin of a plane, or a chemist at his desk. All the more reason for making



this end of a history as veridic as may be, though we may be sure that Haig himself, if he could watch the storm about his image, inured as he was to the rubs of committees and cabinets, would modestly and magnanimously and unflinchingly do his best 'to be like his Bust.'

THE MISSION OF  
TIMOTHY D. HOOT  
(SCENARIO)

*To Mr. Henry James*

## I

IN the fall of 1907 Mr. Timothy Dew Hoot paid a visit to England.

His appearance attracted little attention at the time. He was a small dry man; his name conveyed nothing to the world, and though, like all Americans, supposed to be wealthy, and evidently well furnished with introductions to the highest circles, he was singularly unassuming, not to say retiring in his manners. He was met everywhere during the autumn, and his presence in so many country houses did raise a little mild speculation among his fellow-guests, for he appeared to have small interest in the ordinary pleasures of society. He ate little, did not drink or smoke, played neither cards nor golf, went in for no form of outdoor sport, was a man of few words, and quite impassive in women's society. During his brief visits he was usually turned over to someone to look at the pictures and historical features of the place, to the housekeeper often as the best authority, and acquiesced in the entertainment without enthusiasm. With all his queerness he was not unpopular, but people wondered what pleasure he took in his round of visits, and what led to his being taken up so universally.



## II

The time was a critical one for the great landowners. What Agricultural Depression had left the Death Duties had eaten, and what the Death Duties had left Bridge and Motoring had devoured. On the top of this had come, as the parliamentary session wore on, threats of a project for the compulsory rehousing of agricultural labourers, forced on the Labour Party so as to forestall Mr. Chamberlain, and therefore reluctantly backed by the entire forces of the House of Commons. It was the last straw. It was reported that on all hands negotiations had been opened with municipalities by which the stately homes of England should become schools or asylums, but these overtures were rejected on the ground that the buildings were not in accordance with the latest hygienic requirements. The only other resource was to send pictures, books, furniture and other treasures to the hammer. In the previous year all the leading English connoisseurs had accepted posts in Transatlantic museums and were certain to compete for the spoil. A wild season was looked forward to at Christie's.

In 1908 the Bill passed the House of Commons. The House of Lords at first promised a desperate opposition, and it was thought Ministers would be driven to a dissolution. To the surprise of everyone, when the Bill actually came before the House, it went through with very slight obstruction, and the Press, a little bewildered, congratulated the country on the deep-seated political instinct and patriotism which had counselled so great a sacrifice.

## III

But what followed was more bewildering still. Instead of a series of sensational sales at Christie's, the season was a blank so far as Old Masters were concerned. That historic house shut its doors in the middle of May; Bond Street approached Messrs. Agnew with a view to organising an exhibition for a Dealers' Benevolent Fund, and the American Museum Directors sat with folded hands.

In June Dr. Bode, of Berlin, was reported to be seriously ill, and shortly afterwards went into retirement.

As the season went on, the incredible news began to be whispered that various old families, so far from selling their collections, were actually competing for pictures abroad, and that houses, for generations let or alienated by their decayed owners, were passing back into the original hands, and portraits of ancestors being recovered.

This same season was marked by other peculiarities. There were complaints from the great hotels in London that the annual invasion by the *richissimes* from America had sadly diminished. On the other hand in some of the great houses in town and in numerous week-end parties in the country the number of American guests was abnormal. When August came it was a deluge. A few old-fashioned houses seemed to have resisted the new craze, but on all hands nothing was talked of but the crowds of unfamiliar Americans in famous English places. Many of them seemed permanently to have taken up their quarters with their new hosts, some of them even remaining when those



hosts took brief flight to Paris or Monte Carlo, where their play was reckless beyond precedent. The papers were full of this social 'entente cordiale,' and attributed it to the recent action of the United States Senate (the diplomatic tact of President Roosevelt received credit for this), by which all outstanding differences with 'our kin beyond the sea' had been settled. The *Spectator* published several thoughtful and ingenious articles on the subject.

## I V

The true explanation of the revolution was simple enough. The quiet Mr. Hoot was an agent of the latest and greatest of American millionaires. His was one of those defective minds to which nature has given no faculty of enjoyment save in the region of finance, but he had a preference for large ideas rather than small. His difficulty was not making money, but spending it. When it was suggested to him that one obvious way of employing the encumbrance of his wealth was to form a collection of works of art he assented, though nothing more actively bored him than art of any sort. Baffled, however, in his first attempts (the 'Velazquez,' the 'Shakespeare Folio' and other instances fresh in the public memory were, it is said, among them), he gave some thought to the subject. 'What's the matter,' he argued, 'with the cultured American citizen, that he can't fix to go right in and see those pictures when he wants to, and all the side-shows as well?' In 'side-shows,' he included what his friends told him was equally important, the 'atmosphere' the 'old-time home-life of the British

aristocracy' and a number of other things which he regarded with a respectful astonishment, and never meant, if he could avoid it, to go within a thousand miles of. But if 'this crowd' felt to want it so badly, why should they not have the real thing complete, instead of little bits of it? The details were speedily arranged. The great houses of England and their treasures were bought up and converted into what were practically hotels and country clubs, but it was one of the conditions that the previous owners should continue to play their traditional rôle, and should appear to be the hosts of their visitors, who themselves were not aware of the terms on which they were introduced. At first the conditions laid down savoured alarmingly of 'Bracebridge Hall' and the antique; stage-coaches, a great deal of Christmas cheer and so forth flitted through the crude early sketch; but things in the end shook down to a reasonable compromise, and what remained of feudal practice and ancient life was stereotyped in 1908 by the preoccupied signature of Mr. Hoot's master. The English, longing to give up the ritual of shooting and hunting, fixed establishments and county duties, for a free life of motors and hotels, found themselves thrust back into it all and firmly pinned down to their parts by their terrible benefactor.

