

# WILDE OSCAR

MISCELLANIES

# Oscar Wilde

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*Miscellanies:*

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# Oscar Wilde

## Miscellanies

### DEDICATION: TO WALTER LEDGER

*Since these volumes are sure of a place in your marvellous library I trust that with your unrivalled knowledge of the various editions of Wilde you may not detect any grievous error whether of taste or type, of omission or commission. But should you do so you must blame the editor, and not those who so patiently assisted him, the proof readers, the printers, or the publishers. Some day, however, I look forward to your bibliography of the author, in which you will be at liberty to criticise my capacity for anything except regard and friendship for yourself. —Sincerely yours,*

**ROBERT ROSS**

*May 25, 1908.*

# INTRODUCTION

The concluding volume of any collected edition is unavoidably fragmentary and desultory. And if this particular volume is no exception to a general tendency, it presents points of view in the author's literary career which may have escaped his greatest admirers and detractors. The wide range of his knowledge and interests is more apparent than in some of his finished work.

What I believed to be only the fragment of an essay on *Historical Criticism* was already in the press, when accidentally I came across the remaining portions, in Wilde's own handwriting; it is now complete though unhappily divided in this edition.<sup>1</sup> Any doubt as to its authenticity, quite apart from the calligraphy, would vanish on reading such a characteristic passage as the following: – ‘.. For, it was in vain that the middle ages strove to guard the buried spirit of progress. When the dawn of the Greek spirit arose, the sepulchre was empty, the grave clothes laid aside. Humanity had risen from the dead.’ It was only Wilde who could contrive a literary conceit of that description; but readers will observe with different feelings, according to their temperament, that he never followed up the particular trend of thought developed in the essay. It is indeed more the work of the Berkeley Gold Medallist at Dublin, or the brilliant

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<sup>1</sup> See *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and other Prose Pieces* in this edition, page 223.

young Magdalen Demy than of the dramatist who was to write *Salomé*. The composition belongs to his Oxford days when he was the unsuccessful competitor for the Chancellor's English Essay Prize. Perhaps Magdalen, which has never forgiven herself for nurturing the author of *Ravenna*, may be felicitated on having escaped the further intolerable honour that she might have suffered by seeing crowned again with paltry academic parsley the most highly gifted of all her children in the last century. Compared with the crude criticism on *The Grosvenor Gallery* (one of the earliest of Wilde's published prose writings), *Historical Criticism* is singularly advanced and mature. Apart from his mere scholarship Wilde developed his literary and dramatic talent slowly. He told me that he was never regarded as a particularly precocious or clever youth. Indeed many old family friends and contemporary journalists maintain sturdily that the talent of his elder brother William was much more remarkable. In this opinion they are fortified, appropriately enough, by the late Clement Scott. I record this interesting view because it symbolises the familiar phenomenon that those nearest the mountain cannot appreciate its height.

The exiguous fragment of *La Sainte Courtisane* is the next unpublished work of importance. At the time of Wilde's trial the nearly completed drama was entrusted to Mrs. Levenson, who in 1897 went to Paris on purpose to restore it to the author. Wilde immediately left the manuscript in a cab. A few days later he laughingly informed me of the loss, and added that a cab was



a very proper place for it. I have explained elsewhere that he looked on his plays with disdain in his last years, though he was always full of schemes for writing others. All my attempts to recover the lost work failed. The passages here reprinted are from some odd leaves of a first draft. The play is of course not unlike *Salome*, though it was written in English. It expanded Wilde's favourite theory that when you convert some one to an idea, you lose your faith in it; the same motive runs through *Mr. W. H. Honorius the hermit*, so far as I recollect the story, falls in love with the courtesan who has come to tempt him, and he reveals to her the secret of the Love of God. She immediately becomes a Christian, and is murdered by robbers; Honorius the hermit goes back to Alexandria to pursue a life of pleasure. Two other similar plays Wilde invented in prison, *Ahab and Isabel* and *Pharaoh*; he would never write them down, though often importuned to do so. *Pharaoh* was intensely dramatic and perhaps more original than any of the group. None of these works must be confused with the manuscripts stolen from 16 Tite Street in 1895 – namely the enlarged version of *Mr. W. H.*, the completed form of *A Florentine Tragedy*, and *The Duchess of Padua* (which existing in a prompt copy was of less importance than the others); nor with *The Cardinal of Arragon*, the manuscript of which I never saw. I scarcely think it ever existed, though Wilde used to recite proposed passages for it.

In regard to printing the lectures I have felt some diffidence: the majority of them were delivered from notes, and the

same lectures were repeated in different towns in England and America. The reports of them in the papers are never trustworthy; they are often grotesque travesties, like the reports of after-dinner speeches in the London press of today. I have included only those lectures of which I possess or could obtain manuscript.

The aim of this edition has been completeness; and it is complete so far as human effort can make it; but besides the lost manuscripts there must be buried in the contemporary press many anonymous reviews which I have failed to identify. The remaining contents of this book do not call for further comment, other than a reminder that Wilde would hardly have consented to their republication. But owing to the number of anonymous works wrongly attributed to him, chiefly in America, and spurious works published in his name, I found it necessary to violate the laws of friendship by rejecting nothing I knew to be authentic. It will be seen on reference to the letters on *The Ethics of Journalism* that Wilde's name appearing at the end of poems and articles was not always a proof of authenticity even in his lifetime.

Of the few letters Wilde wrote to the press, those addressed to Whistler I have included with greater misgiving than anything else in this volume. They do not seem to me more amusing than those to which they were the intended rejoinders. But the dates are significant. Wilde was at one time always accused of plagiarising his ideas and his epigrams from Whistler, especially

those with which he decorated his lectures, the accusation being brought by Whistler himself and his various disciples. It should be noted that all the works by which Wilde is known throughout Europe were written *after* the two friends quarrelled. That Wilde derived a great deal from the older man goes without saying, just as he derived much in a greater degree from Pater, Ruskin, Arnold and Burne-Jones. Yet the tedious attempt to recognise in every jest of his some original by Whistler induces the criticism that it seems a pity the great painter did not get them off on the public before he was forestalled. Reluctance from an appeal to publicity was never a weakness in either of the men. Some of Wilde's more frequently quoted sayings were made at the Old Bailey (though their provenance is often forgotten) or on his death-bed.

As a matter of fact, the genius of the two men was entirely different. Wilde was a humourist and a humanist before everything; and his wittiest jests have neither the relentlessness nor the keenness characterising those of the clever American artist. Again, Whistler could no more have obtained the Berkeley Gold Medal for Greek, nor have written *The Importance of Being Earnest*, nor *The Soul of Man*, than Wilde, even if equipped as a painter, could ever have evinced that superb restraint distinguishing the portraits of 'Miss Alexander,' 'Carlyle,' and other masterpieces. Wilde, though it is not generally known, was something of a draughtsman in his youth. I possess several of his drawings.

A complete bibliography including all the foreign translations and American piracies would make a book of itself much larger than the present one. In order that Wilde collectors (and there are many, I believe) may know the authorised editions and authentic writings from the spurious, Mr. Stuart Mason, whose work on this edition I have already acknowledged, has supplied a list which contains every *genuine* and *authorised* English edition. This of course does not preclude the chance that some of the American editions are authorised, and that some of Wilde's genuine works even are included in the pirated editions.

I am indebted to the Editors and Proprietors of the *Queen* for leave to reproduce the article on 'English Poetesses'; to the Editor and Proprietors of the *Sunday Times* for the article entitled 'Art at Willis's Rooms'; and to Mr. William Waldorf Astor for those from the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

ROBERT ROSS

# THE TOMB OF KEATS

*(Irish Monthly, July 1877.)*

As one enters Rome from the Via Ostiensis by the Porta San Paolo, the first object that meets the eye is a marble pyramid which stands close at hand on the left.

There are many Egyptian obelisks in Rome – tall, snakelike spires of red sandstone, mottled with strange writings, which remind us of the pillars of flame which led the children of Israel through the desert away from the land of the Pharaohs; but more wonderful than these to look upon is this gaunt, wedge-shaped pyramid standing here in this Italian city, unshattered amid the ruins and wrecks of time, looking older than the Eternal City itself, like terrible impassiveness turned to stone. And so in the Middle Ages men supposed this to be the sepulchre of Remus, who was slain by his own brother at the founding of the city, so ancient and mysterious it appears; but we have now, perhaps unfortunately, more accurate information about it, and know that it is the tomb of one Caius Cestius, a Roman gentleman of small note, who died about 30 B.C.

Yet though we cannot care much for the dead man who lies in lonely state beneath it, and who is only known to the world through his sepulchre, still this pyramid will be ever dear to the eyes of all English-speaking people, because at evening its shadows fall on the tomb of one who walks with Spenser,

and Shakespeare, and Byron, and Shelley, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning in the great procession of the sweet singers of England.

For at its foot there is a green, sunny slope, known as the Old Protestant Cemetery, and on this a common-looking grave, which bears the following inscription:

This grave contains all that was mortal of a young English poet, who on his deathbed, in the bitterness of his heart, desired these words to be engraven on his tombstone:  
HERE LIES ONE WHOSE NAME WAS WRIT IN  
WATER. February 24, 1821.

And the name of the young English poet is John Keats.

Lord Houghton calls this cemetery 'one of the most beautiful spots on which the eye and heart of man can rest,' and Shelley speaks of it as making one 'in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place'; and indeed when I saw the violets and the daisies and the poppies that overgrow the tomb, I remembered how the dead poet had once told his friend that he thought the 'intensest pleasure he had received in life was in watching the growth of flowers,' and how another time, after lying a while quite still, he murmured in some strange prescience of early death, 'I feel the flowers growing over me.'

But this time-worn stone and these wildflowers are but poor memorials<sup>2</sup> of one so great as Keats; most of all, too, in this city

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<sup>2</sup> Reverently some well-meaning persons have placed a marble slab on the wall of the cemetery with a medallion-profile of Keats on it and some mediocre lines of poetry. The face is ugly, and rather hatchet-shaped, with thick sensual lips, and is utterly unlike

of Rome, which pays such honour to her dead; where popes, and emperors, and saints, and cardinals lie hidden in 'porphyry wombs,' or couched in baths of jasper and chalcedony and malachite, ablaze with precious stones and metals, and tended with continual service. For very noble is the site, and worthy of a noble monument; behind looms the grey pyramid, symbol of the world's age, and filled with memories of the sphinx, and the lotus leaf, and the glories of old Nile; in front is the Monte Testaccio, built, it is said, with the broken fragments of the vessels in which all the nations of the East and the West brought their tribute to Rome; and a little distance off, along the slope of the hill under the Aurelian wall, some tall gaunt cypresses rise, like burnt-out funeral torches, to mark the spot where Shelley's heart (that 'heart of hearts'!) lies in the earth; and, above all, the soil on which we tread is very Rome!

As I stood beside the mean grave of this divine boy, I thought of him as of a Priest of Beauty slain before his time; and the vision of Guido's St. Sebastian came before my eyes as I saw him at Genoa, a lovely brown boy, with crisp, clustering hair and red lips, bound by his evil enemies to a tree, and though pierced by

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the poet himself, who was very beautiful to look upon. 'His countenance,' says a lady who saw him at one of Hazlitt's lectures, 'lives in my mind as one of singular beauty and brightness; it had the expression as if he had been looking on some glorious sight.' And this is the idea which Severn's picture of him gives. Even Haydon's rough pen-and-ink sketch of him is better than this 'marble libel,' which I hope will soon be taken down. I think the best representation of the poet would be a coloured bust, like that of the young Rajah of Koolapoor at Florence, which is a lovely and lifelike work of art.

arrows, raising his eyes with divine, impassioned gaze towards the Eternal Beauty of the opening heavens. And thus my thoughts shaped themselves to rhyme:

## HEU MISERANDE PUER

Rid of the world's injustice and its pain,  
He rests at last beneath God's veil of blue;  
Taken from life while life and love were new  
The youngest of the martyrs here is lain,  
Fair as Sebastian and as foully slain.  
No cypress shades his grave, nor funeral yew,  
But red-lipped daisies, violets drenched with dew,  
And sleepy poppies, catch the evening rain.

O proudest heart that broke for misery!  
O saddest poet that the world hath seen!  
O sweetest singer of the English land!  
Thy name was writ in water on the sand,  
But our tears shall keep thy memory green,  
And make it flourish like a Basil-tree.

*Borne, 1877.*

*Note.* – A later version of this sonnet, under the title of 'The Grave of Keats,' is given in the *Poems*, page 157.



# THE GROSVENOR GALLERY, 1877

(*Dublin University Magazine*, July 1877.)

That 'Art is long and life is short' is a truth which every one feels, or ought to feel; yet surely those who were in London last May, and had in one week the opportunities of hearing Rubenstein play the Sonata Impassionata, of seeing Wagner conduct the Spinning-Wheel Chorus from the *Flying Dutchman*, and of studying art at the Grosvenor Gallery, have very little to complain of as regards human existence and art-pleasures.

Descriptions of music are generally, perhaps, more or less failures, for music is a matter of individual feeling, and the beauties and lessons that one draws from hearing lovely sounds are mainly personal, and depend to a large extent on one's own state of mind and culture. So leaving Rubenstein and Wagner to be celebrated by Franz Hüffer, or Mr. Haweis, or any other of our picturesque writers on music, I will describe some of the pictures now being shown in the Grosvenor Gallery.

The origin of this Gallery is as follows: About a year ago the idea occurred to Sir Coutts Lindsay of building a public gallery, in which, untrammelled by the difficulties or meannesses of 'Hanging Committees,' he could exhibit to the lovers of art the works of certain great living artists side by side: a gallery in which the student would not have to struggle through an endless monotony of mediocre works in order to reach what was worth

looking at; one in which the people of England could have the opportunity of judging of the merits of at least one great master of painting, whose pictures had been kept from public exhibition by the jealousy and ignorance of rival artists. Accordingly, last May, in New Bond Street, the Grosvenor Gallery was opened to the public.

As far as the Gallery itself is concerned, there are only three rooms, so there is no fear of our getting that terrible weariness of mind and eye which comes on after the 'Forced Marches' through ordinary picture galleries. The walls are hung with scarlet damask above a dado of dull green and gold; there are luxurious velvet couches, beautiful flowers and plants, tables of gilded and inlaid marbles, covered with Japanese china and the latest 'Minton,' globes of 'rainbow glass' like large soap-bubbles, and, in fine, everything in decoration that is lovely to look on, and in harmony with the surrounding works of art.

Burne-Jones and Holman Hunt are probably the greatest masters of colour that we have ever had in England, with the single exception of Turner, but their styles differ widely. To draw a rough distinction, Holman Hunt studies and reproduces the colours of natural objects, and deals with historical subjects, or scenes of real life, mostly from the East, touched occasionally with a certain fancifulness, as in the *Shadow of the Cross*. Burne-Jones, on the contrary, is a dreamer in the land of mythology, a seer of fairy visions, a symbolical painter. He is an imaginative colourist too, knowing that all colour is no mere delightful quality

of natural things, but a 'spirit upon them by which they become expressive to the spirit,' as Mr. Pater says. Watts's power, on the other hand, lies in his great originative and imaginative genius, and he reminds us of Æschylus or Michael Angelo in the startling vividness of his conceptions. Although these three painters differ much in aim and in result, they yet are one in their faith, and love, and reverence, the three golden keys to the gate of the House Beautiful.

On entering the West Gallery the first picture that meets the eye is Mr. Watts's *Love and Death*, a large painting, representing a marble doorway, all overgrown with white-starred jasmine and sweet brier-rose. Death, a giant form, veiled in grey draperies, is passing in with inevitable and mysterious power, breaking through all the flowers. One foot is already on the threshold, and one relentless hand is extended, while Love, a beautiful boy with lithe brown limbs and rainbow-coloured wings, all shrinking like a crumpled leaf, is trying, with vain hands, to bar the entrance. A little dove, undisturbed by the agony of the terrible conflict, waits patiently at the foot of the steps for her playmate; but will wait in vain, for though the face of Death is hidden from us, yet we can see from the terror in the boy's eyes and quivering lips, that, Medusa-like, this grey phantom turns all it looks upon to stone; and the wings of Love are rent and crushed. Except on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, there are perhaps few paintings to compare with this in intensity of strength and in marvel of conception. It is worthy to rank with Michael Angelo's

## *God Dividing the Light from the Darkness.*

Next to it are hung five pictures by Millais. Three of them are portraits of the three daughters of the Duke of Westminster, all in white dresses, with white hats and feathers; the delicacy of the colour being rather injured by the red damask background. These pictures do not possess any particular merit beyond that of being extremely good likenesses, especially the one of the Marchioness of Ormonde. Over them is hung a picture of a seamstress, pale and vacant-looking, with eyes red from tears and long watchings in the night, hemming a shirt. It is meant to illustrate Hood's familiar poem. As we look on it, a terrible contrast strikes us between this miserable pauper-seamstress and the three beautiful daughters of the richest duke in the world, which breaks through any artistic reveries by its awful vividness.

The fifth picture is a profile head of a young man with delicate aquiline nose, thoughtful oval face, and artistic, abstracted air, which will be easily recognised as a portrait of Lord Ronald Gower, who is himself known as an artist and sculptor. But no one would discern in these five pictures the genius that painted the *Home at Bethlehem* and the portrait of John Ruskin which is at Oxford.

Then come eight pictures by Alma Tadema, good examples of that accurate drawing of inanimate objects which makes his pictures so real from an antiquarian point of view, and of the sweet subtlety of colouring which gives to them a magic all their own. One represents some Roman girls bathing in a marble tank,

and the colour of the limbs in the water is very perfect indeed; a dainty attendant is tripping down a flight of steps with a bundle of towels, and in the centre a great green sphinx in bronze throws forth a shower of sparkling water for a very pretty laughing girl, who stoops gleefully beneath it. There is a delightful sense of coolness about the picture, and one can almost imagine that one hears the splash of water, and the girls' chatter. It is wonderful what a world of atmosphere and reality may be condensed into a very small space, for this picture is only about eleven by two and a half inches.

The most ambitious of these pictures is one of *Phidias Showing the Frieze of the Parthenon to his Friends*. We are supposed to be on a high scaffolding level with the frieze, and the effect of great height produced by glimpses of light between the planking of the floor is very cleverly managed. But there is a want of individuality among the connoisseurs clustered round Phidias, and the frieze itself is very inaccurately coloured. The Greek boys who are riding and leading the horses are painted Egyptian red, and the whole design is done in this red, dark blue, and black. This sombre colouring is un-Greek; the figures of these boys were undoubtedly tinted with flesh colour, like the ordinary Greek statues, and the whole tone of the colouring of the original frieze was brilliant and light; while one of its chief beauties, the reins and accoutrements of burnished metal, is quite omitted. This painter is more at home in the Greco-Roman art of the Empire and later Republic than he is in the art of the

Periclean age.

The most remarkable of Mr. Richmond's pictures exhibited here is his *Electra at the Tomb of Agamemnon*— a very magnificent subject, to which, however, justice is not done. Electra and her handmaidens are grouped gracefully around the tomb of the murdered King; but there is a want of humanity in the scene: there is no trace of that passionate Asiatic mourning for the dead to which the Greek women were so prone, and which Æschylus describes with such intensity; nor would Greek women have come to pour libations to the dead in such bright-coloured dresses as Mr. Richmond has given them; clearly this artist has not studied Æschylus' play of the *Choëphori*, in which there is an elaborate and pathetic account of this scene. The tall, twisted tree-stems, however, that form the background are fine and original in effect, and Mr. Richmond has caught exactly that peculiar opal-blue of the sky which is so remarkable in Greece; the purple orchids too, and daffodil and narcissi that are in the foreground are all flowers which I have myself seen at Argos.

Sir Coutts Lindsay sends a life-size portrait of his wife, holding a violin, which has some good points of colour and position, and four other pictures, including an exquisitely simple and quaint little picture of the *Dower House at Balcarres*, and a *Daphne* with rather questionable flesh-painting, and in whom we miss the breathlessness of flight.

I saw the blush come o'er her like a rose;

The half-reluctant crimson comes and goes;  
Her glowing limbs make pause, and she is stayed  
Wondering the issue of the words she prayed.

It is a great pity that Holman Hunt is not represented by any of his really great works, such as the *Finding of Christ in the Temple*, or *Isabella Mourning over the Pot of Basil*, both of which are fair samples of his powers. Four pictures of his are shown here: a little Italian child, painted with great love and sweetness, two street scenes in Cairo full of rich Oriental colouring, and a wonderful work called the *Afterglow in Egypt*. It represents a tall swarthy Egyptian woman, in a robe of dark and light blue, carrying a green jar on her shoulder, and a sheaf of grain on her head; around her comes fluttering a flock of beautiful doves of all colours, eager to be fed. Behind is a wide flat river, and across the river a stretch of ripe corn, through which a gaunt camel is being driven; the sun has set, and from the west comes a great wave of red light like wine poured out on the land, yet not crimson, as we see the Afterglow in Northern Europe, but a rich pink like that of a rose. As a study of colour it is superb, but it is difficult to feel a human interest in this Egyptian peasant.

Mr. Albert Moore sends some of his usual pictures of women, which as studies of drapery and colour effects are very charming. One of them, a tall maiden, in a robe of light blue clasped at the neck with a glowing sapphire, and with an orange headdress, is a very good example of the highest decorative art, and a perfect

delight in colour.

Mr. Spencer Stanhope's picture of *Eve Tempted* is one of the remarkable pictures of the Gallery. Eve, a fair woman, of surpassing loveliness, is leaning against a bank of violets, underneath the apple tree; naked, except for the rich thick folds of gilded hair which sweep down from her head like the bright rain in which Zeus came to Danae. The head is drooped a little forward as a flower droops when the dew has fallen heavily, and her eyes are dimmed with the haze that comes in moments of doubtful thought. One arm falls idly by her side; the other is raised high over her head among the branches, her delicate fingers just meeting round one of the burnished apples that glow amidst the leaves like 'golden lamps in a green night.' An amethyst-coloured serpent, with a devilish human head, is twisting round the trunk of the tree and breathes into the woman's ear a blue flame of evil counsel. At the feet of Eve bright flowers are growing, tulips, narcissi, lilies, and anemones, all painted with a loving patience that reminds us of the older Florentine masters; after whose example, too, Mr. Stanhope has used gilding for Eve's hair and for the bright fruits.

Next to it is another picture by the same artist, entitled *Love and the Maiden*. A girl has fallen asleep in a wood of olive trees, through whose branches and grey leaves we can see the glimmer of sky and sea, with a little seaport town of white houses shining in the sunlight. The olive wood is ever sacred to the Virgin Pallas, the Goddess of Wisdom; and who would have



dreamed of finding Eros hidden there? But the girl wakes up, as one wakes from sleep one knows not why, to see the face of the boy Love, who, with outstretched hands, is leaning towards her from the midst of a rhododendron's crimson blossoms. A rose-garland presses the boy's brown curls, and he is clad in a tunic of oriental colours, and delicately sensuous are his face and his bared limbs. His boyish beauty is of that peculiar type unknown in Northern Europe, but common in the Greek islands, where boys can still be found as beautiful as the Charmides of Plato. Guido's *St. Sebastian* in the Palazzo Rosso at Genoa is one of those boys, and Perugino once drew a Greek Ganymede for his native town, but the painter who most shows the influence of this type is Correggio, whose lily-bearer in the Cathedral at Parma, and whose wild-eyed, open-mouthed St. Johns in the 'Incoronata Madonna' of St. Giovanni Evangelista, are the best examples in art of the bloom and vitality and radiance of this adolescent beauty. And so there is extreme loveliness in this figure of Love by Mr. Stanhope, and the whole picture is full of grace, though there is, perhaps, too great a luxuriance of colour, and it would have been a relief had the girl been dressed in pure white.

Mr. Frederick Burton, of whom all Irishmen are so justly proud, is represented by a fine water-colour portrait of Mrs. George Smith; one would almost believe it to be in oils, so great is the lustre on this lady's raven-black hair, and so rich and broad and vigorous is the painting of a Japanese scarf she is wearing. Then as we turn to the east wall of the gallery we see the three

great pictures of Burne-Jones, the *Beguiling of Merlin*, the *Days of Creation*, and the *Mirror of Venus*. The version of the legend of Merlin's Beguiling that Mr. Burne-Jones has followed differs from Mr. Tennyson's and from the account in the *Morte d'Arthur*. It is taken from the *Romance of Merlin*, which tells the story in this wise:

It fell on a day that they went through the forest of Breceliande, and found a bush that was fair and high, of white hawthorn, full of flowers, and there they sat in the shadow. And Merlin fell on sleep; and when she felt that he was on sleep she arose softly, and began her enchantments, such as Merlin had taught her, and made the ring nine times, and nine times the enchantments.

...

And then he looked about him, and him seemed he was in the fairest tower of the world, and the most strong; neither of iron was it fashioned, nor steel, nor timber, nor of stone, but of the air, without any other thing; and in sooth so strong it is that it may never be undone while the world endureth.

So runs the chronicle; and thus Mr. Burne-Jones, the 'Archimage of the esoteric unreal,' treats the subject. Stretched upon a low branch of the tree, and encircled with the glory of the white hawthorn-blossoms, half sits, half lies, the great enchanter. He is not drawn as Mr. Tennyson has described him, with the 'vast and shaggy mantle of a beard,' which youth gone out had left in ashes; smooth and clear-cut and very pale is his face; time has not seared him with wrinkles or the signs of age; one would

hardly know him to be old were it not that he seems very weary of seeking into the mysteries of the world, and that the great sadness that is born of wisdom has cast a shadow on him. But now what availeth him his wisdom or his arts? His eyes, that saw once so clear, are dim and glazed with coming death, and his white and delicate hands that wrought of old such works of marvel, hang listlessly. Vivien, a tall, lithe woman, beautiful and subtle to look on, like a snake, stands in front of him, reading the fatal spell from the enchanted book; mocking the utter helplessness of him whom once her lying tongue had called

Her lord and liege,  
Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,  
Her god, her Merlin, the one passionate love  
Of her whole life.

In her brown crisp hair is the gleam of a golden snake, and she is clad in a silken robe of dark violet that clings tightly to her limbs, more expressing than hiding them; the colour of this dress is like the colour of a purple sea-shell, broken here and there with slight gleams of silver and pink and azure; it has a strange metallic lustre like the iris-neck of the dove. Were this Mr. Burne-Jones's only work it would be enough of itself to make him rank as a great painter. The picture is full of magic; and the colour is truly a spirit dwelling on things and making them expressive to the spirit, for the delicate tones of grey, and green, and violet seem to convey to us the idea of languid sleep, and even the hawthorn-

blossoms have lost their wonted brightness, and are more like the pale moonlight to which Shelley compared them, than the sheet of summer snow we see now in our English fields.

The next picture is divided into six compartments, each representing a day in the Creation of the World, under the symbol of an angel holding a crystal globe, within which is shown the work of a day. In the first compartment stands the lonely angel of the First Day, and within the crystal ball Light is being separated from Darkness. In the fourth compartment are four angels, and the crystal glows like a heated opal, for within it the creation of the Sun, Moon, and Stars is passing; the number of the angels increases, and the colours grow more vivid till we reach the sixth compartment, which shines afar off like a rainbow. Within it are the six angels of the Creation, each holding its crystal ball; and within the crystal of the sixth angel one can see Adam's strong brown limbs and hero form, and the pale, beautiful body of Eve. At the feet also of these six winged messengers of the Creator is sitting the angel of the Seventh Day, who on a harp of gold is singing the glories of that coming day which we have not yet seen. The faces of the angels are pale and oval-shaped, in their eyes is the light of Wisdom and Love, and their lips seem as if they would speak to us; and strength and beauty are in their wings. They stand with naked feet, some on shell-strewn sands whereon tide has never washed nor storm broken, others it seems on pools of water, others on strange flowers; and their hair is like the bright glory round a saint's head.

The scene of the third picture is laid on a long green valley by the sea; eight girls, handmaidens of the Goddess of Love, are collected by the margin of a long pool of clear water, whose surface no wandering wind or flapping bird has ruffled; but the large flat leaves of the water-lily float on it undisturbed, and clustering forget-me-nots rise here and there like heaps of scattered turquoise.

In this *Mirror of Venus* each girl is reflected as in a mirror of polished steel. Some of them bend over the pool in laughing wonder at their own beauty, others, weary of shadows, are leaning back, and one girl is standing straight up; and nothing of her is reflected in the pool but a glimmer of white feet. This picture, however, has not the intense pathos and tragedy of the *Beguiling of Merlin*, nor the mystical and lovely symbolism of the *Days of the Creation*. Above these three pictures are hung five allegorical studies of figures by the same artist, all worthy of his fame.

Mr. Walter Crane, who has illustrated so many fairy tales for children, sends an ambitious work called the *Renaissance of Venus*, which in the dull colour of its 'sunless dawn,' and in its general want of all the glow and beauty and passion that one associates with this scene reminds one of Botticelli's picture of the same subject. After Mr. Swinburne's superb description of the sea-birth of the goddess in his *Hymn to Proserpine*, it is very strange to find a cultured artist of feeling producing such a vapid Venus as this. The best thing in it is the painting of an apple tree:

the time of year is spring, and the leaves have not yet come, but the tree is laden with pink and white blossoms, which stand out in beautiful relief against the pale blue of the sky, and are very true to nature.

M. Alphonse Legros sends nine pictures, and there is a natural curiosity to see the work of a gentleman who holds at Cambridge the same professorship as Mr. Ruskin does at Oxford. Four of these are studies of men's heads, done in two hours each for his pupils at the Slade Schools. There is a good deal of vigorous, rough execution about them, and they are marvels of rapid work. His portrait of Mr. Carlyle is unsatisfactory; and even in No. 79, a picture of two scarlet-robed bishops, surrounded by Spanish monks, his colour is very thin and meagre. A good bit of painting is of some metal pots in a picture called *Le Chaudronnier*.

Mr. Leslie, unfortunately, is represented only by one small work, called *Palm-blossom*. It is a picture of a perfectly lovely child that reminds one of Sir Joshua's cherubs in the National Gallery, with a mouth like two petals of a rose; the under-lip, as Rossetti says quaintly somewhere, 'sucked in, as if it strove to kiss itself.'

Then we come to the most abused pictures in the whole Exhibition – the 'colour symphonies' of the 'Great Dark Master,' Mr. Whistler, who deserves the name of 'Ὀ σκοτεινός' as much as Heraclitus ever did. Their titles do not convey much information. No. 4 is called *Nocturne in Black and Gold*, No. 6A *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*, and so on. The first of these

represents a rocket of golden rain, with green and red fires bursting in a perfectly black sky, two large black smudges on the picture standing, I believe, for a tower which is in 'Cremorne Gardens' and for a crowd of lookers-on. The other is rather prettier; a rocket is breaking in a pale blue sky over a large dark blue bridge and a blue and silver river. These pictures are certainly worth looking at for about as long as one looks at a real rocket, that is, for somewhat less than a quarter of a minute.

No. 7 is called *Arrangement in Black No. 3*, apparently some pseudonym for our greatest living actor, for out of black smudgy clouds comes looming the gaunt figure of Mr. Henry Irving, with the yellow hair and pointed beard, the ruff, short cloak, and tight hose in which he appeared as Philip II. in Tennyson's play *Queen Mary*. One hand is thrust into his breast, and his legs are stuck wide apart in a queer stiff position that Mr. Irving often adopts preparatory to one of his long, wolflike strides across the stage. The figure is life-size, and, though apparently one-armed, is so ridiculously like the original that one cannot help almost laughing when one sees it. And we may imagine that any one who had the misfortune to be shut up at night in the Grosvenor Gallery would hear this *Arrangement in Black No. 3* murmuring in the well-known Lyceum accents:

By St. James, I do protest,  
Upon the faith and honour of a Spaniard,  
I am vastly grieved to leave your Majesty.  
Simon, is supper ready?

Nos. 8 and 9 are life-size portraits of two young ladies, evidently caught in a black London fog; they look like sisters, but are not related probably, as one is a *Harmony in Amber and Black*, the other only an *Arrangement in Brown*.

Mr. Whistler, however, sends one really good picture to this exhibition, a portrait of Mr. Carlyle, which is hung in the entrance hall; the expression on the old man's face, the texture and colour of his grey hair, and the general sympathetic treatment, show Mr. Whistler<sup>3</sup> to be an artist of very great power when he likes.

There is not so much in the East Gallery that calls for notice. Mr. Leighton is unfortunately represented only by two little heads, one of an Italian girl, the other called *A Study*. There is some delicate flesh painting of red and brown in these works that reminds one of a russet apple, but of course they are no samples of this artist's great strength. There are two good portraits – one of Mrs. Burne-Jones, by Mr. Poynter. This lady has a very delicate, artistic face, reminding us, perhaps, a little of one of the angels her husband has painted. She is represented in a white dress, with a perfectly gigantic old-fashioned watch hung to her waist, drinking tea from an old blue china cup.

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<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps not generally known that there is another and older peacock ceiling in the world besides the one Mr. Whistler has done at Kensington. I was surprised lately at Ravenna to come across a mosaic ceiling done in the keynote of a peacock's tail – blue, green, purple, and gold – and with four peacocks in the four spandrels. Mr. Whistler was unaware of the existence of this ceiling at the time he did his own.



The other is a head of the Duchess of Westminster by Mr. Forbes-Robertson, who both as an actor and an artist has shown great cleverness. He has succeeded very well in reproducing the calm, beautiful profile and lustrous golden hair, but the shoulders are ungraceful, and very unlike the original. The figure of a girl leaning against a wonderful screen, looking terribly 'misunderstood,' and surrounded by any amount of artistic china and furniture, by Mrs. Louise Jopling, is worth looking at too. It is called *It Might Have Been*, and the girl is quite fit to be the heroine of any sentimental novel.

The two largest contributors to this gallery are Mr. Ferdinand Heilbuth and Mr. James Tissot. The first of these two artists sends some delightful pictures from Rome, two of which are particularly pleasing. One is of an old Cardinal in the Imperial scarlet of the Cæsars meeting a body of young Italian boys in purple soutanes, students evidently in some religious college, near the Church of St. John Lateran. One of the boys is being presented to the Cardinal, and looks very nervous under the operation; the rest gaze in wonder at the old man in his beautiful dress. The other picture is a view in the gardens of the Villa Borghese; a Cardinal has sat down on a marble seat in the shade of the trees, and is suspending his meditation for a moment to smile at a pretty child to whom a French *bonne* is pointing out the gorgeously dressed old gentleman; a flunkey in attendance on the Cardinal looks superciliously on.

Nearly all of Mr. Tissot's pictures are deficient in feeling

and depth; his young ladies are too fashionably over-dressed to interest the artistic eye, and he has a hard unscrupulousness in painting uninteresting objects in an uninteresting way. There is some good colour and drawing, however, in his painting of a withered chestnut tree, with the autumn sun glowing through the yellow leaves, in a picnic scene, No. 23; the remainder of the picture being something in the photographic style of Frith.

What a gap in art there is between such a picture as the *Banquet of the Civic Guard* in Holland, with its beautiful grouping of noble-looking men, its exquisite Venetian glass aglow with light and wine, and Mr. Tissot's over-dressed, common-looking people, and ugly, painfully accurate representation of modern soda-water bottles!

Mr. Tissot's *Widower*, however, shines in qualities which his other pictures lack; it is full of depth and suggestiveness; the grasses and wild, luxuriant growth of the foreground are a revel of natural life.

We must notice besides in this gallery Mr. Watts's two powerful portraits of Mr. Burne-Jones and Lady Lindsay.

To get to the Water-Colour Room we pass through a small sculpture gallery, which contains some busts of interest, and a pretty terra-cotta figure of a young sailor, by Count Gleichen, entitled *Cheeky*, but it is not remarkable in any way, and contrasts very unfavourably with the Exhibition of Sculpture at the Royal Academy, in which are three really fine works of art – Mr. Leighton's *Man Struggling with a Snake*, which may be thought

worthy of being looked on side by side with the Laocoon of the Vatican, and Lord Ronald Gower's two statues, one of a dying French Guardsman at the Battle of Waterloo, the other of Marie Antoinette being led to execution with bound hands, Queenlike and noble to the last.

The collection of water-colours is mediocre; there is a good effect of Mr. Poynter's, the east wind seen from a high cliff sweeping down on the sea like the black wings of some god; and some charming pictures of Fairy Land by Mr. Richard Doyle, which would make good illustrations for one of Mr. Allingham's Fairy-Poems, but the *tout-ensemble* is poor.

Taking a general view of the works exhibited here, we see that this dull land of England, with its short summer, its dreary rains and fogs, its mining districts and factories, and vile deification of machinery, has yet produced very great masters of art, men with a subtle sense and love of what is beautiful, original, and noble in imagination.

Nor are the art-treasures of this country at all exhausted by this Exhibition; there are very many great pictures by living artists hidden away in different places, which those of us who are yet boys have never seen, and which our elders must wish to see again.

Holman Hunt has done better work than the *Afterglow in Egypt*; neither Millais, Leighton, nor Poynter has sent any of the pictures on which his fame rests; neither Burne-Jones nor Watts shows us here all the glories of his art; and the name of that

strange genius who wrote the *Vision of Love revealed in Sleep*, and the names of Dante Rossetti and of the Marchioness of Waterford, cannot be found in the catalogue. And so it is to be hoped that this is not the only exhibition of paintings that we shall see in the Grosvenor Gallery; and Sir Coutts Lindsay, in showing us great works of art, will be most materially aiding that revival of culture and love of beauty which in great part owes its birth to Mr. Ruskin, and which Mr. Swinburne, and Mr. Pater, and Mr. Symonds, and Mr. Morris, and many others, are fostering and keeping alive, each in his own peculiar fashion.

# THE GROSVENOR GALLERY 1879

(*Saunders' Irish Daily News*, May 5, 1879.)

While the yearly exhibition of the Royal Academy may be said to present us with the general characteristics of ordinary English art at its most commonplace level, it is at the Grosvenor Gallery that we are enabled to see the highest development of the modern artistic spirit as well as what one might call its specially accentuated tendencies.

Foremost among the great works now exhibited at this gallery are Mr. Burne-Jones's *Annunciation* and his four pictures illustrating the Greek legend of Pygmalion – works of the very highest importance in our æsthetic development as illustrative of some of the more exquisite qualities of modern culture. In the first the Virgin Mary, a passionless, pale woman, with that mysterious sorrow whose meaning she was so soon to learn mirrored in her wan face, is standing, in grey drapery, by a marble fountain, in what seems the open courtyard of an empty and silent house, while through the branches of a tall olive tree, unseen by the Virgin's tear-dimmed eyes, is descending the angel Gabriel with his joyful and terrible message, not painted as Angelico loved to do, in the varied splendour of peacock-like wings and garments of gold and crimson, but somewhat sombre in colour, set with all the fine grace of nobly-fashioned drapery and exquisitely ordered design. In presence of what may be called

the mediæval spirit may be discerned both the idea and the technique of the work, and even still more so in the four pictures of the story of Pygmalion, where the sculptor is represented in dress and in looks rather as a Christian *St. Francis*, than as a pure Greek artist in the first morning tide of art, creating his own ideal, and worshipping it. For delicacy and melody of colour these pictures are beyond praise, nor can anything exceed the idyllic loveliness of Aphrodite waking the statue into sensuous life: the world above her head like a brittle globe of glass, her feet resting on a drift of the blue sky, and a choir of doves fluttering around her like a fall of white snow. Following in the same school of ideal and imaginative painting is Miss Evelyn Pickering, whose picture of *St. Catherine*, in the Dudley of some years ago, attracted such great attention. To the present gallery she has contributed a large picture of *Night and Sleep*, twin brothers floating over the world in indissoluble embrace, the one spreading the cloak of darkness, while from the other's listless hands the Leathean poppies fall in a scarlet shower. Mr. Strudwich sends a picture of *Isabella*, which realises in some measure the pathos of Keats's poem, and another of the lover in the lily garden from the Song of Solomon, both works full of delicacy of design and refinement of detail, yet essentially weak in colour, and in comparison with the splendid Giorgione-like work of Mr. Fairfax Murray, are more like the coloured drawings of the modern German school than what we properly call a painting. The last-named artist, while essentially weak in

draughtsmanship, yet possesses the higher quality of noble colour in the fullest degree.