## v

Incidentally this revolution brought others in its train. In the dearth of Old Masters and antiques generally the new rich, at home and abroad, found themselves obliged to have recourse to living artists.



The difficult moment of transition was got over by a tact and initiative displayed in the highest quarters. It had been an unwritten law of our constitutional monarchy for generations that if modern pictures were bought at all or portraits commissioned they should be of a kind that may be described as entirely beyond criticism. This self-denying ordinance was now abrogated with the hearty concurrence of public opinion. The Academy was freely opened to all the original artists of the country, and the King signalised the new departure by commanding a portrait group from Mr. John and purchasing a landscape by Mr. Steer. The lead was quickly followed, and it became fashionable to buy good pictures.

1906

## 'GAPS'

THAT hardy weed of debate, How to keep pictures in this country, has sprung up again in the *Times* over the departure of the *Blue Boy*. None of the specifics will keep any great number of pictures, so long as America grows the biggest millionaires. If one could inoculate them with some other fancy, the drain might stop: short of that the only chance for us is one I put forward years ago under the form of a story. Only under such servile conditions, deserved or undeserved, could our ancient landowners survive with the ornaments of their past about them. For what the picture-people do not take into account is that the drain of pictures is only one symptom of a much more tragic process, the decay of the old order in England. And the whereabouts in the world of a number of Italian and Flemish pictures and English portraits is a trifle compared with that.

The cause of the decay was the insane preponderance in our national life of industry and commerce; the determination to have cheap food and low wages, and the contempt of the town for the countryside. We have poisoned the whole world with our industrial inventions, and our pupils, Germany and America, have bettered the lesson. The War, a war for materials and markets, for the marketing of superfluous industry, was our punishment, and it is now transferred from Germany to America under the name of Peace, which is a battle of bankers and the monopolists of raw material. So long as our industry and commerce fairly



held their own against the new competitors, the process, as it affected the old countryside, was disguised. Commerce and industry, when they had made their pile, bethought themselves, if not of making their souls at least of making themselves respectable in the old-fashioned way: by marriage or purchase they took over the estates and houses of impoverished landowners. In a generation, or two generations, they were absorbed; public school and university and hunting-field venerated them with tradition: they took on estate management, local justice and charities, a part in Parliamentary government, and a great part of the government of our dependencies and the officering of our forces: the buccaneer of trade and manufacture became the country gentleman, and the virtues of the old tradition did much to sweeten our pirate enterprises abroad and make our rule of the seas and of alien races tolerable. But the transfusion of blood and gold and grafting of limbs had become too rapid and wholesale, increased as it was by tributaries from American and Jewish sources: the original stock was being overwhelmed, and the taint of snobbery in those transactions came out in the flashy and vulgar use made of wealth.

Such was the *dégringolade* before the War: now it is a crash. Not only are the great places too heavy a burden for their former owners, and changing hands, but the modester backbone of the country, the places of the squires: their last rally was in the War; those of them who were not killed out are being taxed out, and their homes are derelict.

For a time, no doubt, the revolution will be disguised. Some sort of people will take their place and after a fashion carry on. But a new War is coming to

a head. The Nineteenth Century was the middle-class century. The old 'upper' class and the Crown itself took on, in self-respecting mimicry, the aspect of a middle-class, and the 'lower' had no ambition beyond becoming middle. But the amorphous population called into being by fantastic industry and trade, and no longer content to lend its vote to Liberal or Conservative, that is to iron-master and banker as against landowner, is to play its own hand. The auction is over in which one and the other alternately bid for the labouring vote by concession and dole, and the ring begins to clear for a fight between the monopolist profiteer and the wage-earner.

What will emerge we cannot tell. The present transitional situation is that of the millionaire collector whose accumulations go to the museums. In the times ahead, if Labour cares for such things, it is the public museum, rather than the private house that will hold what of the treasure remains; of the derelict historic houses some part may be taken over as institutions of one kind or another, including museums.

We cannot hope that at present prices many more of the master works grown upon corn and turnips, sheep and beeves, will be kept here, or of the older art acquired by milords in foreign tours. If we are to keep any of the greatest we must narrow our desires and concentrate upon a handful. That being so, it is very important that we should be clear about our National Gallery policy. I have used the word 'museum'; the question is whether the National Gallery is to be a museum or remain a gallery. A museum of pictures may be defined as science taking care of art. Art is packed away in these stores, when the world is other-



wise occupied, as securities are packed away when their owners go abroad. The caretakers begin by being interested in art; but science as caretaker inevitably becomes more interested in science, that is to say in the history, even the pathology of art, collecting pictures and other objects as curiosities, as specimens of the infinite deviations as well as triumphs of human faculty.