The draped figures of men and women in his *Garland Makers*, and *Pastoral*, some wrought in that single note of colour which the earlier Florentines loved, others with all the varied richness and glow of the Venetian school, show what great results may be brought about by a youth spent in Italian cities. And finally I must notice the works contributed to this Gallery by that most powerful of all our English artists, Mr. G. F. Watts, the extraordinary width and reach of whose genius were never more illustrated than by the various pictures bearing his name which are here exhibited. His *Paolo and Francesca*, and his *Orpheus and Eurydice*, are creative visions of the very highest order of imaginative painting; marked as it is with all the splendid vigour of nobly ordered design, the last-named picture possesses qualities of colour no less great. The white body of the dying girl, drooping like a pale lily, and the clinging arms of her lover, whose strong brown limbs seem filled with all the sensuous splendour of passionate life, form a melancholy and wonderful note of colour to which the eye continually returns as indicating the motive of the conception. Yet here I would dwell rather on two pictures which show the splendid simplicity and directness of his strength, the one a portrait of himself, the other that of a little child called *Dorothy*, who has all that sweet gravity and look of candour which we like to associate with that old-fashioned name: a child with bright rippling hair, tangled like floss silk,

open brown eyes and flower-like mouth; dressed in faded claret, with little lace about the neck and throat, toned down to a delicate grey – the hands simply clasped before her. This is the picture; as truthful and lovely as any of those Brignoli children which Vandyke has painted in Genoa. Nor is his own picture of himself – styled in the catalogue merely *A Portrait*– less wonderful, especially the luminous treatment of the various shades of black as shown in the hat and cloak. It would be quite impossible, however, to give any adequate account or criticism of the work now exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery within the limits of a single notice. Richmond's noble picture of *Sleep and Death Bearing the Slain Body of Sarpedon*, and his bronze statue of the Greek athlete, are works of the very highest order of artistic excellence, but I will reserve for another occasion the qualities of his power. Mr. Whistler, whose wonderful and eccentric genius is better appreciated in France than in England, sends a very wonderful picture entitled *The Golden Girl*, a life-size study in amber, yellow and browns, of a child dancing with a skipping-rope, full of birdlike grace and exquisite motion; as well as some delightful specimens of etching (an art of which he is the consummate master), one of which, called *The Little Forge*, entirely done with the dry point, possesses extraordinary merit; nor have the philippics of the *Fors Clavigera* deterred him from exhibiting some more of his 'arrangements in colour,' one of which, called a *Harmony in Green and Gold*, I would especially mention as an extremely good example of what ships lying at



anchor on a summer evening are from the 'Impressionist point of view.'

Mr. Eugene Benson, one of the most cultured of those many Americans who seem to have found their Mecca in modern Rome, has sent a picture of *Narcissus*, a work full of the true Theocritean sympathy for the natural picturesqueness of shepherd life, and entirely delightful to all who love the peculiar qualities of Italian scenery. The shadows of the trees drifting across the grass, the crowding together of the sheep, and the sense of summer air and light which fills the picture, are full of the highest truth and beauty; and Mr. Forbes-Robertson, whose picture of Phelps as Cardinal Wolsey has just been bought by the Garrick Club, and who is himself so well known as a young actor of the very highest promise, is represented by a portrait of Mr. Hermann Vezin which is extremely clever and certainly very lifelike. Nor amongst the minor works must I omit to notice Miss Stuart-Wortley's view on the river Cherwell, taken from the walks of Magdalen College, Oxford, – a little picture marked by great sympathy for the shade and coolness of green places and for the stillness of summer waters; or Mrs. Valentine Bromley's *Misty Day*, remarkable for the excellent drawing of a breaking wave, as well as for a great delicacy of tone. Besides the Marchioness of Waterford, whose brilliant treatment of colour is so well known, and Mr. Richard Doyle, whose water-colour drawings of children and of fairy scenes are always so fresh and bright, the qualities of the Irish genius in the field of art find

an entirely adequate exponent in Mr. Wills, who as a dramatist and a painter has won himself such an honourable name. Three pictures of his are exhibited here: the *Spirit of the Shell*, which is perhaps too fanciful and vague in design; the *Nymph and Satyr*, where the little goat-footed child has all the sweet mystery and romance of the woodlands about him; and the *Parting of Ophelia and Laertes*, a work not only full of very strong drawing, especially in the modelling of the male figure, but a very splendid example of the power of subdued and reserved colour, the perfect harmony of tone being made still more subtle by the fitful play of reflected light on the polished armour.

I shall reserve for another notice the wonderful landscapes of Mr. Cecil Lawson, who has caught so much of Turner's imagination and mode of treatment, as well as a consideration of the works of Herkomer, Tissot and Legros, and others of the modern realistic school.

*Note.* — The other notice mentioned above did not appear.

# L'ENVOI

An Introduction to *Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf* by Rennell Rodd, published by J. M. Stoddart and Co., Philadelphia, 1882.

Amongst the many young men in England who are seeking along with me to continue and to perfect the English Renaissance — *jeunes guerriers du drapeau romantique*, as Gautier would have called us — there is none whose love of art is more flawless and fervent, whose artistic sense of beauty is more subtle and more delicate — none, indeed, who is dearer to myself — than the young poet whose verses I have brought with me to America; verses full of sweet sadness, and yet full of joy; for the most joyous poet is not he who sows the desolate highways of this world with the barren seed of laughter, but he who makes his sorrow most musical, this indeed being the meaning of joy in art — that incommunicable element of artistic delight which, in poetry, for instance, comes from what Keats called the ‘sensuous life of verse,’ the element of song in the singing, made so pleasurable to us by that wonder of motion which often has its origin in mere musical impulse, and in painting is to be sought for, from the subject never, but from the pictorial charm only — the scheme and symphony of the colour, the satisfying beauty of the design: so that the ultimate expression of our artistic movement in painting has been, not in the spiritual visions of the Pre-Raphaelites, for all their marvel of Greek legend and their mystery of Italian song,

but in the work of such men as Whistler and Albert Moore, who have raised design and colour to the ideal level of poetry and music. For the quality of their exquisite painting comes from the mere inventive and creative handling of line and colour, from a certain form and choice of beautiful workmanship, which, rejecting all literary reminiscence and all metaphysical idea, is in itself entirely satisfying to the æsthetic sense – is, as the Greeks would say, an end in itself; the effect of their work being like the effect given to us by music; for music is the art in which form and matter are always one – the art whose subject cannot be separated from the method of its expression; the art which most completely realises for us the artistic ideal, and is the condition to which all the other arts are constantly aspiring.

Now, this increased sense of the absolutely satisfying value of beautiful workmanship, this recognition of the primary importance of the sensuous element in art, this love of art for art's sake, is the point in which we of the younger school have made a departure from the teaching of Mr. Ruskin, – a departure definite and different and decisive.

Master indeed of the knowledge of all noble living and of the wisdom of all spiritual things will he be to us ever, seeing that it was he who by the magic of his presence and the music of his lips taught us at Oxford that enthusiasm for beauty which is the secret of Hellenism, and that desire for creation which is the secret of life, and filled some of us, at least, with the lofty and passionate ambition to go forth into far and fair lands with

some message for the nations and some mission for the world, and yet in his art criticism, his estimate of the joyous element of art, his whole method of approaching art, we are no longer with him; for the keystone to his æsthetic system is ethical always. He would judge of a picture by the amount of noble moral ideas it expresses; but to us the channels by which all noble work in painting can touch, and does touch, the soul are not those of truths of life or metaphysical truths. To him perfection of workmanship seems but the symbol of pride, and incompleteness of technical resource the image of an imagination too limitless to find within the limits of form its complete expression, or of a love too simple not to stammer in its tale. But to us the rule of art is not the rule of morals. In an ethical system, indeed, of any gentle mercy good intentions will, one is fain to fancy, have their recognition; but of those that would enter the serene House of Beauty the question that we ask is not what they had ever meant to do, but what they have done. Their pathetic intentions are of no value to us, but their realised creations only. *Pour moi je préfère les poètes qui font des vers, les médecins qui savent guérir, les peintres qui savent peindre.*

Nor, in looking at a work of art, should we be dreaming of what it symbolises, but rather loving it for what it is. Indeed, the transcendental spirit is alien to the spirit of art. The metaphysical mind of Asia may create for itself the monstrous and many-breasted idol, but to the Greek, pure artist, that work is most instinct with spiritual life which conforms most closely to the

perfect facts of physical life also. Nor, in its primary aspect, has a painting, for instance, any more spiritual message or meaning for us than a blue tile from the wall of Damascus, or a Hitzen vase. It is a beautifully coloured surface, nothing more, and affects us by no suggestion stolen from philosophy, no pathos pilfered from literature, no feeling filched from a poet, but by its own incommunicable artistic essence – by that selection of truth which we call style, and that relation of values which is the draughtsmanship of painting, by the whole quality of the workmanship, the arabesque of the design, the splendour of the colour, for these things are enough to stir the most divine and remote of the chords which make music in our soul, and colour, indeed, is of itself a mystical presence on things, and tone a kind of sentiment.

This, then – the new departure of our younger school – is the chief characteristic of Mr. Rennell Rodd's poetry; for, while there is much in his work that may interest the intellect, much that will excite the emotions, and many-cadenced chords of sweet and simple sentiment – for to those who love Art for its own sake all other things are added – yet, the effect which they pre-eminently seek to produce is purely an artistic one. Such a poem as *The Sea-King's Grave*, with all its majesty of melody as sonorous and as strong as the sea by whose pine-fringed shores it was thus nobly conceived and nobly fashioned; or the little poem that follows it, whose cunning workmanship, wrought with such an artistic sense of limitation, one might liken to the

rare chasing of the mirror that is its motive; or *In a Church*, pale flower of one of those exquisite moments when all things except the moment itself seem so curiously real, and when the old memories of forgotten days are touched and made tender, and the familiar place grows fervent and solemn suddenly with a vision of the undying beauty of the gods that died; or the scene in *Chartres Cathedral*, sombre silence brooding on vault and arch, silent people kneeling on the dust of the desolate pavement as the young priest lifts Lord Christ's body in a crystal star, and then the sudden beams of scarlet light that break through the blazoned window and smite on the carven screen, and sudden organ peals of mighty music rolling and echoing from choir to canopy, and from spire to shaft, and over all the clear glad voice of a singing boy, affecting one as a thing over-sweet, and striking just the right artistic keynote for one's emotions; or *At Lanuvium*, through the music of whose lines one seems to hear again the murmur of the Mantuan bees straying down from their own green valleys and inland streams to find what honeyed amber the sea-flowers might be hiding; or the poem written *In the Coliseum*, which gives one the same artistic joy that one gets watching a handicraftsman at his work, a goldsmith hammering out his gold into those thin plates as delicate as the petals of a yellow rose, or drawing it out into the long wires like tangled sunbeams, so perfect and precious is the mere handling of it; or the little lyric interludes that break in here and there like the singing of a thrush, and are as swift and as sure as the beating of a bird's wing, as light

and bright as the apple-blossoms that flutter fitfully down to the orchard grass after a spring shower, and look the lovelier for the rain's tears lying on their dainty veinings of pink and pearl; or the sonnets – for Mr. Rodd is one of those *qui sonnent le sonnet*, as the Ronsardists used to say – that one called *On the Border Hills*, with its fiery wonder of imagination and the strange beauty of its eighth line; or the one which tells of the sorrow of the great king for the little dead child – well, all these poems aim, as I said, at producing a purely artistic effect, and have the rare and exquisite quality that belongs to work of that kind; and I feel that the entire subordination in our æsthetic movement of all merely emotional and intellectual motives to the vital informing poetic principle is the surest sign of our strength.

But it is not enough that a work of art should conform to the æsthetic demands of the age: there should be also about it, if it is to give us any permanent delight, the impress of a distinct individuality. Whatever work we have in the nineteenth century must rest on the two poles of personality and perfection. And so in this little volume, by separating the earlier and more simple work from the work that is later and stronger and possesses increased technical power and more artistic vision, one might weave these disconnected poems, these stray and scattered threads, into one fiery-coloured strand of life, noting first a boy's mere gladness of being young, with all its simple joy in field and flower, in sunlight and in song, and then the bitterness of sudden sorrow at the ending by Death of one of



the brief and beautiful friendships of one's youth, with all those unanswered longings and questionings unsatisfied by which we vex, so uselessly, the marble face of death; the artistic contrast between the discontented incompleteness of the spirit and the complete perfection of the style that expresses it forming the chief element of the æsthetic charm of these particular poems; – and then the birth of Love, and all the wonder and the fear and the perilous delight of one on whose boyish brows the little wings of love have beaten for the first time; and the love-songs, so dainty and delicate, little swallow-flights of music, and full of such fragrance and freedom that they might all be sung in the open air and across moving water; and then autumn, coming with its choirless woods and odorous decay and ruined loveliness, Love lying dead; and the sense of the mere pity of it.

One might stop there, for from a young poet one should ask for no deeper chords of life than those that love and friendship make eternal for us; and the best poems in the volume belong clearly to a later time, a time when these real experiences become absorbed and gathered up into a form which seems from such real experiences to be the most alien and the most remote; when the simple expression of joy or sorrow suffices no longer, and lives rather in the stateliness of the cadenced metre, in the music and colour of the linked words, than in any direct utterance; lives, one might say, in the perfection of the form more than in the pathos of the feeling. And yet, after the broken music of love and the burial of love in the autumn woods, we can trace that

wandering among strange people, and in lands unknown to us, by which we try so pathetically to heal the hurts of the life we know, and that pure and passionate devotion to Art which one gets when the harsh reality of life has too suddenly wounded one, and is with discontent or sorrow marring one's youth, just as often, I think, as one gets it from any natural joy of living; and that curious intensity of vision by which, in moments of overmastering sadness and despair ungovernable, artistic things will live in one's memory with a vivid realism caught from the life which they help one to forget – an old grey tomb in Flanders with a strange legend on it, making one think how, perhaps, passion does live on after death; a necklace of blue and amber beads and a broken mirror found in a girl's grave at Rome, a marble image of a boy habited like Erôs, and with the pathetic tradition of a great king's sorrow lingering about it like a purple shadow, – over all these the tired spirit broods with that calm and certain joy that one gets when one has found something that the ages never dull and the world cannot harm; and with it comes that desire of Greek things which is often an artistic method of expressing one's desire for perfection; and that longing for the old dead days which is so modern, so incomplete, so touching, being, in a way, the inverted torch of Hope, which burns the hand it should guide; and for many things a little sadness, and for all things a great love; and lastly, in the pinewood by the sea, once more the quick and vital pulse of joyous youth leaping and laughing in every line, the frank and fearless freedom of wave

and wind waking into fire life's burnt-out ashes and into song the silent lips of pain, – how clearly one seems to see it all, the long colonnade of pines with sea and sky peeping in here and there like a flitting of silver; the open place in the green, deep heart of the wood with the little moss-grown altar to the old Italian god in it; and the flowers all about, cyclamen in the shadowy places, and the stars of the white narcissus lying like snow-flakes over the grass, where the quick, bright-eyed lizard starts by the stone, and the snake lies coiled lazily in the sun on the hot sand, and overhead the gossamer floats from the branches like thin, tremulous threads of gold, – the scene is so perfect for its motive, for surely here, if anywhere, the real gladness of life might be revealed to one's youth – the gladness that comes, not from the rejection, but from the absorption, of all passion, and is like that serene calm that dwells in the faces of the Greek statues, and which despair and sorrow cannot touch, but intensify only.

In some such way as this we could gather up these strewn and scattered petals of song into one perfect rose of life, and yet, perhaps, in so doing, we might be missing the true quality of the poems; one's real life is so often the life that one does not lead; and beautiful poems, like threads of beautiful silks, may be woven into many patterns and to suit many designs, all wonderful and all different: and romantic poetry, too, is essentially the poetry of impressions, being like that latest school of painting, the school of Whistler and Albert Moore, in its choice of situation as opposed to subject; in its dealing with the

exceptions rather than with the types of life; in its brief intensity; in what one might call its fiery-coloured momentariness, it being indeed the momentary situations of life, the momentary aspects of nature, which poetry and painting now seek to render for us. Sincerity and constancy will the artist, indeed, have always, but sincerity in art is merely that plastic perfection of execution without which a poem or a painting, however noble its sentiment or human its origin, is but wasted and unreal work, and the constancy of the artist cannot be to any definite rule or system of living, but to that principle of beauty only through which the inconstant shadows of his life are in their most fleeting moment arrested and made permanent. He will not, for instance, in intellectual matters acquiesce in that facile orthodoxy of our day which is so reasonable and so artistically uninteresting, nor yet will he desire that fiery faith of the antique time which, while it intensified, yet limited the vision; still less will he allow the calm of his culture to be marred by the discordant despair of doubt or the sadness of a sterile scepticism; for the Valley Perilous, where ignorant armies clash by night, is no resting-place meet for her to whom the gods have assigned the clear upland, the serene height, and the sunlit air, – rather will he be always curiously testing new forms of belief, tinging his nature with the sentiment that still lingers about some beautiful creeds, and searching for experience itself, and not for the fruits of experience; when he has got its secret, he will leave without regret much that was once very precious to him. ‘I am always

insincere,' says Emerson somewhere, 'as knowing that there are other moods': '*Les émotions*,' wrote Théophile Gautier once in a review of Arsène Houssaye, '*Les émotions ne se ressemblent pas, mais être ému—voilà l'important.*'

Now, this is the secret of the art of the modern romantic school, and gives one the right keynote for its apprehension; but the real quality of all work which, like Mr. Rodd's, aims, as I said, at a purely artistic effect, cannot be described in terms of intellectual criticism; it is too intangible for that. One can perhaps convey it best in terms of the other arts, and by reference to them; and, indeed, some of these poems are as iridescent and as exquisite as a lovely fragment of Venetian glass; others as delicate in perfect workmanship and as single in natural motive as an etching by Whistler is, or one of those beautiful little Greek figures which in the olive woods round Tanagra men can still find, with the faint gilding and the fading crimson not yet fled from hair and lips and raiment; and many of them seem like one of Corot's twilights just passing into music; for not merely in visible colour, but in sentiment also – which is the colour of poetry – may there be a kind of tone.

But I think that the best likeness to the quality of this young poet's work I ever saw was in the landscape by the Loire. We were staying once, he and I, at Amboise, that little village with its grey slate roofs and steep streets and gaunt, grim gateway, where the quiet cottages nestle like white pigeons into the sombre clefts of the great bastioned rock, and the stately Renaissance houses

stand silent and apart – very desolate now, but with some memory of the old days still lingering about the delicately-twisted pillars, and the carved doorways, with their grotesque animals, and laughing masks, and quaint heraldic devices, all reminding one of a people who could not think life real till they had made it fantastic. And above the village, and beyond the bend of the river, we used to go in the afternoon, and sketch from one of the big barges that bring the wine in autumn and the wood in winter down to the sea, or lie in the long grass and make plans *pour la gloire, et pour ennuyer les philistins*, or wander along the low, sedgy banks, ‘matching our reeds in sportive rivalry,’ as comrades used in the old Sicilian days; and the land was an ordinary land enough, and bare, too, when one thought of Italy, and how the oleanders were robing the hillsides by Genoa in scarlet, and the cyclamen filling with its purple every valley from Florence to Rome; for there was not much real beauty, perhaps, in it, only long, white dusty roads and straight rows of formal poplars; but, now and then, some little breaking gleam of broken light would lend to the grey field and the silent barn a secret and a mystery that were hardly their own, would transfigure for one exquisite moment the peasants passing down through the vineyard, or the shepherd watching on the hill, would tip the willows with silver and touch the river into gold; and the wonder of the effect, with the strange simplicity of the material, always seemed to me to be a little like the quality of these the verses of my friend.

# MRS. LANGTRY AS HESTER GRAZEBROOK

*(New York World, November 7, 1882.)*

It is only in the best Greek gems, on the silver coins of Syracuse, or among the marble figures of the Parthenon frieze, that one can find the ideal representation of the marvellous beauty of that face which laughed through the leaves last night as Hester Grazebrook.

Pure Greek it is, with the grave low forehead, the exquisitely arched brow; the noble chiselling of the mouth, shaped as if it were the mouthpiece of an instrument of music; the supreme and splendid curve of the cheek; the augustly pillared throat which bears it all: it is Greek, because the lines which compose it are so definite and so strong, and yet so exquisitely harmonised that the effect is one of simple loveliness purely: Greek, because its essence and its quality, as is the quality of music and of architecture, is that of beauty based on absolutely mathematical laws.

But while art remains dumb and immobile in its passionless serenity, with the beauty of this face it is different: the grey eyes lighten into blue or deepen into violet as fancy succeeds fancy; the lips become flower-like in laughter or, tremulous as a bird's wing, mould themselves at last into the strong and bitter moulds

of pain or scorn. And then motion comes, and the statue wakes into life. But the life is not the ordinary life of common days; it is life with a new value given to it, the value of art: and the charm to me of Hester Grazebrook's acting in the first scene of the play<sup>4</sup> last night was that mingling of classic grace with absolute reality which is the secret of all beautiful art, of the plastic work of the Greeks and of the pictures of Jean François Millet equally.

I do not think that the sovereignty and empire of women's beauty has at all passed away, though we may no longer go to war for them as the Greeks did for the daughter of Leda. The greatest empire still remains for them – the empire of art. And, indeed, this wonderful face, seen last night for the first time in America, has filled and permeated with the pervading image of its type the whole of our modern art in England. Last century it was the romantic type which dominated in art, the type loved by Reynolds and Gainsborough, of wonderful contrasts of colour, of exquisite and varying charm of expression, but without that definite plastic feeling which divides classic from romantic work. This type degenerated into mere facile prettiness in the hands of lesser masters, and, in protest against it, was created by the hands of the Pre-Raphaelites a new type, with its rare combination of Greek form with Florentine mysticism. But this mysticism becomes over-strained and a burden, rather than an aid to expression, and a desire for the pure Hellenic joy

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<sup>4</sup> *An Unequal Match*, by Tom Taylor, at Wallack's Theatre, New York, November 6, 1882.



and serenity came in its place; and in all our modern work, in the paintings of such men as Albert Moore and Leighton and Whistler, we can trace the influence of this single face giving fresh life and inspiration in the form of a new artistic ideal.

As regards Hester Grazebrook's dresses, the first was a dress whose grace depended entirely on the grace of the person who wore it. It was merely the simple dress of a village girl in England. The second was a lovely combination of blue and creamy lace. But the masterpiece was undoubtedly the last, a symphony in silver-grey and pink, a pure melody of colour which I feel sure Whistler would call a *Scherzo*, and take as its visible motive the moonlight wandering in silver mist through a rose-garden; unless indeed he saw this dress, in which case he would paint it and nothing else, for it is a dress such as Velasquez only could paint, and Whistler very wisely always paints those things which are within reach of Velasquez only.

The scenery was, of course, prepared in a hurry. Still, much of it was very good indeed: the first scene especially, with its graceful trees and open forge and cottage porch, though the roses were dreadfully out of tone and, besides their crudity of colour, were curiously badly grouped. The last scene was exceedingly clever and true to nature as well, being that combination of lovely scenery and execrable architecture which is so specially characteristic of a German spa. As for the drawing-room scene, I cannot regard it as in any way a success. The heavy ebony doors are entirely out of keeping with the satin panels; the silk

hangings and festoons of black and yellow are quite meaningless in their position and consequently quite ugly; the carpet is out of all colour relation with the rest of the room, and the table-cover is mauve. Still, to have decorated ever so bad a room in six days must, I suppose, be a subject of respectful wonder, though I should have fancied that Mr. Wallack had many very much better sets in his own stock.

But I am beginning to quarrel generally with most modern scene-painting. A scene is primarily a decorative background for the actors, and should always be kept subordinate, first to the players, their dress, gesture, and action; and secondly, to the fundamental principle of decorative art, which is not to imitate but to suggest nature. If the landscape is given its full realistic value, the value of the figures to which it serves as a background is impaired and often lost, and so the painted hangings of the Elizabethan age were a far more artistic, and so a far more rational form of scenery than most modern scene-painting is. From the same master-hand which designed the curtain of Madison Square Theatre I should like very much to see a good decorative landscape in scene-painting; for I have seen no open-air scene in any theatre which did not really mar the value of the actors. One must either, like Titian, make the landscape subordinate to the figures, or, like Claude, the figures subordinate to the landscape; for if we desire realistic acting we cannot have realistic scene-painting.

I need not describe, however, how the beauty of Hester

Grazebrook survived the crude roses and the mauve tablecloth triumphantly. That it is a beauty that will be appreciated to the full in America I do not doubt for a moment, for it is only countries which possess great beauty that can appreciate beauty at all. It may also influence the art of America as it has influenced the art of England, for of the rare Greek type it is the most absolutely perfect example.

The Philistine may, of course, object that to be absolutely perfect is impossible. Well, that is so: but then it is only the impossible things that are worth doing nowadays!

# WOMAN'S DRESS

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, October 14, 1884.)

Mr. Oscar Wilde, who asks us to permit him 'that most charming of all pleasures, the pleasure of answering one's critics,' sends us the following remarks: —

The 'Girl Graduate' must of course have precedence, not merely for her sex but for her sanity: her letter is extremely sensible. She makes two points: that high heels are a necessity for any lady who wishes to keep her dress clean from the Stygian mud of our streets, and that without a tight corset 'the ordinary number of petticoats and etceteras' cannot be properly or conveniently held up. Now, it is quite true that as long as the lower garments are suspended from the hips a corset is an absolute necessity; the mistake lies in not suspending all apparel from the shoulders. In the latter case a corset becomes useless, the body is left free and unconfined for respiration and motion, there is more health, and consequently more beauty. Indeed all the most ungainly and uncomfortable articles of dress that fashion has ever in her folly prescribed, not the tight corset merely, but the farthingale, the vertugadin, the hoop, the crinoline, and that modern monstrosity the so-called 'dress improver' also, all of them have owed their origin to the same error, the error of not seeing that it is from the shoulders, and from the shoulders only, that all garments should be hung.

And as regards high heels, I quite admit that some additional height to the shoe or boot is necessary if long gowns are to be worn in the street; but what I object to is that the height should be given to the heel only, and not to the sole of the foot also. The modern high-heeled boot is, in fact, merely the clog of the time of Henry VI., with the front prop left out, and its inevitable effect is to throw the body forward, to shorten the steps, and consequently to produce that want of grace which always follows want of freedom.

Why should clogs be despised? Much art has been expended on clogs. They have been made of lovely woods, and delicately inlaid with ivory, and with mother-of-pearl. A clog might be a dream of beauty, and, if not too high or too heavy, most comfortable also. But if there be any who do not like clogs, let them try some adaptation of the trouser of the Turkish lady, which is loose round the limb and tight at the ankle.

The 'Girl Graduate,' with a pathos to which I am not insensible, entreats me not to apotheosise 'that awful, befringed, beflounced, and bekilted divided skirt.' Well, I will acknowledge that the fringes, the flounces, and the kilting do certainly defeat the whole object of the dress, which is that of ease and liberty; but I regard these things as mere wicked superfluities, tragic proofs that the divided skirt is ashamed of its own division. The principle of the dress is good, and, though it is not by any means perfection, it is a step towards it.

Here I leave the 'Girl Graduate,' with much regret, for Mr.

Wentworth Huyshe. Mr. Huyshe makes the old criticism that Greek dress is unsuited to our climate, and, to me the somewhat new assertion, that the men's dress of a hundred years ago was preferable to that of the second part of the seventeenth century, which I consider to have been the exquisite period of English costume.

Now, as regards the first of these two statements, I will say, to begin with, that the warmth of apparel does not depend really on the number of garments worn, but on the material of which they are made. One of the chief faults of modern dress is that it is composed of far too many articles of clothing, most of which are of the wrong substance; but over a substratum of pure wool, such as is supplied by Dr. Jaeger under the modern German system, some modification of Greek costume is perfectly applicable to our climate, our country and our century. This important fact has already been pointed out by Mr. E. W. Godwin in his excellent, though too brief, handbook on Dress, contributed to the Health Exhibition. I call it an important fact because it makes almost any form of lovely costume perfectly practicable in our cold climate. Mr. Godwin, it is true, points out that the English ladies of the thirteenth century abandoned after some time the flowing garments of the early Renaissance in favour of a tighter mode, such as Northern Europe seems to demand. This I quite admit, and its significance; but what I contend, and what I am sure Mr. Godwin would agree with me in, is that the principles, the laws of Greek dress may be perfectly realised, even in a moderately tight

gown with sleeves: I mean the principle of suspending all apparel from the shoulders, and of relying for beauty of effect not on the stiff ready-made ornaments of the modern milliner – the bows where there should be no bows, and the flounces where there should be no flounces – but on the exquisite play of light and line that one gets from rich and rippling folds. I am not proposing any antiquarian revival of an ancient costume, but trying merely to point out the right laws of dress, laws which are dictated by art and not by archæology, by science and not by fashion; and just as the best work of art in our days is that which combines classic grace with absolute reality, so from a continuation of the Greek principles of beauty with the German principles of health will come, I feel certain, the costume of the future.

And now to the question of men's dress, or rather to Mr. Huyshe's claim of the superiority, in point of costume, of the last quarter of the eighteenth century over the second quarter of the seventeenth. The broad-brimmed hat of 1640 kept the rain of winter and the glare of summer from the face; the same cannot be said of the hat of one hundred years ago, which, with its comparatively narrow brim and high crown, was the precursor of the modern 'chimney-pot': a wide turned-down collar is a healthier thing than a strangling stock, and a short cloak much more comfortable than a sleeved overcoat, even though the latter may have had 'three capes'; a cloak is easier to put on and off, lies lightly on the shoulder in summer, and wrapped round one in winter keeps one perfectly warm. A doublet, again, is simpler

than a coat and waistcoat; instead of two garments one has one; by not being open also it protects the chest better.

Short loose trousers are in every way to be preferred to the tight knee-breeches which often impede the proper circulation of the blood; and finally, the soft leather boots which could be worn above or below the knee, are more supple, and give consequently more freedom, than the stiff Hessian which Mr. Huyshe so praises. I say nothing about the question of grace and picturesqueness, for I suppose that no one, not even Mr. Huyshe, would prefer a macaroni to a cavalier, a Lawrence to a Vandyke, or the third George to the first Charles; but for ease, warmth and comfort this seventeenth-century dress is infinitely superior to anything that came after it, and I do not think it is excelled by any preceding form of costume. I sincerely trust that we may soon see in England some national revival of it.



# MORE RADICAL IDEAS UPON DRESS REFORM

*(Pall Mall Gazette, November 11, 1884.)*

I have been much interested at reading the large amount of correspondence that has been called forth by my recent lecture on Dress. It shows me that the subject of dress reform is one that is occupying many wise and charming people, who have at heart the principles of health, freedom, and beauty in costume, and I hope that 'H. B. T.' and 'Materfamilias' will have all the real influence which their letters – excellent letters both of them – certainly deserve.

I turn first to Mr. Huyshe's second letter, and the drawing that accompanies it; but before entering into any examination of the theory contained in each, I think I should state at once that I have absolutely no idea whether this gentleman wears his hair longer short, or his cuffs back or forward, or indeed what he is like at all. I hope he consults his own comfort and wishes in everything which has to do with his dress, and is allowed to enjoy that individualism in apparel which he so eloquently claims for himself, and so foolishly tries to deny to others; but I really could not take Mr. Wentworth Huyshe's personal appearance as any intellectual basis for an investigation of the principles which should guide the costume of a nation. I am not

denying the force, or even the popularity, of the "Eave arf a brick" school of criticism, but I acknowledge it does not interest me. The gamin in the gutter may be a necessity, but the gamin in discussion is a nuisance. So I will proceed at once to the real point at issue, the value of the late eighteenth-century costume over that worn in the second quarter of the seventeenth: the relative merits, that is, of the principles contained in each. Now, as regards the eighteenth-century costume, Mr. Wentworth Huyshe acknowledges that he has had no practical experience of it at all; in fact, he makes a pathetic appeal to his friends to corroborate him in his assertion, which I do not question for a moment, that he has never been 'guilty of the eccentricity' of wearing himself the dress which he proposes for general adoption by others. There is something so naïve and so amusing about this last passage in Mr. Huyshe's letter that I am really in doubt whether I am not doing him a wrong in regarding him as having any serious, or sincere, views on the question of a possible reform in dress; still, as irrespective of any attitude of Mr. Huyshe's in the matter, the subject is in itself an interesting one, I think it is worth continuing, particularly as I have myself worn this late eighteenth-century dress many times, both in public and in private, and so may claim to have a very positive right to speak on its comfort and suitability. The particular form of the dress I wore was very similar to that given in Mr. Godwin's handbook, from a print of Northcote's, and had a certain elegance and grace about it which was very charming; still, I gave it up for these

reasons: – After a further consideration of the laws of dress I saw that a doublet is a far simpler and easier garment than a coat and waistcoat, and, if buttoned from the shoulder, far warmer also, and that tails have no place in costume, except on some Darwinian theory of heredity; from absolute experience in the matter I found that the excessive tightness of knee-breeches is not really comfortable if one wears them constantly; and, in fact, I satisfied myself that the dress is not one founded on any real principles. The broad-brimmed hat and loose cloak, which, as my object was not, of course, historical accuracy but modern ease, I had always worn with the costume in question, I have still retained, and find them most comfortable.

Well, although Mr. Huyshe has no real experience of the dress he proposes, he gives us a drawing of it, which he labels, somewhat prematurely, ‘An ideal dress.’ An ideal dress of course it is not; ‘passably picturesque,’ he says I may possibly think it; well, passably picturesque it may be, but not beautiful, certainly, simply because it is not founded on right principles, or, indeed, on any principles at all. Picturesqueness one may get in a variety of ways; ugly things that are strange, or unfamiliar to us, for instance, may be picturesque, such as a late sixteenth-century costume, or a Georgian house. Ruins, again, may be picturesque, but beautiful they never can be, because their lines are meaningless. Beauty, in fact, is to be got only from the perfection of principles; and in ‘the ideal dress’ of Mr. Huyshe there are no ideas or principles at all, much less the perfection of

either. Let us examine it, and see its faults; they are obvious to any one who desires more than a 'Fancy-dress ball' basis for costume. To begin with, the hat and boots are all wrong. Whatever one wears on the extremities, such as the feet and head, should, for the sake of comfort, be made of a soft material, and for the sake of freedom should take its shape from the way one chooses to wear it, and not from any stiff, stereotyped design of hat or boot maker. In a hat made on right principles one should be able to turn the brim up or down according as the day is dark or fair, dry or wet; but the hat brim of Mr. Huyshe's drawing is perfectly stiff, and does not give much protection to the face, or the possibility of any at all to the back of the head or the ears, in case of a cold east wind; whereas the bycocket, a hat made in accordance with the right laws, can be turned down behind and at the sides, and so give the same warmth as a hood. The crown, again, of Mr. Huyshe's hat is far too high; a high crown diminishes the stature of a small person, and in the case of any one who is tall is a great inconvenience when one is getting in and out of hansoms and railway carriages, or passing under a street awning: in no case is it of any value whatsoever, and being useless it is of course against the principles of dress.

As regards the boots, they are not quite so ugly or so uncomfortable as the hat; still they are evidently made of stiff leather, as otherwise they would fall down to the ankle, whereas the boot should be made of soft leather always, and if worn high at all must be either laced up the front or carried well over the

knee: in the latter case one combines perfect freedom for walking together with perfect protection against rain, neither of which advantages a short stiff boot will ever give one, and when one is resting in the house the long soft boot can be turned down as the boot of 1640 was. Then there is the overcoat: now, what are the right principles of an overcoat? To begin with, it should be capable of being easily put on or off, and worn over any kind of dress; consequently it should never have narrow sleeves, such as are shown in Mr. Huyshe's drawing. If an opening or slit for the arm is required it should be made quite wide, and may be protected by a flap, as in that excellent overall the modern Inverness cape; secondly, it should not be too tight, as otherwise all freedom of walking is impeded. If the young gentleman in the drawing buttons his overcoat he may succeed in being statuesque, though that I doubt very strongly, but he will never succeed in being swift; his *super-totus* is made for him on no principle whatsoever; a *super-totus*, or overall, should be capable of being worn long or short, quite loose or moderately tight, just as the wearer wishes; he should be able to have one arm free and one arm covered, or both arms free or both arms covered, just as he chooses for his convenience in riding, walking, or driving; an overall again should never be heavy, and should always be warm: lastly, it should be capable of being easily carried if one wants to take it off; in fact, its principles are those of freedom and comfort, and a cloak realises them all, just as much as an overcoat of the pattern suggested by Mr. Huyshe violates them.

The knee-breeches are of course far too tight; any one who has worn them for any length of time – any one, in fact, whose views on the subject are not purely theoretical – will agree with me there; like everything else in the dress, they are a great mistake. The substitution of the jacket for the coat and waistcoat of the period is a step in the right direction, which I am glad to see; it is, however, far too tight over the hips for any possible comfort. Whenever a jacket or doublet comes below the waist it should be slit at each side. In the seventeenth century the skirt of the jacket was sometimes laced on by points and tags, so that it could be removed at will, sometimes it was merely left open at the sides: in each case it exemplified what are always the true principles of dress, I mean freedom and adaptability to circumstances.

Finally, as regards drawings of this kind, I would point out that there is absolutely no limit at all to the amount of ‘passably picturesque’ costumes which can be either revived or invented for us; but that unless a costume is founded on principles and exemplified laws, it never can be of any real value to us in the reform of dress. This particular drawing of Mr. Huyshe’s, for instance, proves absolutely nothing, except that our grandfathers did not understand the proper laws of dress. There is not a single rule of right costume which is not violated in it, for it gives us stiffness, tightness and discomfort instead of comfort, freedom and ease.

Now here, on the other hand, is a dress which, being founded on principles, can serve us as an excellent guide and model;

it has been drawn for me, most kindly, by Mr. Godwin from the Duke of Newcastle's delightful book on horsemanship, a book which is one of our best authorities on our best era of costume. I do not of course propose it necessarily for absolute imitation; that is not the way in which one should regard it; it is not, I mean, a revival of a dead costume, but a realisation of living laws. I give it as an example of a particular application of principles which are universally right. This rationally dressed young man can turn his hat brim down if it rains, and his loose trousers and boots down if he is tired – that is, he can adapt his costume to circumstances; then he enjoys perfect freedom, the arms and legs are not made awkward or uncomfortable by the excessive tightness of narrow sleeves and knee-breeches, and the hips are left quite untrammelled, always an important point; and as regards comfort, his jacket is not too loose for warmth, nor too close for respiration; his neck is well protected without being strangled, and even his ostrich feathers, if any Philistine should object to them, are not merely dandyism, but fan him very pleasantly, I am sure, in summer, and when the weather is bad they are no doubt left at home, and his cloak taken out. *The value of the dress is simply that every separate article of it expresses a law.* My young man is consequently apparelled with ideas, while Mr. Huyshe's young man is stiffened with facts; the latter teaches one nothing; from the former one learns everything. I need hardly say that this dress is good, not because it is seventeenth century, but because it is constructed on the true principles of costume,

just as a square lintel or a pointed arch is good, not because one may be Greek and the other Gothic, but because each of them is the best method of spanning a certain-sized opening, or resisting a certain weight. The fact, however, that this dress was generally worn in England two centuries and a half ago shows at least this, that the right laws of dress have been understood and realised in our country, and so in our country may be realised and understood again. As regards the absolute beauty of this dress and its meaning, I should like to say a few words more. Mr. Wentworth Huyshe solemnly announces that 'he and those who think with him' cannot permit this question of beauty to be imported into the question of dress; that he and those who think with him take 'practical views on the subject,' and so on. Well, I will not enter here into a discussion as to how far any one who does not take beauty and the value of beauty into account can claim to be practical at all. The word practical is nearly always the last refuge of the uncivilised. Of all misused words it is the most evilly treated. But what I want to point out is that beauty is essentially organic; that is, it comes, not from without, but from within, not from any added prettiness, but from the perfection of its own being; and that consequently, as the body is beautiful, so all apparel that rightly clothes it must be beautiful also in its construction and in its lines.

I have no more desire to define ugliness than I have daring to define beauty; but still I would like to remind those who mock at beauty as being an unpractical thing of this fact, that an ugly thing



is merely a thing that is badly made, or a thing that does not serve its purpose; that ugliness is want of fitness; that ugliness is failure; that ugliness is uselessness, such as ornament in the wrong place, while beauty, as some one finely said, is the purgation of all superfluities. There is a divine economy about beauty; it gives us just what is needful and no more, whereas ugliness is always extravagant; ugliness is a spendthrift and wastes its material; in fine, ugliness – and I would commend this remark to Mr. Wentworth Huyshe – ugliness, as much in costume as in anything else, is always the sign that somebody has been unpractical. So the costume of the future in England, if it is founded on the true laws of freedom, comfort, and adaptability to circumstances, cannot fail to be most beautiful also, because beauty is the sign always of the rightness of principles, the mystical seal that is set upon what is perfect, and upon what is perfect only.

As for your other correspondent, the first principle of dress that all garments should be hung from the shoulders and not from the waist seems to me to be generally approved of, although an ‘Old Sailor’ declares that no sailors or athletes ever suspend their clothes from the shoulders, but always from the hips. My own recollection of the river and running ground at Oxford – those two homes of Hellenism in our little Gothic town – is that the best runners and rowers (and my own college turned out many) wore always a tight jersey, with short drawers attached to it, the whole costume being woven in one piece. As for sailors it is true, I admit, and the bad custom seems to involve that constant

'hitching up' of the lower garments which, however popular in transpontine dramas, cannot, I think, but be considered an extremely awkward habit; and as all awkwardness comes from discomfort of some kind, I trust that this point in our sailor's dress will be looked to in the coming reform of our navy, for, in spite of all protests, I hope we are about to reform everything, from torpedoes to top-hats, and from crinolettes to cruises.

Then as regards clogs, my suggestion of them seems to have aroused a great deal of terror. Fashion in her high-heeled boots has screamed, and the dreadful word 'anachronism' has been used. Now, whatever is useful cannot be an anachronism. Such a word is applicable only to the revival of some folly; and, besides, in the England of our own day clogs are still worn in many of our manufacturing towns, such as Oldham. I fear that in Oldham they may not be dreams of beauty; in Oldham the art of inlaying them with ivory and with pearl may possibly be unknown; yet in Oldham they serve their purpose. Nor is it so long since they were worn by the upper classes of this country generally. Only a few days ago I had the pleasure of talking to a lady who remembered with affectionate regret the clogs of her girlhood; they were, according to her, not too high nor too heavy, and were provided, besides, with some kind of spring in the sole so as to make them the more supple for the foot in walking. Personally, I object to all additional height being given to a boot or shoe; it is really against the proper principles of dress, although, if any such height is to be given it should be by means of two props,

not one; but what I should prefer to see is some adaptation of the divided skirt or long and moderately loose knickerbockers. If, however, the divided skirt is to be of any positive value, it must give up all idea of 'being identical in appearance with an ordinary skirt'; it must diminish the moderate width of each of its divisions, and sacrifice its foolish frills and flounces; the moment it imitates a dress it is lost; but let it visibly announce itself as what it actually is, and it will go far towards solving a real difficulty. I feel sure that there will be found many graceful and charming girls ready to adopt a costume founded on these principles, in spite of Mr. Wentworth Huyshe's terrible threat that he will not propose to them as long as they wear it, for all charges of a want of womanly character in these forms of dress are really meaningless; every right article of apparel belongs equally to both sexes, and there is absolutely no such thing as a definitely feminine garment. One word of warning I should like to be allowed to give: The over-tunic should be made full and moderately loose; it may, if desired, be shaped more or less to the figure, but in no case should it be confined at the waist by any straight band or belt; on the contrary, it should fall from the shoulder to the knee, or below it, in fine curves and vertical lines, giving more freedom and consequently more grace. Few garments are so absolutely unbecoming as a belted tunic that reaches to the knees, a fact which I wish some of our Rosalinds would consider when they don doublet and hose; indeed, to the disregard of this artistic principle is due the ugliness, the want of

proportion, in the Bloomer costume, a costume which in other respects is sensible.

# MR. WHISTLER'S TEN O'CLOCK

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, February 21, 1885.)

Last night, at Prince's Hall, Mr. Whistler made his first public appearance as a lecturer on art, and spoke for more than an hour with really marvellous eloquence on the absolute uselessness of all lectures of the kind. Mr. Whistler began his lecture with a very pretty *aria* on prehistoric history, describing how in earlier times hunter and warrior would go forth to chase and foray, while the artist sat at home making cup and bowl for their service. Rude imitations of nature they were first, like the gourd bottle, till the sense of beauty and form developed and, in all its exquisite proportions, the first vase was fashioned. Then came a higher civilisation of architecture and armchairs, and with exquisite design, and dainty diaper, the useful things of life were made lovely; and the hunter and the warrior lay on the couch when they were tired, and, when they were thirsty, drank from the bowl, and never cared to lose the exquisite proportion of the one, or the delightful ornament of the other; and this attitude of the primitive anthropophagous Philistine formed the text of the lecture and was the attitude which Mr. Whistler entreated his audience to adopt towards art. Remembering, no doubt, many charming invitations to wonderful private views, this fashionable assemblage seemed somewhat aghast, and not a little amused, at being told that the slightest appearance among a civilised

people of any joy in beautiful things is a grave impertinence to all painters; but Mr. Whistler was relentless, and, with charming ease and much grace of manner, explained to the public that the only thing they should cultivate was ugliness, and that on their permanent stupidity rested all the hopes of art in the future.

The scene was in every way delightful; he stood there, a miniature Mephistopheles, mocking the majority! He was like a brilliant surgeon lecturing to a class composed of subjects destined ultimately for dissection, and solemnly assuring them how valuable to science their maladies were, and how absolutely uninteresting the slightest symptoms of health on their part would be. In fairness to the audience, however, I must say that they seemed extremely gratified at being rid of the dreadful responsibility of admiring anything, and nothing could have exceeded their enthusiasm when they were told by Mr. Whistler that no matter how vulgar their dresses were, or how hideous their surroundings at home, still it was possible that a great painter, if there was such a thing, could, by contemplating them in the twilight and half closing his eyes, see them under really picturesque conditions, and produce a picture which they were not to attempt to understand, much less dare to enjoy. Then there were some arrows, barbed and brilliant, shot off, with all the speed and splendour of fireworks, and the archæologists, who spend their lives in verifying the birthplaces of nobodies, and estimate the value of a work of art by its date or its decay; at the art critics who always treat a picture as if it were a novel, and

try and find out the plot; at dilettanti in general and amateurs in particular; and (*O mea culpa!*) at dress reformers most of all. 'Did not Velasquez paint crinolines? What more do you want?'

Having thus made a holocaust of humanity, Mr. Whistler turned to nature, and in a few moments convicted her of the Crystal Palace, Bank holidays, and a general overcrowding of detail, both in omnibuses and in landscapes, and then, in a passage of singular beauty, not unlike one that occurs in Corot's letters, spoke of the artistic value of dim dawns and dusks, when the mean facts of life are lost in exquisite and evanescent effects, when common things are touched with mystery and transfigured with beauty, when the warehouses become as palaces and the tall chimneys of the factory seem like campaniles in the silver air.

Finally, after making a strong protest against anybody but a painter judging of painting, and a pathetic appeal to the audience not to be lured by the æsthetic movement into having beautiful things about them, Mr. Whistler concluded his lecture with a pretty passage about Fusiyama on a fan, and made his bow to an audience which he had succeeded in completely fascinating by his wit, his brilliant paradoxes, and, at times, his real eloquence. Of course, with regard to the value of beautiful surroundings I differ entirely from Mr. Whistler. An artist is not an isolated fact; he is the resultant of a certain *milieu* and a certain *entourage*, and can no more be born of a nation that is devoid of any sense of beauty than a fig can grow from a thorn or a rose blossom from a thistle. That an artist will find beauty in ugliness, *le beau*

*dans l'horrible*, is now a commonplace of the schools, the *argot* of the atelier, but I strongly deny that charming people should be condemned to live with magenta ottomans and Albert-blue curtains in their rooms in order that some painter may observe the side-lights on the one and the values of the other. Nor do I accept the dictum that only a painter is a judge of painting. I say that only an artist is a judge of art; there is a wide difference. As long as a painter is a painter merely, he should not be allowed to talk of anything but mediums and megilp, and on those subjects should be compelled to hold his tongue; it is only when he becomes an artist that the secret laws of artistic creation are revealed to him. For there are not many arts, but one art merely – poem, picture and Parthenon, sonnet and statue – all are in their essence the same, and he who knows one knows all. But the poet is the supreme artist, for he is the master of colour and of form, and the real musician besides, and is lord over all life and all arts; and so to the poet beyond all others are these mysteries known; to Edgar Allan Poe and to Baudelaire, not to Benjamin West and Paul Delaroche. However, I should not enjoy anybody else's lectures unless in a few points I disagreed with them, and Mr. Whistler's lecture last night was, like everything that he does, a masterpiece. Not merely for its clever satire and amusing jests will it be remembered, but for the pure and perfect beauty of many of its passages – passages delivered with an earnestness which seemed to amaze those who had looked on Mr. Whistler as a master of persiflage merely, and had not known him as we



do, as a master of painting also. For that he is indeed one of the very greatest masters of painting is my opinion. And I may add that in this opinion Mr. Whistler himself entirely concurs.

# THE RELATION OF DRESS TO ART: A NOTE IN BLACK AND WHITE ON MR. WHISTLER'S LECTURE

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, February 28, 1885.)

'How can you possibly paint these ugly three-cornered hats?' asked a reckless art critic once of Sir Joshua Reynolds. 'I see light and shade in them,' answered the artist. '*Les grands coloristes*,' says Baudelaire, in a charming article on the artistic value of frock coats, '*les grands coloristes savent faire de la couleur avec un habit noir, une cravate blanche, et un fond gris.*'

'Art seeks and finds the beautiful in all times, as did her high priest Rembrandt, when he saw the picturesque grandeur of the Jews' quarter of Amsterdam, and lamented not that its inhabitants were not Greeks,' were the fine and simple words used by Mr. Whistler in one of the most valuable passages of his lecture. The most valuable, that is, to the painter: for there is nothing of which the ordinary English painter needs more to be reminded than that the true artist does not wait for life to be made picturesque for him, but sees life under picturesque conditions always – under conditions, that is to say, which are at once new and delightful. But between the attitude of the painter

towards the public and the attitude of a people towards art, there is a wide difference. That, under certain conditions of light and shade, what is ugly in fact may in its effect become beautiful, is true; and this, indeed, is the real *modernité* of art: but these conditions are exactly what we cannot be always sure of, as we stroll down Piccadilly in the glaring vulgarity of the noonday, or lounge in the park with a foolish sunset as a background. Were we able to carry our *chiaroscuro* about with us, as we do our umbrellas, all would be well; but this being impossible, I hardly think that pretty and delightful people will continue to wear a style of dress as ugly as it is useless and as meaningless as it is monstrous, even on the chance of such a master as Mr. Whistler spiritualising them into a symphony or refining them into a mist. For the arts are made for life, and not life for the arts.

Nor do I feel quite sure that Mr. Whistler has been himself always true to the dogma he seems to lay down, that a painter should paint only the dress of his age and of his actual surroundings: far be it from me to burden a butterfly with the heavy responsibility of its past: I have always been of opinion that consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative: but have we not all seen, and most of us admired, a picture from his hand of exquisite English girls strolling by an opal sea in the fantastic dresses of Japan? Has not Tite Street been thrilled with the tidings that the models of Chelsea were posing to the master, in peplums, for pastels?

Whatever comes from Mr Whistler's brush is far too perfect

in its loveliness to stand or fall by any intellectual dogmas on art, even by his own: for Beauty is justified of all her children, and cares nothing for explanations: but it is impossible to look through any collection of modern pictures in London, from Burlington House to the Grosvenor Gallery, without feeling that the professional model is ruining painting and reducing it to a condition of mere pose and *pastiche*.

Are we not all weary of him, that venerable impostor fresh from the steps of the Piazza di Spagna, who, in the leisure moments that he can spare from his customary organ, makes the round of the studios and is waited for in Holland Park? Do we not all recognise him, when, with the gay *insouciance* of his nation, he reappears on the walls of our summer exhibitions as everything that he is not, and as nothing that he is, glaring at us here as a patriarch of Canaan, here beaming as a brigand from the Abruzzi? Popular is he, this poor peripatetic professor of posing, with those whose joy it is to paint the posthumous portrait of the last philanthropist who in his lifetime had neglected to be photographed, – yet he is the sign of the decadence, the symbol of decay.

For all costumes are caricatures. The basis of Art is not the Fancy Ball. Where there is loveliness of dress, there is no dressing up. And so, were our national attire delightful in colour, and in construction simple and sincere; were dress the expression of the loveliness that it shields and of the swiftness and motion that it does not impede; did its lines break from the shoulder instead

of bulging from the waist; did the inverted wineglass cease to be the ideal of form; were these things brought about, as brought about they will be, then would painting be no longer an artificial reaction against the ugliness of life, but become, as it should be, the natural expression of life's beauty. Nor would painting merely, but all the other arts also, be the gainers by a change such as that which I propose; the gainers, I mean, through the increased atmosphere of Beauty by which the artists would be surrounded and in which they would grow up. For Art is not to be taught in Academies. It is what one looks at, not what one listens to, that makes the artist. The real schools should be the streets. There is not, for instance, a single delicate line, or delightful proportion, in the dress of the Greeks, which is not echoed exquisitely in their architecture. A nation arrayed in stove-pipe hats and dress-improvers might have built the Pantehnichon possibly, but the Parthenon never. And finally, there is this to be said: Art, it is true, can never have any other claim but her own perfection, and it may be that the artist, desiring merely to contemplate and to create, is wise in not busying himself about change in others: yet wisdom is not always the best; there are times when she sinks to the level of common-sense; and from the passionate folly of those – and there are many – who desire that Beauty shall be confined no longer to the *bric-à-brac* of the collector and the dust of the museum, but shall be, as it should be, the natural and national inheritance of all, – from this noble unwisdom, I say, who knows what new loveliness shall be given

to life, and, under these more exquisite conditions, what perfect artist born? *Le milieu se renouvelant, l'art se renouvelle.*

Speaking, however, from his own passionless pedestal, Mr. Whistler, in pointing out that the power of the painter is to be found in his power of vision, not in his cleverness of hand, has expressed a truth which needed expression, and which, coming from the lord of form and colour, cannot fail to have its influence. His lecture, the Apocrypha though it be for the people, yet remains from this time as the Bible for the painter, the masterpiece of masterpieces, the song of songs. It is true he has pronounced the panegyric of the Philistine, but I fancy Ariel praising Caliban for a jest: and, in that he has read the Commination Service over the critics, let all men thank him, the critics themselves, indeed, most of all, for he has now relieved them from the necessity of a tedious existence. Considered, again, merely as an orator, Mr. Whistler seems to me to stand almost alone. Indeed, among all our public speakers I know but few who can combine so felicitously as he does the mirth and malice of Puck with the style of the minor prophets.

# KEATS'S SONNET ON BLUE

(*Century Guild Hobby Horse*, July 1886.)

During my tour in America I happened one evening to find myself in Louisville, Kentucky. The subject I had selected to speak on was the Mission of Art in the Nineteenth Century, and in the course of my lecture I had occasion to quote Keats's Sonnet on Blue as an example of the poet's delicate sense of colour-harmonies. When my lecture was concluded there came round to see me a lady of middle age, with a sweet gentle manner and a most musical voice. She introduced herself to me as Mrs. Speed, the daughter of George Keats, and invited me to come and examine the Keats manuscripts in her possession. I spent most of the next day with her, reading the letters of Keats to her father, some of which were at that time unpublished, poring over torn yellow leaves and faded scraps of paper, and wondering at the little Dante in which Keats had written those marvellous notes on Milton. Some months afterwards, when I was in California, I received a letter from Mrs. Speed asking my acceptance of the original manuscript of the sonnet which I had quoted in my lecture. This manuscript I have had reproduced here, as it seems to me to possess much psychological interest. It shows us the conditions that preceded the perfected form, the gradual growth, not of the conception but of the expression, and the workings of that spirit of selection which is the secret of style. In the case

of poetry, as in the case of the other arts, what may appear to be simply technicalities of method are in their essence spiritual, not mechanical, and although, in all lovely work, what concerns us is the ultimate form, not the conditions that necessitate that form, yet the preference that precedes perfection, the evolution of the beauty, and the mere making of the music, have, if not their artistic value, at least their value to the artist.

It will be remembered that this sonnet was first published in 1848 by Lord Houghton in his *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*. Lord Houghton does not definitely state where he found it, but it was probably among the Keats manuscripts belonging to Mr. Charles Brown. It is evidently taken from a version later than that in my possession, as it accepts all the corrections, and makes three variations. As in my manuscript the first line is torn away, I give the sonnet here as it appears in Lord Houghton's edition.

## **ANSWER TO A SONNET ENDING THUS:**

Dark eyes are dearer far  
Than those that make the hyacinthine bell.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 'Make' is of course a mere printer's error for 'mock,' and was subsequently corrected by Lord Houghton. The sonnet as given in *The Garden of Florence* reads 'orbs' for 'those.'



## By J. H. REYNOLDS

Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven, – the domain  
Of Cynthia, – the wide palace of the sun, —  
The tent of Hesperus and all his train, —  
The bosomer of clouds, gold, grey and dun.  
Blue! 'Tis the life of waters – ocean  
And all its vassal streams: pools numberless  
May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can  
Subside if not to dark-blue nativeness.  
Blue! gentle cousin of the forest green,  
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers,  
Forget-me-not, – the blue-bell, – and, that queen  
Of secrecy, the violet: what strange powers  
Hast thou, as a mere shadow! But how great,  
When in an Eye thou art alive with fate!

*Feb. 1818.*

In the *Athenæum* of the 3rd of June 1876, appeared a letter from Mr. A. J. Horwood, stating that he had in his possession a copy of *The Garden of Florence* in which this sonnet was transcribed. Mr. Horwood, who was unaware that the sonnet had been already published by Lord Houghton, gives the transcript at length. His version reads *hue* for *life* in the first line, and *bright* for *wide* in the second, and gives the sixth line thus:

With all his tributary streams, pools numberless,

a foot too long: it also reads *to* for *of* in the ninth line. Mr. Buxton Forman is of opinion that these variations are decidedly genuine, but indicative of an earlier state of the poem than that adopted in Lord Houghton's edition. However, now that we have before us Keats's first draft of his sonnet, it is difficult to believe that the sixth line in Mr. Horwood's version is really a genuine variation. Keats may have written,

Ocean

His tributary streams, pools numberless,

and the transcript may have been carelessly made, but having got his line right in his first draft, Keats probably did not spoil it in his second. The *Athenæum* version inserts a comma after *art* in the last line, which seems to me a decided improvement, and eminently characteristic of Keats's method. I am glad to see that Mr. Buxton Forman has adopted it.

As for the corrections that Lord Houghton's version shows Keats to have made in the eighth and ninth lines of this sonnet, it is evident that they sprang from Keats's reluctance to repeat the same word in consecutive lines, except in cases where a word's music or meaning was to be emphasised. The substitution of 'its' for 'his' in the sixth line is more difficult of explanation. It was due probably to a desire on Keats's part not to mar by any echo the fine personification of Hesperus.

It may be noticed that Keats's own eyes were brown, and not blue, as stated by Mrs. Proctor to Lord Houghton. Mrs. Speed showed me a note to that effect written by Mrs. George Keats on the margin of the page in Lord Houghton's *Life* (p. 100, vol. i.), where Mrs. Proctor's description is given. Cowden Clarke made a similar correction in his *Recollections*, and in some of the later editions of Lord Houghton's book the word 'blue' is struck out. In Severn's portraits of Keats also the eyes are given as brown.

The exquisite sense of colour expressed in the ninth and tenth lines may be paralleled by

The Ocean with its vastness, its blue green,

of the sonnet to George Keats.

# THE AMERICAN INVASION

*(Court and Society Review, March 23, 1887.)*

A terrible danger is hanging over the Americans in London. Their future and their reputation this season depend entirely on the success of Buffalo Bill and Mrs. Brown-Potter. The former is certain to draw; for English people are far more interested in American barbarism than they are in American civilisation. When they sight Sandy Hook they look to their rifles and ammunition; and, after dining once at Delmonico's, start off for Colorado or California, for Montana or the Yellow Stone Park. Rocky Mountains charm them more than riotous millionaires; they have been known to prefer buffaloes to Boston. Why should they not? The cities of America are inexpressibly tedious. The Bostonians take their learning too sadly; culture with them is an accomplishment rather than an atmosphere; their 'Hub,' as they call it, is the paradise of prigs. Chicago is a sort of monster-shop, full of bustle and bores. Political life at Washington is like political life in a suburban vestry. Baltimore is amusing for a week, but Philadelphia is dreadfully provincial; and though one can dine in New York one could not dwell there. Better the Far West with its grizzly bears and its untamed cow-boys, its free open-air life and its free open-air manners, its boundless prairie and its boundless mendacity! This is what Buffalo Bill is going to bring to London; and we have no doubt that London will fully

appreciate his show.

With regard to Mrs. Brown-Potter, as acting is no longer considered absolutely essential for success on the English stage, there is really no reason why the pretty bright-eyed lady who charmed us all last June by her merry laugh and her nonchalant ways, should not – to borrow an expression from her native language – make a big boom and paint the town red. We sincerely hope she will; for, on the whole, the American invasion has done English society a great deal of good. American women are bright, clever, and wonderfully cosmopolitan. Their patriotic feelings are limited to an admiration for Niagara and a regret for the Elevated Railway; and, unlike the men, they never bore us with Bunkers Hill. They take their dresses from Paris and their manners from Piccadilly, and wear both charmingly. They have a quaint pertness, a delightful conceit, a native self-assertion. They insist on being paid compliments and have almost succeeded in making Englishmen eloquent. For our aristocracy they have an ardent admiration; they adore titles and are a permanent blow to Republican principles. In the art of amusing men they are adepts, both by nature and education, and can actually tell a story without forgetting the point – an accomplishment that is extremely rare among the women of other countries. It is true that they lack repose and that their voices are somewhat harsh and strident when they land first at Liverpool; but after a time one gets to love these pretty whirlwinds in petticoats that sweep so recklessly through society and are so agitating to all

duchesses who have daughters. There is something fascinating in their funny, exaggerated gestures and their petulant way of tossing the head. Their eyes have no magic nor mystery in them, but they challenge us for combat; and when we engage we are always worsted. Their lips seem made for laughter and yet they never grimace. As for their voices, they soon get them into tune. Some of them have been known to acquire a fashionable drawl in two seasons; and after they have been presented to Royalty they all roll their R's as vigorously as a young equerry or an old lady-in-waiting. Still, they never really lose their accent; it keeps peeping out here and there, and when they chatter together they are like a bevy of peacocks. Nothing is more amusing than to watch two American girls greeting each other in a drawing-room or in the Row. They are like children with their shrill staccato cries of wonder, their odd little exclamations. Their conversation sounds like a series of exploding crackers; they are exquisitely incoherent and use a sort of primitive, emotional language. After five minutes they are left beautifully breathless and look at each other half in amusement and half in affection. If a stolid young Englishman is fortunate enough to be introduced to them he is amazed at their extraordinary vivacity, their electric quickness of repartee, their inexhaustible store of curious catchwords. He never really understands them, for their thoughts flutter about with the sweet irresponsibility of butterflies; but he is pleased and amused and feels as if he were in an aviary. On the whole, American girls have a wonderful charm and, perhaps, the chief

secret of their charm is that they never talk seriously except about amusements. They have, however, one grave fault – their mothers. Dreary as were those old Pilgrim Fathers who left our shores more than two centuries ago to found a New England beyond seas, the Pilgrim Mothers who have returned to us in the nineteenth century are drearier still.

Here and there, of course, there are exceptions, but as a class they are either dull, dowdy or dyspeptic. It is only fair to the rising generation of America to state that they are not to blame for this. Indeed, they spare no pains at all to bring up their parents properly and to give them a suitable, if somewhat late, education. From its earliest years every American child spends most of its time in correcting the faults of its father and mother; and no one who has had the opportunity of watching an American family on the deck of an Atlantic steamer, or in the refined seclusion of a New York boarding-house, can fail to have been struck by this characteristic of their civilisation. In America the young are always ready to give to those who are older than themselves the full benefits of their inexperience. A boy of only eleven or twelve years of age will firmly but kindly point out to his father his defects of manner or temper; will never weary of warning him against extravagance, idleness, late hours, unpunctuality, and the other temptations to which the aged are so particularly exposed; and sometimes, should he fancy that he is monopolising too much of the conversation at dinner, will remind him, across the table, of the new child's adage, 'Parents should be seen, not heard.' Nor

does any mistaken idea of kindness prevent the little American girl from censuring her mother whenever it is necessary. Often, indeed, feeling that a rebuke conveyed in the presence of others is more truly efficacious than one merely whispered in the quiet of the nursery, she will call the attention of perfect strangers to her mother's general untidiness, her want of intellectual Boston conversation, immoderate love of iced water and green corn, stinginess in the matter of candy, ignorance of the usages of the best Baltimore society, bodily ailments and the like. In fact, it may be truly said that no American child is ever blind to the deficiencies of its parents, no matter how much it may love them.

Yet, somehow, this educational system has not been so successful as it deserved. In many cases, no doubt, the material with which the children had to deal was crude and incapable of real development; but the fact remains that the American mother is a tedious person. The American father is better, for he is never seen in London. He passes his life entirely in Wall Street and communicates with his family once a month by means of a telegram in cipher. The mother, however, is always with us, and, lacking the quick imitative faculty of the younger generation, remains uninteresting and provincial to the last. In spite of her, however, the American girl is always welcome. She brightens our dull dinner parties for us and makes life go pleasantly by for a season. In the race for coronets she often carries off the prize; but, once she has gained the victory, she is generous and forgives her English rivals everything, even their beauty.



Warned by the example of her mother that American women do not grow old gracefully, she tries not to grow old at all and often succeeds. She has exquisite feet and hands, is always *bien chaussée et bien gantée* and can talk brilliantly upon any subject, provided that she knows nothing about it.

Her sense of humour keeps her from the tragedy of a *grande passion*, and, as there is neither romance nor humility in her love, she makes an excellent wife. What her ultimate influence on English life will be it is difficult to estimate at present; but there can be no doubt that, of all the factors that have contributed to the social revolution of London, there are few more important, and none more delightful, than the American Invasion.

# **SERMONS IN STONES AT BLOOMSBURY: THE NEW SCULPTURE ROOM AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM**

*(Pall Mall Gazette, October 15, 1887.)*

Through the exertions of Sir Charles Newton, to whom every student of classic art should be grateful, some of the wonderful treasures so long immured in the grimy vaults of the British Museum have at last been brought to light, and the new Sculpture Room now opened to the public will amply repay the trouble of a visit, even from those to whom art is a stumbling-block and a rock of offence. For setting aside the mere beauty of form, outline and mass, the grace and loveliness of design and the delicacy of technical treatment, here we have shown to us what the Greeks and Romans thought about death; and the philosopher, the preacher, the practical man of the world, and even the Philistine himself, cannot fail to be touched by these 'sermons in stones,' with their deep significance, their fertile suggestion, their plain humanity. Common tombstones they are, most of them, the work not of famous artists but of simple handicraftsmen, only they were wrought in days when every handicraft was an art. The finest specimens, from the purely

artistic point of view, are undoubtedly the two *stelai* found at Athens. They are both the tombstones of young Greek athletes. In one the athlete is represented handing his *strigil* to his slave, in the other the athlete stands alone, *strigil* in hand. They do not belong to the greatest period of Greek art, they have not the grand style of the Phidian age, but they are beautiful for all that, and it is impossible not to be fascinated by their exquisite grace and by the treatment which is so simple in its means, so subtle in its effect. All the tombstones, however, are full of interest. Here is one of two ladies of Smyrna who were so remarkable in their day that the city voted them honorary crowns; here is a Greek doctor examining a little boy who is suffering from indigestion; here is the memorial of Xanthippus who, probably, was a martyr to gout, as he is holding in his hand the model of a foot, intended, no doubt, as a votive offering to some god. A lovely *stèle* from Rhodes gives us a family group. The husband is on horseback and is bidding farewell to his wife, who seems as if she would follow him but is being held back by a little child. The pathos of parting from those we love is the central motive of Greek funeral art. It is repeated in every possible form, and each mute marble stone seems to murmur *χαῖρε*. Roman art is different. It introduces vigorous and realistic portraiture and deals with pure family life far more frequently than Greek art does. They are very ugly, those stern-looking Roman men and women whose portraits are exhibited on their tombs, but they seem to have been loved and respected by their children and their servants. Here is

the monument of Aphrodisius and Atilia, a Roman gentleman and his wife, who died in Britain many centuries ago, and whose tombstone was found in the Thames; and close by it stands a *stèle* from Rome with the busts of an old married couple who are certainly marvellously ill-favoured. The contrast between the abstract Greek treatment of the idea of death and the Roman concrete realisation of the individuals who have died is extremely curious.

Besides the tombstones, the new Sculpture Room contains some most fascinating examples of Roman decorative art under the Emperors. The most wonderful of all, and this alone is worth a trip to Bloomsbury, is a bas-relief representing a marriage scene. Juno Pronuba is joining the hands of a handsome young noble and a very stately lady. There is all the grace of Perugino in this marble, all the grace of Raphael even. The date of it is uncertain, but the particular cut of the bridegroom's beard seems to point to the time of the Emperor Hadrian. It is clearly the work of Greek artists and is one of the most beautiful bas-reliefs in the whole Museum. There is something in it which reminds one of the music and the sweetness of Propertian verse. Then we have delightful friezes of children. One representing children playing on musical instruments might have suggested much of the plastic art of Florence. Indeed, as we view these marbles it is not difficult to see whence the Renaissance sprang and to what we owe the various forms of Renaissance art. The frieze of the Muses, each of whom wears in her hair a feather plucked

from the wings of the vanquished sirens, is extremely fine; there is a lovely little bas-relief of two cupids racing in chariots; and the frieze of recumbent Amazons has some splendid qualities of design. A frieze of children playing with the armour of the god Mars should also be mentioned. It is full of fancy and delicate humour.

On the whole, Sir Charles Newton and Mr. Murray are warmly to be congratulated on the success of the new room. We hope, however, that some more of the hidden treasures will shortly be catalogued and shown. In the vaults at present there is a very remarkable bas-relief of the marriage of Cupid and Psyche, and another representing the professional mourners weeping over the body of the dead. The fine cast of the Lion of Chæronea should also be brought up, and so should the *stele* with the marvellous portrait of the Roman slave. Economy is an excellent public virtue, but the parsimony that allows valuable works of art to remain in the grime and gloom of a damp cellar is little short of a detestable public vice.

# THE UNITY OF THE ARTS: A LECTURE AND A FIVE O'CLOCK

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, December 12, 1887.)

Last Saturday afternoon, at Willis's Rooms, Mr. Selwyn Image delivered the first of a series of four lectures on Modern Art before a select and distinguished audience. The chief point on which he dwelt was the absolute unity of all the arts and, in order to convey this idea, he framed a definition wide enough to include Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Michael Angelo's *Creation*, Paul Veronese's picture of Alexander and Darius, and Gibbon's description of the entry of Heliogabalus into Rome. All these he regarded as so many expressions of man's thoughts and emotions on fine things, conveyed through visible or audible modes; and starting from this point he approached the question of the true relation of literature to painting, always keeping in view the central motive of his creed, *Credo in unam artem multipartitam, indivisibilem*, and dwelling on resemblances rather than differences. The result at which he ultimately arrived was this: the Impressionists, with their frank artistic acceptance of form and colour as things absolutely satisfying in themselves, have produced very beautiful work, but painting has something more to give us than the mere visible aspect of things. The lofty spiritual visions of William Blake, and the marvellous romance

of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, can find their perfect expression in painting; every mood has its colour and every dream has its form. The chief quality of Mr. Image's lecture was its absolute fairness, but this was, to a certain portion of the audience, its chief defect. 'Sweet reasonableness,' said one, 'is always admirable in a spectator, but from a leader we want something more.' 'It is only an auctioneer who should admire all schools of art,' said another; while a third sighed over what he called 'the fatal sterility of the judicial mind,' and expressed a perfectly groundless fear that the Century Guild was becoming rational. For, with a courtesy and a generosity that we strongly recommend to other lecturers, Mr. Image provided refreshments for his audience after his address was over, and it was extremely interesting to listen to the various opinions expressed by the great Five-o'clock-tea School of Criticism which was largely represented. For our own part, we found Mr. Image's lecture extremely suggestive. It was sometimes difficult to understand in what exact sense he was using the word 'literary,' and we do not think that a course of drawing from the plaster cast of the *Dying Gaul* would in the slightest degree improve the ordinary art critic. The true unity of the arts is to be found, not in any resemblance of one art to another, but in the fact that to the really artistic nature all the arts have the same message and speak the same language though with different tongues. No amount of daubing on a cellar wall will make a man understand the mystery of Michael Angelo's Sybils, nor is it necessary to write a blank verse drama before

one can appreciate the beauty of *Hamlet*. It is essential that an art critic should have a nature receptive of beautiful impressions, and sufficient intuition to recognise style when he meets with it, and truth when it is shown to him; but, if he does not possess these qualities, a reckless career of water-colour painting will not give them to him, for, if from the incompetent critic all things be hidden, to the bad painter nothing shall be revealed.



# ART AT WILLIS'S ROOMS

(*Sunday Times*, December 25, 1887.)

Accepting a suggestion made by a friendly critic last week, Mr. Selwyn Image began his second lecture by explaining more fully what he meant by literary art, and pointed out the difference between an ordinary illustration to a book and such creative and original works as Michael Angelo's fresco of *The Expulsion from Eden* and Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*. In the latter case the artist treats literature as if it were life itself, and gives a new and delightful form to what seer or singer has shown us; in the former we have merely a translation which misses the music and adds no marvel. As for subject, Mr. Image protested against the studio-slang that no subject is necessary, defining subject as the thought, emotion or impression which a man desires to embody in form and colour, and admitting Mr. Whistler's fireworks as readily as Giotto's angels, and Van Huysum's roses no less than Mantegna's gods. Here, we think that Mr. Image might have pointed out more clearly the contrast between the purely pictorial subject and the subject that includes among its elements such things as historical associations or poetic memories; the contrast, in fact, between impressive art and the art that is expressive also. However, the topics he had to deal with were so varied that it was, no doubt, difficult for him to do more than suggest. From subject he passed to style, which he described as 'that masterful but restrained

individuality of manner by which one artist is differentiated from another.' The true qualities of style he found in restraint which is submission to law; simplicity which is unity of vision; and severity, for *le beau est toujours sévère*.

The realist he defined as one who aims at reproducing the external phenomena of nature, while the idealist is the man who 'imagines things of fine interest.' Yet, while he defined them he would not separate them. The true artist is a realist, for he recognises an external world of truth; an idealist, for he has selection, abstraction and the power of individualisation. To stand apart from the world of nature is fatal, but it is no less fatal merely to reproduce facts.

Art, in a word, must not content itself simply with holding the mirror up to nature, for it is a re-creation more than a reflection, and not a repetition but rather a new song. As for finish, it must not be confused with elaboration. A picture, said Mr. Image, is finished when the means of form and colour employed by the artist are adequate to convey the artist's intention; and, with this definition and a peroration suitable to the season, he concluded his interesting and intellectual lecture.

Light refreshments were then served to the audience, and the five-o'clock-tea school of criticism came very much to the front. Mr. Image's entire freedom from dogmatism and self-assertion was in some quarters rather severely commented on, and one young gentleman declared that such virtuous modesty as the lecturer's might easily become a most vicious mannerism.

Everybody, however, was extremely pleased to learn that it is no longer the duty of art to hold the mirror up to nature, and the few Philistines who dissented from this view received that most terrible of all punishments – the contempt of the highly cultured.

Mr. Image's third lecture will be delivered on January 21 and will, no doubt, be largely attended, as the subjects advertised are full of interest, and though 'sweet reasonableness' may not convert, it always charms.

# MR. MORRIS ON TAPESTRY

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, November 2, 1888.)

Yesterday evening Mr. William Morris delivered a most interesting and fascinating lecture on Carpet and Tapestry Weaving at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition now held at the New Gallery. Mr. Morris had small practical models of the two looms used, the carpet loom where the weaver sits in front of his work; the more elaborate tapestry loom where the weaver sits behind, at the back of the stuff, has his design outlined on the upright threads and sees in a mirror the shadow of the pattern and picture as it grows gradually to perfection. He spoke at much length on the question of dyes – praising madder and kermes for reds, precipitate of iron or ochre for yellows, and for blue either indigo or woad. At the back of the platform hung a lovely Flemish tapestry of the fourteenth century, and a superb Persian carpet about two hundred and fifty years old. Mr. Morris pointed out the loveliness of the carpet – its delicate suggestion of hawthorn blossom, iris and rose, its rejection of imitation and shading; and showed how it combined the great quality of decorative design – being at once clear and well defined in form: each outline exquisitely traced, each line deliberate in its intention and its beauty, and the whole effect being one of unity, of harmony, almost of mystery, the colours being so perfectly harmonised together and the little bright notes of colour being so cunningly

placed either for tone or brilliancy.

Tapestries, he said, were to the North of Europe what fresco was to the South – our climate, amongst other reasons, guiding us in our choice of material for wall-covering. England, France, and Flanders were the three great tapestry countries – Flanders with its great wool trade being the first in splendid colours and superb Gothic design. The keynote of tapestry, the secret of its loveliness, was, he told the audience, the complete filling up of every corner and square inch of surface with lovely and fanciful and suggestive design. Hence the wonder of those great Gothic tapestries where the forest trees rise in different places, one over the other, each leaf perfect in its shape and colour and decorative value, while in simple raiment of beautiful design knights and ladies wandered in rich flower gardens, and rode with hawk on wrist through long green arcades, and sat listening to lute and viol in blossom-starred bowers or by cool gracious water springs. Upon the other hand, when the Gothic feeling died away, and Boucher and others began to design, they gave us wide expanses of waste sky, elaborate perspective, posing nymphs and shallow artificial treatment. Indeed, Boucher met with scant mercy at Mr. Morris's vigorous hands and was roundly abused, and modern Gobelins, with M. Bougereau's cartoons, fared no better.