Let me take an example from an institution which has definitely gone over from its original intention, that of a school of design, to the scientific programme, namely the South Kensington Museum. The recent acquisition of a bust by Bernini was quite irresistible and irreproachable as a museum acquisition. The only bust in the country by Bernini, the only surviving bust of an Englishman by him, an example of the unsurpassed accomplishment of a famous artist, how was it to be refused? Yet in itself the thing is an unclean object, a bird's nest of forms compared with great sculpture, a record of the complaisance towards a vain and mean subject of a vulgar spirit. For the vulgarity that crept into sculpture with Praxiteles and was the delight of later times in Ghiberti and Cellini, reaches a climax of curiosity in this hairdresser. The Campo Santo of Genoa follows.

The course of the National Gallery, if never undeviatingly laid, has on the whole pointed in another direction: it set out to collect, not specimens of all sorts, but the best paintings to be found. Yet German science has had its effect, and a definite twist was given to the helm by the Committee of Trustees which reported in 1913. They laid down a programme of 'filling gaps,' of finding specimens of unrepresented or

half-represented painters, and the Director subsequently appointed, whose learning and competence are unsurpassed in the ranks of our connoisseurs, has been loyally carrying out that programme. I should like to see him rebel and give greater play to his taste as an artist, the taste that has secured for us the fragment of a Manet and some other precious things. For see what the programme leads to. There is a big (and splendid) Reynolds group in the Gallery; there is a big (and poor) Gainsborough group: therefore the 'gap' of a big Romney group must be filled. Now of the English painters of the eighteenth century, after Hogarth, only three are *necessary*; Reynolds, Gainsborough, Wilson. In Reynoldses we are well-off; in Gainsboroughs rather badly off. Romney stands on the margin of those qualified for National Gallery rank, admissible for an occasional good thing and for the reason that he is English. But the big empty portrait group gives him away rather than adds to his reputation. Relax the standard over Romney by following the logic of the programme, and what follows (or in this case, preceded)? The work of an obscure, and rightly obscure, painter named Stringer, is admitted, because the name was hitherto unknown; a 'gap' is declared and filled. And once the programme admits such things as purchases, it is relaxed also for gifts and bequests. Ugly trash like the Jan Lys is admitted, because the name is rare: pretty trash like the Peroneau, because the name, not this pastel, is great.

The new Van Dyck is a case open to debate. It was a tempting counterblow to hang in place of Gainsborough's lost challenge to that master the master himself; the picture is an ingenious solution of the



difficult problem of grouping two standing figures into a unity, if not so conclusive as the Cobham variation; there is very handsome painting in the draperies; the historical interest of the figures is considerable, if they are the brothers Villiers; and as Sir Charles Holmes and Sir Claude Phillips point out, a gap in the English representation of the author is filled. Yet a doubt remains: the blue and the brown, well related and of fine quality, remain separate masses, not patterned, and the general elegance of legs and hands and draperies seems not quite to swallow the heads, one of them better, one worse. Altogether I should say an irresistible picture for the National Portrait Gallery, if it had the funds; but not 'necessary' here.

What then do you propose, criticising at ease your colleagues in their daily more difficult task, and setting yourself against the whole stream of cultured opinion? Well, I obstinately and isolatedly think that such resources as we have should be jealously saved for purchase of a few 'necessary' things (the list of them is known, but not to be talked about) and in the forefront of them one or two Gainsboroughs. And for everything bought I would sell something to add to our resources and economise space. If necessities are impossible, then desirables, but real desirables, not gap-stoppers.

## SHIGIONOTH

*What profiteth the graven image . . . a teacher of lies . . . Woe unto him that saith to the dumb wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! . . . there is no breath at all in the midst of it. Hab. ii. 18-20.*

THE *Times*, as we know, is not now the 'safe' and sober moderator it was, doling half-ounces on this or the other scale to keep the balance trim: Jupiter has left his throne to turn Crusader, and perhaps tomorrow that other pillar of our equanimity, Mr. Punch, will be hewing in pieces his graven image of Britannia, and poking fury at the chunks. Meantime, nothing outside of politics has been more disturbing to solid readers than the substitution for a former critic of Mr. Clutton Brock. Conviction tells immediately in writing, and the new idols, Picasso, Matisse, and the rest, flashed upon us with all the unfair advantage of scarlet upon a skilfully long-continued drab: the suppressions of orthodoxy sped those heretic bolts of Jove. The latest of them was a letter at the tail-end of the 'How to Keep Pictures' correspondence. Let us have done with Old Masters, said Mr. Brock, and have done with Committees and Directors; let us instal in their place a Prophet, to buy the pictures of the future. The prophet must obviously be a Habakkuk, who was 'capable of everything,' though the original had a fiery contempt for pictures and other images, and perhaps no great gift for the administration of a gallery. Before, then, we let loose



the new Habakkuk to sing upon Shigionoth in 'variable songs or tunes' the unprofitableness of our graven idols, before we send to the right-about our humdrum officials and their committees, shall we inquire a little whether the poor things are not capable of something, whether the future is their proper care, and whether they do not 'act, act,' even too strenuously, in 'the living Present.'

As an old disturber of the peace, it goes against the grain with me to restrain the prophetic rage: but I like also to see the object of wrath clearly, and when I turn an accusing eye upon those directors and keepers and committees, I find that so far from living sleepily in the past they are Janus-and-Argus-eyed. The committees, dread engines as we used to know them, are chastened and eager to please; the directors and keepers quite terribly up-to-date; the museums are not content with mummy and old balsams, but like *Punch's* French perfumer 'have all ze new smells.' Even twenty years ago the South Kensington Museum was stocking 'Art Nouveau' (and had to bury it hastily, as too rank), and if you go to their Print Department to-day and ask for Wyndham Lewis or Gordon Craig, Mr. Hardie will disinter them from super-incumbent masters and ask, 'Is that really the latest you want?' In the venerable Print Room itself I have every confidence that an inquiry for Bolshevik posters would not find Mr. Campbell Dodgson napping: Forain, at least, is familiar to him as Dürer. I know too well that the Tate Gallery is a wilderness to some of our friends, because in the embryonic French section or in the English some one artist of their predilection has not walked straight from his nursery.