Mr. Morris told some delightful stories about old tapestry work from the days when in the Egyptian tombs the dead were laid wrapped in picture cloths, some of which are now in the South Kensington Museum, to the time of the great Turk Bajazet

who, having captured some Christian knights, would accept nothing for their ransom but the 'storied tapestries of France' and gerfalcons. As regards the use of tapestry in modern days, he pointed out that we were richer than the middle ages, and so should be better able to afford this form of lovely wall-covering, which for artistic tone is absolutely without rival. He said that the very limitation of material and form forced the imaginative designer into giving us something really beautiful and decorative. 'What is the use of setting an artist in a twelve-acre field and telling him to design a house? Give him a limited space and he is forced by its limitation to concentrate, and to fill with pure loveliness the narrow surface at his disposal.' The worker also gives to the original design a very perfect richness of detail, and the threads with their varying colours and delicate reflections convey into the work a new source of delight. Here, he said, we found perfect unity between the imaginative artist and the handicraftsman. The one was not too free, the other was not a slave. The eye of the artist saw, his brain conceived, his imagination created, but the hand of the weaver had also its opportunity for wonderful work, and did not copy what was already made, but re-created and put into a new and delightful form a design that for its perfection needed the loom to aid, and had to pass into a fresh and marvellous material before its beauty came to its real flower and blossom of absolutely right expression and artistic effect. But, said Mr. Morris in conclusion, to have great work we must be worthy of it. Commercialism, with its vile

god cheapness, its callous indifference to the worker, its innate vulgarity of temper, is our enemy. To gain anything good we must sacrifice something of our luxury – must think more of others, more of the State, the commonweal: ‘We cannot have riches and wealth both,’ he said; we must choose between them.

The lecture was listened to with great attention by a very large and distinguished audience, and Mr. Morris was loudly applauded.

The next lecture will be on Sculpture by Mr. George Simonds, and if it is half so good as Mr. Morris it will well repay a visit to the lecture-room. Mr. Crane deserves great credit for his exertions in making this exhibition what it should be, and there is no doubt but that it will exercise an important and a good influence on all the handicrafts of our country.

# SCULPTURE AT THE ARTS AND CRAFTS

*(Pall Mall Gazette, November 9, 1888.)*

The most satisfactory thing in Mr. Simonds' lecture last night was the peroration, in which he told the audience that 'an artist cannot be made.' But for this well-timed warning some deluded people might have gone away under the impression that sculpture was a sort of mechanical process within the reach of the meanest capabilities. For it must be confessed that Mr. Simonds' lecture was at once too elementary and too elaborately technical. The ordinary art student, even the ordinary studio-loafer, could not have learned anything from it, while the 'cultured person,' of whom there were many specimens present, could not but have felt a little bored at the careful and painfully clear descriptions given by the lecturer of very well-known and uninteresting methods of work. However, Mr. Simonds did his best. He described modelling in clay and wax; casting in plaster and in metal; how to enlarge and how to diminish to scale; bas-reliefs and working in the round; the various kinds of marble, their qualities and characteristics; how to reproduce in marble the plaster or clay bust; how to use the point, the drill, the wire and the chisel; and the various difficulties attending each process. He exhibited a clay bust of Mr. Walter Crane on which he did



some elementary work; a bust of Mr. Parsons; a small statuette; several moulds, and an interesting diagram of the furnace used by Balthasar Keller for casting a great equestrian statue of Louis XIV. in 1697-8.

What his lecture lacked were ideas. Of the artistic value of each material; of the correspondence between material or method and the imaginative faculty seeking to find expression; of the capacities for realism and idealism that reside in each material; of the historical and human side of the art – he said nothing. He showed the various instruments and how they are used, but he treated them entirely as instruments for the hand. He never once brought his subject into any relation either with art or with life. He explained forms of labour and forms of saving labour. He showed the various methods as they might be used by an artisan. Mr. Morris, last week, while explaining the technical processes of weaving, never forgot that he was lecturing on an art. He not merely taught his audience, but he charmed them. However, the audience gathered together last night at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition seemed very much interested; at least, they were very attentive; and Mr. Walter Crane made a short speech at the conclusion, in which he expressed his satisfaction that in spite of modern machinery sculpture had hardly altered one of its tools. For our own part we cannot help regretting the extremely commonplace character of the lecture. If a man lectures on poets he should not confine his remarks purely to grammar.

Next week Mr. Emery Walker lectures on Printing. We hope

– indeed we are sure, that he will not forget that it is an art, or rather it was an art once, and can be made so again.

# PRINTING AND PRINTERS

*(Pall Mall Gazette, November 16, 1888.)*

Nothing could have been better than Mr. Emery Walker's lecture on Letterpress Printing and Illustration, delivered last night at the Arts and Crafts. A series of most interesting specimens of old printed books and manuscripts was displayed on the screen by means of the magic-lantern, and Mr. Walker's explanations were as clear and simple as his suggestions were admirable. He began by explaining the different kinds of type and how they are made, and showed specimens of the old block-printing which preceded the movable type and is still used in China. He pointed out the intimate connection between printing and handwriting – as long as the latter was good the printers had a living model to go by, but when it decayed printing decayed also. He showed on the screen a page from Gutenberg's Bible (the first printed book, date about 1450-5) and a manuscript of Columella; a printed Livy of 1469, with the abbreviations of handwriting, and a manuscript of the History of Pompeius by Justin of 1451. The latter he regarded as an example of the beginning of the Roman type. The resemblance between the manuscripts and the printed books was most curious and suggestive. He then showed a page out of John of Spier's edition of Cicero's Letters, the first book printed at Venice, an edition of the same book by Nicholas Jansen in 1470, and a wonderful manuscript Petrarch of the

sixteenth century. He told the audience about Aldus, who was the first publisher to start cheap books, who dropped abbreviations and had his type cut by Francia *pictor et aurifex*, who was said to have taken it from Petrarch's handwriting. He exhibited a page of the copy-book of Vicentino, the great Venetian writing-master, which was greeted with a spontaneous round of applause, and made some excellent suggestions about improving modern copy-books and avoiding slanting writing.

A superb Plautus printed at Florence in 1514 for Lorenzo di Medici, Polydore Virgil's History with the fine Holbein designs, printed at Basle in 1556, and other interesting books, were also exhibited on the screen, the size, of course, being very much enlarged. He spoke of Elzevir in the seventeenth century when handwriting began to fall off, and of the English printer Caslon, and of Baskerville whose type was possibly designed by Hogarth, but is not very good. Latin, he remarked, was a better language to print than English, as the tails of the letters did not so often fall below the line. The wide spacing between lines, occasioned by the use of a lead, he pointed out, left the page in stripes and made the blanks as important as the lines. Margins should, of course, be wide except the inner margins, and the headlines often robbed the page of its beauty of design. The type used by the *Pall Mall* was, we are glad to say, rightly approved of.

With regard to illustration, the essential thing, Mr. Walker said, is to have harmony between the type and the decoration. He pleaded for true book ornament as opposed to the silly habit of

putting pictures where they are not wanted, and pointed out that mechanical harmony and artistic harmony went hand in hand. No ornament or illustration should be used in a book which cannot be printed in the same way as the type. For his warnings he produced Rogers's *Italy* with a steel-plate engraving, and a page from an American magazine which being florid, pictorial and bad, was greeted with some laughter. For examples we had a lovely Boccaccio printed at Ulm, and a page out of *La Mer des Histoires* printed in 1488. Blake and Bewick were also shown, and a page of music designed by Mr. Horne.

The lecture was listened to with great attention by a large audience, and was certainly most attractive. Mr. Walker has the keen artistic instinct that comes out of actually working in the art of which he spoke. His remarks about the pictorial character of modern illustration were well timed, and we hope that some of the publishers in the audience will take them to heart.

Next Thursday Mr. Cobden-Sanderson lectures on Bookbinding, a subject on which few men in England have higher qualifications for speaking. We are glad to see these lectures are so well attended.

# THE BEAUTIES OF BOOKBINDING

*(Pall Mall Gazette, November 23, 1888.)*

‘The beginning of art,’ said Mr. Cobden-Sanderson last night in his charming lecture on Bookbinding, ‘is man thinking about the universe.’ He desires to give expression to the joy and wonder that he feels at the marvels that surround him, and invents a form of beauty through which he utters the thought or feeling that is in him. And bookbinding ranks amongst the arts: ‘through it a man expresses himself.’

This elegant and pleasantly exaggerated exordium preceded some very practical demonstrations. ‘The apron is the banner of the future!’ exclaimed the lecturer, and he took his coat off and put his apron on. He spoke a little about old bindings for the papyrus roll, about the ivory or cedar cylinders round which old manuscripts were wound, about the stained covers and the elaborate strings, till binding in the modern sense began with literature in a folded form, with literature in pages. A binding, he pointed out, consists of two boards, originally of wood, now of mill-board, covered with leather, silk or velvet. The use of these boards is to protect the ‘world’s written wealth.’ The best material is leather, decorated with gold. The old binders used to be given forests that they might always have a supply of the skins

of wild animals; the modern binder has to content himself with importing morocco, which is far the best leather there is, and is very much to be preferred to calf.

Mr. Sanderson mentioned by name a few of the great binders such as Le Gascon, and some of the patrons of bookbinding like the Medicis, Grolier, and the wonderful women who so loved books that they lent them some of the perfume and grace of their own strange lives. However, the historical part of the lecture was very inadequate, possibly necessarily so through the limitations of time. The really elaborate part of the lecture was the practical exposition. Mr. Sanderson described and illustrated the various processes of smoothing, pressing, cutting, paring, and the like. He divided bindings into two classes, the useful and the beautiful. Among the former he reckoned paper covers such as the French use, paper boards and cloth boards, and half leather or calf bindings. Cloth he disliked as a poor material, the gold on which soon fades away. As for beautiful bindings, in them 'decoration rises into enthusiasm.' A beautiful binding is 'a homage to genius.' It has its ethical value, its spiritual effect. 'By doing good work we raise life to a higher plane,' said the lecturer, and he dwelt with loving sympathy on the fact that a book is 'sensitive by nature,' that it is made by a human being for a human being, that the design must 'come from the man himself, and express the moods of his imagination, the joy of his soul.' There must, consequently, be no division of labour. 'I make my own paste and enjoy doing it,' said Mr. Sanderson as he spoke

of the necessity for the artist doing the whole work with his own hands. But before we have really good bookbinding we must have a social revolution. As things are now, the worker diminished to a machine is the slave of the employer, and the employer bloated into a millionaire is the slave of the public, and the public is the slave of its pet god, cheapness. The bookbinder of the future is to be an educated man who appreciates literature and has freedom for his fancy and leisure for his thought.

All this is very good and sound. But in treating bookbinding as an imaginative, expressive human art we must confess that we think that Mr. Sanderson made something of an error. Bookbinding is essentially decorative, and good decoration is far more often suggested by material and mode of work than by any desire on the part of the designer to tell us of his joy in the world. Hence it comes that good decoration is always traditional. Where it is the expression of the individual it is usually either false or capricious. These handicrafts are not primarily expressive arts; they are impressive arts. If a man has any message for the world he will not deliver it in a material that always suggests and always conditions its own decoration. The beauty of bookbinding is abstract decorative beauty. It is not, in the first instance, a mode of expression for a man's soul. Indeed, the danger of all these lofty claims for handicraft is simply that they show a desire to give crafts the province and motive of arts such as poetry, painting and sculpture. Such province and such motive they have not got. Their aim is different. Between the arts that aim at



annihilating their material and the arts that aim at glorifying it there is a wide gulf.

However, it was quite right of Mr. Cobden-Sanderson to extol his own art, and though he seemed often to confuse expressive and impressive modes of beauty, he always spoke with great sincerity.

Next week Mr. Crane delivers the final lecture of this admirable 'Arts and Crafts' series and, no doubt, he will have much to say on a subject to which he has devoted the whole of his fine artistic life. For ourselves, we cannot help feeling that in bookbinding art expresses primarily not the feeling of the worker but simply itself, its own beauty, its own wonder.

# THE CLOSE OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS

*(Pall Mall Gazette, November 30, 1888.)*

Mr. Walter Crane, the President of the Society of Arts and Crafts, was greeted last night by such an enormous audience that at one time the honorary secretary became alarmed for the safety of the cartoons, and many people were unable to gain admission at all. However, order was soon established, and Mr. Cobden-Sanderson stepped up on to the platform and in a few pleasantly sententious phrases introduced Mr. Crane as one who had always been 'the advocate of great and unpopular causes,' and the aim of whose art was 'joy in widest commonalty spread.' Mr. Crane began his lecture by pointing out that Art had two fields, aspect and adaptation, and that it was primarily with the latter that the designer was concerned, his object being not literal fact but ideal beauty. With the unstudied and accidental effects of Nature the designer had nothing to do. He sought for principles and proceeded by geometric plan and abstract line and colour. Pictorial art is isolated and unrelated, and the frame is the last relic of the old connection between painting and architecture. But the designer does not desire primarily to produce a picture. He aims at making a pattern and proceeds by selection; he rejects the 'hole in the wall' idea, and will have nothing to do with the

‘false windows of a picture.’

Three things differentiate designs. First, the spirit of the artist, that mode and manner by which Dürer is separated from Flaxman, by which we recognise the soul of a man expressing itself in the form proper to it. Next comes the constructive idea, the filling of spaces with lovely work. Last is the material which, be it leather or clay, ivory or wood, often suggests and always controls the pattern. As for naturalism, we must remember that we see not with our eyes alone but with our whole faculties. Feeling and thought are part of sight. Mr. Crane then drew on a blackboard the naturalistic oak-tree of the landscape painter and the decorative oak-tree of the designer. He showed that each artist is looking for different things, and that the designer always makes appearance subordinate to decorative motive. He showed also the field daisy as it is in Nature and the same flower treated for panel decoration. The designer systematises and emphasises, chooses and rejects, and decorative work bears the same relation to naturalistic presentation that the imaginative language of the poetic drama bears to the language of real life. The decorative capabilities of the square and the circle were then shown on the board, and much was said about symmetry, alternation and radiation, which last principle Mr. Crane described as ‘the Home Rule of design, the perfection of local self-government,’ and which, he pointed out, was essentially organic, manifesting itself in the bird’s wing as well as in the Tudor vaulting of Gothic architecture. Mr. Crane then passed to the human figure, ‘that

expressive unit of design,' which contains all the principles of decoration, and exhibited a design of a nude figure with an axe couched in an architectural spandrel, a figure which he was careful to explain was, in spite of the axe, not that of Mr. Gladstone. The designer then leaving *chiaroscuro*, shading and other 'superficial facts of life' to take care of themselves, and keeping the idea of space limitation always before him, then proceeds to emphasise the beauty of his material, be it metal with its 'agreeable bossiness,' as Ruskin calls it, or leaded glass with its fine dark lines, or mosaic with its jewelled tesserae, or the loom with its crossed threads, or wood with its pleasant crispness. Much bad art comes from one art trying to borrow from another. We have sculptors who try to be pictorial, painters who aim at stage effects, weavers who seek for pictorial motives, carvers who make Life and not Art their aim, cotton printers 'who tie up bunches of artificial flowers with streamers of artificial ribbons' and fling them on the unfortunate textile.

Then came the little bit of Socialism, very sensible and very quietly put. 'How can we have fine art when the worker is condemned to monotonous and mechanical labour in the midst of dull or hideous surroundings, when cities and nature are sacrificed to commercial greed, when cheapness is the god of Life?' In old days the craftsman was a designer; he had his 'prentice days of quiet study; and even the painter began by grinding colours. Some little old ornament still lingers, here and there, on the brass rosettes of cart-horses, in the common milk-

cans of Antwerp, in the water-vessels of Italy. But even this is disappearing. 'The tourist passes by' and creates a demand that commerce satisfies in an unsatisfactory manner. We have not yet arrived at a healthy state of things. There is still the Tottenham Court Road and a threatened revival of Louis Seize furniture, and the 'popular pictorial print struggles through the meshes of the antimacassar.' Art depends on Life. We cannot get it from machines. And yet machines are bad only when they are our masters. The printing press is a machine that Art values because it obeys her. True art must have the vital energy of life itself, must take its colours from life's good or evil, must follow angels of light or angels of darkness. The art of the past is not to be copied in a servile spirit. For a new age we require a new form.

Mr. Crane's lecture was most interesting and instructive. On one point only we would differ from him. Like Mr. Morris he quite underrates the art of Japan, and looks on the Japanese as naturalists and not as decorative artists. It is true that they are often pictorial, but by the exquisite finesse of their touch, the brilliancy and beauty of their colour, their perfect knowledge of how to make a space decorative without decorating it (a point on which Mr. Crane said nothing, though it is one of the most important things in decoration), and by their keen instinct of where to place a thing, the Japanese are decorative artists of a high order. Next year somebody must lecture the Arts and Crafts on Japanese art. In the meantime, we congratulate Mr. Crane and Mr. Cobden-Sanderson on the admirable series of lectures that

has been delivered at this exhibition. Their influence for good can hardly be over-estimated. The exhibition, we are glad to hear, has been a financial success. It closes tomorrow, but is to be only the first of many to come.

# ENGLISH POETESSES

(*Queen*, December 8, 1888.)

England has given to the world one great poetess, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. By her side Mr. Swinburne would place Miss Christina Rossetti, whose New Year hymn he describes as so much the noblest of sacred poems in our language, that there is none which comes near it enough to stand second. 'It is a hymn,' he tells us, 'touched as with the fire, and bathed as in the light of sunbeams, tuned as to chords and cadences of refluent sea-music beyond reach of harp and organ, large echoes of the serene and sonorous tides of heaven.' Much as I admire Miss Rossetti's work, her subtle choice of words, her rich imagery, her artistic naïveté, wherein curious notes of strangeness and simplicity are fantastically blended together, I cannot but think that Mr. Swinburne has, with noble and natural loyalty, placed her on too lofty a pedestal. To me, she is simply a very delightful artist in poetry. This is indeed something so rare that when we meet it we cannot fail to love it, but it is not everything. Beyond it and above it are higher and more sunlit heights of song, a larger vision, and an ampler air, a music at once more passionate and more profound, a creative energy that is born of the spirit, a winged rapture that is born of the soul, a force and fervour of mere utterance that has all the wonder of the prophet, and not a little of the consecration of the priest.

Mrs. Browning is unapproachable by any woman who has ever touched lyre or blown through reed since the days of the great Æolian poetess. But Sappho, who, to the antique world was a pillar of flame, is to us but a pillar of shadow. Of her poems, burnt with other most precious work by Byzantine Emperor and by Roman Pope, only a few fragments remain. Possibly they lie mouldering in the scented darkness of an Egyptian tomb, clasped in the withered hands of some long-dead lover. Some Greek monk at Athos may even now be poring over an ancient manuscript, whose crabbed characters conceal lyric or ode by her whom the Greeks spoke of as 'the Poetess' just as they termed Homer 'the Poet,' who was to them the tenth Muse, the flower of the Graces, the child of Erôs, and the pride of Hellas – Sappho, with the sweet voice, the bright, beautiful eyes, the dark hyacinth-coloured hair. But, practically, the work of the marvellous singer of Lesbos is entirely lost to us.

We have a few rose-leaves out of her garden, that is all. Literature nowadays survives marble and bronze, but in old days, in spite of the Roman poet's noble boast, it was not so. The fragile clay vases of the Greeks still keep for us pictures of Sappho, delicately painted in black and red and white; but of her song we have only the echo of an echo.

Of all the women of history, Mrs. Browning is the only one that we could name in any possible or remote conjunction with Sappho.

Sappho was undoubtedly a far more flawless and perfect artist.



She stirred the whole antique world more than Mrs. Browning ever stirred our modern age. Never had Love such a singer. Even in the few lines that remain to us the passion seems to scorch and burn. But, as unjust Time, who has crowned her with the barren laurels of fame, has twined with them the dull poppies of oblivion, let us turn from the mere memory of a poetess to one whose song still remains to us as an imperishable glory to our literature; to her who heard the cry of the children from dark mine and crowded factory, and made England weep over its little ones; who, in the feigned sonnets from the Portuguese, sang of the spiritual mystery of Love, and of the intellectual gifts that Love brings to the soul; who had faith in all that is worthy, and enthusiasm for all that is great, and pity for all that suffers; who wrote the *Vision of Poets* and *Casa Guidi Windows* and *Aurora Leigh*.

As one, to whom I owe my love of poetry no less than my love of country, has said of her:

Still on our ears

The clear 'Excelsior' from a woman's lip

Rings out across the Apennines, although

The woman's brow lies pale and cold in death

With all the mighty marble dead in Florence.

For while great songs can stir the hearts of men,

Spreading their full vibrations through the world

In ever-widening circles till they reach

The Throne of God, and song becomes a prayer,

And prayer brings down the liberating strength  
That kindles nations to heroic deeds,  
She lives – the great-souled poetess who saw  
From Casa Guidi windows Freedom dawn  
On Italy, and gave the glory back  
In sunrise hymns to all Humanity!

She lives indeed, and not alone in the heart of Shakespeare's England, but in the heart of Dante's Italy also. To Greek literature she owed her scholarly culture, but modern Italy created her human passion for Liberty. When she crossed the Alps she became filled with a new ardour, and from that fine, eloquent mouth, that we can still see in her portraits, broke forth such a noble and majestic outburst of lyrical song as had not been heard from woman's lips for more than two thousand years. It is pleasant to think that an English poetess was to a certain extent a real factor in bringing about that unity of Italy that was Dante's dream, and if Florence drove her great singer into exile, she at least welcomed within her walls the later singer that England had sent to her.

If one were asked the chief qualities of Mrs. Browning's work, one would say, as Mr. Swinburne said of Byron's, its sincerity and its strength. Faults it, of course, possesses. 'She would rhyme moon to table,' used to be said of her in jest; and certainly no more monstrous rhymes are to be found in all literature than some of those we come across in Mrs. Browning's poems. But her ruggedness was never the result of carelessness. It was

deliberate, as her letters to Mr. Horne show very clearly. She refused to sandpaper her muse. She disliked facile smoothness and artificial polish. In her very rejection of art she was an artist. She intended to produce a certain effect by certain means, and she succeeded; and her indifference to complete assonance in rhyme often gives a splendid richness to her verse, and brings into it a pleasurable element of surprise.

In philosophy she was a Platonist, in politics an Opportunist. She attached herself to no particular party. She loved the people when they were king-like, and kings when they showed themselves to be men. Of the real value and motive of poetry she had a most exalted idea. 'Poetry,' she says, in the preface of one of her volumes, 'has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing. There has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry, nor leisure for the hour of the poet. I have done my work so far, not as mere hand and head work apart from the personal being, but as the completest expression of that being to which I could attain.'

It certainly is her completest expression, and through it she realises her fullest perfection. 'The poet,' she says elsewhere, 'is at once richer and poorer than he used to be; he wears better broadcloth, but speaks no more oracles.' These words give us the keynote to her view of the poet's mission. He was to utter Divine oracles, to be at once inspired prophet and holy priest; and as such we may, I think, without exaggeration, conceive her. She

was a Sibyl delivering a message to the world, sometimes through stammering lips, and once at least with blinded eyes, yet always with the true fire and fervour of lofty and unshaken faith, always with the great raptures of a spiritual nature, the high ardours of an impassioned soul. As we read her best poems we feel that, though Apollo's shrine be empty and the bronze tripod overthrown, and the vale of Delphi desolate, still the Pythia is not dead. In our own age she has sung for us, and this land gave her new birth. Indeed, Mrs. Browning is the wisest of the Sibyls, wiser even than that mighty figure whom Michael Angelo has painted on the roof of the Sistine Chapel at Rome, poring over the scroll of mystery, and trying to decipher the secrets of Fate; for she realised that, while knowledge is power, suffering is part of knowledge.

To her influence, almost as much as to the higher education of women, I would be inclined to attribute the really remarkable awakening of woman's song that characterises the latter half of our century in England. No country has ever had so many poetesses at once. Indeed, when one remembers that the Greeks had only nine muses, one is sometimes apt to fancy that we have too many. And yet the work done by women in the sphere of poetry is really of a very high standard of excellence. In England we have always been prone to underrate the value of tradition in literature. In our eagerness to find a new voice and a fresh mode of music, we have forgotten how beautiful Echo may be. We look first for individuality and personality, and these are, indeed, the chief characteristics of the masterpieces of our

literature, either in prose or verse; but deliberate culture and a study of the best models, if united to an artistic temperament and a nature susceptible of exquisite impressions, may produce much that is admirable, much that is worthy of praise. It would be quite impossible to give a complete catalogue of all the women who since Mrs. Browning's day have tried lute and lyre. Mrs. Pfeiffer, Mrs. Hamilton King, Mrs. Augusta Webster, Graham Tomson, Miss Mary Robinson, Jean Ingelow, Miss May Kendall, Miss Nesbit, Miss May Probyn, Mrs. Craik, Mrs. Meynell, Miss Chapman, and many others have done really good work in poetry, either in the grave Dorian mode of thoughtful and intellectual verse, or in the light and graceful forms of old French song, or in the romantic manner of antique ballad, or in that 'moment's monument,' as Rossetti called it, the intense and concentrated sonnet. Occasionally one is tempted to wish that the quick, artistic faculty that women undoubtedly possess developed itself somewhat more in prose and somewhat less in verse. Poetry is for our highest moods, when we wish to be with the gods, and in our poetry nothing but the very best should satisfy us; but prose is for our daily bread, and the lack of good prose is one of the chief blots on our culture. French prose, even in the hands of the most ordinary writers, is always readable, but English prose is detestable. We have a few, a very few, masters, such as they are. We have Carlyle, who should not be imitated; and Mr. Pater, who, through the subtle perfection of his form, is inimitable absolutely; and Mr. Froude, who is useful; and

Matthew Arnold, who is a model; and Mr. George Meredith, who is a warning; and Mr. Lang, who is the divine amateur; and Mr. Stevenson, who is the humane artist; and Mr. Ruskin, whose rhythm and colour and fine rhetoric and marvellous music of words are entirely unattainable. But the general prose that one reads in magazines and in newspapers is terribly dull and cumbrous, heavy in movement and uncouth or exaggerated in expression. Possibly some day our women of letters will apply themselves more definitely to prose.

Their light touch, and exquisite ear, and delicate sense of balance and proportion would be of no small service to us. I can fancy women bringing a new manner into our literature.

However, we have to deal here with women as poetesses, and it is interesting to note that, though Mrs. Browning's influence undoubtedly contributed very largely to the development of this new song-movement, if I may so term it, still there seems to have been never a time during the last three hundred years when the women of this kingdom did not cultivate, if not the art, at least the habit, of writing poetry.

Who the first English poetess was I cannot say. I believe it was the Abbess Juliana Berners, who lived in the fifteenth century; but I have no doubt that Mr. Freeman would be able at a moment's notice to produce some wonderful Saxon or Norman poetess, whose works cannot be read without a glossary, and even with its aid are completely unintelligible. For my own part, I am content with the Abbess Juliana, who wrote enthusiastically

about hawking; and after her I would mention Anne Askew, who in prison and on the eve of her fiery martyrdom wrote a ballad that has, at any rate, a pathetic and historical interest. Queen Elizabeth's 'most sweet and sententious ditty' on Mary Stuart is highly praised by Puttenham, a contemporary critic, as an example of 'Exargasia, or the Gorgeous in Literature,' which somehow seems a very suitable epithet for such a great Queen's poems. The term she applies to the unfortunate Queen of Scots, 'the daughter of debate,' has, of course, long since passed into literature. The Countess of Pembroke, Sir Philip Sidney's sister, was much admired as a poetess in her day.

In 1613 the 'learned, virtuous, and truly noble ladie,' Elizabeth Carew, published a *Tragedie of Marian, the Faire Queene of Jewry*, and a few years later the 'noble ladie Diana Primrose' wrote *A Chain of Pearl*, which is a panegyric on the 'peerless graces' of Gloriana. Mary Morpeth, the friend and admirer of Drummond of Hawthornden; Lady Mary Wroth, to whom Ben Jonson dedicated *The Alchemist*; and the Princess Elizabeth, the sister of Charles I., should also be mentioned.

After the Restoration women applied themselves with still greater ardour to the study of literature and the practice of poetry. Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, was a true woman of letters, and some of her verses are extremely pretty and graceful. Mrs. Aphra Behn was the first Englishwoman who adopted literature as a regular profession. Mrs. Katharine Philips, according to Mr. Gosse, invented sentimentality. As she

was praised by Dryden, and mourned by Cowley, let us hope she may be forgiven. Keats came across her poems at Oxford when he was writing *Endymion*, and found in one of them 'a most delicate fancy of the Fletcher kind'; but I fear nobody reads the Matchless Orinda now. Of Lady Winchelsea's *Nocturnal Reverie* Wordsworth said that, with the exception of Pope's *Windsor Forest*, it was the only poem of the period intervening between *Paradise Lost* and Thomson's *Seasons* that contained a single new image of external nature. Lady Rachel Russell, who may be said to have inaugurated the letter-writing literature of England; Eliza Haywood, who is immortalised by the badness of her work, and has a niche in *The Dunciad*; and the Marchioness of Wharton, whose poems Waller said he admired, are very remarkable types, the finest of them being, of course, the first named, who was a woman of heroic mould and of a most noble dignity of nature.

Indeed, though the English poetesses up to the time of Mrs. Browning cannot be said to have produced any work of absolute genius, they are certainly interesting figures, fascinating subjects for study. Amongst them we find Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who had all the caprice of Cleopatra, and whose letters are delightful reading; Mrs. Centlivre, who wrote one brilliant comedy; Lady Anne Barnard, whose *Auld Robin Gray* was described by Sir Walter Scott as 'worth all the dialogues Corydon and Phillis have together spoken from the days of Theocritus downwards,' and is certainly a very beautiful and touching poem; Esther Vanhomrigh and Hester Johnson, the



Vanessa and the Stella of Dean Swift's life; Mrs. Thrale, the friend of the great lexicographer; the worthy Mrs. Barbauld; the excellent Mrs. Hannah More; the industrious Joanna Baillie; the admirable Mrs. Chapone, whose *Ode to Solitude* always fills me with the wildest passion for society, and who will at least be remembered as the patroness of the establishment at which Becky Sharp was educated; Miss Anna Seward, who was called 'The Swan of Lichfield'; poor L. E. L., whom Disraeli described in one of his clever letters to his sister as 'the personification of Brompton – pink satin dress, white satin shoes, red cheeks, snub nose, and her hair *à la Sappho*'; Mrs. Ratcliffe, who introduced the romantic novel, and has consequently much to answer for; the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, of whom Gibbon said that she was 'made for something better than a Duchess'; the two wonderful sisters, Lady Dufferin and Mrs. Norton; Mrs. Tighe, whose *Psyche* Keats read with pleasure; Constantia Grierson, a marvellous blue-stocking in her time; Mrs. Hemans; pretty, charming 'Perdita,' who flirted alternately with poetry and the Prince Regent, played divinely in the *Winter's Tale*, was brutally attacked by Gifford, and has left us a pathetic little poem on the Snowdrop; and Emily Brontë, whose poems are instinct with tragic power, and seem often on the verge of being great.

Old fashions in literature are not so pleasant as old fashions in dress. I like the costume of the age of powder better than the poetry of the age of Pope. But if one adopts the historical standpoint – and this is, indeed, the only standpoint from which

we can ever form a fair estimate of work that is not absolutely of the highest order – we cannot fail to see that many of the English poetesses who preceded Mrs. Browning were women of no ordinary talent, and that if the majority of them looked upon poetry simply as a department of *belles lettres*, so in most cases did their contemporaries. Since Mrs. Browning's day our woods have become full of singing birds, and if I venture to ask them to apply themselves more to prose and less to song, it is not that I like poetical prose, but that I love the prose of poets.

# LONDON MODELS

(*English Illustrated Magazine*, January 1889.)

Professional models are a purely modern invention. To the Greeks, for instance, they were quite unknown. Mr. Mahaffy, it is true, tells us that Pericles used to present peacocks to the great ladies of Athenian society in order to induce them to sit to his friend Phidias, and we know that Polygnotus introduced into his picture of the Trojan women the face of Elpinice, the celebrated sister of the great Conservative leader of the day, but these *grandes dames* clearly do not come under our category. As for the old masters, they undoubtedly made constant studies from their pupils and apprentices, and even their religious pictures are full of the portraits of their friends and relations, but they do not seem to have had the inestimable advantage of the existence of a class of people whose sole profession is to pose. In fact the model, in our sense of the word, is the direct creation of Academic Schools.

Every country now has its own models, except America. In New York, and even in Boston, a good model is so great a rarity that most of the artists are reduced to painting Niagara and millionaires. In Europe, however, it is different. Here we have plenty of models, and of every nationality. The Italian models are the best. The natural grace of their attitudes, as well as the wonderful picturesqueness of their colouring, makes them facile

– often too facile – subjects for the painter’s brush. The French models, though not so beautiful as the Italian, possess a quickness of intellectual sympathy, a capacity, in fact, of understanding the artist, which is quite remarkable. They have also a great command over the varieties of facial expression, are peculiarly dramatic, and can chatter the *argot* of the *atelier* as cleverly as the critic of the *Gil Bias*. The English models form a class entirely by themselves. They are not so picturesque as the Italian, nor so clever as the French, and they have absolutely no tradition, so to speak, of their order. Now and then some old veteran knocks at a studio door, and proposes to sit as Ajax defying the lightning, or as King Lear upon the blasted heath. One of them some time ago called on a popular painter who, happening at the moment to require his services, engaged him, and told him to begin by kneeling down in the attitude of prayer. ‘Shall I be Biblical or Shakespearean, sir?’ asked the veteran. ‘Well – Shakespearean,’ answered the artist, wondering by what subtle *nuance* of expression the model would convey the difference. ‘All right, sir,’ said the professor of posing, and he solemnly knelt down and began to wink with his left eye! This class, however, is dying out. As a rule the model, nowadays, is a pretty girl, from about twelve to twenty-five years of age, who knows nothing about art, cares less, and is merely anxious to earn seven or eight shillings a day without much trouble. English models rarely look at a picture, and never venture on any æsthetic theories. In fact, they realise very completely Mr. Whistler’s idea of the function

of an art critic, for they pass no criticisms at all. They accept all schools of art with the grand catholicity of the auctioneer, and sit to a fantastic young impressionist as readily as to a learned and laborious academician. They are neither for the Whistlerites nor against them; the quarrel between the school of facts and the school of effects touches them not; idealistic and naturalistic are words that convey no meaning to their ears; they merely desire that the studio shall be warm, and the lunch hot, for all charming artists give their models lunch.

As to what they are asked to do they are equally indifferent. On Monday they will don the rags of a beggar-girl for Mr. Pumper, whose pathetic pictures of modern life draw such tears from the public, and on Tuesday they will pose in a peplum for Mr. Phœbus, who thinks that all really artistic subjects are necessarily B.C. They career gaily through all centuries and through all costumes, and, like actors, are interesting only when they are not themselves. They are extremely good-natured, and very accommodating. 'What do you sit for?' said a young artist to a model who had sent him in her card (all models, by the way, have cards and a small black bag). 'Oh, for anything you like, sir,' said the girl, 'landscape if necessary!'

Intellectually, it must be acknowledged, they are Philistines, but physically they are perfect – at least some are. Though none of them can talk Greek, many can look Greek, which to a nineteenth-century painter is naturally of great importance. If they are allowed, they chatter a great deal, but they never

say anything. Their observations are the only *banalités* heard in Bohemia. However, though they cannot appreciate the artist as artist, they are quite ready to appreciate the artist as a man. They are very sensitive to kindness, respect and generosity. A beautiful model who had sat for two years to one of our most distinguished English painters, got engaged to a street vendor of penny ices. On her marriage the painter sent her a pretty wedding present, and received in return a nice letter of thanks with the following remarkable postscript: 'Never eat the green ices!'

When they are tired a wise artist gives them a rest. Then they sit in a chair and read penny dreadfuls, till they are roused from the tragedy of literature to take their place again in the tragedy of art. A few of them smoke cigarettes. This, however, is regarded by the other models as showing a want of seriousness, and is not generally approved of. They are engaged by the day and by the half-day. The tariff is a shilling an hour, to which great artists usually add an omnibus fare. The two best things about them are their extraordinary prettiness, and their extreme respectability. As a class they are very well behaved, particularly those who sit for the figure, a fact which is curious or natural according to the view one takes of human nature. They usually marry well, and sometimes they marry the artist. For an artist to marry his model is as fatal as for a *gourmet* to marry his cook: the one gets no sittings, and the other gets no dinners.

On the whole the English female models are very naïve, very natural, and very good-humoured. The virtues which the

artist values most in them are prettiness and punctuality. Every sensible model consequently keeps a diary of her engagements, and dresses neatly. The bad season is, of course, the summer, when the artists are out of town. However, of late years some artists have engaged their models to follow them, and the wife of one of our most charming painters has often had three or four models under her charge in the country, so that the work of her husband and his friends should not be interrupted. In France the models migrate *en masse* to the little seaport villages or forest hamlets where the painters congregate. The English models, however, wait patiently in London, as a rule, till the artists come back. Nearly all of them live with their parents, and help to support the house. They have every qualification for being immortalised in art except that of beautiful hands. The hands of the English model are nearly always coarse and red.

As for the male models, there is the veteran whom we have mentioned above. He has all the traditions of the grand style, and is rapidly disappearing with the school he represents. An old man who talks about Fuseli is, of course, unendurable, and, besides, patriarchs have ceased to be fashionable subjects. Then there is the true Academy model. He is usually a man of thirty, rarely good-looking, but a perfect miracle of muscles. In fact he is the apotheosis of anatomy, and is so conscious of his own splendour that he tells you of his tibia and his thorax, as if no one else had anything of the kind. Then come the Oriental models. The supply of these is limited, but there are always about a dozen in London.

They are very much sought after as they can remain immobile for hours, and generally possess lovely costumes. However, they have a very poor opinion of English art, which they regard as something between a vulgar personality and a commonplace photograph. Next we have the Italian youth who has come over specially to be a model, or takes to it when his organ is out of repair. He is often quite charming with his large melancholy eyes, his crisp hair, and his slim brown figure. It is true he eats garlic, but then he can stand like a faun and couch like a leopard, so he is forgiven. He is always full of pretty compliments, and has been known to have kind words of encouragement for even our greatest artists. As for the English lad of the same age, he never sits at all. Apparently he does not regard the career of a model as a serious profession. In any case he is rarely, if ever, to be got hold of. English boys, too, are difficult to find. Sometimes an ex-model who has a son will curl his hair, and wash his face, and bring him the round of the studios, all soap and shininess. The young school don't like him, but the older school do, and when he appears on the walls of the Royal Academy he is called *The Infant Samuel*. Occasionally also an artist catches a couple of *gamins* in the gutter and asks them to come to his studio. The first time they always appear, but after that they don't keep their appointments. They dislike sitting still, and have a strong and perhaps natural objection to looking pathetic. Besides, they are always under the impression that the artist is laughing at them. It is a sad fact, but there is no doubt that the poor are



completely unconscious of their own picturesqueness. Those of them who can be induced to sit do so with the idea that the artist is merely a benevolent philanthropist who has chosen an eccentric method of distributing alms to the undeserving. Perhaps the School Board will teach the London *gamin* his own artistic value, and then they will be better models than they are now. One remarkable privilege belongs to the Academy model, that of extorting a sovereign from any newly elected Associate or R.A. They wait at Burlington House till the announcement is made, and then race to the hapless artist's house. The one who arrives first receives the money. They have of late been much troubled at the long distances they have had to run, and they look with disfavour on the election of artists who live at Hampstead or at Bedford Park, for it is considered a point of honour not to employ the underground railway, omnibuses, or any artificial means of locomotion. The race is to the swift.