But must we really because of that pour ashes upon our head and curse our day? Would a Habakkuk after all have done so much better than Mr. Aitken? If we are to open at the first knock of the new generations, I think our servants answer the door with all reasonable promptitude.

In my perverse way, indeed, I think the latest generation might be left on the doorstep a little longer, to its advantage and ours. To admit only the dead to our National galleries was a wholesome rule for more reasons than one. The first is the atmosphere of jealousy created when the living enter. If A is admitted, B and C come into view, sore and urgent, with almost, if not quite as good a claim, and the doubt teases any scrupulous mind whether a personal bias or anti-bias has had anything to do with the choice. A, by admission, is so much bettered in the outside competition: B and C, by exclusion, so much worsened: are the scales quite true? Moreover the attitude towards A, B, C, and the rest of the alphabet, of deciding on their general performance that one or the other is admissible, and then looking for an example, is faulty. It is the gap-filling attitude, bad enough in the case of the old master, but worse in the case of the living, because he is personally concerned. The right attitude is to want a particular work with no thought of who is its author. These are troublesome considerations: more important is a doubt that must hang over the claim to be prophetic. Is any judge to be trusted to make more than a few bull's-eye shots about his immediate contemporaries? Should there not be a sifting time before the living are rushed into immortality? Is it not the natural and advantageous arrangement that the private



purchaser should be the adventurer and that the painter should win through to the public gallery after a station in his ante-room? The crowd of candidates is so much greater than the final elect, of whom in each generation there are only two or three undoubtedly qualified. Let them thin out, says the argument. Finally, is it to the good of the public to find the latest fashions in the public galleries, as well as in the current exhibitions? And is it for the good of the artists themselves? I very greatly doubt it, for this reason, that the public takes the habit of seeing pictures only in this way. People give up buying and possessing because they can satisfy themselves by an occasional visit to a gallery. And it is bad for the pictures, which tend to be painted for this occasional, rapid amusement, and tend to be all of one sort, the immediately fashionable sort. The shutting away, the part seclusion of working for a few patrons, not for the scrimmage of exhibition, is a wholesomer condition for the production of what will last.

Such are the arguments against the modern practice, and to my thinking they prove the practice wrong. What are the arguments for? One only, so far as I know, with a corollary. The plea is that everyone does it, that the practice is general in Europe and America, and that it would be unfair to our artists not to be published as promptly as the foreigner. The practice began, I suppose, with the Luxembourg, which has been held up as a model. It is really an awful example. Because half-a-dozen masterpieces were forced into that gallery, the tawdry collection has shone in their reflected light for people of good taste; while it has shone in its own light for the majority,

who love the tawdry. It has come together by a process not free from corruption: the State buys from among the disciples, now of this, now of that eminent teacher, according to the pull he and they have in the Salons, with some consideration also of the province the artist hails from, and the pull of its deputies in the Chambers. The large 'machines' produced by prize pupils take their place for a time at the Luxembourg, then are passed on to extend the boredom of the provincial galleries, or fill their lumber-rooms. The practice began in England, not by State action, but by the benefactions of Vernon and Chantrey, and was continued by the gifts of Sir Henry Tate and Mr. Watts. Very little of Vernon's selection remains in the high places of the Tate. Piety makes it difficult to deal so drastically with the donor of the gallery, but sifting must come. The Watts gift was too big and too much the artist's choice. But the Chantrey collection is a continuing benefaction or malefaction. It is administered on the theory that fellow-artists are the best judges. They are—for their own kind of art, and when they are disinterested. But no *society* of artists can be trusted. They inevitably administer such a fund as a bounty for prominent members and exhibitors in turn, and even as a charitable institution for those who have a difficulty in selling. Any other society would have bought in much the same way as the Academy.

But there it is: the practice has been started, and has two consequences beyond the many undesirables and the very few desirables it brings in. The first is that since the mediocre artists are thus largely honoured, it is difficult to resist the claim of the neglected good living artists to be included, and the effort at the Tate



Gallery since its foundation has been to redress the balance with very little help from public funds. The second is that the general practice being what it is, the best works (and the earliest are often the best) of living artists will be snapped up by other public collections or will rise so greatly and quickly in price that it will be difficult or impossible to acquire them later, unless by gift or bequest.

These are difficulties: but difficulties are things to be surmounted. What is wanted is an intermediary, a suspended state of being or probation, a Purgatory of art before the Paradise of national collections is reached. And two such purgatories were provided at a time when it was not always possible to force good things into the National or Tate Gallery. One is the National Art Collections' Fund, predominantly but not entirely for old Masters; the other the less wealthy and powerful Contemporary Art Society, entirely for the living. If benefactors would be content to give or leave to those societies for a term of probation, and greater power were given to the galleries to dispose of works coming to them from the Chantrey and other sources, we should have some mitigation of an excessive hospitality. 'Storage' in the end will be impracticable: lending of inferior stuff to the provinces is undesirable.

'The Suburbs shall shake,' said Ezekiel, 'at the sound of the cry of the pilots.' The suburbs are not so easily shaken now; but they may smile at a conflict of minor prophets, one for setting the gates wide to the future; the other for narrowing them for present and past alike.

## PROHIBITION

THE other night a little group of men interested in our public galleries wrangled amicably round the fire. There were ardent spirits present who were all for the humming activity of American administration against what they declared was the passivity of British: on one side they painted a perpetual movement of exhibition, immense lecturing and 'publicity,' inspectors, also, to see that the pictures are looked at, and if not, why not; teams of able-bodied men to scour the galleries and hold the telephones till every householder has 'come under the sound' of their gospel and joined the local and prodigious equivalent of our modest National Art Collections Fund; in fact a revivalist campaign in the field of art: on this side they deplored a take-it-or-leave-it attitude; a belief that those who really like and really can see as well as look at pictures will find them out; no one to welcome and nurse the visitor in the galleries, and directors who pursue an obscure occupation in offices instead of going out into the street and compelling the wayfarer to come in. At some of this the more Laodicean of the company were inclined to jib; at an advertisement system by which six and eight—or is it eight and six?—is spent to gain a pound in subscription, at the illusions of visual education through the ear, at the notion that the appetite for this one of the arts calls for a forcing 'encouragement' by the State with which the butcher and the baker can dispense, and that it is a



matter of duty or even salvation to enjoy oneself in this particular fashion.

One part of the programme was readily conceded; the young should be passed through the galleries before they leave school (as they are, it appears, very profitably, at Norwich), so that the elect of this art may discover that it exists and spread the infection among susceptibles; for the rest, the galleries are there and the pictures are there, State-provided or donor-provided, and if there would be an advantage in brighter and fuller notice-boards and other ways of making smooth the path of the bland vague mortal who now avoids and passes by, there is no call for hustling people into heaven, if the heaven is not theirs. The arts of music and the drama are not so happy. No State buildings exist for their performance, and the music *is not there* and the play is only half there, if not performed. Here is a real and glaring gap. But the Blatant Beast of advertisement kills the divine stealth of beauty; God is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the still small voice; and Moses, the outsider, who insisted on seeing Him, was vouchsafed no more than the back of the picture.

So were the two sides stated or over-stated. But a further difference arose. In the States there are not only huge funds at the disposal of the museums for acquisition, administration and exposition, but it is the rule that collections formed by the millionaire (largely at the expense of our ancient stores) pass at his death out of circulation into one or other of those multiplying concentration camps. In England there is little of this and but for connoisseurs of foreign blood among us there would be less; the collector buys and

keeps, or buys and sells, and private circulation would be maintained, if there were not, at each dispersal, the tug of transatlantic purses. The ardent spirits were once more all for the American, the democratic idea that no one has a right to seclude and enjoy a work of art, and for its propagation, in the poor degree possible, over here. The Laodiceans regarded the vast public collections as a necessary evil, and one of them contended that even in America they need not be thought of as eternal: a revolution might break the locks and send the prisoner-masterpieces travelling again. 'A Revolution! But how?' Well, a country that has already enacted Prohibition against Drink might easily come to vote for Prohibition against Pictures. The armies and the batteries for such a campaign are all mobilised and at work, but hitherto this most obvious of abuses has been ignored. To begin with, the picture-traffic is an immigration of aliens, and the patriotic statesmen who have stemmed a tide of the living Wop and Dago will see to it that this more insidious ancestral stream is dammed. And what aliens! Purity, as well as Patriotism, will take the field, the Nudes will have to go, and Morality will bundle after them all that is not domestic in the high hundred-per-cent. manner, or uplifting in the high commercial; to Ellis Island will depart all the scenes and portraits that recall the loose living and disreputable lives of lands monarchical and effete. No less terrible and drastic will be the onset of Religion, for the Fundamentalist-Protestant will realise that in State-supported or tolerated establishments the Pope and his minions are sheltered and abetted in the contamination of the youthful mind. The painters of



one period favoured by a foreign and poisonous aestheticism were to a man Catholic: will the country that has rejected 'Al' in succession to 'Cal,' because even the 'side-walk' did not wipe out the taint of Rome, will that country abide, once it is awake, the presence at its heart of accursed doctrines and heathen rites recommended by the meretricities of paint? Clearly the days of this anomaly are numbered; the pictures will one day return, at reduced prices. Sir Charles Robinson used to tell how, when he was called in to report upon the Old Masters of Glasgow, a bailie, shocked by their character, proposed that they should be traded to the Japanese, 'who,' he understood, 'were a vara immoaral people.' So might righteousness and commerce kiss.

But not only in the States is there a hopeful prospect for Prohibition. We are slow, but we follow. About the time that the Yankees are prohibiting painting, we shall be prohibiting literature. The police have already stolen many marches upon us, as the *Saturday Review* forlornly witnesses, and not even the *Saturday Review* has noted them all. The Bobbies are already the censors of our public art as well as of our public manners. It is they who decide the surprising shapes taken by roads and refuges at their points of confluence, and if they have their way no more statues or memorials will be permitted to steal a yard from traffic space. Only the accident of an Act of Parliament prevents the permanent exile of Gilbert's fountain from the Circus, and the sharing of a refuge in Whitehall by the statue of Lord Haig has been frowned upon so that buses may tear down that spacious thoroughfare three abreast. What with those

Puritans of traffic in the streets and the other fanatics of unrelieved greenery in the parks, to whom sculpture is a worse blot than love-making, statues of the great will soon be hunted from the four-mile radius and pounded with the British Museum's carefully cherished files of the local news-sheets from Greater Piddle in some far suburban repository.