Besides the professional posers of the studio there are posers of the Row, the posers at afternoon teas, the posers in politics and the circus posers. All four classes are delightful, but only the last class is ever really decorative. Acrobats and gymnasts can give the young painter infinite suggestions, for they bring into their art an element of swiftness of motion and of constant change that the studio model necessarily lacks. What is interesting in these 'slaves of the ring' is that with them Beauty is an unconscious result not a conscious aim, the result in fact of the mathematical calculation of curves and distances, of absolute precision of eye,

of the scientific knowledge of the equilibrium of forces, and of perfect physical training. A good acrobat is always graceful, though grace is never his object; he is graceful because he does what he has to do in the best way in which it can be done – graceful because he is natural. If an ancient Greek were to come to life now, which considering the probable severity of his criticisms would be rather trying to our conceit, he would be found far oftener at the circus than at the theatre. A good circus is an oasis of Hellenism in a world that reads too much to be wise, and thinks too much to be beautiful. If it were not for the running-ground at Eton, the towing-path at Oxford, the Thames swimming-baths, and the yearly circuses, humanity would forget the plastic perfection of its own form, and degenerate into a race of short-sighted professors and spectacled *précieuses*. Not that the circus proprietors are, as a rule, conscious of their high mission. Do they not bore us with the *haute école*, and weary us with Shakespearean clowns? – Still, at least, they give us acrobats, and the acrobat is an artist. The mere fact that he never speaks to the audience shows how well he appreciates the great truth that the aim of art is not to reveal personality but to please. The clown may be blatant, but the acrobat is always beautiful. He is an interesting combination of the spirit of Greek sculpture with the spangles of the modern costumier. He has even had his niche in the novels of our age, and if *Manette Salomon* be the unmasking of the model, *Les Frères Zemganno* is the apotheosis of the acrobat.

As regards the influence of the ordinary model on our English school of painting, it cannot be said that it is altogether good. It is, of course, an advantage for the young artist sitting in his studio to be able to isolate 'a little corner of life,' as the French say, from disturbing surroundings, and to study it under certain effects of light and shade. But this very isolation leads often to mere mannerism in the painter, and robs him of that broad acceptance of the general facts of life which is the very essence of art. Model-painting, in a word, while it may be the condition of art, is not by any means its aim. It is simply practice, not perfection. Its use trains the eye and the hand of the painter, its abuse produces in his work an effect of mere posing and prettiness. It is the secret of much of the artificiality of modern art, this constant posing of pretty people, and when art becomes artificial it becomes monotonous. Outside the little world of the studio, with its draperies and its *bric-à-brac*, lies the world of life with its infinite, its Shakespearean variety. We must, however, distinguish between the two kinds of models, those who sit for the figure and those who sit for the costume. The study of the first is always excellent, but the costume-model is becoming rather wearisome in modern pictures. It is really of very little use to dress up a London girl in Greek draperies and to paint her as a goddess. The robe may be the robe of Athens, but the face is usually the face of Brompton. Now and then, it is true, one comes across a model whose face is an exquisite anachronism, and who looks lovely and natural in the dress of any century but her own.

This, however, is rather rare. As a rule models are absolutely *de notre siècle*, and should be painted as such. Unfortunately they are not, and, as a consequence, we are shown every year a series of scenes from fancy dress balls which are called historical pictures, but are little more than mediocre representations of modern people masquerading. In France they are wiser. The French painter uses the model simply for study; for the finished picture he goes direct to life.

However, we must not blame the sitters for the shortcomings of the artists. The English models are a well-behaved and hard-working class, and if they are more interested in artists than in art, a large section of the public is in the same condition, and most of our modern exhibitions seem to justify its choice.

# LETTER TO JOAQUIN MILLER

Written to Mr. Joaquin Miller in reply to a letter, dated February 9, 1882, in reference to the behaviour of a section of the audience at Wilde's lecture on the English Renaissance at the Grand Opera House, Rochester, New York State, on February 7. It was first published in a volume called *Decorative Art in America*, containing unauthorised reprints of certain reviews and letters contributed by Wilde to English newspapers. (New York: Brentano's, 1906.)

St. Louis, *February* 28, 1882.

MY DEAR JOAQUIN MILLER, – I thank you for your chivalrous and courteous letter. Believe me, I would as lief judge of the strength and splendour of sun and sea by the dust that dances in the beam and the bubble that breaks on the wave, as take the petty and profitless vulgarity of one or two insignificant towns as any test or standard of the real spirit of a sane, strong and simple people, or allow it to affect my respect for the many noble men or women whom it has been my privilege in this great country to know.

For myself and the cause which I represent I have no fears as regards the future. Slander and folly have their way for a season, but for a season only; while, as touching the few provincial newspapers which have so vainly assailed me, or that ignorant and itinerant libeller of New England who goes lecturing from

village to village in such open and ostentatious isolation, be sure I have no time to waste on them. Youth being so glorious, art so godlike, and the very world about us so full of beautiful things, and things worthy of reverence, and things honourable, how should one stop to listen to the lucubrations of a literary *gamin*, to the brawling and mouthing of a man whose praise would be as insolent as his slander is impotent, or to the irresponsible and irrepressible chatter of the professionally unproductive?

It is a great advantage, I admit, to have done nothing, but one must not abuse even that advantage.

Who, after all, that I should write of him, is this scribbling anonymuncule in grand old Massachusetts who scrawls and screams so glibly about what he cannot understand? This apostle of inhospitality, who delights to defile, to desecrate, and to defame the gracious courtesies he is unworthy to enjoy? Who are these scribes who, passing with purposeless alacrity from the *Police News* to the Parthenon, and from crime to criticism, sway with such serene incapacity the office which they so lately swept? 'Narcissuses of imbecility,' what should they see in the clear waters of Beauty and in the well undefiled of Truth but the shifting and shadowy image of their own substantial stupidity? Secure of that oblivion for which they toil so laboriously and, I must acknowledge, with such success, let them peer at us through their telescopes and report what they like of us. But, my dear Joaquin, should we put them under the microscope there would be really nothing to be seen.

I look forward to passing another delightful evening with you on my return to New York, and I need not tell you that whenever you visit England you will be received with that courtesy with which it is our pleasure to welcome all Americans, and that honour with which it is our privilege to greet all poets. – Most sincerely and affectionately yours,

OSCAR WILDE.

# NOTES ON WHISTLER

## I

**(World, November 14, 1883.)**

From Oscar Wilde, Exeter, to J. M'Neill Whistler, Tite Street.  
—*Punch* too ridiculous – when you and I are together we never talk about anything except ourselves.

## II

**(World, February 25, 1885.)**

DEAR BUTTERFLY, – By the aid of a biographical dictionary I made the discovery that there were once two painters, called Benjamin West and Paul Delaroche, who rashly lectured upon Art. As of their works nothing at all remains, I conclude that they explained themselves away.

Be warned in time, James; and remain, as I do,



incomprehensible. To be great is to be misunderstood. —*Tout à vous*, OSCAR WILDE.

### III

**(World, November 24, 1886.)**

ATLAS, – This is very sad! With our James vulgarity begins at home, and should be allowed to stay there. —*À vous*, OSCAR WILDE.

# REPLY TO WHISTLER

(*Truth*, January 9, 1890.)

To the Editor of *Truth*.

SIR, – I can hardly imagine that the public is in the very smallest degree interested in the shrill shrieks of ‘Plagiarism’ that proceed from time to time out of the lips of silly vanity or incompetent mediocrity.

However, as Mr. James Whistler has had the impertinence to attack me with both venom and vulgarity in your columns, I hope you will allow me to state that the assertions contained in his letter are as deliberately untrue as they are deliberately offensive.

The definition of a disciple as one who has the courage of the opinions of his master is really too old even for Mr. Whistler to be allowed to claim it, and as for borrowing Mr. Whistler’s ideas about art, the only thoroughly original ideas I have ever heard him express have had reference to his own superiority as a painter over painters greater than himself.

It is a trouble for any gentleman to have to notice the lucubrations of so ill-bred and ignorant a person as Mr. Whistler, but your publication of his insolent letter left me no option in the matter. – I remain, sir, faithfully yours, OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, CHELSEA, S. W.

# LETTERS ON DORIAN GRAY

## I. MR. WILDE'S BAD CASE

(*St. James's Gazette*, June 26, 1890.)

To the Editor of the *St. James's Gazette*.

SIR, – I have read your criticism of my story, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; and I need hardly say that I do not propose to discuss its merits or demerits, its personalities or its lack of personality. England is a free country, and ordinary English criticism is perfectly free and easy. Besides, I must admit that, either from temperament or taste, or from both, I am quite incapable of understanding how any work of art can be criticised from a moral standpoint. The sphere of art and the sphere of ethics are absolutely distinct and separate; and it is to the confusion between the two that we owe the appearance of Mrs. Grundy, that amusing old lady who represents the only original form of humour that the middle classes of this country have been able to produce.

What I do object to most strongly is that you should have placarded the town with posters on which was printed in large letters: —

MR. OSCAR WILDE'S

LATEST ADVERTISEMENT:  
A BAD CASE.

Whether the expression 'A Bad Case' refers to my book or to the present position of the Government, I cannot tell. What was silly and unnecessary was the use of the term 'advertisement.'

I think I may say without vanity – though I do not wish to appear to run vanity down – that of all men in England I am the one who requires least advertisement. I am tired to death of being advertised – I feel no thrill when I see my name in a paper. The chronicle does not interest me any more. I wrote this book entirely for my own pleasure, and it gave me very great pleasure to write it. Whether it becomes popular or not is a matter of absolute indifference to me. I am afraid, Sir, that the real advertisement is your cleverly written article. The English public, as a mass, takes no interest in a work of art until it is told that the work in question is immoral, and your *réclame* will, I have no doubt, largely increase the sale of the magazine; in which sale I may mention with some regret, I have no pecuniary interest. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant, OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, CHELSEA, *June 25.*

## II. MR. OSCAR WILDE AGAIN

(*St. James's Gazette*, June 27, 1890.)

SIR, – In your issue of today you state that my brief letter published in your columns is the 'best reply' I can make to your

article upon *Dorian Gray*. This is not so. I do not propose to discuss fully the matter here, but I feel bound to say that your article contains the most unjustifiable attack that has been made upon any man of letters for many years.

The writer of it, who is quite incapable of concealing his personal malice, and so in some measure destroys the effect he wishes to produce, seems not to have the slightest idea of the temper in which a work of art should be approached. To say that such a book as mine should be 'chucked into the fire' is silly. That is what one does with newspapers.

Of the value of pseudo-ethical criticism in dealing with artistic work I have spoken already. But as your writer has ventured into the perilous grounds of literary criticism I ask you to allow me, in fairness not merely to myself but to all men to whom literature is a fine art, to say a few words about his critical method.

He begins by assailing me with much ridiculous virulence because the chief personages in my story are puppies. They *are* puppies. Does he think that literature went to the dogs when Thackeray wrote about puppydom? I think that puppies are extremely interesting from an artistic as well as from a psychological point of view.

They seem to me to be certainly far more interesting than prigs; and I am of opinion that Lord Henry Wotton is an excellent corrective of the tedious ideal shadowed forth in the semi-theological novels of our age.

He then makes vague and fearful insinuations about my

grammar and my erudition. Now, as regards grammar, I hold that, in prose at any rate, correctness should always be subordinate to artistic effect and musical cadence; and any peculiarities of syntax that may occur in *Dorian Gray* are deliberately intended, and are introduced to show the value of the artistic theory in question. Your writer gives no instance of any such peculiarity. This I regret, because I do not think that any such instances occur.

As regards erudition, it is always difficult, even for the most modest of us, to remember that other people do not know quite as much as one does one's self. I myself frankly admit I cannot imagine how a casual reference to Suetonius and Petronius Arbiter can be construed into evidence of a desire to impress an unoffending and ill-educated public by an assumption of superior knowledge. I should fancy that the most ordinary of scholars is perfectly well acquainted with the *Lives of the Cæsars* and with the *Satyricon*.

The *Lives of the Cæsars*, at any rate, forms part of the curriculum at Oxford for those who take the Honour School of *Literæ Humaniores*; and as for the *Satyricon* it is popular even among pass-men, though I suppose they are obliged to read it in translations.

The writer of the article then suggests that I, in common with that great and noble artist Count Tolstoi, take pleasure in a subject because it is dangerous. About such a suggestion there is this to be said. Romantic art deals with the exception and with the

individual. Good people, belonging as they do to the normal, and so, commonplace, type, are artistically uninteresting.

Bad people are, from the point of view of art, fascinating studies. They represent colour, variety and strangeness. Good people exasperate one's reason; bad people stir one's imagination. Your critic, if I must give him so honourable a title, states that the people in my story have no counterpart in life; that they are, to use his vigorous if somewhat vulgar phrase, 'mere catchpenny revelations of the non-existent.' Quite so.

If they existed they would not be worth writing about. The function of the artist is to invent, not to chronicle. There are no such people. If there were I would not write about them. Life by its realism is always spoiling the subject-matter of art.

The superior pleasure in literature is to realise the non-existent.

And finally, let me say this. You have reproduced, in a journalistic form, the comedy of *Much Ado about Nothing* and have, of course, spoilt it in your reproduction.

The poor public, hearing, from an authority so high as your own, that this is a wicked book that should be coerced and suppressed by a Tory Government, will, no doubt, rush to it and read it. But, alas! they will find that it is a story with a moral. And the moral is this: All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment.

The painter, Basil Hallward, worshipping physical beauty far too much, as most painters do, dies by the hand of one in

whose soul he has created a monstrous and absurd vanity. Dorian Gray, having led a life of mere sensation and pleasure, tries to kill conscience, and at that moment kills himself. Lord Henry Wotton seeks to be merely the spectator of life. He finds that those who reject the battle are more deeply wounded than those who take part in it.

Yes, there is a terrible moral in *Dorian Gray*— a moral which the prurient will not be able to find in it, but it will be revealed to all whose minds are healthy. Is this an artistic error? I fear it is. It is the only error in the book. — I remain, Sir, your obedient servant, OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, CHELSEA, *June 26.*

### III. MR. OSCAR WILDE'S DEFENCE

(*St. James's Gazette*, June 28, 1890.)

To the Editor of the *St. James's Gazette*.

SIR, — As you still keep up, though in a somewhat milder form than before, your attacks on me and my book, you not only confer on me the right, but you impose upon me the duty of reply.

You state, in your issue of today, that I misrepresented you when I said that you suggested that a book so wicked as mine should be 'suppressed and coerced by a Tory Government.' Now, you did not propose this, but you did suggest it. When you declare that you do not know whether or not the Government will take action about my book, and remark that the authors of



books much less wicked have been proceeded against in law, the suggestion is quite obvious.

In your complaint of misrepresentation you seem to me, Sir, to have been not quite candid.

However, as far as I am concerned, this suggestion is of no importance. What is of importance is that the editor of a paper like yours should appear to countenance the monstrous theory that the Government of a country should exercise a censorship over imaginative literature. This is a theory against which I, and all men of letters of my acquaintance, protest most strongly; and any critic who admits the reasonableness of such a theory shows at once that he is quite incapable of understanding what literature is, and what are the rights that literature possesses. A Government might just as well try to teach painters how to paint, or sculptors how to model, as attempt to interfere with the style, treatment and subject-matter of the literary artist, and no writer, however eminent or obscure, should ever give his sanction to a theory that would degrade literature far more than any didactic or so-called immoral book could possibly do.

You then express your surprise that 'so experienced a literary gentleman' as myself should imagine that your critic was animated by any feeling of personal malice towards him. The phrase 'literary gentleman' is a vile phrase, but let that pass.

I accept quite readily your assurance that your critic was simply criticising a work of art in the best way that he could, but I feel that I was fully justified in forming the opinion of him that

I did. He opened his article by a gross personal attack on myself. This, I need hardly say, was an absolutely unpardonable error of critical taste.

There is no excuse for it except personal malice; and you, Sir, should not have sanctioned it. A critic should be taught to criticise a work of art without making any reference to the personality of the author. This, in fact, is the beginning of criticism. However, it was not merely his personal attack on me that made me imagine that he was actuated by malice. What really confirmed me in my first impression was his reiterated assertion that my book was tedious and dull.

Now, if I were criticising my book, which I have some thoughts of doing, I think I would consider it my duty to point out that it is far too crowded with sensational incident, and far too paradoxical in style, as far, at any rate, as the dialogue goes. I feel that from a standpoint of art these are true defects in the book. But tedious and dull the book is not.

Your critic has cleared himself of the charge of personal malice, his denial and yours being quite sufficient in the matter; but he has done so only by a tacit admission that he has really no critical instinct about literature and literary work, which, in one who writes about literature, is, I need hardly say, a much graver fault than malice of any kind.

Finally, Sir, allow me to say this. Such an article as you have published really makes me despair of the possibility of any general culture in England. Were I a French author, and my book

brought out in Paris, there is not a single literary critic in France on any paper of high standing who would think for a moment of criticising it from an ethical standpoint. If he did so he would stultify himself, not merely in the eyes of all men of letters, but in the eyes of the majority of the public.

You have yourself often spoken against Puritanism. Believe me, Sir, Puritanism is never so offensive and destructive as when it deals with art matters. It is there that it is radically wrong. It is this Puritanism, to which your critic has given expression, that is always marring the artistic instinct of the English. So far from encouraging it, you should set yourself against it, and should try to teach your critics to recognise the essential difference between art and life.

The gentleman who criticised my book is in a perfectly hopeless confusion about it, and your attempt to help him out by proposing that the subject-matter of art should be limited does not mend matters. It is proper that limitation should be placed on action. It is not proper that limitation should be placed on art. To art belong all things that are and all things that are not, and even the editor of a London paper has no right to restrain the freedom of art in the selection of subject-matter. I now trust, Sir, that these attacks on me and on my book will cease. There are forms of advertisement that are unwarranted and unwarrantable. – I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, S. W., *June 27.*

#### IV. (St. James's Gazette, June 30, 1890.)

To the Editor of the *St. James's Gazette*.

SIR, – In your issue of this evening you publish a letter from ‘A London Editor’ which clearly insinuates in the last paragraph that I have in some way sanctioned the circulation of an expression of opinion, on the part of the proprietors of *Lippincott's Magazine*, of the literary and artistic value of my story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Allow me, Sir, to state that there are no grounds for this insinuation. I was not aware that any such document was being circulated; and I have written to the agents, Messrs. Ward and Lock – who cannot, I feel sure, be primarily responsible for its appearance – to ask them to withdraw it at once. No publisher should ever express an opinion of the value of what he publishes. That is a matter entirely for the literary critic to decide.

I must admit, as one to whom contemporary literature is constantly submitted for criticism, that the only thing that ever prejudices me against a book is the lack of literary style; but I can quite understand how any ordinary critic would be strongly prejudiced against a work that was accompanied by a premature and unnecessary panegyric from the publisher. A publisher is simply a useful middleman. It is not for him to anticipate the verdict of criticism.

I may, however, while expressing my thanks to the ‘London

Editor' for drawing my attention to this, I trust, purely American method of procedure, venture to differ from him in one of his criticisms. He states that he regards the expression 'complete' as applied to a story, as a specimen of the 'adjectival exuberance of the puffer.' Here, it seems to me, he sadly exaggerates. What my story is is an interesting problem. What my story is not is a 'novelette' – a term which you have more than once applied to it. There is no such word in the English language as novelette. It should not be used. It is merely part of the slang of Fleet Street.

In another part of your paper, Sir, you state that I received your assurance of the lack of malice in your critic 'somewhat grudgingly.' This is not so. I frankly said that I accepted that assurance 'quite readily,' and that your own denial and that of your own critic were 'sufficient.'

Nothing more generous could have been said. What I did feel was that you saved your critic from the charge of malice by convicting him of the unpardonable crime of lack of literary instinct. I still feel that. To call my book an ineffective attempt at allegory, that in the hands of Mr. Anstey might have been made striking, is absurd.

Mr. Anstey's sphere in literature and my sphere are different. You then gravely ask me what rights I imagine literature possesses. That is really an extraordinary question for the editor of a newspaper such as yours to ask. The rights of literature, Sir, are the rights of intellect.

I remember once hearing M. Renan say that he would sooner

live under a military despotism than under the despotism of the Church, because the former merely limited the freedom of action, while the latter limited the freedom of mind.

You say that a work of art is a form of action. It is not. It is the highest mode of thought.

In conclusion, Sir, let me ask you not to force on me this continued correspondence by daily attacks. It is a trouble and a nuisance.

As you assailed me first, I have a right to the last word. Let that last word be the present letter, and leave my book, I beg you, to the immortality that it deserves. – I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, S.W., *June 28.*

## V. ‘DORIAN GRAY’

(*Daily Chronicle*, July 2, 1890.)

To the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*.

SIR, – Will you allow me to correct some errors into which your critic has fallen in his review of my story, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, published in today’s issue of your paper?

Your critic states, to begin with, that I make desperate attempts to ‘vamp up’ a moral in my story. Now, I must candidly confess that I do not know what ‘vamping’ is. I see, from time to time, mysterious advertisements in the newspapers about ‘How

to Vamp,' but what vamping really means remains a mystery to me – a mystery that, like all other mysteries, I hope some day to explore.

However, I do not propose to discuss the absurd terms used by modern journalism. What I want to say is that, so far from wishing to emphasise any moral in my story, the real trouble I experienced in writing the story was that of keeping the extremely obvious moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect.

When I first conceived the idea of a young man selling his soul in exchange for eternal youth – an idea that is old in the history of literature, but to which I have given new form – I felt that, from an æsthetic point of view, it would be difficult to keep the moral in its proper secondary place; and even now I do not feel quite sure that I have been able to do so. I think the moral too apparent. When the book is published in a volume I hope to correct this defect.

As for what the moral is, your critic states that it is this – that when a man feels himself becoming 'too angelic' he should rush out and make a 'beast of himself.' I cannot say that I consider this a moral. The real moral of the story is that all excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its punishment, and this moral is so far artistically and deliberately suppressed that it does not enunciate its law as a general principle, but realises itself purely in the lives of individuals, and so becomes simply a dramatic element in a work of art, and not the object of the work of art itself.

Your critic also falls into error when he says that Dorian Gray, having a ‘cool, calculating, conscienceless character,’ was inconsistent when he destroyed the picture of his own soul, on the ground that the picture did not become less hideous after he had done what, in his vanity, he had considered his first good action. Dorian Gray has not got a cool, calculating, conscienceless character at all. On the contrary, he is extremely impulsive, absurdly romantic, and is haunted all through his life by an exaggerated sense of conscience which mars his pleasures for him and warns him that youth and enjoyment are not everything in the world. It is finally to get rid of the conscience that had dogged his steps from year to year that he destroys the picture; and thus in his attempt to kill conscience Dorian Gray kills himself.

Your critic then talks about ‘obtrusively cheap scholarship.’ Now, whatever a scholar writes is sure to display scholarship in the distinction of style and the fine use of language; but my story contains no learned or pseudo-learned discussions, and the only literary books that it alludes to are books that any fairly educated reader may be supposed to be acquainted with, such as the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter, or Gautier’s *Emaux et Camées*. Such books as Le Conso’s *Clericalis Disciplina* belong not to culture, but to curiosity. Anybody may be excused for not knowing them.

Finally, let me say this – the æsthetic movement produced certain curious colours, subtle in their loveliness and fascinating



in their almost mystical tone. They were, and are, our reaction against the crude primaries of a doubtless more respectable but certainly less cultivated age. My story is an essay on decorative art. It reacts against the crude brutality of plain realism. It is poisonous if you like, but you cannot deny that it is also perfect, and perfection is what we artists aim at. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant, OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, *June 30.*

## VI. MR. WILDE'S REJOINDER

(*Scots Observer*, July 12, 1890.)

To the Editor of the *Scots Observer*.

SIR, – You have published a review of my story, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. As this review is grossly unjust to me as an artist, I ask you to allow me to exercise in your columns my right of reply.

Your reviewer, Sir, while admitting that the story in question is 'plainly the work of a man of letters,' the work of one who has 'brains, and art, and style,' yet suggests, and apparently in all seriousness, that I have written it in order that it should be read by the most depraved members of the criminal and illiterate classes. Now, Sir, I do not suppose that the criminal and illiterate classes ever read anything except newspapers. They are certainly not likely to be able to understand anything of mine. So let them pass, and on the broad question of why a man of letters writes

at all let me say this.

The pleasure that one has in creating a work of art is a purely personal pleasure, and it is for the sake of this pleasure that one creates. The artist works with his eye on the object. Nothing else interests him. What people are likely to say does not even occur to him.

He is fascinated by what he has in hand. He is indifferent to others. I write because it gives me the greatest possible artistic pleasure to write. If my work pleases the few I am gratified. If it does not, it causes me no pain. As for the mob, I have no desire to be a popular novelist. It is far too easy.

Your critic then, Sir, commits the absolutely unpardonable crime of trying to confuse the artist with his subject-matter. For this, Sir, there is no excuse at all.

Of one who is the greatest figure in the world's literature since Greek days, Keats remarked that he had as much pleasure in conceiving the evil as he had in conceiving the good. Let your reviewer, Sir, consider the bearings of Keats's fine criticism, for it is under these conditions that every artist works. One stands remote from one's subject-matter. One creates it and one contemplates it. The further away the subject-matter is, the more freely can the artist work.

Your reviewer suggests that I do not make it sufficiently clear whether I prefer virtue to wickedness or wickedness to virtue. An artist, Sir, has no ethical sympathies at all. Virtue and wickedness are to him simply what the colours on his palette are to the

painter. They are no more and they are no less. He sees that by their means a certain artistic effect can be produced and he produces it. Iago may be morally horrible and Imogen stainlessly pure. Shakespeare, as Keats said, had as much delight in creating the one as he had in creating the other.

It was necessary, Sir, for the dramatic development of this story to surround Dorian Gray with an atmosphere of moral corruption. Otherwise the story would have had no meaning and the plot no issue. To keep this atmosphere vague and indeterminate and wonderful was the aim of the artist who wrote the story. I claim, Sir, that he has succeeded. Each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray. What Dorian Gray's sins are no one knows. He who finds them has brought them.

In conclusion, Sir, let me say how really deeply I regret that you should have permitted such a notice as the one I feel constrained to write on to have appeared in your paper. That the editor of the *St. James's Gazette* should have employed Caliban as his art-critic was possibly natural. The editor of the *Scots Observer* should not have allowed Thersites to make mows in his review. It is unworthy of so distinguished a man of letters. – I am, etc.,

OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, CHELSEA, *July 9.*

## VII. ART AND MORALITY

(*Scots Observer*, August 2, 1890.)

To the Editor of the *Scots Observer*.

SIR, – In a letter dealing with the relations of art to morals recently published in your columns – a letter which I may say seems to me in many respects admirable, especially in its insistence on the right of the artist to select his own subject-matter – Mr. Charles Whibley suggests that it must be peculiarly painful for me to find that the ethical import of *Dorian Gray* has been so strongly recognised by the foremost Christian papers of England and America that I have been greeted by more than one of them as a moral reformer.

Allow me, Sir, to reassure, on this point, not merely Mr. Charles Whibley himself but also your, no doubt, anxious readers. I have no hesitation in saying that I regard such criticisms as a very gratifying tribute to my story. For if a work of art is rich, and vital and complete, those who have artistic instincts will see its beauty, and those to whom ethics appeal more strongly than æsthetics will see its moral lesson. It will fill the cowardly with terror, and the unclean will see in it their own shame. It will be to each man what he is himself. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.

And so in the case of *Dorian Gray* the purely literary critic, as in the *Speaker* and elsewhere, regards it as a ‘serious’ and

'fascinating' work of art: the critic who deals with art in its relation to conduct, as the *Christian Leader* and the *Christian World*, regards it as an ethical parable: *Light*, which I am told is the organ of the English mystics, regards it as a work of high spiritual import; the *St. James's Gazette*, which is seeking apparently to be the organ of the prurient, sees or pretends to see in it all kinds of dreadful things, and hints at Treasury prosecutions; and your Mr. Charles Whibley genially says that he discovers in it 'lots of morality.'

It is quite true that he goes on to say that he detects no art in it. But I do not think that it is fair to expect a critic to be able to see a work of art from every point of view. Even Gautier had his limitations just as much as Diderot had, and in modern England Goethes are rare. I can only assure Mr. Charles Whibley that no moral apotheosis to which he has added the most modest contribution could possibly be a source of unhappiness to an artist. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, CHELSEA, *July* 1890.

## VIII

(*Scots Observer*, August 16, 1890.)

To the Editor of the *Scots Observer*.

SIR, – I am afraid I cannot enter into any newspaper discussion on the subject of art with Mr. Whibley, partly because

the writing of letters is always a trouble to me, and partly because I regret to say that I do not know what qualifications Mr. Whibley possesses for the discussion of so important a topic. I merely noticed his letter because, I am sure without in any way intending it, he made a suggestion about myself personally that was quite inaccurate. His suggestion was that it must have been painful to me to find that a certain section of the public, as represented by himself and the critics of some religious publications, had insisted on finding what he calls 'lots of morality' in my story of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Being naturally desirous of setting your readers right on a question of such vital interest to the historian, I took the opportunity of pointing out in your columns that I regarded all such criticisms as a very gratifying tribute to the ethical beauty of the story, and I added that I was quite ready to recognise that it was not really fair to ask of any ordinary critic that he should be able to appreciate a work of art from every point of view.

I still hold this opinion. If a man sees the artistic beauty of a thing, he will probably care very little for its ethical import. If his temperament is more susceptible to ethical than to æsthetic influences, he will be blind to questions of style, treatment and the like. It takes a Goethe to see a work of art fully, completely and perfectly, and I thoroughly agree with Mr. Whibley when he says that it is a pity that Goethe never had an opportunity of reading *Dorian Gray*. I feel quite certain that he would have been delighted by it, and I only hope that some ghostly publisher is

even now distributing shadowy copies in the Elysian fields, and that the cover of Gautier's copy is powdered with gilt asphodels.

You may ask me, Sir, why I should care to have the ethical beauty of my story recognised. I answer, Simply because it exists, because the thing is there.

The chief merit of *Madame Bovary* is not the moral lesson that can be found in it, any more than the chief merit of *Salammbô* is its archæology; but Flaubert was perfectly right in exposing the ignorance of those who called the one immoral and the other inaccurate; and not merely was he right in the ordinary sense of the word, but he was artistically right, which is everything. The critic has to educate the public; the artist has to educate the critic.

Allow me to make one more correction, Sir, and I will have done with Mr. Whibley. He ends his letter with the statement that I have been indefatigable in my public appreciation of my own work. I have no doubt that in saying this he means to pay me a compliment, but he really overrates my capacity, as well as my inclination for work. I must frankly confess that, by nature and by choice, I am extremely indolent.

Cultivated idleness seems to me to be the proper occupation for man. I dislike newspaper controversies of any kind, and of the two hundred and sixteen criticisms of *Dorian Gray* that have passed from my library table into the wastepaper basket I have taken public notice of only three. One was that which appeared in the *Scots Observer*. I noticed it because it made a suggestion, about the intention of the author in writing the book, which

needed correction. The second was an article in the *St. James's Gazette*. It was offensively and vulgarly written, and seemed to me to require immediate and caustic censure. The tone of the article was an impertinence to any man of letters.

The third was a meek attack in a paper called the *Daily Chronicle*. I think my writing to the *Daily Chronicle* was an act of pure wilfulness. In fact, I feel sure it was. I quite forget what they said. I believe they said that *Dorian Gray* was poisonous, and I thought that, on alliterative grounds, it would be kind to remind them that, however that may be, it is at any rate perfect. That was all. Of the other two hundred and thirteen criticisms I have taken no notice. Indeed, I have not read more than half of them. It is a sad thing, but one wearies even of praise.

As regards Mr. Brown's letter, it is interesting only in so far as it exemplifies the truth of what I have said above on the question of the two obvious schools of critics. Mr. Brown says frankly that he considers morality to be the 'strong point' of my story. Mr. Brown means well, and has got hold of a half truth, but when he proceeds to deal with the book from the artistic standpoint he, of course, goes sadly astray. To class *Dorian Gray* with M. Zola's *La Terre* is as silly as if one were to class Musset's *Fortunio* with one of the Adelphi melodramas. Mr. Brown should be content with ethical appreciation. There he is impregnable.

Mr. Cobban opens badly by describing my letter, setting Mr. Whibley right on a matter of fact, as an 'impudent paradox.' The term 'impudent' is meaningless, and the word 'paradox'



is misplaced. I am afraid that writing to newspapers has a deteriorating influence on style. People get violent and abusive and lose all sense of proportion, when they enter that curious journalistic arena in which the race is always to the noisiest. 'Impudent paradox' is neither violent nor abusive, but it is not an expression that should have been used about my letter. However, Mr. Cobban makes full atonement afterwards for what was, no doubt, a mere error of manner, by adopting the impudent paradox in question as his own, and pointing out that, as I had previously said, the artist will always look at the work of art from the standpoint of beauty of style and beauty of treatment, and that those who have not got the sense of beauty, or whose sense of beauty is dominated by ethical considerations, will always turn their attention to the subject-matter and make its moral import the test and touchstone of the poem or novel or picture that is presented to them, while the newspaper critic will sometimes take one side and sometimes the other, according as he is cultured or uncultured. In fact, Mr. Cobban converts the impudent paradox into a tedious truism, and, I dare say, in doing so does good service.

The English public likes tediousness, and likes things to be explained to it in a tedious way.

Mr. Cobban has, I have no doubt, already repented of the unfortunate expression with which he has made his *début*, so I will say no more about it. As far as I am concerned he is quite forgiven.

And finally, Sir, in taking leave of the *Scots Observer* I feel bound to make a candid confession to you.

It has been suggested to me by a great friend of mine, who is a charming and distinguished man of letters, and not unknown to you personally, that there have been really only two people engaged in this terrible controversy, and that those two people are the editor of the *Scots Observer* and the author of *Dorian Gray*. At dinner this evening, over some excellent Chianti, my friend insisted that under assumed and mysterious names you had simply given dramatic expression to the views of some of the semi-educated classes of our community, and that the letters signed 'H.' were your own skilful, if somewhat bitter, caricature of the Philistine as drawn by himself. I admit that something of the kind had occurred to me when I read 'H.'s' first letter – the one in which he proposes that the test of art should be the political opinions of the artist, and that if one differed from the artist on the question of the best way of misgoverning Ireland, one should always abuse his work. Still, there are such infinite varieties of Philistines, and North Britain is so renowned for seriousness, that I dismissed the idea as one unworthy of the editor of a Scotch paper. I now fear that I was wrong, and that you have been amusing yourself all the time by inventing little puppets and teaching them how to use big words. Well, Sir, if it be so – and my friend is strong upon the point – allow me to congratulate you most sincerely on the cleverness with which you have reproduced that lack of literary style which is, I am

told, essential for any dramatic and lifelike characterisation. I confess that I was completely taken in; but I bear no malice; and as you have, no doubt, been laughing at me up your sleeve, let me now join openly in the laugh, though it be a little against myself. A comedy ends when the secret is out. Drop your curtain and put your dolls to bed. I love Don Quixote, but I do not wish to fight any longer with marionettes, however cunning may be the master-hand that works their wires. Let them go, Sir, on the shelf. The shelf is the proper place for them. On some future occasion you can re-label them and bring them out for our amusement. They are an excellent company, and go well through their tricks, and if they are a little unreal, I am not the one to object to unreality in art. The jest was really a good one. The only thing that I cannot understand is why you gave your marionettes such extraordinary and improbable names. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant, OSCAR WILDE.

16 TITE STREET, CHELSEA, *August 13.*

# AN ANGLO-INDIAN'S COMPLAINT

(*Times*, September 26, 1891.)

To the Editor of the *Times*.

SIR, – The writer of a letter signed ‘An Indian Civilian’ that appears in your issue of today makes a statement about me which I beg you to allow me to correct at once.

He says I have described the Anglo-Indians as being vulgar. This is not the case. Indeed, I have never met a vulgar Anglo-Indian. There may be many, but those whom I have had the pleasure of meeting here have been chiefly scholars, men interested in art and thought, men of cultivation; nearly all of them have been exceedingly brilliant talkers; some of them have been exceedingly brilliant writers.

What I did say – I believe in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*<sup>6</sup>– was that vulgarity is the distinguishing note of those Anglo-Indians whom Mr. Rudyard Kipling loves to write about, and writes about so cleverly. This is quite true, and there is no reason why Mr. Rudyard Kipling should not select vulgarity as his subject-matter, or as part of it. For a realistic artist, certainly, vulgarity is a most admirable subject. How far Mr. Kipling's stories really mirror Anglo-Indian society I have no idea at all,

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<sup>6</sup> September 1890. See *Intentions*, page 214.

nor, indeed, am I ever much interested in any correspondence between art and nature. It seems to me a matter of entirely secondary importance. I do not wish, however, that it should be supposed that I was passing a harsh and *saugrenu* judgment on an important and in many ways distinguished class, when I was merely pointing out the characteristic qualities of some puppets in a prose-play. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

*September 25.*

# A HOUSE OF POMEGRANATES

## I

(*Speaker*, December 5, 1891.)

SIR. – I have just purchased, at a price that for any other English sixpenny paper I would have considered exorbitant, a copy of the *Speaker* at one of the charming kiosks that decorate Paris; institutions, by the way, that I think we should at once introduce into London. The kiosk is a delightful object, and, when illuminated at night from within, as lovely as a fantastic Chinese lantern, especially when the transparent advertisements are from the clever pencil of M. Chéret. In London we have merely the ill-clad newsvendor, whose voice, in spite of the admirable efforts of the Royal College of Music to make England a really musical nation, is always out of tune, and whose rags, badly designed and badly worn, merely emphasise a painful note of uncomely misery, without conveying that impression of picturesqueness which is the only thing that makes the poverty of others at all bearable.

It is not, however, about the establishment of kiosks in London that I wish to write to you, though I am of opinion that it is a thing that the County Council should at once take in hand. The

object of my letter is to correct a statement made in a paragraph of your interesting paper.

The writer of the paragraph in question states that the decorative designs that make lovely my book, *A House of Pomegranates*, are by the hand of Mr. Shannon, while the delicate dreams that separate and herald each story are by Mr. Ricketts. The contrary is the case. Mr. Shannon is the drawer of the dreams, and Mr. Ricketts is the subtle and fantastic decorator. Indeed, it is to Mr. Ricketts that the entire decorative design of the book is due, from the selection of the type and the placing of the ornamentation, to the completely beautiful cover that encloses the whole. The writer of the paragraph goes on to state that he does not 'like the cover.' This is, no doubt, to be regretted, though it is not a matter of much importance, as there are only two people in the world whom it is absolutely necessary that the cover should please. One is Mr. Ricketts, who designed it, the other is myself, whose book it binds. We both admire it immensely! The reason, however, that your critic gives for his failure to gain from the cover any impression of beauty seems to me to show a lack of artistic instinct on his part, which I beg you will allow me to try to correct.