We are not so often fortunate in those well-intended effigies that the sleep of the Home Secretary will be notably disturbed should they disappear. When he comes to prohibit novels as a part of obscene literature, beginning, as Mr. Havelock Ellis has pertinently remarked, with the Bible, there may be a more appreciable disturbance of his repose. Not every woman in this island is yet a novelist, but the proportion is very high and rapidly increasing, already high enough to affect the result in a closely-contested election. Having obtained the vote by violent means, women are probably as much disillusioned about that privilege as men had long become; this brand of prohibition might drag them to the polls and delay the reform of Mudie and Smith, and the expurgation of the classics. But with Mr. 'Rd.' (is it still 'Sickert' or only 'A.R.A.'?) and other leaders of thought behind the police, the great movement will be only checked, not throttled. Will the delicate squalors of Camden Town then be safe from conflagration? When the house of Deiphobus is down, *proximus*, O Rd.! *ardet Ucalegon*.

The result will, of course, as with all revolutions, be very different from what was intended. Police magistrates and judges live in a charmed world where 'morals' and their relation to law are black-and-white



affairs, about which no change of attitude is conceivable or debate anything but an outrage. For them the end of wisdom is to sit on the safety valve of free speculation. Nor are the defenders of such moral tracts and fictions as come before the Courts less remote from the real issue. They cover it up by declaring that such books, however wicked, are great works of art, which they very frequently are not. The beginning of wisdom on this difficult and debatable ground is to recognise that the novel is an instrument for trying-out imaginatively what otherwise will be tried-out actually, but in furtive ignorance. Suppress the means by which a writer throws into character and narrative this or the other problem, individual and social, and by which the reader can identify himself with the experiment and judge its value; do that, and you extinguish the danger signals. To prohibit the imagined experiment is to provoke the actual; the persecuted idea, good or bad, thrives underground. The Home Secretary and the police, if they follow that course, will have their work cut out for them with a vengeance.

## ENCOURAGING ART

*To Lord Stanmore*

## I

THE House of Lords indulged last Monday, at the instance of Lord Stanmore, in one of the conversations peculiar to that Chamber, admirable so far as they stir questions out of the range of hand-to-mouth politics, and impossible in the other House because of the congestion of flabby-furious debate, but ineffectual, because the interlocutors are oppressed from the outset with the conviction that nothing will come of the discussion. This conviction is partly to be laid to the account of Lord Salisbury, who has a fatalistic despair about the prospects of any idea not forced upon him against his will by the voters. Autocratic within his own sphere, such affairs of high policy as can be reserved from the decision of the daily paper and the voter, he believes apparently that the tides of stupidity and ignorance rule in all other matters, and that the chances of popular agitation, not to be controlled, settle them blindly. It is a mistake: a very little courage, a firm lead, a little explanation and persuasion will carry an idea through with a democracy if its proposer's position gives him a hearing and his knowledge authority. In matters about which he cares and knows nothing this sort of lead is of course not to be looked for from Lord Salisbury. But why do the begetters of ideas in the Upper House bring them to him in such a condition that they are fore-



ordained to execution by his gloomy intelligence? Here, says the introducer, is my smoking flax, here is my bruised reed, which the Premier, before the evening is over, will doubtless quench or break. And Lord Salisbury, thus invited, duly puts his foot on the proposal with sad alacrity. I venture to suggest to Peers who raise conversations of this nature that their schemes ought to be so chosen, so timed and so backed by consideration and knowledge, that they would outlive a douche of cold water from Lord Salisbury. The suggestion of Lord Wemyss, for example, the other day, that models of the new Government buildings should be exhibited for criticism in the House is too late. The buildings are decided upon, and in progress. It is not too late, however, to nip in the bud the Victoria Memorial scheme, if it turns out to be unsatisfactory. On the other hand Lord Stanmore's proposal to revive the Royal Commission of 1842 for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts is an ill-considered proposal, however well meant, as a brief review of the facts will show. That Commission 'flickered out' or rather put itself out, after twenty years' activity, not, as Lord Salisbury supposes, because nobody in this country cares for art, but because, first, no committee should ever be given the vague task of Encouraging Art, and second because this committee went about that mistaken task in a more than usually foolish and incompetent manner.

It is no business of the State directly to 'encourage' art any more than it is its business to encourage eating and drinking. The State encourages eating and drinking to the extent of feeding the citizens who perform definite public services. Even so it may properly pay

artists to carry out definite pieces of work that the State wants, or buy existing works of art because they are worth the money. It should never pay for what is not wanted under the hypocrisy of 'encouragement.' An individual who wishes to have his portrait painted, or a picture to hang above his dining-room table, employs the painter or buys the picture that he likes. His object, if he is an honest man and not a pretender to taste, is to get the picture because he likes it, not to 'encourage art.' He never dreams of the effrontery of giving out his portrait to competition among painters generally, with the bait of one or two prizes, and by this means tempting recruits into the army of painters. But this is exactly what the Royal Commission of 1842 did. It planned to call into existence a new levy of painters by the bait of competition, and when they had been brought together did not employ them. A perfectly definite job was on hand. The Houses of Parliament had been burned down. They had been rebuilt by Sir Charles Barry. The nation decided that they were to be made more magnificent still by the addition of paintings and sculpture. Now the reasonable plan, one would think, in such a case would be for the nation to decide how much it was prepared to lay out on those decorations and then say to the architect, Find your sculptors and painters and do the best you can for the money. But this was not enough for the public men of the day; they determined to 'promote and encourage art,' in the sense of stimulating young men all over the country to turn to painting in the grand style: the idea at the bottom being that a parliamentary demand for great artists will create a supply. Instead therefore of looking about for the best men