He complains that a portion of the design on the left-hand side of the cover reminds him of an Indian club with a house-painter's brush on top of it, while a portion of the design on the right-hand side suggests to him the idea of 'a chimney-pot hat with a sponge in it.' Now, I do not for a moment dispute that these are the real

impressions your critic received. It is the spectator, and the mind of the spectator, as I pointed out in the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, that art really mirrors. What I want to indicate is this: the artistic beauty of the cover of my book resides in the delicate tracing, arabesques, and massing of many coral-red lines on a ground of white ivory, the colour effect culminating in certain high gilt notes, and being made still more pleasurable by the overlapping band of moss-green cloth that holds the book together.

What the gilt notes suggest, what imitative parallel may be found to them in that chaos that is termed Nature, is a matter of no importance. They may suggest, as they do sometimes to me, peacocks and pomegranates and splashing fountains of gold water, or, as they do to your critic, sponges and Indian clubs and chimney-pot hats. Such suggestions and evocations have nothing whatsoever to do with the æsthetic quality and value of the design. A thing in Nature becomes much lovelier if it reminds us of a thing in Art, but a thing in Art gains no real beauty through reminding us of a thing in Nature. The primary æsthetic impression of a work of art borrows nothing from recognition or resemblance. These belong to a later and less perfect stage of apprehension.

Properly speaking, they are no part of a real æsthetic impression at all, and the constant preoccupation with subject-matter that characterises nearly all our English art-criticism, is what makes our art-criticisms, especially as regards literature,



so sterile, so profitless, so much beside the mark, and of such curiously little account. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,  
OSCAR WILDE.

BOULEVARD DES CAPUCINES, PARIS.

## II

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, December 11, 1891.)

To the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

SIR, – I have just had sent to me from London a copy of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, containing a review of my book *A House of Pomegranates*.<sup>7</sup> The writer of this review makes a certain suggestion which I beg you will allow me to correct at once.

He starts by asking an extremely silly question, and that is, whether or not I have written this book for the purpose of giving pleasure to the British child. Having expressed grave doubts on this subject, a subject on which I cannot conceive any fairly educated person having any doubts at all, he proceeds, apparently quite seriously, to make the extremely limited vocabulary at the disposal of the British child the standard by which the prose of an artist is to be judged! Now, in building this *House of Pomegranates*, I had about as much intention of pleasing the British child as I had of pleasing the British public. Mamilius is as entirely delightful as Caliban is entirely detestable, but neither the

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<sup>7</sup> November 30, 1891.

standard of Mamilius nor the standard of Caliban is my standard. No artist recognises any standard of beauty but that which is suggested by his own temperament. The artist seeks to realise, in a certain material, his immaterial idea of beauty, and thus to transform an idea into an ideal. That is the way an artist makes things. That is why an artist makes things. The artist has no other object in making things. Does your reviewer imagine that Mr. Shannon, for instance, whose delicate and lovely illustrations he confesses himself quite unable to see, draws for the purpose of giving information to the blind? – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

BOULEVARD DES CAPUCINES, PARIS.

# PUPPETS AND ACTORS

(*Daily Telegraph*, February 20, 1892.)

To the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

SIR, – I have just been sent an article that seems to have appeared in your paper some days ago,<sup>8</sup> in which it is stated that, in the course of some remarks addressed to the Playgoers' Club on the occasion of my taking the chair at their last meeting, I laid it down as an axiom that the stage is only 'a frame furnished with a set of puppets.'

Now, it is quite true that I hold that the stage is to a play no more than a picture-frame is to a painting, and that the actable value of a play has nothing whatsoever to do with its value as a work of art. In this century, in England, to take an obvious example, we have had only two great plays – one is Shelley's *Cenci*, the other Mr. Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*, and neither of them is in any sense of the word an actable play. Indeed, the mere suggestion that stage representation is any test of a work of art is quite ridiculous. In the production of Browning's plays, for instance, in London and at Oxford, what was being tested was obviously the capacity of the modern stage to represent, in any adequate measure or degree, works of introspective method and strange or sterile psychology. But

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<sup>8</sup> February 12, 1892.

the artistic value of *Strafford* or *In a Balcony* was settled when Robert Browning wrote their last lines. It is not, Sir, by the mimes that the muses are to be judged.

So far, the writer of the article in question is right. Where he goes wrong is in saying that I describe this frame – the stage – as being furnished with a set of puppets. He admits that he speaks only by report, but he should have remembered, Sir, that report is not merely a lying jade, which, personally, I would willingly forgive her, but a jade who lies without lovely invention is a thing that I, at any rate, can forgive her, never.

What I really said was that the frame we call the stage was ‘peopled with either living actors or moving puppets,’ and I pointed out briefly, of necessity, that the personality of the actor is often a source of danger in the perfect presentation of a work of art. It may distort. It may lead astray. It may be a discord in the tone or symphony. For anybody can act. Most people in England do nothing else. To be conventional is to be a comedian. To act a particular part, however, is a very different thing, and a very difficult thing as well. The actor’s aim is, or should be, to convert his own accidental personality into the real and essential personality of the character he is called upon to personate, whatever that character may be; or perhaps I should say that there are two schools of action – the school of those who attain their effect by exaggeration of personality, and the school of those who attain it by suppression. It would be too long to discuss these schools, or to decide which of them the dramatist

loves best. Let me note the danger of personality, and pass to my puppets.

There are many advantages in puppets. They never argue. They have no crude views about art. They have no private lives. We are never bothered by accounts of their virtues, or bored by recitals of their vices; and when they are out of an engagement they never do good in public or save people from drowning, nor do they speak more than is set down for them. They recognise the presiding intellect of the dramatist, and have never been known to ask for their parts to be written up. They are admirably docile, and have no personalities at all. I saw lately, in Paris, a performance by certain puppets of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, in M. Maurice Boucher's translation. Miranda was the mirage of Miranda, because an artist has so fashioned her; and Ariel was true Ariel, because so had she been made. Their gestures were quite sufficient, and the words that seemed to come from their little lips were spoken by poets who had beautiful voices. It was a delightful performance, and I remember it still with delight, though Miranda took no notice of the flowers I sent her after the curtain fell. For modern plays, however, perhaps we had better have living players, for in modern plays actuality is everything. The charm – the ineffable charm – of the unreal is here denied us, and rightly.

Suffer me one more correction. Your writer describes the author of the brilliant fantastic lecture on 'The Modern Actor' as a *protégé* of mine. Allow me to state that my acquaintance

with Mr. John Gray is, I regret to say, extremely recent, and that I sought it because he had already a perfected mode of expression both in prose and verse. All artists in this vulgar age need protection certainly. Perhaps they have always needed it. But the nineteenth-century artist finds it not in Prince, or Pope, or Patron, but in high indifference of temper, in the pleasure of the creation of beautiful things, and the long contemplation of them, in disdain of what in life is common and ignoble and in such felicitous sense of humour as enables one to see how vain and foolish is all popular opinion, and popular judgment, upon the wonderful things of art. These qualities Mr. John Gray possesses in a marked degree. He needs no other protection, nor, indeed, would he accept it. — I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,  
OSCAR WILDE.

# LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN: AN EXPLANATION

(*St. James's Gazette*, February 27, 1892.)

To the Editor of the *St. James's Gazette*.

SIR, – Allow me to correct a statement put forward in your issue of this evening to the effect that I have made a certain alteration in my play in consequence of the criticism of some journalists who write very recklessly and very foolishly in the papers about dramatic art. This statement is entirely untrue and grossly ridiculous.

The facts are as follows. On last Saturday night, after the play was over, and the author, cigarette in hand, had delivered a delightful and immortal speech, I had the pleasure of entertaining at supper a small number of personal friends; and as none of them was older than myself I, naturally, listened to their artistic views with attention and pleasure. The opinions of the old on matters of Art are, of course, of no value whatsoever. The artistic instincts of the young are invariably fascinating; and I am bound to state that all my friends, without exception, were of opinion that the psychological interest of the second act would be greatly increased by the disclosure of the actual relationship existing between Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne – an opinion, I may add, that had previously been strongly held and urged by Mr.

Alexander.

As to those of us who do not look on a play as a mere question of pantomime and clowning psychological interest is everything, I determined, consequently, to make a change in the precise moment of revelation. This determination, however, was entered into long before I had the opportunity of studying the culture, courtesy, and critical faculty displayed in such papers as the *Referee*, *Reynolds'*, and the *Sunday Sun*.

When criticism becomes in England a real art, as it should be, and when none but those of artistic instinct and artistic cultivation is allowed to write about works of art, artists will, no doubt, read criticisms with a certain amount of intellectual interest. As things are at present, the criticisms of ordinary newspapers are of no interest whatsoever, except in so far as they display, in its crudest form, the Bœotianism of a country that has produced some Athenians, and in which some Athenians have come to dwell. – I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

*February 26.*



# SALOMÉ

(*Times*, March 2, 1893.)

To the Editor of the *Times*.

SIR, – My attention has been drawn to a review of *Salomé* which was published in your columns last week.<sup>9</sup> The opinions of English critics on a French work of mine have, of course, little, if any, interest for me. I write simply to ask you to allow me to correct a misstatement that appears in the review in question.

The fact that the greatest tragic actress of any stage now living saw in my play such beauty that she was anxious to produce it, to take herself the part of the heroine, to lend to the entire poem the glamour of her personality, and to my prose the music of her flute-like voice – this was naturally, and always will be, a source of pride and pleasure to me, and I look forward with delight to seeing Mme. Bernhardt present my play in Paris, that vivid centre of art, where religious dramas are often performed. But my play was in no sense of the words written for this great actress. I have never written a play for any actor or actress, nor shall I ever do so. Such work is for the artisan in literature – not for the artist. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

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<sup>9</sup> February 23, 1893.

# THE THIRTEEN CLUB

(*Times*, January 16, 1894.)

At a dinner of the Thirteen Club held at the Holborn Restaurant on January 13, 1894, the Chairman (Mr. Harry Furniss) announced that from Mr. Oscar Wilde the following letter had been received: —

I have to thank the members of your Club for their kind invitation, for which convey to them, I beg you, my sincere thanks. But I love superstitions. They are the colour element of thought and imagination. They are the opponents of common sense. Common sense is the enemy of romance. The aim of your Society seems to be dreadful. Leave us some unreality. Do not make us too offensively sane. I love dining out, but with a Society with so wicked an object as yours I cannot dine. I regret it. I am sure you will all be charming, but I could not come, though 13 is a lucky number.

# THE ETHICS OF JOURNALISM

## I

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, September 20, 1894.)

To the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

SIR, – Will you allow me to draw your attention to a very interesting example of the ethics of modern journalism, a quality of which we have all heard so much and seen so little?

About a month ago Mr. T. P. O'Connor published in the *Sunday Sun* some doggerel verses entitled 'The Shamrock,' and had the amusing impertinence to append my name to them as their author. As for some years past all kinds of scurrilous personal attacks had been made on me in Mr. O'Connor's newspapers, I determined to take no notice at all of the incident.

Enraged, however, by my courteous silence, Mr. O'Connor returns to the charge this week. He now solemnly accuses me of plagiarising the poem he had the vulgarity to attribute to me.<sup>10</sup>

This seems to me to pass beyond even those bounds of coarse humour and coarser malice that are, by the contempt of all, conceded to the ordinary journalist, and it is really very

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<sup>10</sup> The verses called 'The Shamrock' were printed in the *Sunday Sun*, August 5, 1894, and the charge of plagiarism was made in the issue dated September 16, 1894.

distressing to find so low a standard of ethics in a Sunday newspaper. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

*September 18.*

## II

*(Pall Mall Gazette, September 25, 1894.)*

To the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

SIR, – The assistant editor of the *Sunday Sun*, on whom seems to devolve the arduous duty of writing Mr. T. P. O'Connor's apologies for him, does not, I observe with regret, place that gentleman's conduct in any more attractive or more honourable light by the attempted explanation that appears in the letter published in your issue of today. For the future it would be much better if Mr. O'Connor would always write his own apologies. That he can do so exceedingly well no one is more ready to admit than myself. I happen to possess one from him.

The assistant editor's explanation, stripped of its unnecessary verbiage, amounts to this: It is now stated that some months ago, somebody, whose name, observe, is not given, forwarded to the office of the *Sunday Sun* a manuscript in his own handwriting, containing some fifth-rate verses with my name appended to them as their author. The assistant editor frankly admits that they had grave doubts about my being capable of such an astounding production. To me, I must candidly say, it seems more probable

that they never for a single moment believed that the verses were really from my pen. Literary instinct is, of course, a very rare thing, and it would be too much to expect any true literary instinct to be found among the members of the staff of an ordinary newspaper; but had Mr. O'Connor really thought that the production, such as it is, was mine, he would naturally have asked my permission before publishing it. Great licence of comment and attack of every kind is allowed nowadays to newspapers, but no respectable editor would dream of printing and publishing a man's work without first obtaining his consent.

Mr. O'Connor's subsequent conduct in accusing me of plagiarism, when it was proved to him on unimpeachable authority that the verses he had vulgarly attributed to me were not by me at all, I have already commented on. It is perhaps best left to the laughter of the gods and the sorrow of men. I would like, however, to point out that when Mr. O'Connor, with the kind help of his assistant editor, states, as a possible excuse for his original sin, that he and the members of his staff 'took refuge' in the belief that the verses in question might conceivably be some very early and useful work of mine, he and the members of his staff showed a lamentable ignorance of the nature of the artistic temperament. Only mediocrities progress. An artist revolves in a cycle of masterpieces, the first of which is no less perfect than the last.

In conclusion, allow me to thank you for your courtesy in opening to me the columns of your valuable paper, and also

to express the hope that the painful *exposé* of Mr. O'Connor's conduct that I have been forced to make will have the good result of improving the standard of journalistic ethics in England. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

WORTHING, *September 22.*

# THE GREEN CARNATION

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, October 2, 1894.)

To the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

SIR, – Kindly allow me to contradict, in the most emphatic manner, the suggestion, made in your issue of Thursday last, and since then copied into many other newspapers, that I am the author of *The Green Carnation*.

I invented that magnificent flower. But with the middle-class and mediocre book that usurps its strangely beautiful name I have, I need hardly say, nothing whatsoever to do. The flower is a work of art. The book is not. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant, OSCAR WILDE.

WORTHING, *October 1*.

# PHRASES AND PHILOSOPHIES FOR THE USE OF THE YOUNG

(*Chameleon*, December 1894 )

The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible. What the second duty is no one has as yet discovered.

Wickedness is a myth invented by good people to account for the curious attractiveness of others.

If the poor only had profiles there would be no difficulty in solving the problem of poverty.

Those who see any difference between soul and body have neither.

A really well-made buttonhole is the only link between Art and Nature.

Religions die when they are proved to be true. Science is the record of dead religions.

The well-bred contradict other people. The wise contradict themselves.

Nothing that actually occurs is of the smallest importance.

Dulness is the coming of age of seriousness.

In all unimportant matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential. In all important matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential.

If one tells the truth one is sure, sooner or later, to be found out.



Pleasure is the only thing one should live for. Nothing ages like happiness.

It is only by not paying one's bills that one can hope to live in the memory of the commercial classes.

No crime is vulgar, but all vulgarity is crime. Vulgarity is the conduct of others.

Only the shallow know themselves.

Time is waste of money.

One should always be a little improbable.

There is a fatality about all good resolutions. They are invariably made too soon.

The only way to atone for being occasionally a little overdressed is by being always absolutely over-educated.

To be premature is to be perfect.

Any preoccupation with ideas of what is right or wrong in conduct shows an arrested intellectual development.

Ambition is the last refuge of the failure.

A truth ceases to be true when more than one person believes in it.

In examinations the foolish ask questions that the wise cannot answer.

Greek dress was in its essence inartistic. Nothing should reveal the body but the body.

One should either be a work of art, or wear a work of art.

It is only the superficial qualities that last. Man's deeper nature is soon found out.

Industry is the root of all ugliness.

The ages live in history through their anachronisms.

It is only the gods who taste of death. Apollo has passed away, but Hyacinth, whom men say he slew, lives on. Nero and Narcissus are always with us.

The old believe everything: the middle-aged suspect everything: the young know everything.

The condition of perfection is idleness: the aim of perfection is youth.

Only the great masters of style ever succeed in being obscure.

There is something tragic about the enormous number of young men there are in England at the present moment who start life with perfect profiles, and end by adopting some useful profession.

To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance.

# THE RISE OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM

The first portion of this essay is given at the end of the volume containing *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Prose Pieces*. Recently the remainder of the original manuscript has been discovered, and is here published for the first time. It was written for the Chancellor's English Essay Prize at Oxford in 1879, the subject being 'Historical Criticism among the Ancients.' The prize was not awarded. To Professor J. W. Mackail thanks are due for revising the proofs.

## IV

It is evident that here Thucydides is ready to admit the variety of manifestations which external causes bring about in their workings on the uniform character of the nature of man. Yet, after all is said, these are perhaps but very general statements: the ordinary effects of peace and war are dwelt on, but there is no real analysis of the immediate causes and general laws of the phenomena of life, nor does Thucydides seem to recognise the truth that if humanity proceeds in circles, the circles are always widening.

Perhaps we may say that with him the philosophy of history

is partly in the metaphysical stage, and see, in the progress of this idea from Herodotus to Polybius, the exemplification of the Comtian law of the three stages of thought, the theological, the metaphysical, and the scientific: for truly out of the vagueness of theological mysticism this conception which we call the Philosophy of History was raised to a scientific principle, according to which the past was explained and the future predicted by reference to general laws.

Now, just as the earliest account of the nature of the progress of humanity is to be found in Plato, so in him we find the first explicit attempt to found a universal philosophy of history upon wide rational grounds. Having created an ideally perfect state, the philosopher proceeds to give an elaborate theory of the complex causes which produce revolutions of the moral effects of various forms of government and education, of the rise of the criminal classes and their connection with pauperism, and, in a word, to create history by the deductive method and to proceed from *a priori* psychological principles to discover the governing laws of the apparent chaos of political life.

There have been many attempts since Plato to deduce from a single philosophical principle all the phenomena which experience subsequently verifies for us. Fichte thought he could predict the world-plan from the idea of universal time. Hegel dreamed he had found the key to the mysteries of life in the development of freedom, and Krause in the categories of being. But the one scientific basis on which the true philosophy of

history must rest is the complete knowledge of the laws of human nature in all its wants, its aspirations, its powers and its tendencies: and this great truth, which Thucydides may be said in some measure to have apprehended, was given to us first by Plato.

Now, it cannot be accurately said of this philosopher that either his philosophy or his history is entirely and simply *a priori*. *On est de son siècle même quand on y proteste*, and so we find in him continual references to the Spartan mode of life, the Pythagorean system, the general characteristics of Greek tyrannies and Greek democracies. For while, in his account of the method of forming an ideal state, he says that the political artist is indeed to fix his gaze on the sun of abstract truth in the heavens of the pure reason, but is sometimes to turn to the realisation of the ideals on earth: yet, after all, the general character of the Platonic method, which is what we are specially concerned with, is essentially deductive and *a priori*. And he himself, in the building up of his *Nephelococcygia*, certainly starts with a *καθαρος πινάξ*, making a clean sweep of all history and all experience; and it was essentially as an *a priori* theorist that he is criticised by Aristotle, as we shall see later.

To proceed to closer details regarding the actual scheme of the laws of political revolutions as drawn out by Plato, we must first note that the primary cause of the decay of the ideal state is the general principle, common to the vegetable and animal worlds as well as to the world of history, that all created things

are fated to decay – a principle which, though expressed in the terms of a mere metaphysical abstraction, is yet perhaps in its essence scientific. For we too must hold that a continuous redistribution of matter and motion is the inevitable result of the normal persistence of Force, and that perfect equilibrium is as impossible in politics as it certainly is in physics.

The secondary causes which mar the perfection of the Platonic ‘city of the sun’ are to be found in the intellectual decay of the race consequent on injudicious marriages and in the Philistine elevation of physical achievements over mental culture; while the hierarchical succession of Timocracy and Oligarchy, Democracy and Tyranny, is dwelt on at great length and its causes analysed in a very dramatic and psychological manner, if not in that sanctioned by the actual order of history.

And indeed it is apparent at first sight that the Platonic succession of states represents rather the succession of ideas in the philosophic mind than any historical succession of time.

Aristotle meets the whole simply by an appeal to facts. If the theory of the periodic decay of all created things, he urges, be scientific, it must be universal, and so true of all the other states as well as of the ideal. Besides, a state usually changes into its contrary and not to the form next to it; so the ideal state would not change into Timocracy; while Oligarchy, more often than Tyranny, succeeds Democracy. Plato, besides, says nothing of what a Tyranny would change to. According to the cycle theory it ought to pass into the ideal state again, but as a

fact one Tyranny is changed into another as at Sicyon, or into a Democracy as at Syracuse, or into an Aristocracy as at Carthage. The example of Sicily, too, shows that an Oligarchy is often followed by a Tyranny, as at Leontini and Gela. Besides, it is absurd to represent greed as the chief motive of decay, or to talk of avarice as the root of Oligarchy, when in nearly all true oligarchies money-making is forbidden by law. And finally the Platonic theory neglects the different kinds of democracies and of tyrannies.

Now nothing can be more important than this passage in Aristotle's *Politics* (v. 12.), which may be said to mark an era in the evolution of historical criticism. For there is nothing on which Aristotle insists so strongly as that the generalisations from facts ought to be added to the data of the *a priori* method – a principle which we know to be true not merely of deductive speculative politics but of physics also: for are not the residual phenomena of chemists a valuable source of improvement in theory?

His own method is essentially historical though by no means empirical. On the contrary, this far-seeing thinker, rightly styled *il maestro di color che sanno*, may be said to have apprehended clearly that the true method is neither exclusively empirical nor exclusively speculative, but rather a union of both in the process called Analysis or the Interpretation of Facts, which has been defined as the application to facts of such general conceptions as may fix the important characteristics of the phenomena, and present them permanently in their true relations.

He too was the first to point out, what even in our own day is incompletely appreciated, that nature, including the development of man, is not full of incoherent episodes like a bad tragedy, that inconsistency and anomaly are as impossible in the moral as they are in the physical world, and that where the superficial observer thinks he sees a revolution the philosophical critic discerns merely the gradual and rational evolution of the inevitable results of certain antecedents.

And while admitting the necessity of a psychological basis for the philosophy of history, he added to it the important truth that man, to be apprehended in his proper position in the universe as well as in his natural powers, must be studied from below in the hierarchical progression of higher function from the lower forms of life. The important maxim, that to obtain a clear conception of anything we must 'study it in its growth from the very beginning' is formally set down in the opening of the *Politics*, where, indeed, we shall find the other characteristic features of the modern Evolutionary theory, such as the 'Differentiation of Function' and the 'Survival of the Fittest' explicitly set forth.

What a valuable step this was in the improvement of the method of historical criticism it is needless to point out. By it, one may say, the true thread was given to guide one's steps through the bewildering labyrinth of facts. For history (to use terms with which Aristotle has made us familiar) may be looked at from two essentially different standpoints; either as a work of art whose τέλος or final cause is external to it and imposed



on it from without; or as an organism containing the law of its own development in itself, and working out its perfection merely by the fact of being what it is. Now, if we adopt the former, which we may style the theological view, we shall be in continual danger of tripping into the pitfall of some *a priori* conclusion – that bourne from which, it has been truly said, no traveller ever returns.

The latter is the only scientific theory and was apprehended in its fulness by Aristotle, whose application of the inductive method to history, and whose employment of the evolutionary theory of humanity, show that he was conscious that the philosophy of history is nothing separate from the facts of history but is contained in them, and that the rational law of the complex phenomena of life, like the ideal in the world of thought, is to be reached through the facts, not superimposed on them – *κατα πολλων* not *παρα πολλα*.

And finally, in estimating the enormous debt which the science of historical criticism owes to Aristotle, we must not pass over his attitude towards those two great difficulties in the formation of a philosophy of history on which I have touched above. I mean the assertion of extra-natural interference with the normal development of the world and of the incalculable influence exercised by the power of free will.

Now, as regards the former, he may be said to have neglected it entirely. The special acts of providence proceeding from God's immediate government of the world, which Herodotus saw as

mighty landmarks in history, would have been to him essentially disturbing elements in that universal reign of law, the extent of whose limitless empire he of all the great thinkers of antiquity was the first explicitly to recognise.

Standing aloof from the popular religion as well as from the deeper conceptions of Herodotus and the Tragic School, he no longer thought of God as of one with fair limbs and treacherous face haunting wood and glade, nor would he see in him a jealous judge continually interfering in the world's history to bring the wicked to punishment and the proud to a fall. God to him was the incarnation of the pure Intellect, a being whose activity was the contemplation of his own perfection, one whom Philosophy might imitate but whom prayers could never move, to the sublime indifference of whose passionless wisdom what were the sons of men, their desires or their sins? While, as regards the other difficulty and the formation of a philosophy of history, the conflict of free will with general laws appears first in Greek thought in the usual theological form in which all great ideas seem to be cradled at their birth.

It was such legends as those of Ædipus and Adrastus, exemplifying the struggles of individual humanity against the overpowering force of circumstances and necessity, which gave to the early Greeks those same lessons which we of modern days draw, in somewhat less artistic fashion, from the study of statistics and the laws of physiology.

In Aristotle, of course, there is no trace of supernatural

influence. The Furies, which drive their victim into sin first and then punishment, are no longer 'viper-tressed goddesses with eyes and mouth aflame,' but those evil thoughts which harbour within the impure soul. In this, as in all other points, to arrive at Aristotle is to reach the pure atmosphere of scientific and modern thought.

But while he rejected pure necessitarianism in its crude form as essentially a *reductio ad absurdum* of life, he was fully conscious of the fact that the will is not a mysterious and ultimate unit of force beyond which we cannot go and whose special characteristic is inconsistency, but a certain creative attitude of the mind which is, from the first, continually influenced by habits, education and circumstance; so absolutely modifiable, in a word, that the good and the bad man alike seem to lose the power of free will; for the one is morally unable to sin, the other physically incapacitated for reformation.

And of the influence of climate and temperature in forming the nature of man (a conception perhaps pressed too far in modern days when the 'race theory' is supposed to be a sufficient explanation of the Hindoo, and the latitude and longitude of a country the best guide to its morals<sup>11</sup>) Aristotle is completely unaware. I do not allude to such smaller points as the oligarchical tendencies of a horse-breeding country and the democratic

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<sup>11</sup> Cousin errs a good deal in this respect. To say, as he did, 'Give me the latitude and the longitude of a country, its rivers and its mountains, and I will deduce the race,' is surely a glaring exaggeration.

influence of the proximity of the sea (important though they are for the consideration of Greek history), but rather to those wider views in the seventh book of his *Politics*, where he attributes the happy union in the Greek character of intellectual attainments with the spirit of progress to the temperate climate they enjoyed, and points out how the extreme cold of the north dulls the mental faculties of its inhabitants and renders them incapable of social organisation or extended empire; while to the enervating heat of eastern countries was due that want of spirit and bravery which then, as now, was the characteristic of the population in that quarter of the globe.

Thucydides has shown the causal connection between political revolutions and the fertility of the soil, but goes a step farther and points out the psychological influences on a people's character exercised by the various extremes of climate – in both cases the first appearance of a most valuable form of historical criticism.

To the development of Dialectic, as to God, intervals of time are of no account. From Plato and Aristotle we pass direct to Polybius.

The progress of thought from the philosopher of the Academe to the Arcadian historian may be best illustrated by a comparison of the method by which each of the three writers, whom I have selected as the highest expressions of the rationalism of his respective age, attained to his ideal state: for the latter conception may be in a measure regarded as representing the most spiritual principle which they could discern in history.

Now, Plato created his on *a priori* principles: Aristotle formed his by an analysis of existing constitutions; Polybius found his realised for him in the actual world of fact. Aristotle criticised the deductive speculations of Plato by means of inductive negative instances, but Polybius will not take the ‘Cloud City’ of the *Republic* into account at all. He compares it to an athlete who has never run on ‘Constitution Hill,’ to a statue so beautiful that it is entirely removed from the ordinary conditions of humanity, and consequently from the canons of criticism.

The Roman state had attained in his eyes, by means of the mutual counteraction of three opposing forces,<sup>12</sup> that stable equilibrium in politics which was the ideal of all the theoretical writers of antiquity. And in connection with this point it will be convenient to notice here how much truth there is contained in the accusation so often brought against the ancients that they knew nothing of the idea of Progress, for the meaning of many of their speculations will be hidden from us if we do not try and comprehend first what their aim was, and secondly why it was so.

Now, like all wide generalities, this statement is at least inaccurate. The prayer of Plato’s ideal city – εἰς ἀγαθῶν ἀμεινούς, καὶ εἰς ὠφελιμωτέρους αἰετῶς ἐκγονοῦς γίγνεσθαι, might be written as a text over the door of the last Temple to Humanity raised by the disciples of Fourier and Saint Simon, but it is certainly true that their ideal principle was order

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<sup>12</sup> The monarchical, aristocratical, and democratic elements of the Roman constitution are referred to.

and permanence, not indefinite progress. For, setting aside the artistic prejudices which would have led the Greeks to reject this idea of unlimited improvement, we may note that the modern conception of progress rests partly on the new enthusiasm and worship of humanity, partly on the splendid hopes of material improvements in civilisation which applied science has held out to us, two influences from which ancient Greek thought seems to have been strangely free. For the Greeks marred the perfect humanism of the great men whom they worshipped, by imputing to them divinity and its supernatural powers; while their science was eminently speculative and often almost mystic in its character, aiming at culture and not utility, at higher spirituality and more intense reverence for law, rather than at the increased facilities of locomotion and the cheap production of common things about which our modern scientific school ceases not to boast. And lastly, and perhaps chiefly, we must remember that the 'plague spot of all Greek states,' as one of their own writers has called it, was the terrible insecurity to life and property which resulted from the factions and revolutions which ceased not to trouble Greece at all times, raising a spirit of fanaticism such as religion raised in the middle ages of Europe.

These considerations, then, will enable us to understand first how it was that, radical and unscrupulous reformers as the Greek political theorists were, yet, their end once attained, no modern conservatives raised such outcry against the slightest innovation. Even acknowledged improvements in such things as the games

of children or the modes of music were regarded by them with feelings of extreme apprehension as the herald of the *drapeau rouge* of reform. And secondly, it will show us how it was that Polybius found his ideal in the commonwealth of Rome, and Aristotle, like Mr. Bright, in the middle classes. Polybius, however, is not content merely with pointing out his ideal state, but enters at considerable length into the question of those general laws whose consideration forms the chief essential of the philosophy of history.

He starts by accepting the general principle that all things are fated to decay (which I noticed in the case of Plato), and that 'as iron produces rust and as wood breeds the animals that destroy it, so every state has in it the seeds of its own corruption.' He is not, however, content to rest there, but proceeds to deal with the more immediate causes of revolutions, which he says are twofold in nature, either external or internal. Now, the former, depending as they do on the synchronous conjunction of other events outside the sphere of scientific estimation, are from their very character incalculable; but the latter, though assuming many forms, always result from the over-great preponderance of any single element to the detriment of the others, the rational law lying at the base of all varieties of political changes being that stability can result only from the statical equilibrium produced by the counteraction of opposing parts, since the more simple a constitution is the more it is insecure. Plato had pointed out before how the extreme liberty of a democracy always resulted in despotism, but Polybius

analyses the law and shows the scientific principles on which it rests.

The doctrine of the instability of pure constitutions forms an important era in the philosophy of history. Its special applicability to the politics of our own day has been illustrated in the rise of the great Napoleon, when the French state had lost those divisions of caste and prejudice, of landed aristocracy and moneyed interest, institutions in which the vulgar see only barriers to Liberty but which are indeed the only possible defences against the coming of that periodic Sirius of politics, the τυραννος εκ προστατικης ριζης

There is a principle which Tocqueville never wearies of explaining, and which has been subsumed by Mr. Herbert Spencer under that general law common to all organic bodies which we call the Instability of the Homogeneous. The various manifestations of this law, as shown in the normal, regular revolutions and evolutions of the different forms of government,<sup>13</sup> are expounded with great clearness by Polybius, who claimed for his theory in the Thucydidean spirit, that it is a κτημα ες αιει, not a mere αγωνισμα ες το παραχρημα, and that a knowledge of it will enable the impartial observer<sup>14</sup> to discover at any time what period of its constitutional evolution any particular state has already reached and into what form it will be next differentiated, though possibly the exact time of the

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<sup>13</sup> Polybius, vi. 9. αυτη πολιτειων ανακυκλωσις, αυτη φυσεως οικονομια.

<sup>14</sup> χωρις οργης η φθονου ποιουμενος την αποδειξιν.



changes may be more or less uncertain.<sup>15</sup>

Now in this necessarily incomplete account of the laws of political revolutions as expounded by Polybius enough perhaps has been said to show what is his true position in the rational development of the 'Idea' which I have called the Philosophy of History, because it is the unifying of history. Seen darkly as it is through the glass of religion in the pages of Herodotus, more metaphysical than scientific with Thucydides, Plato strove to seize it by the eagle-flight of speculation, to reach it with the eager grasp of a soul impatient of those slower and surer inductive methods which Aristotle, in his trenchant criticism of his great master, showed were more brilliant than any vague theory, if the test of brilliancy is truth.

What then is the position of Polybius? Does any new method remain for him? Polybius was one of those many men who are born too late to be original. To Thucydides belongs the honour of being the first in the history of Greek thought to discern the supreme calm of law and order underlying the fitful storms of life, and Plato and Aristotle each represents a great new principle. To Polybius belongs the office – how noble an office he made it his writings show – of making more explicit the ideas which were implicit in his predecessors, of showing that they were of wider applicability and perhaps of deeper meaning than they had seemed before, of examining with more minuteness the laws which they had discovered, and finally of pointing out more

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<sup>15</sup> The various stages are συστασις, αυξησις, ακμη, μεταβολη ες τουμπαλιν.

clearly than any one had done the range of science and the means it offered for analysing the present and predicting what was to come. His office thus was to gather up what they had left, to give their principles new life by a wider application.

Polybius ends this great diapason of Greek thought. When the Philosophy of history appears next, as in Plutarch's tract on 'Why God's anger is delayed,' the pendulum of thought had swung back to where it began. His theory was introduced to the Romans under the cultured style of Cicero, and was welcomed by them as the philosophical panegyric of their state. The last notice of it in Latin literature is in the pages of Tacitus, who alludes to the stable polity formed out of these elements as a constitution easier to commend than to produce and in no case lasting. Yet Polybius had seen the future with no uncertain eye, and had prophesied the rise of the Empire from the unbalanced power of the ochlocracy fifty years and more before there was joy in the Julian household over the birth of that boy who, borne to power as the champion of the people, died wearing the purple of a king.

No attitude of historical criticism is more important than the means by which the ancients attained to the philosophy of history. The principle of heredity can be exemplified in literature as well as in organic life: Aristotle, Plato and Polybius are the lineal ancestors of Fichte and Hegel, of Vico and Cousin, of Montesquieu and Tocqueville.

As my aim is not to give an account of historians but to point out those great thinkers whose methods have furthered the

advance of this spirit of historical criticism, I shall pass over those annalists and chroniclers who intervened between Thucydides and Polybius. Yet perhaps it may serve to throw new light on the real nature of this spirit and its intimate connection with all other forms of advanced thought if I give some estimate of the character and rise of those many influences prejudicial to the scientific study of history which cause such a wide gap between these two historians.

Foremost among these is the growing influence of rhetoric and the Isocratean school, which seems to have regarded history as an arena for the display of either pathos or paradoxes, not a scientific investigation into laws.

The new age is the age of style. The same spirit of exclusive attention to form which made Euripides often, like Swinburne, prefer music to meaning and melody to morality, which gave to the later Greek statues that refined effeminacy, that overstrained gracefulness of attitude, was felt in the sphere of history. The rules laid down for historical composition are those relating to the æsthetic value of digressions, the legality of employing more than one metaphor in the same sentence, and the like; and historians are ranked not by their power of estimating evidence but by the goodness of the Greek they write.

I must note also the important influence on literature exercised by Alexander the Great; for while his travels encouraged the more accurate research of geography, the very splendour of his achievements seems to have brought history

again into the sphere of romance. The appearance of all great men in the world is followed invariably by the rise of that mythopœic spirit and that tendency to look for the marvellous, which is so fatal to true historical criticism. An Alexander, a Napoleon, a Francis of Assisi and a Mahomet are thought to be outside the limiting conditions of rational law, just as comets were supposed to be not very long ago. While the founding of that city of Alexandria, in which Western and Eastern thought met with such strange result to both, diverted the critical tendencies of the Greek spirit into questions of grammar, philology and the like, the narrow, artificial atmosphere of that University town (as we may call it) was fatal to the development of that independent and speculative spirit of research which strikes out new methods of inquiry, of which historical criticism is one.

The Alexandrines combined a great love of learning with an ignorance of the true principles of research, an enthusiastic spirit for accumulating materials with a wonderful incapacity to use them. Not among the hot sands of Egypt, or the Sophists of Athens, but from the very heart of Greece rises the man of genius on whose influence in the evolution of the philosophy of history I have a short time ago dwelt. Born in the serene and pure air of the clear uplands of Arcadia, Polybius may be said to reproduce in his work the character of the place which gave him birth. For, of all the historians – I do not say of antiquity but of all time – none is more rationalistic than he, none more free from any belief in the ‘visions and omens, the monstrous

legends, the grovelling superstitions and unmanly craving for the supernatural' (δεισιδαιμονιας αγεννους και τερατειας γυναικωδους<sup>16</sup>) which he is compelled to notice himself as the characteristics of some of the historians who preceded him. Fortunate in the land which bore him, he was no less blessed in the wondrous time of his birth. For, representing in himself the spiritual supremacy of the Greek intellect and allied in bonds of chivalrous friendship to the world-conqueror of his day, he seems led as it were by the hand of Fate 'to comprehend,' as has been said, 'more clearly than the Romans themselves the historical position of Rome,' and to discern with greater insight than all other men could those two great resultants of ancient civilisation, the material empire of the city of the seven hills, and the intellectual sovereignty of Hellas.

Before his own day, he says,<sup>17</sup> the events of the world were unconnected and separate and the histories confined to particular countries. Now, for the first time the universal empire of the Romans rendered a universal history possible.<sup>18</sup> This, then, is the august motive of his work: to trace the gradual rise of this Italian city from the day when the first legion crossed the narrow strait of Messina and landed on the fertile fields of Sicily to the time when Corinth in the East and Carthage in the West fell before the resistless wave of empire and the eagles of Rome passed on the

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<sup>16</sup> Polybius, xii. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Polybius, i. 4, viii. 4, specially; and really *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> He makes one exception.

wings of universal victory from Calpè and the Pillars of Hercules to Syria and the Nile. At the same time he recognised that the scheme of Rome's empire was worked out under the ægis of God's will.<sup>19</sup> For, as one of the Middle Age scribes most truly says, the *τυχη* of Polybius is that power which we Christians call God; the second aim, as one may call it, of his history is to point out the rational and human and natural causes which brought this result, distinguishing, as we should say, between God's mediate and immediate government of the world.

With any direct intervention of God in the normal development of Man, he will have nothing to do: still less with any idea of chance as a factor in the phenomena of life. Chance and miracles, he says, are mere expressions for our ignorance of rational causes. The spirit of rationalism which we recognised in Herodotus as a vague uncertain attitude and which appears in Thucydides as a consistent attitude of mind never argued about or even explained, is by Polybius analysed and formulated as the great instrument of historical research.

Herodotus, while believing on principle in the supernatural, yet was sceptical at times. Thucydides simply ignored the supernatural. He did not discuss it, but he annihilated it by explaining history without it. Polybius enters at length into the whole question and explains its origin and the method of treating it. Herodotus would have believed in Scipio's dream. Thucydides would have ignored it entirely. Polybius explains it. He is the

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<sup>19</sup> Polybius, viii. 4.

culmination of the rational progression of Dialectic. ‘Nothing,’ he says, ‘shows a foolish mind more than the attempt to account for any phenomena on the principle of chance or supernatural intervention. History is a search for rational causes, and there is nothing in the world – even those phenomena which seem to us the most remote from law and improbable – which is not the logical and inevitable result of certain rational antecedents.’

Some things, of course, are to be rejected *a priori* without entering into the subject: ‘As regards such miracles,’ he says,<sup>20</sup> ‘as that on a certain statue of Artemis rain or snow never falls though the statue stands in the open air, or that those who enter God’s shrine in Arcadia lose their natural shadows, I cannot really be expected to argue upon the subject. For these things are not only utterly improbable but absolutely impossible.’

‘For us to argue reasonably on an acknowledged absurdity is as vain a task as trying to catch water in a sieve; it is really to admit the possibility of the supernatural, which is the very point at issue.’

What Polybius felt was that to admit the possibility of a miracle is to annihilate the possibility of history: for just as scientific and chemical experiments would be either impossible or useless if exposed to the chance of continued interference on the part of some foreign body, so the laws and principles which govern history, the causes of phenomena, the evolution of progress, the whole science, in a word, of man’s dealings with his

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<sup>20</sup> Polybius, xvi. 12.

own race and with nature, will remain a sealed book to him who admits the possibility of extra-natural interference.

The stories of miracles, then, are to be rejected on *a priori* rational grounds, but in the case of events which we know to have happened the scientific historian will not rest till he has discovered their natural causes which, for instance, in the case of the wonderful rise of the Roman Empire – the most marvellous thing, Polybius says, which God ever brought about<sup>21</sup> – are to be found in the excellence of their constitution (τη ιδιοτητι της πολιτειας), the wisdom of their advisers, their splendid military arrangements, and their superstition (τη δεισιδαιμονια). For while Polybius regarded the revealed religion as, of course, objective reality of truth,<sup>22</sup> he laid great stress on its moral subjective influence, going, in one passage on the subject, even so far as almost to excuse the introduction of the supernatural in very small quantities into history on account of the extremely good effect it would have on pious people.

But perhaps there is no passage in the whole of ancient and modern history which breathes such a manly and splendid spirit of rationalism as one preserved to us in the Vatican – strange resting-place for it! – in which he treats of the terrible

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<sup>21</sup> Polybius, viii. 4: το παραδοξοτον των καθ ημας εργων ητυχη συνετελεσε; τουτο δ'εστι το παντα τα γνωριζομενα μερη της οικουμενης υπο μιαν αρχην και δυναστειαν αγαγειν, ο προτερον ουχ ευρισκεται γεγονος

<sup>22</sup> Polybius resembled Gibbon in many respects. Like him he held that all religions were to the philosopher equally false, to the vulgar equally true, to the statesman equally useful.



decay of population which had fallen on his native land in his own day, and which by the general orthodox public was regarded as a special judgment of God, sending childlessness on women as a punishment for the sins of the people. For it was a disaster quite without parallel in the history of the land, and entirely unforeseen by any of its political-economy writers who, on the contrary, were always anticipating that danger would arise from an excess of population overrunning its means of subsistence, and becoming unmanageable through its size. Polybius, however, will have nothing to do with either priest or worker of miracles in this matter. He will not even seek that 'sacred Heart of Greece,' Delphi, Apollo's shrine, whose inspiration even Thucydides admitted and before whose wisdom Socrates bowed. How foolish, he says, were the man who on this matter would pray to God. We must search for the rational causes, and the causes are seen to be clear, and the method of prevention also. He then proceeds to notice how all this arose from the general reluctance to marriage and to bearing the expense of educating a large family which resulted from the carelessness and avarice of the men of his day, and he explains on entirely rational principles the whole of this apparently supernatural judgment.

Now, it is to be borne in mind that while his rejection of miracles as violation of inviolable laws is entirely *a priori*—for, discussion of such a matter is, of course, impossible for a rational thinker — yet his rejection of supernatural intervention rests

entirely on the scientific grounds of the necessity of looking for natural causes. And he is quite logical in maintaining his position on these principles. For, where it is either difficult or impossible to assign any rational cause for phenomena, or to discover their laws, he acquiesces reluctantly in the alternative of admitting some extra-natural interference which his essentially scientific method of treating the matter has logically forced on him, approving, for instance, of prayers for rain, on the express ground that the laws of meteorology had not yet been ascertained. He would, of course, have been the first to welcome our modern discoveries in the matter. The passage in question is in every way one of the most interesting in his whole work, not, of course, as signifying any inclination on his part to acquiesce in the supernatural, but because it shows how essentially logical and rational his method of argument was, and how candid and fair his mind.

Having now examined Polybius's attitude towards the supernatural and the general ideas which guided his research, I will proceed to examine the method he pursued in his scientific investigation of the complex phenomena of life. For, as I have said before in the course of this essay, what is important in all great writers is not so much the results they arrive at as the methods they pursue. The increased knowledge of facts may alter any conclusion in history as in physical science, and the canons of speculative historical credibility must be acknowledged to appeal rather to that subjective attitude of mind which we call

the historic sense than to any formulated objective rules. But a scientific method is a gain for all time, and the true if not the only progress of historical criticism consists in the improvement of the instruments of research.

Now first, as regards his conception of history, I have already pointed out that it was to him essentially a search for causes, a problem to be solved, not a picture to be painted, a scientific investigation into laws and tendencies, not a mere romantic account of startling incident and wondrous adventure. Thucydides, in the opening of his great work, had sounded the first note of the scientific conception of history. 'The absence of romance in my pages,' he says, 'will, I fear, detract somewhat from its value, but I have written my work not to be the exploit of a passing hour but as the possession of all time.'<sup>23</sup> Polybius follows with words almost entirely similar. If, he says, we banish from history the consideration of causes, methods and motives (το δια τι, και πως, και τινος χαριν), and refuse to consider how far the result of anything is its rational consequent, what is left is a mere αγωνισμα, not a μαθημα, an oratorical essay which may give pleasure for the moment, but which is entirely without any scientific value for the explanation of the future. Elsewhere he says that 'history robbed of the exposition of its causes and laws is a profitless thing, though it may allure a fool.' And all through his history the same point is put forward and exemplified

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Polybius, xii. 25, ψιλως λεγομενον το γεγονος ψυχαγωγει μεν, ωφελει δ' ουδεν προστεθεισης δε της αιτιας εγκαρπος η της ιστοριας γιγνεται χρησις.

in every fashion.

So far for the conception of history. Now for the groundwork. As regards the character of the phenomena to be selected by the scientific investigator, Aristotle had laid down the general formula that nature should be studied in her normal manifestations. Polybius, true to his character of applying explicitly the principles implicit in the work of others, follows out the doctrine of Aristotle, and lays particular stress on the rational and undisturbed character of the development of the Roman constitution as affording special facilities for the discovery of the laws of its progress. Political revolutions result from causes either external or internal. The former are mere disturbing forces which lie outside the sphere of scientific calculation. It is the latter which are important for the establishing of principles and the elucidation of the sequences of rational evolution.

He thus may be said to have anticipated one of the most important truths of the modern methods of investigation: I mean that principle which lays down that just as the study of physiology should precede the study of pathology, just as the laws of disease are best discovered by the phenomena presented in health, so the method of arriving at all great social and political truths is by the investigation of those cases where development has been normal, rational and undisturbed.

The critical canon that the more a people has been interfered with, the more difficult it becomes to generalise the laws of its progress and to analyse the separate forces of its civilisation, is

one the validity of which is now generally recognised by those who pretend to a scientific treatment of all history: and while we have seen that Aristotle anticipated it in a general formula, to Polybius belongs the honour of being the first to apply it explicitly in the sphere of history.

I have shown how to this great scientific historian the motive of his work was essentially the search for causes; and true to his analytical spirit he is careful to examine what a cause really is and in what part of the antecedents of any consequent it is to be looked for. To give an illustration: As regards the origin of the war with Perseus, some assigned as causes the expulsion of Abrupolis by Perseus, the expedition of the latter to Delphi, the plot against Eumenes and the seizure of the ambassadors in Bœotia; of these incidents the two former, Polybius points out, were merely the pretexts, the two latter merely the occasions of the war. The war was really a legacy left to Perseus by his father, who was determined to fight it out with Rome.<sup>24</sup>

Here as elsewhere he is not originating any new idea. Thucydides had pointed out the difference between the real and the alleged cause, and the Aristotelian dictum about revolutions, ου περι μικρων αλλ εκ μικρων, draws the distinction between cause and occasion with the brilliancy of an epigram. But the explicit and rational investigation of the difference between αιτια, αρχη and προφασις was reserved for Polybius. No canon of historical criticism can be said to be of more real value

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<sup>24</sup> Polybius, xxii. 22.

than that involved in this distinction, and the overlooking of it has filled our histories with the contemptible accounts of the intrigues of courtiers and of kings and the petty plottings of backstairs influence – particulars interesting, no doubt, to those who would ascribe the Reformation to Anne Boleyn's pretty face, the Persian war to the influence of a doctor or a curtain-lecture from Atossa, or the French Revolution to Madame de Maintenon, but without any value for those who aim at any scientific treatment of history.

But the question of method, to which I am compelled always to return, is not yet exhausted. There is another aspect in which it may be regarded, and I shall now proceed to treat of it.

One of the greatest difficulties with which the modern historian has to contend is the enormous complexity of the facts which come under his notice: D'Alembert's suggestion that at the end of every century a selection of facts should be made and the rest burned (if it was really intended seriously) could not, of course, be entertained for a moment. A problem loses all its value when it becomes simplified, and the world would be all the poorer if the Sybil of History burned her volumes. Besides, as Gibbon pointed out, 'a Montesquieu will detect in the most insignificant fact relations which the vulgar overlook.'

Nor can the scientific investigator of history isolate the particular elements, which he desires to examine, from disturbing and extraneous causes, as the experimental chemist can do (though sometimes, as in the case of lunatic asylums and prisons,

he is enabled to observe phenomena in a certain degree of isolation). So he is compelled either to use the deductive mode of arguing from general laws or to employ the method of abstraction which gives a fictitious isolation to phenomena never so isolated in actual existence. And this is exactly what Polybius has done as well as Thucydides. For, as has been well remarked, there is in the works of these two writers a certain plastic unity of type and motive; whatever they write is penetrated through and through with a specific quality, a singleness and concentration of purpose, which we may contrast with the more comprehensive width as manifested not merely in the modern mind, but also in Herodotus. Thucydides, regarding society as influenced entirely by political motives, took no account of forces of a different nature, and consequently his results, like those of most modern political economists, have to be modified largely<sup>25</sup> before they come to correspond with what we know was the actual state of fact. Similarly, Polybius will deal only with those forces which tended to bring the civilised world under the dominion of Rome (ix. 1), and in the Thucydidean spirit points out the want of picturesqueness and romance in his pages which is the result of the abstract method (το μονοειδες της συνταξεως), being careful also to tell us that his rejection of all other forces is

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<sup>25</sup> I mean particularly as regards his sweeping denunciation of the complete moral decadence of Greek society during the Peloponnesian War which, from what remains to us of Athenian literature, we know must have been completely exaggerated. Or, rather, he is looking at men merely in their political dealings: and in politics the man who is personally honourable and refined will not scruple to do anything for his party.

essentially deliberate and the result of a preconceived theory and by no means due to carelessness of any kind.

Now, of the general value of the abstract method and the legality of its employment in the sphere of history, this is perhaps not the suitable occasion for any discussion. It is, however, in all ways worthy of note that Polybius is not merely conscious of, but dwells with particular weight on, the fact which is usually urged as the strongest objection to the employment of the abstract method – I mean the conception of a society as a sort of human organism whose parts are indissolubly connected with one another and all affected when one member is in any way agitated. This conception of the organic nature of society appears first in Plato and Aristotle, who apply it to cities. Polybius, as his wont is, expands it to be a general characteristic of all history. It is an idea of the very highest importance, especially to a man like Polybius whose thoughts are continually turned towards the essential unity of history and the impossibility of isolation.

Farther, as regards the particular method of investigating that group of phenomena obtained for him by the abstract method, he will adopt, he tells us, neither the purely deductive nor the purely inductive mode but the union of both. In other words, he formally adopts that method of analysis upon the importance of which I have dwelt before.

And lastly, while, without doubt, enormous simplicity in the elements under consideration is the result of the employment of the abstract method, even within the limit thus obtained a certain



selection must be made, and a selection involves a theory. For the facts of life cannot be tabulated with as great an ease as the colours of birds and insects can be tabulated. Now, Polybius points out that those phenomena particularly are to be dwelt on which may serve as a παραδειγμα or sample, and show the character of the tendencies of the age as clearly as ‘a single drop from a full cask will be enough to disclose the nature of the whole contents.’ This recognition of the importance of single facts, not in themselves but because of the spirit they represent, is extremely scientific; for we know that from the single bone, or tooth even, the anatomist can recreate entirely the skeleton of the primeval horse, and the botanist tell the character of the flora and fauna of a district from a single specimen.

Regarding truth as ‘the most divine thing in Nature,’ the very ‘eye and light of history without which it moves a blind thing,’ Polybius spared no pains in the acquisition of historical materials or in the study of the sciences of politics and war, which he considered were so essential to the training of the scientific historian, and the labour he took is mirrored in the many ways in which he criticises other authorities.

There is something, as a rule, slightly contemptible about ancient criticism. The modern idea of the critic as the interpreter, the expounder of the beauty and excellence of the work he selects, seems quite unknown. Nothing can be more captious or unfair, for instance, than the method by which Aristotle criticised the ideal state of Plato in his ethical works, and the passages

quoted by Polybius from Timæus show that the latter historian fully deserved the punning name given to him. But in Polybius there is, I think, little of that bitterness and pettiness of spirit which characterises most other writers, and an incidental story he tells of his relations with one of the historians whom he criticised shows that he was a man of great courtesy and refinement of taste – as, indeed, befitted one who had lived always in the society of those who were of great and noble birth.

Now, as regards the character of the canons by which he criticises the works of other authors, in the majority of cases he employs simply his own geographical and military knowledge, showing, for instance, the impossibility in the accounts given of Nabis's march from Sparta simply by his acquaintance with the spots in question; or the inconsistency of those of the battle of Issus; or of the accounts given by Ephorus of the battles of Leuctra and Mantinea. In the latter case he says, if any one will take the trouble to measure out the ground of the site of the battle and then test the manœuvres given, he will find how inaccurate the accounts are.

In other cases he appeals to public documents, the importance of which he was always foremost in recognising; showing, for instance, by a document in the public archives of Rhodes how inaccurate were the accounts given of the battle of Lade by Zeno and Antisthenes. Or he appeals to psychological probability, rejecting, for instance, the scandalous stories told of Philip of Macedon, simply from the king's general greatness of character,

and arguing that a boy so well educated and so respectably connected as Demochares (xii. 14) could never have been guilty of that of which evil rumour accused him.

But the chief object of his literary censure is Timæus, who had been so unsparing of his strictures on others. The general point which he makes against him, impugning his accuracy as a historian, is that he derived his knowledge of history not from the dangerous perils of a life of action but in the secure indolence of a narrow scholastic life. There is, indeed, no point on which he is so vehement as this. 'A history,' he says, 'written in a library gives as lifeless and as inaccurate a picture of history as a painting which is copied not from a living animal but from a stuffed one.'

There is more difference, he says in another place, between the history of an eye-witness and that of one whose knowledge comes from books, than there is between the scenes of real life and the fictitious landscapes of theatrical scenery. Besides this, he enters into somewhat elaborate detailed criticism of passages where he thought Timæus was following a wrong method and perverting truth, passages which it will be worth while to examine in detail.

Timæus, from the fact of there being a Roman custom to shoot a war-horse on a stated day, argued back to the Trojan origin of that people. Polybius, on the other hand, points out that the inference is quite unwarrantable, because horse-sacrifices are ordinary institutions common to all barbarous tribes. Timæus here, as was so common with Greek writers, is arguing back from

some custom of the present to an historical event in the past. Polybius really is employing the comparative method, showing how the custom was an ordinary step in the civilisation of every early people.

In another place,<sup>26</sup> he shows how illogical is the scepticism of Timæus as regards the existence of the Bull of Phalaris simply by appealing to the statue of the Bull, which was still to be seen in Carthage; pointing out how impossible it was, on any other theory except that it belonged to Phalaris, to account for the presence in Carthage of a bull of this peculiar character with a door between his shoulders. But one of the great points which he uses against this Sicilian historian is in reference to the question of the origin of the Locrian colony. In accordance with the received tradition on the subject, Aristotle had represented the Locrian colony as founded by some Parthenidæ or slaves' children, as they were called, a statement which seems to have roused the indignation of Timæus, who went to a good deal of trouble to confute this theory. He does so on the following grounds: —

First of all, he points out that in the ancient days the Greeks had no slaves at all, so the mention of them in the matter is an anachronism; and next he declares that he was shown in the Greek city of Locris certain ancient inscriptions in which their relation to the Italian city was expressed in terms of the position between parent and child, which showed also that mutual

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<sup>26</sup> Polybius, xii. 25.

rights of citizenship were accorded to each city. Besides this, he appeals to various questions of improbability as regards their international relationship, on which Polybius takes diametrically opposite grounds which hardly call for discussion. And in favour of his own view he urges two points more: first, that the Lacedæmonians being allowed furlough for the purpose of seeing their wives at home, it was unlikely that the Locrians should not have had the same privilege; and next, that the Italian Locrians knew nothing of the Aristotelian version and had, on the contrary, very severe laws against adulterers, runaway slaves and the like. Now, most of these questions rest on mere probability, which is always such a subjective canon that an appeal to it is rarely conclusive. I would note, however, as regards the inscriptions which, if genuine, would of course have settled the matter, that Polybius looks on them as a mere invention on the part of Timæus, who, he remarks, gives no details about them, though, as a rule, he is so over-anxious to give chapter and verse for everything. A somewhat more interesting point is that where he attacks Timæus for the introduction of fictitious speeches into his narrative; for on this point Polybius seems to be far in advance of the opinions held by literary men on the subject not merely in his own day, but for centuries after. Herodotus had introduced speeches avowedly dramatic and fictitious. Thucydides states clearly that, where he was unable to find out what people really said, he put down what they ought to have said. Sallust alludes, it is true, to the fact of the speech he puts into the mouth of

the tribune Memmius being essentially genuine, but the speeches given in the senate on the occasion of the Catilinarian conspiracy are very different from the same orations as they appear in Cicero. Livy makes his ancient Romans wrangle and chop logic with all the subtlety of a Hortensius or a Scævola. And even in later days, when shorthand reporters attended the debates of the senate and a *Daily News* was published in Rome, we find that one of the most celebrated speeches in Tacitus (that in which the Emperor Claudius gives the Gauls their freedom) is shown, by an inscription discovered recently at Lugdunum, to be entirely fabulous.

Upon the other hand, it must be borne in mind that these speeches were not intended to deceive; they were regarded merely as a certain dramatic element which it was allowable to introduce into history for the purpose of giving more life and reality to the narration, and were to be criticised, not as we should, by arguing how in an age before shorthand was known such a report was possible or how, in the failure of written documents, tradition could bring down such an accurate verbal account, but by the higher test of their psychological probability as regards the persons in whose mouths they are placed. An ancient historian in answer to modern criticism would say, probably, that these fictitious speeches were in reality more truthful than the actual ones, just as Aristotle claimed for poetry a higher degree of truth in comparison to history. The whole point is interesting as showing how far in advance of his age Polybius

may be said to have been.

The last scientific historian, it is possible to gather from his writings what he considered were the characteristics of the ideal writer of history; and no small light will be thrown on the progress of historical criticism if we strive to collect and analyse what in Polybius are more or less scattered expressions. The ideal historian must be contemporary with the events he describes, or removed from them by one generation only. Where it is possible, he is to be an eye-witness of what he writes of; where that is out of his power he is to test all traditions and stories carefully and not to be ready to accept what is plausible in place of what is true. He is to be no bookworm living aloof from the experiences of the world in the artificial isolation of a university town, but a politician, a soldier, and a traveller, a man not merely of thought but of action, one who can do great things as well as write of them, who in the sphere of history could be what Byron and Æschylus were in the sphere of poetry, at once *le chantre et le héros*.

He is to keep before his eyes the fact that chance is merely a synonym for our ignorance; that the reign of law pervades the domain of history as much as it does that of political science. He is to accustom himself to look on all occasions for rational and natural causes. And while he is to recognise the practical utility of the supernatural, in an educational point of view, he is not himself to indulge in such intellectual beating of the air as to admit the possibility of the violation of inviolable laws, or to

argue in a sphere wherein argument is *a priori* annihilated. He is to be free from all bias towards friend and country; he is to be courteous and gentle in criticism; he is not to regard history as a mere opportunity for splendid and tragic writing; nor is he to falsify truth for the sake of a paradox or an epigram.

While acknowledging the importance of particular facts as samples of higher truths, he is to take a broad and general view of humanity. He is to deal with the whole race and with the world, not with particular tribes or separate countries. He is to bear in mind that the world is really an organism wherein no one part can be moved without the others being affected also. He is to distinguish between cause and occasion, between the influence of general laws and particular fancies, and he is to remember that the greatest lessons of the world are contained in history and that it is the historian's duty to manifest them so as to save nations from following those unwise policies which always lead to dishonour and ruin, and to teach individuals to apprehend by the intellectual culture of history those truths which else they would have to learn in the bitter school of experience.

Now, as regards his theory of the necessity of the historian's being contemporary with the events he describes, so far as the historian is a mere narrator the remark is undoubtedly true. But to appreciate the harmony and rational position of the facts of a great epoch, to discover its laws, the causes which produced it and the effects which it generates, the scene must be viewed from a certain height and distance to be completely apprehended.



A thoroughly contemporary historian such as Lord Clarendon or Thucydides is in reality part of the history he criticises; and, in the case of such contemporary historians as Fabius and Philistus, Polybius is compelled to acknowledge that they are misled by patriotic and other considerations. Against Polybius himself no such accusation can be made. He indeed of all men is able, as from some lofty tower, to discern the whole tendency of the ancient world, the triumph of Roman institutions and of Greek thought which is the last message of the old world and, in a more spiritual sense, has become the Gospel of the new.

One thing indeed he did not see, or if he saw it, he thought but little of it – how from the East there was spreading over the world, as a wave spreads, a spiritual inroad of new religions from the time when the Pessinuntine mother of the gods, a shapeless mass of stone, was brought to the eternal city by her holiest citizen, to the day when the ship *Castor and Pollux* stood in at Puteoli, and St. Paul turned his face towards martyrdom and victory at Rome. Polybius was able to predict, from his knowledge of the causes of revolutions and the tendencies of the various forms of governments, the uprising of that democratic tone of thought which, as soon as a seed is sown in the murder of the Gracchi and the exile of Marius, culminated as all democratic movements do culminate, in the supreme authority of one man, the lordship of the world under the world's rightful lord, Caius Julius Cæsar. This, indeed, he saw in no uncertain way. But the turning of all men's hearts to the East, the first glimmering of that splendid

dawn which broke over the hills of Galilee and flooded the earth like wine, was hidden from his eyes.

There are many points in the description of the ideal historian which one may compare to the picture which Plato has given us of the ideal philosopher. They are both 'spectators of all time and all existence.' Nothing is contemptible in their eyes, for all things have a meaning, and they both walk in august reasonableness before all men, conscious of the workings of God yet free from all terror of mendicant priest or vagrant miracle-worker. But the parallel ends here. For the one stands aloof from the world-storm of sleet and hail, his eyes fixed on distant and sunlit heights, loving knowledge for the sake of knowledge and wisdom for the joy of wisdom, while the other is an eager actor in the world ever seeking to apply his knowledge to useful things. Both equally desire truth, but the one because of its utility, the other for its beauty. The historian regards it as the rational principle of all true history, and no more. To the other it comes as an all-pervading and mystic enthusiasm, 'like the desire of strong wine, the craving of ambition, the passionate love of what is beautiful.'

Still, though we miss in the historian those higher and more spiritual qualities which the philosopher of the Academe alone of all men possessed, we must not blind ourselves to the merits of that great rationalist who seems to have anticipated the very latest words of modern science. Nor yet is he to be regarded merely in the narrow light in which he is estimated by most modern critics, as the explicit champion of rationalism and nothing more. For

he is connected with another idea, the course of which is as the course of that great river of his native Arcadia which, springing from some arid and sun-bleached rock, gathers strength and beauty as it flows till it reaches the asphodel meadows of Olympia and the light and laughter of Ionian waters.

For in him we can discern the first notes of that great cult of the seven-hilled city which made Virgil write his epic and Livy his history, which found in Dante its highest exponent, which dreamed of an Empire where the Emperor would care for the bodies and the Pope for the souls of men, and so has passed into the conception of God's spiritual empire and the universal brotherhood of man and widened into the huge ocean of universal thought as the Peneus loses itself in the sea.

Polybius is the last scientific historian of Greece. The writer who seems fittingly to complete the progress of thought is a writer of biographies only. I will not here touch on Plutarch's employment of the inductive method as shown in his constant use of inscription and statue, of public document and building and the like, because they involve no new method. It is his attitude towards miracles of which I desire to treat.

Plutarch is philosophic enough to see that in the sense of a violation of the laws of nature a miracle is impossible. It is absurd, he says, to imagine that the statue of a saint can speak, and that an inanimate object not possessing the vocal organs should be able to utter an articulate sound. Upon the other hand, he protests against science imagining that, by

explaining the natural causes of things, it has explained away their transcendental meaning. 'When the tears on the cheek of some holy statue have been analysed into the moisture which certain temperatures produce on wood and marble, it yet by no means follows that they were not a sign of grief and mourning set there by God Himself.' When Lampon saw in the prodigy of the one-horned ram the omen of the supreme rule of Pericles, and when Anaxagoras showed that the abnormal development was the rational resultant of the peculiar formation of the skull, the dreamer and the man of science were both right; it was the business of the latter to consider how the prodigy came about, of the former to show why it was so formed and what it so portended. The progression of thought is exemplified in all particulars. Herodotus had a glimmering sense of the impossibility of a violation of nature. Thucydides ignored the supernatural. Polybius rationalised it. Plutarch raises it to its mystical heights again, though he bases it on law. In a word, Plutarch felt that while science brings the supernatural down to the natural, yet ultimately all that is natural is really supernatural. To him, as to many of our own day, religion was that transcendental attitude of the mind which, contemplating a world resting on inviolable law, is yet comforted and seeks to worship God not in the violation but in the fulfilment of nature.

It may seem paradoxical to quote in connection with the priest of Chæroneia such a pure rationalist as Mr. Herbert Spencer; yet when we read as the last message of modern science that 'when

the equation of life has been reduced to its lowest terms the symbols are symbols still,' mere signs, that is, of that unknown reality which underlies all matter and all spirit, we may feel how over the wide strait of centuries thought calls to thought and how Plutarch has a higher position than is usually claimed for him in the progress of the Greek intellect.

And, indeed, it seems that not merely the importance of Plutarch himself but also that of the land of his birth in the evolution of Greek civilisation has been passed over by modern critics. To us, indeed, the bare rock to which the Parthenon serves as a crown, and which lies between Colonus and Attica's violet hills, will always be the holiest spot in the land of Greece: and Delphi will come next, and then the meadows of Eurotas where that noble people lived who represented in Hellenic thought the reaction of the law of duty against the law of beauty, the opposition of conduct to culture. Yet, as one stands on the *σχίστη οδος* of Cithæron and looks out on the great double plain of Bœotia, the enormous importance of the division of Hellas comes to one's mind with great force. To the north is Orchomenus and the Minyan treasure house, seat of those merchant princes of Phœnicia who brought to Greece the knowledge of letters and the art of working in gold. Thebes is at our feet with the gloom of the terrible legends of Greek tragedy still lingering about it, the birthplace of Pindar, the nurse of Epaminondas and the Sacred Band.

And from out of the plain where 'Mars loved to dance,' rises

the Muses' haunt, Helicon, by whose silver streams Corinna and Hesiod sang. While far away under the white ægis of those snow-capped mountains lies Chæronea and the Lion plain where with vain chivalry the Greeks strove to check Macedon first and afterwards Rome; Chæronea, where in the Martinmas summer of Greek civilisation Plutarch rose from the drear waste of a dying religion as the aftermath rises when the mowers think they have left the field bare.

Greek philosophy began and ended in scepticism: the first and the last word of Greek history was Faith.

Splendid thus in its death, like winter sunsets, the Greek religion passed away into the horror of night. For the Cimmerian darkness was at hand, and when the schools of Athens were closed and the statue of Athena broken, the Greek spirit passed from the gods and the history of its own land to the subtleties of defining the doctrine of the Trinity and the mystical attempts to bring Plato into harmony with Christ and to reconcile Gethsemane and the Sermon on the Mount with the Athenian prison and the discussion in the woods of Colonus. The Greek spirit slept for wellnigh a thousand years. When it woke again, like Antæus it had gathered strength from the earth where it lay, like Apollo it had lost none of its divinity through its long servitude.

In the history of Roman thought we nowhere find any of those characteristics of the Greek Illumination which I have pointed out are the necessary concomitants of the rise of historical

criticism. The conservative respect for tradition which made the Roman people delight in the ritual and formulas of law, and is as apparent in their politics as in their religion, was fatal to any rise of that spirit of revolt against authority the importance of which, as a factor in intellectual progress, we have already seen.

The whitened tables of the Pontifices preserved carefully the records of the eclipses and other atmospherical phenomena, and what we call the art of verifying dates was known to them at an early time; but there was no spontaneous rise of physical science to suggest by its analogies of law and order a new method of research, nor any natural springing up of the questioning spirit of philosophy with its unification of all phenomena and all knowledge. At the very time when the whole tide of Eastern superstition was sweeping into the heart of the Capitol the Senate banished the Greek philosophers from Rome. And of the three systems which did at length take some root in the city those of Zeno and Epicurus were merely used as the rule for the ordering of life, while the dogmatic scepticism of Carneades, by its very principles, annihilated the possibility of argument and encouraged a perfect indifference to research.

Nor were the Romans ever fortunate enough like the Greeks to have to face the incubus of any dogmatic system of legends and myths, the immoralities and absurdities of which might excite a revolutionary outbreak of sceptical criticism. For the Roman religion became as it were crystallised and isolated from progress at an early period of its evolution. Their gods remained

mere abstractions of commonplace virtues or uninteresting personifications of the useful things of life. The old primitive creed was indeed always upheld as a state institution on account of the enormous facilities it offered for cheating in politics, but as a spiritual system of belief it was unanimously rejected at a very early period both by the common people and the educated classes, for the sensible reason that it was so extremely dull. The former took refuge in the mystic sensualities of the worship of Isis, the latter in the Stoical rules of life. The Romans classified their gods carefully in their order of precedence, analysed their genealogies in the laborious spirit of modern heraldry, fenced them round with a ritual as intricate as their law, but never quite cared enough about them to believe in them. So it was of no account with them when the philosophers announced that Minerva was merely memory. She had never been much else. Nor did they protest when Lucretius dared to say of Ceres and of Liber that they were only the corn of the field and the fruit of the vine. For they had never mourned for the daughter of Demeter in the asphodel meadows of Sicily, nor traversed the glades of Cithæron with fawn-skin and with spear.

This brief sketch of the condition of Roman thought will serve to prepare us for the almost total want of scientific historical criticism which we shall discern in their literature, and has, besides, afforded fresh corroborations of the conditions essential to the rise of this spirit, and of the modes of thought which it reflects and in which it is always to be found. Roman



historical composition had its origin in the pontifical college of ecclesiastical lawyers, and preserved to its close the uncritical spirit which characterised its fountain-head. It possessed from the outset a most voluminous collection of the materials of history, which, however, produced merely antiquarians, not historians. It is so hard to use facts, so easy to accumulate them.

Wearied of the dull monotony of the pontifical annals, which dwelt on little else but the rise and fall in provisions and the eclipses of the sun, Cato wrote out a history with his own hand for the instruction of his child, to which he gave the name of *Origines*, and before his time some aristocratic families had written histories in Greek much in the same spirit in which the Germans of the eighteenth century used French as the literary language. But the first regular Roman historian is Sallust. Between the extravagant eulogies passed on this author by the French (such as De Closset), and Dr. Mommsen's view of him as merely a political pamphleteer, it is perhaps difficult to reach the *via media* of unbiassed appreciation. He has, at any rate, the credit of being a purely rationalistic historian, perhaps the only one in Roman literature. Cicero had a good many qualifications for a scientific historian, and (as he usually did) thought very highly of his own powers. On passages of ancient legend, however, he is rather unsatisfactory, for while he is too sensible to believe them he is too patriotic to reject them. And this is really the attitude of Livy, who claims for early Roman legend a certain uncritical homage from the rest of the subject

world. His view in his history is that it is not worth while to examine the truth of these stories.

In his hands the history of Rome unrolls before our eyes like some gorgeous tapestry, where victory succeeds victory, where triumph treads on the heels of triumph, and the line of heroes seems never to end. It is not till we pass behind the canvas and see the slight means by which the effect is produced that we apprehend the fact that like most picturesque writers Livy is an indifferent critic. As regards his attitude towards the credibility of early Roman history he is quite as conscious as we are of its mythical and unsound nature. He will not, for instance, decide whether the Horatii were Albans or Romans; who was the first dictator; how many tribunes there were, and the like. His method, as a rule, is merely to mention all the accounts and sometimes to decide in favour of the most probable, but usually not to decide at all. No canons of historical criticism will ever discover whether the Roman women interviewed the mother of Coriolanus of their own accord or at the suggestion of the senate; whether Remus was killed for jumping over his brother's wall or because they quarrelled about birds; whether the ambassadors found Cincinnatus ploughing or only mending a hedge. Livy suspends his judgment over these important facts and history when questioned on their truth is dumb. If he does select between two historians he chooses the one who is nearer to the facts he describes. But he is no critic, only a conscientious writer. It is mere vain waste to dwell on his critical powers, for

they do not exist.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the case of Tacitus imagination has taken the place of history. The past lives again in his pages, but through no laborious criticism; rather through a dramatic and psychological faculty which he specially possessed.

In the philosophy of history he has no belief. He can never make up his mind what to believe as regards God's government of the world. There is no method in him and none elsewhere in Roman literature.

Nations may not have missions but they certainly have functions. And the function of ancient Italy was not merely to give us what is statical in our institutions and rational in our law, but to blend into one elemental creed the spiritual aspirations of Aryan and of Semite. Italy was not a pioneer in intellectual progress, nor a motive power in the evolution of thought. The owl of the goddess of Wisdom traversed over the whole land and found nowhere a resting-place. The dove, which is the bird of Christ, flew straight to the city of Rome and the new reign began. It was the fashion of early Italian painters to represent in mediæval costume the soldiers who watched over the tomb of Christ, and this, which was the result of the frank anachronism of all true art, may serve to us as an allegory. For it was in vain that the middle ages strove to guard the buried spirit of progress.

When the dawn of the Greek spirit arose, the sepulchre was empty, the grave-clothes laid aside. Humanity had risen from the dead.

The study of Greek, it has been well said, implies the birth of criticism, comparison and research. At the opening of that education of modern by ancient thought which we call the Renaissance, it was the words of Aristotle which sent Columbus sailing to the New World, while a fragment of Pythagorean astronomy set Copernicus thinking on that train of reasoning which has revolutionised the whole position of our planet in the universe. Then it was seen that the only meaning of progress is a return to Greek modes of thought. The monkish hymns which obscured the pages of Greek manuscripts were blotted out, the splendours of a new method were unfolded to the world, and out of the melancholy sea of mediævalism rose the free spirit of man in all that splendour of glad adolescence, when the bodily powers seem quickened by a new vitality, when the eye sees more clearly than its wont and the mind apprehends what was beforetime hidden from it. To herald the opening of the sixteenth century, from the little Venetian printing press came forth all the great authors of antiquity, each bearing on the title-page the words Ἄλδος ο Μανουτιος Ρωμαιος και Φιλελλην words which may serve to remind us with what wondrous prescience Polybius saw the world's fate when he foretold the material sovereignty of Roman institutions and exemplified in himself the intellectual empire of Greece.

The course of the study of the spirit of historical criticism has not been a profitless investigation into modes and forms of thought now antiquated and of no account. The only spirit which is entirely removed from us is the mediæval; the Greek spirit is essentially modern. The introduction of the comparative method of research which has forced history to disclose its secrets belongs in a measure to us. Ours, too, is a more scientific knowledge of philology and the method of survival. Nor did the ancients know anything of the doctrine of averages or of crucial instances, both of which methods have proved of such importance in modern criticism, the one adding a most important proof of the statical elements of history, and exemplifying the influences of all physical surroundings on the life of man; the other, as in the single instance of the Moulin Quignon skull, serving to create a whole new science of prehistoric archæology and to bring us back to a time when man was coeval with the stone age, the mammoth and the woolly rhinoceros. But, except these, we have added no new canon or method to the science of historical criticism. Across the drear waste of a thousand years the Greek and the modern spirit join hands.

In the torch race which the Greek boys ran from the Cerameician field of death to the home of the goddess of Wisdom, not merely he who first reached the goal but he also who first started with the torch aflame received a prize. In the Lampadephoria of civilisation and free thought let us not forget to render due meed of honour to those who first lit that sacred

flame, the increasing splendour of which lights our footsteps to the far-off divine event of the attainment of perfect truth.

# LA SAINTE COURTISANE; OR, THE WOMAN COVERED WITH JEWELS

*The scene represents a corner of a valley in the Thebaid. On the right hand of the stage is a cavern. In front of the cavern stands a great crucifix.*

*On the left [sand dunes].*

*The sky is blue like the inside of a cup of lapis lazuli. The hills are of red sand. Here and there on the hills there are clumps of thorns.*

FIRST MAN. Who is she? She makes me afraid. She has a purple cloak and her hair is like threads of gold. I think she must be the daughter of the Emperor. I have heard the boatmen say that the Emperor has a daughter who wears a cloak of purple.

SECOND MAN. She has birds' wings upon her sandals, and her tunic is of the colour of green corn. It is like corn in spring when she stands still. It is like young corn troubled by the shadows of hawks when she moves. The pearls on her tunic are like many moons.

FIRST MAN. They are like the moons one sees in the water when the wind blows from the hills.

SECOND MAN. I think she is one of the gods. I think she comes from Nubia.

FIRST MAN. I am sure she is the daughter of the Emperor. Her nails are stained with henna. They are like the petals of a rose. She has come here to weep for Adonis.

SECOND MAN. She is one of the gods. I do not know why she has left her temple. The gods should not leave their temples. If she speaks to us let us not answer and she will pass by.

FIRST MAN. She will not speak to us. She is the daughter of the Emperor.

MYRRHINA. Dwells he not here, the beautiful young hermit, he who will not look on the face of woman?

FIRST MAN. Of a truth it is here the hermit dwells.

MYRRHINA. Why will he not look on the face of woman?

SECOND MAN. We do not know.

MYRRHINA. Why do ye yourselves not look at me?

FIRST MAN. You are covered with bright stones, and you dazzle our eyes.

SECOND MAN. He who looks at the sun becomes blind. You are too bright to look at. It is not wise to look at things that are very bright. Many of the priests in the temples are blind, and have slaves to lead them.