and asking, Will you fill a space of ten feet by six with such and such a subject at such and such a price, the Commission laid out a vast deleterious programme. It was composed, be it said, of busy statesmen, literary men and so forth, but not a single artist except the secretary (Mr., afterwards Sir Charles Eastlake). Its first decision, in the face of all the painters' advice obtained, was that the method of painting should be fresco, that being a method unknown to English painters, and, as the event proved, thoroughly unsuited to the English climate. Having thus successfully debarred the greater number of existing artists with fixed methods of painting, the commission invited a new generation out of the vague by means of competitions, competitions not for definite subjects and sizes but general exercises of no use except as tests. To these successive competitions candidates flocked in great numbers, most of them young men misled by ambition. Some new men of talent were among them; but Alfred Stevens and Madox Brown received no commissions, and Mr. G. F. Watts a trifling one. These competitions, in fact, were a long-drawn farce resulting in nothing but expense and heartbreak to the candidates. There was one painter who was inevitable from the first. This was William Dyce, who had spent his youth in Italy in the study of monumental painting, was already director of the new Government Schools of Design, and was consulted at the very outset by the Parliamentary Committee that preceded the Commission. To him, after the farce of the competitions, the lion's share of the work was given, and for the rest the Commissioners fell back on the ordinary, able, facile academician. Maclise was the most

able and facile; Maclise, whose private opinion it was that all the Old Masters from Madrid to Moscow might be burned and no harm done. With him were employed Messrs. Ward, Cope and Horsley. Herbert was the Commission's chief discovery. The result, it will be seen, was pretty much what would have happened if Parliament, in the first instance, had gone to the President of the Royal Academy and asked him to name painters for the various spaces to be filled. Only there had been the huge delay, cost, fuss, disappointed expectations, twisted and spoiled careers due to the indefinite competitions.

Now I venture to ask Lord Stanmore, in the light of this history, to think out what would happen if the Commission were revived to complete the unfinished programme in the Houses of Parliament. There would be the same taking of evidence, endless committees and reportings, competitions to which a number of young men would hopefully send their work. Among these young men might be one or two of promise, who would be passed over by the influential owls of the Commission. Finally the Academy would be invited officially or unofficially to advise; and after five or ten years' delay the Maclise of our time, Mr. Abbey, would be set to work. Why then put in motion so portentous a machinery to arrive at a foregone conclusion? Why not invite the President of the Academy to disclose at once the fact of Mr. Abbey's existence? It is a pretty make-believe for a mother to look for her baby behind the curtain and under the sofa and in the coal-scuttle while he is all the time crowing on the rug: it is a tedious game for a Royal Commission.



I need not say that going to the Academy for its present Wards, Copes and Horsleys is not the course I am anxious to see Lord Stanmore adopt. I only point out that it is a short cut preferable to reappointing a Commission to 'inquire and report whether advantage may not be taken of the rebuilding of our Palace at Westminster . . . for the purpose of promoting and encouraging the fine arts in our United Kingdom.' I have not space to develop an alternative, and must return to the subject. But I will add a word on Lord Rosebery's proposal that a sum should yearly be allowed by the Treasury for commissioning portraits of great men for the National Portrait Gallery. It is a plausible scheme, but in practice would probably degenerate into a second Chantrey Fund. Our great men do, as a rule, get painted, and it is not in the least necessary that the portrait should be in one particular gallery. For the purposes of history a photograph of the portrait, supplemented by photographs of the man are sufficient. If at any time a portrait-monument of any one great man is wanted it is best that it should be commissioned singly. Perpetual machinery means secretaries, offices, jobbery and embarrassing collections of pictures for which wall-space must be found.

1901

## II

The end of the season has come, and 'closed' a whole list of subjects that I wished to say a word about. But when there is the slightest prospect of getting something done rather than merely talked about, I prefer to use my occasional appearances in

print in aid of such schemes. I therefore turn to the subject that Lord Stanmore, with admirable persistency, has once more raised in the House of Lords, namely the fact that the scheme for the decoration of that building by paintings and sculpture initiated in 1841 has been so long at a standstill.

Just three years ago, when Lord Stanmore raised the question for the first time, I ventured to point out the dangers of reviving, as he proposed, the old Commission. After five years, one painting had been secured, the best artists were lost, the mediocre employed, time and money wasted, and the Commission collapsed in 1863 with its work only begun. Therefore, I say, if we are to revive the scheme at all, let us at least learn the two lessons of its older history. The first of these lessons is that the old machinery ought in no way to be revived. The story of this amateur committee-mill, which let the good men slip through and in the end turned to mediocrities, is nothing but an awful warning. Let us have done, therefore, with tedious unrealities of that sort, if we want any result worth the having, and come to business. The second and minor, but important lesson of the old proceedings is that the fresco-process employed was a mistake, as the artists told the Commission from the first. Since then a satisfactory process has been in use in France, the process employed by Puvis de Chavannes and others. By this process the painter works in the ordinary way, on canvas, so that he is not experimenting in unaccustomed and doubtful methods. The canvas is afterwards 'maroufflé,' attached to a preparation upon slate, and this bed can be ventilated behind, so that moisture does not get in.



Very well: the old way was a bad one, and Lord Stanmore has happily not persuaded the Government to revive it. After these failures I wish to propose to him a practicable scheme. First of all, if there is to be no Committee and no Government machinery for the choice of artists, evidently we must forgo any idea of a Government grant of money; that is one of the realities of the situation. But another reality of the situation is that the Government has not the slightest intention at present of allotting money for this purpose; in throwing away the bad machinery we are therefore losing nothing whatever. Our hands, on the contrary, become free, and in losing the Government control and interference that would accompany a Government grant, we may be greatly the gainers. The nation, by its representatives, in effect, says, 'We should like to have the house painted, but really, at present, we can't as a nation afford to have it done'; and under their breath, we may be pretty sure, the representatives add, 'There was such an infernal fuss with very little result when last we had the painters in, and so much of the money dribbled away over secretaries and stationery and reports and inquiries and preliminary competitions, that even if the money were there we should hesitate to take the carpets up again, for fear of the same tedious and futile proceedings.' And their attitude, in view of what happened, is quite reasonable.

Now, that being so, next time Lord Stanmore raises this question, let him take the bull by the horns, and when the First Commissioner of Works and the Leader of the Opposition have expressed their platonic sympathy with his project and polite regret that

nothing can be done, let him put it to the Government in this way. 'You say you would like to have this decoration continued, but that you can't afford to do it; will you, then, let other people do it? Will you, if I submit to you a reasonable scheme, put no obstacles in its way?'

Suppose Lord Stanmore to get this provisional assent, what is the next step he must take? His problem is a double one, to find the money and to find the artists. Now that will prove a very difficult problem if he attacks the two branches of it separately. People will not subscribe, and ought not to subscribe, unless they know who the artists are to be; therefore a vague general subscription with committee-management once more is ruled out. Nor can a list of artists be drawn up unless the money is forthcoming to pay them. But make the problem one problem, and it becomes, I believe, perfectly soluble. That is to say, look not for the money and the artists separately, but look for the patron who will back a particular artist. Not only is the problem soluble in that form, but the thing has been done. For some years now the Royal Exchange has been in process of decoration on this plan, that various City companies have contributed each a panel, painted by a chosen artist. I do not know what the precise machinery of choice has been; very likely there has been a committee-stage of some sort, because the patron was not an individual but a corporation. Suppose, instead of that, the case of individual patrons, or groups of them, admirers of particular artists, invited to employ and to pay their own man for his share in the decoration of the Houses of Parliament; on these terms the thing might be done.



Surely there are enough English gentlemen interested in such a national event to back their fancy in painting as others do in horseracing! The money put down need not be a large sum. In a new and experimental departure like this the younger men might reasonably be given the larger share, and from £200 to £500 would attract the better and more ardent.

'Experimental':—I foresee the owl-heads glowering and blinking over that word; and it is well to have it out at once over that difficulty. Anything that is done must be experimental; to play for safety by way of Commissions leads to nothing but waste of money, time and hopes, leads only to dull instead of hopeful experiments. Suppose the worst that is at all probable; suppose that out of twenty experiments ten were relatively and markedly failures; the proportion would not be so high as it was by the old method. And these failures, if definitely adjudged to be failures in twenty years' time, would be easily removable, without injury, and could then revert to their donor or his representatives: the walls of the House need not be permanently pledged. Something must be ventured always if anything is to be won, and the likely way to win is to engage very definitely someone's responsibility for the choice of the man. The most definite way to engage responsibility is to require the chooser to wager his money that his man is good enough. The sense of responsibility is not so keen in dealing with other people's money, or else it leads to choosing what will commend itself to that noxious fiction the average man but to no actual human being.

I urge Lord Stanmore, therefore, to make this sporting offer to the Government, and if it is accepted, to

prepare, in conjunction with Lord Windsor, a plan of the Houses of Parliament showing all the available spaces. Thereupon, let a section of these be set apart for a first trial. Then let him write to the secretaries of the various art societies, the Academies of England and Scotland, the British Artists and Royal Institute, the New English Art Club, the Arts and Crafts Society, the International, and invite tenders. Let the artists thereupon find their backers or the donors their artists, the price to be paid being a private matter between artist and donor or donors. If it be thought desirable to have some guarantee for the quality of the artists employed, let it be a condition that these offers come through the council of one or another of the important societies. When the offers have come in, let the different sets of spaces be assigned to the different groups of artists by consultation, by ballot, or by arbitration, and let each group come to an agreement among themselves about subjects and general treatment, so that there may be no needless discordance between picture and picture. Such a scheme would secure the utmost desirable degree of freedom and emulation, with the check upon it that some one has got to pay for his taste in each case, and to lose the honours of donorship ultimately, if the result is not good enough. The scheme, moreover, would be thoroughly in accordance with English methods of getting things done. If Lord Stanmore will look at it and get the Government to consent, I think I can promise him that it will lead to surprisingly fine results. As I think over the members of the various societies I can draw up an imaginary list that would make the Palace an interesting picture gallery, and if



everything were not first-rate no great harm would be done, for the building is not a jewel that a touch will ruin. It is a building of our time, on which painters of our time might very well have an opportunity of showing what they can do.

1904











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