MYRRHINA. Where does he dwell, the beautiful young hermit who will not look on the face of woman? Has he a house of reeds or a house of burnt clay or does he lie on the hillside? Or does he make his bed in the rushes?

FIRST MAN. He dwells in that cavern yonder.

MYRRHINA. What a curious place to dwell in.



FIRST MAN. Of old a centaur lived there. When the hermit came the centaur gave a shrill cry, wept and lamented, and galloped away.

SECOND MAN. No. It was a white unicorn who lived in the cave. When it saw the hermit coming the unicorn knelt down and worshipped him. Many people saw it worshipping him.

FIRST MAN. I have talked with people who saw it.

...

SECOND MAN. Some say he was a hewer of wood and worked for hire. But that may not be true.

...

MYRRHINA. What gods then do ye worship? Or do ye worship any gods? There are those who have no gods to worship. The philosophers who wear long beards and brown cloaks have no gods to worship. They wrangle with each other in the porticoes. The [] laugh at them.

FIRST MAN. We worship seven gods. We may not tell their names. It is a very dangerous thing to tell the names of the gods. No one should ever tell the name of his god. Even the priests who praise the gods all day long, and eat of their food with them, do not call them by their right names.

MYRRHINA. Where are these gods ye worship?

FIRST MAN. We hide them in the folds of our tunics. We do not show them to any one. If we showed them to any one they might leave us.

MYRRHINA. Where did ye meet with them?

FIRST MAN. They were given to us by an embalmer of the dead who had found them in a tomb. We served him for seven years.

MYRRHINA. The dead are terrible. I am afraid of Death.

FIRST MAN. Death is not a god. He is only the servant of the gods.

MYRRHINA. He is the only god I am afraid of. Ye have seen many of the gods?

FIRST MAN. We have seen many of them. One sees them chiefly at night time. They pass one by very swiftly. Once we saw some of the gods at daybreak. They were walking across a plain.

MYRRHINA. Once as I was passing through the market place I heard a sophist from Cilicia say that there is only one God. He said it before many people.

FIRST MAN. That cannot be true. We have ourselves seen many, though we are but common men and of no account. When I saw them I hid myself in a bush. They did me no harm.

MYRRHINA. Tell me more about the beautiful young hermit. Talk to me about the beautiful young hermit who will not look on the face of woman. What is the story of his days? What mode of life has he?

FIRST MAN. We do not understand you.

MYRRHINA. What does he do, the beautiful young hermit? Does he sow or reap? Does he plant a garden or catch fish in a net? Does he weave linen on a loom? Does he set his hand to the wooden plough and walk behind the oxen?

SECOND MAN. He being a very holy man does nothing. We are common men and of no account. We toil all day long in the sun. Sometimes the ground is very hard.

MYRRHINA. Do the birds of the air feed him? Do the jackals share their booty with him?

FIRST MAN. Every evening we bring him food. We do not think that the birds of the air feed him.

MYRRHINA. Why do ye feed him? What profit have ye in so doing?

SECOND MAN. He is a very holy man. One of the gods whom he has offended has made him mad. We think he has offended the moon.

MYRRHINA. Go and tell him that one who has come from Alexandria desires to speak with him.

FIRST MAN. We dare not tell him. This hour he is praying to his God. We pray thee to pardon us for not doing thy bidding.

MYRRHINA. Are ye afraid of him?

FIRST MAN. We are afraid of him.

MYRRHINA. Why are ye afraid of him?

FIRST MAN. We do not know.

MYRRHINA. What is his name?

FIRST MAN. The voice that speaks to him at night time in the cavern calls to him by the name of Honorius. It was also by the name of Honorius that the three lepers who passed by once called to him. We think that his name is Honorius.

MYRRHINA. Why did the three lepers call to him?

FIRST MAN. That he might heal them.

MYRRHINA. Did he heal them?

SECOND MAN. No. They had committed some sin: it was for that reason they were lepers. Their hands and faces were like salt. One of them wore a mask of linen. He was a king's son.

MYRRHINA. What is the voice that speaks to him at night time in his cave?

FIRST MAN. We do not know whose voice it is. We think it is the voice of his God. For we have seen no man enter his cavern nor any come forth from it.

MYRRHINA. Honorius.

HONORIUS (*from within*). Who calls Honorius?

...

MYRRHINA. Come forth, Honorius.

...

My chamber is ceiled with cedar and odorous with myrrh. The pillars of my bed are of cedar and the hangings are of purple. My bed is strewn with purple and the steps are of silver. The hangings are sewn with silver pomegranates and the steps that are of silver are strewn with saffron and with myrrh. My lovers hang garlands round the pillars of my house. At night time they come with the flute players and the players of the harp. They woo me with apples and on the pavement of my courtyard they write my name in wine.

From the uttermost parts of the world my lovers come to me. The kings of the earth come to me and bring me presents.

When the Emperor of Byzantium heard of me he left his porphyry chamber and set sail in his galleys. His slaves bare no torches that none might know of his coming. When the King of Cyprus heard of me he sent me ambassadors. The two Kings of Libya who are brothers brought me gifts of amber.

I took the minion of Cæsar from Cæsar and made him my playfellow. He came to me at night in a litter. He was pale as a narcissus, and his body was like honey.

The son of the Præfect slew himself in my honour, and the Tetrarch of Cilicia scourged himself for my pleasure before my slaves.

The King of Hierapolis who is a priest and a robber set carpets for me to walk on.

Sometimes I sit in the circus and the gladiators fight beneath me. Once a Thracian who was my lover was caught in the net. I gave the signal for him to die and the whole theatre applauded. Sometimes I pass through the gymnasium and watch the young men wrestling or in the race. Their bodies are bright with oil and their brows are wreathed with willow sprays and with myrtle. They stamp their feet on the sand when they wrestle and when they run the sand follows them like a little cloud. He at whom I smile leaves his companions and follows me to my home. At other times I go down to the harbour and watch the merchants unloading their vessels. Those that come from Tyre have cloaks of silk and earrings of emerald. Those that come from Massilia have cloaks of fine wool and earrings of brass. When they see me

coming they stand on the prows of their ships and call to me, but I do not answer them. I go to the little taverns where the sailors lie all day long drinking black wine and playing with dice and I sit down with them.

I made the Prince my slave, and his slave who was a Tyrian I made my Lord for the space of a moon.

I put a figured ring on his finger and brought him to my house. I have wonderful things in my house.

The dust of the desert lies on your hair and your feet are scratched with thorns and your body is scorched by the sun. Come with me, Honorius, and I will clothe you in a tunic of silk. I will smear your body with myrrh and pour spikenard on your hair. I will clothe you in hyacinth and put honey in your mouth. Love —

HONORIUS. There is no love but the love of God.

MYRRHINA. Who is He whose love is greater than that of mortal men?

HONORIUS. It is He whom thou seest on the cross, Myrrhina. He is the Son of God and was born of a virgin. Three wise men who were kings brought Him offerings, and the shepherds who were lying on the hills were wakened by a great light.

The Sibyls knew of His coming. The groves and the oracles spake of Him. David and the prophets announced Him. There is no love like the love of God nor any love that can be compared to it.

The body is vile, Myrrhina. God will raise thee up with a new body which will not know corruption, and thou wilt dwell in the Courts of the Lord and see Him whose hair is like fine wool and whose feet are of brass.

MYRRHINA. The beauty.

HONORIUS. The beauty of the soul increases till it can see God. Therefore, Myrrhina, repent of thy sins. The robber who was crucified beside Him He brought into Paradise. [*Exit.*

MYRRHINA. How strangely he spake to me. And with what scorn did he regard me. I wonder why he spake to me so strangely.

...

HONORIUS. Myrrhina, the scales have fallen from my eyes and I see now clearly what I did not see before. Take me to Alexandria and let me taste of the seven sins.

MYRRHINA. Do not mock me, Honorius, nor speak to me with such bitter words. For I have repented of my sins and I am seeking a cavern in this desert where I too may dwell so that my soul may become worthy to see God.

HONORIUS. The sun is setting, Myrrhina. Come with me to Alexandria.

MYRRHINA. I will not go to Alexandria.

HONORIUS. Farewell, Myrrhina.

MYRRHINA. Honorius, farewell. No, no, do not go.

...

I have cursed my beauty for what it has done, and cursed the

wonder of my body for the evil that it has brought upon you.

Lord, this man brought me to Thy feet. He told me of Thy coming upon earth, and of the wonder of Thy birth, and the great wonder of Thy death also. By him, O Lord, Thou wast revealed to me.

HONORIUS. You talk as a child, Myrrhina, and without knowledge. Loosen your hands. Why didst thou come to this valley in thy beauty?

MYRRHINA. The God whom thou worshippest led me here that I might repent of my iniquities and know Him as the Lord.

HONORIUS. Why didst thou tempt me with words?

MYRRHINA. That thou shouldst see Sin in its painted mask and look on Death in its robe of Shame.



# THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE OF ART

‘The English Renaissance of Art’ was delivered as a lecture for the first time in the Chickering Hall, New York, on January 9, 1882. A portion of it was reported in the *New York Tribune* on the following day and in other American papers subsequently. Since then this portion has been reprinted, more or less accurately, from time to time, in unauthorised editions, but not more than one quarter of the lecture has ever been published.

There are in existence no less than four copies of the lecture, the earliest of which is entirely in the author’s handwriting. The others are type-written and contain many corrections and additions made by the author in manuscript. These have all been collated and the text here given contains, as nearly as possible, the lecture in its original form as delivered by the author during his tour in the United States.

Among the many debts which we owe to the supreme æsthetic faculty of Goethe is that he was the first to teach us to define beauty in terms the most concrete possible, to realise it, I mean, always in its special manifestations. So, in the lecture which I have the honour to deliver before you, I will not try to give you any abstract definition of beauty – any such universal formula for it as was sought for by the philosophy of the eighteenth century

– still less to communicate to you that which in its essence is incommunicable, the virtue by which a particular picture or poem affects us with a unique and special joy; but rather to point out to you the general ideas which characterise the great English Renaissance of Art in this century, to discover their source, as far as that is possible, and to estimate their future as far as that is possible.

I call it our English Renaissance because it is indeed a sort of new birth of the spirit of man, like the great Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century, in its desire for a more gracious and comely way of life, its passion for physical beauty, its exclusive attention to form, its seeking for new subjects for poetry, new forms of art, new intellectual and imaginative enjoyments: and I call it our romantic movement because it is our most recent expression of beauty.

It has been described as a mere revival of Greek modes of thought, and again as a mere revival of mediæval feeling. Rather I would say that to these forms of the human spirit it has added whatever of artistic value the intricacy and complexity and experience of modern life can give: taking from the one its clearness of vision and its sustained calm, from the other its variety of expression and the mystery of its vision. For what, as Goethe said, is the study of the ancients but a return to the real world (for that is what they did); and what, said Mazzini, is mediævalism but individuality?

It is really from the union of Hellenism, in its breadth,

its sanity of purpose, its calm possession of beauty, with the adventive, the intensified individualism, the passionate colour of the romantic spirit, that springs the art of the nineteenth century in England, as from the marriage of Faust and Helen of Troy sprang the beautiful boy Euphorion.

Such expressions as 'classical' and 'romantic' are, it is true, often apt to become the mere catchwords of schools. We must always remember that art has only one sentence to utter: there is for her only one high law, the law of form or harmony – yet between the classical and romantic spirit we may say that there lies this difference at least, that the one deals with the type and the other with the exception. In the work produced under the modern romantic spirit it is no longer the permanent, the essential truths of life that are treated of; it is the momentary situation of the one, the momentary aspect of the other that art seeks to render. In sculpture, which is the type of one spirit, the subject predominates over the situation; in painting, which is the type of the other, the situation predominates over the subject.

There are two spirits, then: the Hellenic spirit and the spirit of romance may be taken as forming the essential elements of our conscious intellectual tradition, of our permanent standard of taste. As regards their origin, in art as in politics there is but one origin for all revolutions, a desire on the part of man for a nobler form of life, for a freer method and opportunity of expression. Yet, I think that in estimating the sensuous and intellectual spirit which presides over our English Renaissance, any attempt to

isolate it in any way from the progress and movement and social life of the age that has produced it would be to rob it of its true vitality, possibly to mistake its true meaning. And in disengaging from the pursuits and passions of this crowded modern world those passions and pursuits which have to do with art and the love of art, we must take into account many great events of history which seem to be the most opposed to any such artistic feeling.

Alien then from any wild, political passion, or from the harsh voice of a rude people in revolt, as our English Renaissance must seem, in its passionate cult of pure beauty, its flawless devotion to form, its exclusive and sensitive nature, it is to the French Revolution that we must look for the most primary factor of its production, the first condition of its birth: that great Revolution of which we are all the children, though the voices of some of us be often loud against it; that Revolution to which at a time when even such spirits as Coleridge and Wordsworth lost heart in England, noble messages of love blown across seas came from your young Republic.

It is true that our modern sense of the continuity of history has shown us that neither in politics nor in nature are there revolutions ever but evolutions only, and that the prelude to that wild storm which swept over France in '89 and made every king in Europe tremble for his throne, was first sounded in literature years before the Bastille fell and the Palace was taken. The way for those red scenes by Seine and Loire was paved by that critical spirit of Germany and England which accustomed men

to bring all things to the test of reason or utility or both, while the discontent of the people in the streets of Paris was the echo that followed the life of Émile and of Werther. For Rousseau, by silent lake and mountain, had called humanity back to the golden age that still lies before us and preached a return to nature, in passionate eloquence whose music still lingers about our keen northern air. And Goethe and Scott had brought romance back again from the prison she had lain in for so many centuries – and what is romance but humanity?

Yet in the womb of the Revolution itself, and in the storm and terror of that wild time, tendencies were hidden away that the artistic Renaissance bent to her own service when the time came – a scientific tendency first, which has borne in our own day a brood of somewhat noisy Titans, yet in the sphere of poetry has not been unproductive of good. I do not mean merely in its adding to enthusiasm that intellectual basis which is its strength, or that more obvious influence about which Wordsworth was thinking when he said very nobly that poetry was merely the impassioned expression in the face of science, and that when science would put on a form of flesh and blood the poet would lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration. Nor do I dwell much on the great cosmical emotion and deep pantheism of science to which Shelley has given its first and Swinburne its latest glory of song, but rather on its influence on the artistic spirit in preserving that close observation and the sense of limitation as well as of clearness of vision which are the characteristics of

the real artist.

The great and golden rule of art as well as of life, wrote William Blake, is that the more distinct, sharp and defined the boundary line, the more perfect is the work of art; and the less keen and sharp the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism and bungling. 'Great inventors in all ages knew this – Michael Angelo and Albert Dürer are known by this and by this alone'; and another time he wrote, with all the simple directness of nineteenth-century prose, 'to generalise is to be an idiot.'

And this love of definite conception, this clearness of vision, this artistic sense of limit, is the characteristic of all great work and poetry; of the vision of Homer as of the vision of Dante, of Keats and William Morris as of Chaucer and Theocritus. It lies at the base of all noble, realistic and romantic work as opposed to colourless and empty abstractions of our own eighteenth-century poets and of the classical dramatists of France, or of the vague spiritualities of the German sentimental school: opposed, too, to that spirit of transcendentalism which also was root and flower itself of the great Revolution, underlying the impassioned contemplation of Wordsworth and giving wings and fire to the eagle-like flight of Shelley, and which in the sphere of philosophy, though displaced by the materialism and positiveness of our day, bequeathed two great schools of thought, the school of Newman to Oxford, the school of Emerson to America. Yet is this spirit of transcendentalism alien to the spirit of art. For the artist can accept no sphere of life in exchange for life itself.

For him there is no escape from the bondage of the earth: there is not even the desire of escape.

He is indeed the only true realist: symbolism, which is the essence of the transcendental spirit, is alien to him. The metaphysical mind of Asia will create for itself the monstrous, many-breasted idol of Ephesus, but to the Greek, pure artist, that work is most instinct with spiritual life which conforms most clearly to the perfect facts of physical life.

‘The storm of revolution,’ as André Chenier said, ‘blows out the torch of poetry.’ It is not for some little time that the real influence of such a wild cataclysm of things is felt: at first the desire for equality seems to have produced personalities of more giant and Titan stature than the world had ever known before. Men heard the lyre of Byron and the legions of Napoleon; it was a period of measureless passions and of measureless despair; ambition, discontent, were the chords of life and art; the age was an age of revolt: a phase through which the human spirit must pass but one in which it cannot rest. For the aim of culture is not rebellion but peace, the valley perilous where ignorant armies clash by night being no dwelling-place meet for her to whom the gods have assigned the fresh uplands and sunny heights and clear, untroubled air.

And soon that desire for perfection, which lay at the base of the Revolution, found in a young English poet its most complete and flawless realisation.

Phidias and the achievements of Greek art are foreshadowed

in Homer: Dante prefigures for us the passion and colour and intensity of Italian painting: the modern love of landscape dates from Rousseau, and it is in Keats that one discerns the beginning of the artistic renaissance of England.

Byron was a rebel and Shelley a dreamer; but in the calmness and clearness of his vision, his perfect self-control, his unerring sense of beauty and his recognition of a separate realm for the imagination, Keats was the pure and serene artist, the forerunner of the pre-Raphaelite school, and so of the great romantic movement of which I am to speak.

Blake had indeed, before him, claimed for art a lofty, spiritual mission, and had striven to raise design to the ideal level of poetry and music, but the remoteness of his vision both in painting and poetry and the incompleteness of his technical powers had been adverse to any real influence. It is in Keats that the artistic spirit of this century first found its absolute incarnation.

And these pre-Raphaelites, what were they? If you ask nine-tenths of the British public what is the meaning of the word æsthetics, they will tell you it is the French for affectation or the German for a dado; and if you inquire about the pre-Raphaelites you will hear something about an eccentric lot of young men to whom a sort of divine crookedness and holy awkwardness in drawing were the chief objects of art. To know nothing about their great men is one of the necessary elements of English education.

As regards the pre-Raphaelites the story is simple enough. In



the year 1847 a number of young men in London, poets and painters, passionate admirers of Keats all of them, formed the habit of meeting together for discussions on art, the result of such discussions being that the English Philistine public was roused suddenly from its ordinary apathy by hearing that there was in its midst a body of young men who had determined to revolutionise English painting and poetry. They called themselves the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

In England, then as now, it was enough for a man to try and produce any serious beautiful work to lose all his rights as a citizen; and besides this, the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood – among whom the names of Dante Rossetti, Holman Hunt and Millais will be familiar to you – had on their side three things that the English public never forgives: youth, power and enthusiasm.

Satire, always as sterile as it is shameful and as impotent as it is insolent, paid them that usual homage which mediocrity pays to genius – doing, here as always, infinite harm to the public, blinding them to what is beautiful, teaching them that irreverence which is the source of all vileness and narrowness of life, but harming the artist not at all, rather confirming him in the perfect rightness of his work and ambition. For to disagree with three-fourths of the British public on all points is one of the first elements of sanity, one of the deepest consolations in all moments of spiritual doubt.

As regards the ideas these young men brought to the regeneration of English art, we may see at the base of their

artistic creations a desire for a deeper spiritual value to be given to art as well as a more decorative value.

Pre-Raphaelites they called themselves; not that they imitated the early Italian masters at all, but that in their work, as opposed to the facile abstractions of Raphael, they found a stronger realism of imagination, a more careful realism of technique, a vision at once more fervent and more vivid, an individuality more intimate and more intense.

For it is not enough that a work of art should conform to the æsthetic demands of its age: there must be also about it, if it is to affect us with any permanent delight, the impress of a distinct individuality, an individuality remote from that of ordinary men, and coming near to us only by virtue of a certain newness and wonder in the work, and through channels whose very strangeness makes us more ready to give them welcome.

*La personnalité*, said one of the greatest of modern French critics, *voilà ce qui nous sauvera*.

But above all things was it a return to Nature – that formula which seems to suit so many and such diverse movements: they would draw and paint nothing but what they saw, they would try and imagine things as they really happened. Later there came to the old house by Blackfriars Bridge, where this young brotherhood used to meet and work, two young men from Oxford, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris – the latter substituting for the simpler realism of the early days a more exquisite spirit of choice, a more faultless devotion to beauty,

a more intense seeking for perfection: a master of all exquisite design and of all spiritual vision. It is of the school of Florence rather than of that of Venice that he is kinsman, feeling that the close imitation of Nature is a disturbing element in imaginative art. The visible aspect of modern life disturbs him not; rather is it for him to render eternal all that is beautiful in Greek, Italian, and Celtic legend. To Morris we owe poetry whose perfect precision and clearness of word and vision has not been excelled in the literature of our country, and by the revival of the decorative arts he has given to our individualised romantic movement the social idea and the social factor also.

But the revolution accomplished by this clique of young men, with Ruskin's faultless and fervent eloquence to help them, was not one of ideas merely but of execution, not one of conceptions but of creations.

For the great eras in the history of the development of all the arts have been eras not of increased feeling or enthusiasm in feeling for art, but of new technical improvements primarily and specially. The discovery of marble quarries in the purple ravines of Pentelicus and on the little low-lying hills of the island of Paros gave to the Greeks the opportunity for that intensified vitality of action, that more sensuous and simple humanism, to which the Egyptian sculptor working laboriously in the hard porphyry and rose-coloured granite of the desert could not attain. The splendour of the Venetian school began with the introduction of the new oil medium for painting. The progress in modern

music has been due to the invention of new instruments entirely, and in no way to an increased consciousness on the part of the musician of any wider social aim. The critic may try and trace the deferred resolutions of Beethoven<sup>27</sup> to some sense of the incompleteness of the modern intellectual spirit, but the artist would have answered, as one of them did afterwards, 'Let them pick out the fifths and leave us at peace.'

And so it is in poetry also: all this love of curious French metres like the Ballade, the Villanelle, the Rondel; all this increased value laid on elaborate alliterations, and on curious words and refrains, such as you will find in Dante Rossetti and Swinburne, is merely the attempt to perfect flute and viol and trumpet through which the spirit of the age and the lips of the poet may blow the music of their many messages.

And so it has been with this romantic movement of ours: it is a reaction against the empty conventional workmanship, the lax execution of previous poetry and painting, showing itself in the work of such men as Rossetti and Burne-Jones by a far greater splendour of colour, a far more intricate wonder of design than English imaginative art has shown before. In Rossetti's poetry and the poetry of Morris, Swinburne and Tennyson a perfect precision and choice of language, a style flawless and fearless, a seeking for all sweet and precious melodies and a sustaining

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<sup>27</sup> As an instance of the inaccuracy of published reports of this lecture, it may be mentioned that all previous versions give this passage as *The artist may trace the depressed revolution of Bunthorne simply to the lack of technical means!*

consciousness of the musical value of each word are opposed to that value which is merely intellectual. In this respect they are one with the romantic movement of France of which not the least characteristic note was struck by Théophile Gautier's advice to the young poet to read his dictionary every day, as being the only book worth a poet's reading.

While, then, the material of workmanship is being thus elaborated and discovered to have in itself incommunicable and eternal qualities of its own, qualities entirely satisfying to the poetic sense and not needing for their æsthetic effect any lofty intellectual vision, any deep criticism of life or even any passionate human emotion at all, the spirit and the method of the poet's working – what people call his inspiration – have not escaped the controlling influence of the artistic spirit. Not that the imagination has lost its wings, but we have accustomed ourselves to count their innumerable pulsations, to estimate their limitless strength, to govern their ungovernable freedom.

To the Greeks this problem of the conditions of poetic production, and the places occupied by either spontaneity or self-consciousness in any artistic work, had a peculiar fascination. We find it in the mysticism of Plato and in the rationalism of Aristotle. We find it later in the Italian Renaissance agitating the minds of such men as Leonardo da Vinci. Schiller tried to adjust the balance between form and feeling, and Goethe to estimate the position of self-consciousness in art. Wordsworth's definition of poetry as 'emotion remembered in tranquillity' may

be taken as an analysis of one of the stages through which all imaginative work has to pass; and in Keats's longing to be 'able to compose without this fever' (I quote from one of his letters), his desire to substitute for poetic ardour 'a more thoughtful and quiet power,' we may discern the most important moment in the evolution of that artistic life. The question made an early and strange appearance in your literature too; and I need not remind you how deeply the young poets of the French romantic movement were excited and stirred by Edgar Allan Poe's analysis of the workings of his own imagination in the creating of that supreme imaginative work which we know by the name of *The Raven*.

In the last century, when the intellectual and didactic element had intruded to such an extent into the kingdom which belongs to poetry, it was against the claims of the understanding that an artist like Goethe had to protest. 'The more incomprehensible to the understanding a poem is the better for it,' he said once, asserting the complete supremacy of the imagination in poetry as of reason in prose. But in this century it is rather against the claims of the emotional faculties, the claims of mere sentiment and feeling, that the artist must react. The simple utterance of joy is not poetry any more than a mere personal cry of pain, and the real experiences of the artist are always those which do not find their direct expression but are gathered up and absorbed into some artistic form which seems, from such real experiences, to be the farthest removed and the most alien.

‘The heart contains passion but the imagination alone contains poetry,’ says Charles Baudelaire. This too was the lesson that Théophile Gautier, most subtle of all modern critics, most fascinating of all modern poets, was never tired of teaching – ‘Everybody is affected by a sunrise or a sunset.’ The absolute distinction of the artist is not his capacity to feel nature so much as his power of rendering it. The entire subordination of all intellectual and emotional faculties to the vital and informing poetic principle is the surest sign of the strength of our Renaissance.

We have seen the artistic spirit working, first in the delightful and technical sphere of language, the sphere of expression as opposed to subject, then controlling the imagination of the poet in dealing with his subject. And now I would point out to you its operation in the choice of subject. The recognition of a separate realm for the artist, a consciousness of the absolute difference between the world of art and the world of real fact, between classic grace and absolute reality, forms not merely the essential element of any æsthetic charm but is the characteristic of all great imaginative work and of all great eras of artistic creation – of the age of Phidias as of the age of Michael Angelo, of the age of Sophocles as of the age of Goethe.

Art never harms itself by keeping aloof from the social problems of the day: rather, by so doing, it more completely realises for us that which we desire. For to most of us the real life is the life we do not lead, and thus, remaining more true

to the essence of its own perfection, more jealous of its own unattainable beauty, is less likely to forget form in feeling or to accept the passion of creation as any substitute for the beauty of the created thing.

The artist is indeed the child of his own age, but the present will not be to him a whit more real than the past; for, like the philosopher of the Platonic vision, the poet is the spectator of all time and of all existence. For him no form is obsolete, no subject out of date; rather, whatever of life and passion the world has known, in desert of Judæa or in Arcadian valley, by the rivers of Troy or the rivers of Damascus, in the crowded and hideous streets of a modern city or by the pleasant ways of Camelot – all lies before him like an open scroll, all is still instinct with beautiful life. He will take of it what is salutary for his own spirit, no more; choosing some facts and rejecting others with the calm artistic control of one who is in possession of the secret of beauty.

There is indeed a poetical attitude to be adopted towards all things, but all things are not fit subjects for poetry. Into the secure and sacred house of Beauty the true artist will admit nothing that is harsh or disturbing, nothing that gives pain, nothing that is debatable, nothing about which men argue. He can steep himself, if he wishes, in the discussion of all the social problems of his day, poor-laws and local taxation, free trade and bimetallic currency, and the like; but when he writes on these subjects it will be, as Milton nobly expressed it, with his left hand, in prose and not in verse, in a pamphlet and not in a lyric. This exquisite spirit



of artistic choice was not in Byron: Wordsworth had it not. In the work of both these men there is much that we have to reject, much that does not give us that sense of calm and perfect repose which should be the effect of all fine, imaginative work. But in Keats it seemed to have been incarnate, and in his lovely *Ode on a Grecian Urn* it found its most secure and faultless expression; in the pageant of *The Earthly Paradise* and the knights and ladies of Burne-Jones it is the one dominant note.

It is to no avail that the Muse of Poetry be called, even by such a clarion note as Whitman's, to migrate from Greece and Ionia and to placard REMOVED and TO LET on the rocks of the snowy Parnassus. Calliope's call is not yet closed, nor are the epics of Asia ended; the Sphinx is not yet silent, nor the fountain of Castaly dry. For art is very life itself and knows nothing of death; she is absolute truth and takes no care of fact; she sees (as I remember Mr. Swinburne insisting on at dinner) that Achilles is even now more actual and real than Wellington, not merely more noble and interesting as a type and figure but more positive and real.

Literature must rest always on a principle, and temporal considerations are no principle at all. For to the poet all times and places are one; the stuff he deals with is eternal and eternally the same: no theme is inept, no past or present preferable. The steam whistle will not affright him nor the flutes of Arcadia weary him: for him there is but one time, the artistic moment; but one law, the law of form; but one land, the land of Beauty – a

land removed indeed from the real world and yet more sensuous because more enduring; calm, yet with that calm which dwells in the faces of the Greek statues, the calm which comes not from the rejection but from the absorption of passion, the calm which despair and sorrow cannot disturb but intensify only. And so it comes that he who seems to stand most remote from his age is he who mirrors it best, because he has stripped life of what is accidental and transitory, stripped it of that ‘mist of familiarity which makes life obscure to us.’

Those strange, wild-eyed sibyls fixed eternally in the whirlwind of ecstasy, those mighty-limbed and Titan prophets, labouring with the secret of the earth and the burden of mystery, that guard and glorify the chapel of Pope Sixtus at Rome – do they not tell us more of the real spirit of the Italian Renaissance, of the dream of Savonarola and of the sin of Borgia, than all the brawling boors and cooking women of Dutch art can teach us of the real spirit of the history of Holland?

And so in our own day, also, the two most vital tendencies of the nineteenth century – the democratic and pantheistic tendency and the tendency to value life for the sake of art – found their most complete and perfect utterance in the poetry of Shelley and Keats who, to the blind eyes of their own time, seemed to be as wanderers in the wilderness, preachers of vague or unreal things. And I remember once, in talking to Mr. Burne-Jones about modern science, his saying to me, ‘the more materialistic science becomes, the more angels shall I paint: their wings are

my protest in favour of the immortality of the soul.'

But these are the intellectual speculations that underlie art. Where in the arts themselves are we to find that breadth of human sympathy which is the condition of all noble work; where in the arts are we to look for what Mazzini would call the social ideas as opposed to the merely personal ideas? By virtue of what claim do I demand for the artist the love and loyalty of the men and women of the world? I think I can answer that.

Whatever spiritual message an artist brings to his aid is a matter for his own soul. He may bring judgment like Michael Angelo or peace like Angelico; he may come with mourning like the great Athenian or with mirth like the singer of Sicily; nor is it for us to do aught but accept his teaching, knowing that we cannot smite the bitter lips of Leopardi into laughter or burden with our discontent Goethe's serene calm. But for warrant of its truth such message must have the flame of eloquence in the lips that speak it, splendour and glory in the vision that is its witness, being justified by one thing only – the flawless beauty and perfect form of its expression: this indeed being the social idea, being the meaning of joy in art.

Not laughter where none should laugh, nor the calling of peace where there is no peace; not in painting the subject ever, but the pictorial charm only, the wonder of its colour, the satisfying beauty of its design.

You have most of you seen, probably, that great masterpiece of Rubens which hangs in the gallery of Brussels, that swift

and wonderful pageant of horse and rider arrested in its most exquisite and fiery moment when the winds are caught in crimson banner and the air lit by the gleam of armour and the flash of plume. Well, that is joy in art, though that golden hillside be trodden by the wounded feet of Christ and it is for the death of the Son of Man that that gorgeous cavalcade is passing.

But this restless modern intellectual spirit of ours is not receptive enough of the sensuous element of art; and so the real influence of the arts is hidden from many of us: only a few, escaping from the tyranny of the soul, have learned the secret of those high hours when thought is not.

And this indeed is the reason of the influence which Eastern art is having on us in Europe, and of the fascination of all Japanese work. While the Western world has been laying on art the intolerable burden of its own intellectual doubts and the spiritual tragedy of its own sorrows, the East has always kept true to art's primary and pictorial conditions.

In judging of a beautiful statue the æsthetic faculty is absolutely and completely gratified by the splendid curves of those marble lips that are dumb to our complaint, the noble modelling of those limbs that are powerless to help us. In its primary aspect a painting has no more spiritual message or meaning than an exquisite fragment of Venetian glass or a blue tile from the wall of Damascus: it is a beautifully coloured surface, nothing more. The channels by which all noble imaginative work in painting should touch, and do touch the

soul, are not those of the truths of life, nor metaphysical truths. But that pictorial charm which does not depend on any literary reminiscence for its effect on the one hand, nor is yet a mere result of communicable technical skill on the other, comes of a certain inventive and creative handling of colour. Nearly always in Dutch painting and often in the works of Giorgione or Titian, it is entirely independent of anything definitely poetical in the subject, a kind of form and choice in workmanship which is itself entirely satisfying, and is (as the Greeks would say) an end in itself.

And so in poetry too, the real poetical quality, the joy of poetry, comes never from the subject but from an inventive handling of rhythmical language, from what Keats called the 'sensuous life of verse.' The element of song in the singing accompanied by the profound joy of motion, is so sweet that, while the incomplete lives of ordinary men bring no healing power with them, the thorn-crown of the poet will blossom into roses for our pleasure; for our delight his despair will gild its own thorns, and his pain, like Adonis, be beautiful in its agony; and when the poet's heart breaks it will break in music.

And health in art – what is that? It has nothing to do with a sane criticism of life. There is more health in Baudelaire than there is in [Kingsley]. Health is the artist's recognition of the limitations of the form in which he works. It is the honour and the homage which he gives to the material he uses – whether it be language with its glories, or marble or pigment with their glories

– knowing that the true brotherhood of the arts consists not in their borrowing one another’s method, but in their producing, each of them by its own individual means, each of them by keeping its objective limits, the same unique artistic delight. The delight is like that given to us by music – for music is the art in which form and matter are always one, the art whose subject cannot be separated from the method of its expression, the art which most completely realises the artistic ideal, and is the condition to which all the other arts are constantly aspiring.

And criticism – what place is that to have in our culture? Well, I think that the first duty of an art critic is to hold his tongue at all times, and upon all subjects: *C’est une grande avantage de n’avoir rien fait, mais il ne faut pas en abuser.*

It is only through the mystery of creation that one can gain any knowledge of the quality of created things. You have listened to *Patience* for a hundred nights and you have heard me only for one. It will make, no doubt, that satire more piquant by knowing something about the subject of it, but you must not judge of æstheticism by the satire of Mr. Gilbert. As little should you judge of the strength and splendour of sun or sea by the dust that dances in the beam, or the bubble that breaks on the wave, as take your critic for any sane test of art. For the artists, like the Greek gods, are revealed only to one another, as Emerson says somewhere; their real value and place time only can show. In this respect also omnipotence is with the ages. The true critic addresses not the artist ever but the public only. His work lies

with them. Art can never have any other claim but her own perfection: it is for the critic to create for art the social aim, too, by teaching the people the spirit in which they are to approach all artistic work, the love they are to give it, the lesson they are to draw from it.

All these appeals to art to set herself more in harmony with modern progress and civilisation, and to make herself the mouthpiece for the voice of humanity, these appeals to art 'to have a mission,' are appeals which should be made to the public. The art which has fulfilled the conditions of beauty has fulfilled all conditions: it is for the critic to teach the people how to find in the calm of such art the highest expression of their own most stormy passions. 'I have no reverence,' said Keats, 'for the public, nor for anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the memory of great men and the principle of Beauty.'

Such then is the principle which I believe to be guiding and underlying our English Renaissance, a Renaissance many-sided and wonderful, productive of strong ambitions and lofty personalities, yet for all its splendid achievements in poetry and in the decorative arts and in painting, for all the increased comeliness and grace of dress, and the furniture of houses and the like, not complete. For there can be no great sculpture without a beautiful national life, and the commercial spirit of England has killed that; no great drama without a noble national life, and the commercial spirit of England has killed that too.

It is not that the flawless serenity of marble cannot bear the

burden of the modern intellectual spirit, or become instinct with the fire of romantic passion – the tomb of Duke Lorenzo and the chapel of the Medici show us that – but it is that, as Théophile Gautier used to say, the visible world is dead, *le monde visible a disparu*.

Nor is it again that the novel has killed the play, as some critics would persuade us – the romantic movement of France shows us that. The work of Balzac and of Hugo grew up side by side together; nay, more, were complementary to each other, though neither of them saw it. While all other forms of poetry may flourish in an ignoble age, the splendid individualism of the lyricist, fed by its own passion, and lit by its own power, may pass as a pillar of fire as well across the desert as across places that are pleasant. It is none the less glorious though no man follow it – nay, by the greater sublimity of its loneliness it may be quickened into loftier utterance and intensified into clearer song. From the mean squalor of the sordid life that limits him, the dreamer or the idyllist may soar on poesy's viewless wings, may traverse with fawn-skin and spear the moonlit heights of Cithæron though Faun and Bassarid dance there no more. Like Keats he may wander through the old-world forests of Latmos, or stand like Morris on the galley's deck with the Viking when king and galley have long since passed away. But the drama is the meeting-place of art and life; it deals, as Mazzini said, not merely with man, but with social man, with man in his relation to God and to Humanity. It is the product of a period of great national united energy; it is



impossible without a noble public, and belongs to such ages as the age of Elizabeth in London and of Pericles at Athens; it is part of such lofty moral and spiritual ardour as came to Greece after the defeat of the Persian fleet, and to Englishman after the wreck of the Armada of Spain.

Shelley felt how incomplete our movement was in this respect, and has shown in one great tragedy by what terror and pity he would have purified our age; but in spite of *The Cenci* the drama is one of the artistic forms through which the genius of the England of this century seeks in vain to find outlet and expression. He has had no worthy imitators.

It is rather, perhaps, to you that we should turn to complete and perfect this great movement of ours, for there is something Hellenic in your air and world, something that has a quicker breath of the joy and power of Elizabeth's England about it than our ancient civilisation can give us. For you, at least, are young; 'no hungry generations tread you down,' and the past does not weary you with the intolerable burden of its memories nor mock you with the ruins of a beauty, the secret of whose creation you have lost. That very absence of tradition, which Mr. Ruskin thought would rob your rivers of their laughter and your flowers of their light, may be rather the source of your freedom and your strength.

To speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and

grass by the roadside, has been defined by one of your poets as a flawless triumph of art. It is a triumph which you above all nations may be destined to achieve. For the voices that have their dwelling in sea and mountain are not the chosen music of Liberty only; other messages are there in the wonder of wind-swept height and the majesty of silent deep – messages that, if you will but listen to them, may yield you the splendour of some new imagination, the marvel of some new beauty.

‘I foresee,’ said Goethe, ‘the dawn of a new literature which all people may claim as their own, for all have contributed to its foundation.’ If, then, this is so, and if the materials for a civilisation as great as that of Europe lie all around you, what profit, you will ask me, will all this study of our poets and painters be to you? I might answer that the intellect can be engaged without direct didactic object on an artistic and historical problem; that the demand of the intellect is merely to feel itself alive; that nothing which has ever interested men or women can cease to be a fit subject for culture.

I might remind you of what all Europe owes to the sorrow of a single Florentine in exile at Verona, or to the love of Petrarch by that little well in Southern France; nay, more, how even in this dull, materialistic age the simple expression of an old man’s simple life, passed away from the clamour of great cities amid the lakes and misty hills of Cumberland, has opened out for England treasures of new joy compared with which the treasures of her luxury are as barren as the sea which she has made her highway,

and as bitter as the fire which she would make her slave.

But I think it will bring you something besides this, something that is the knowledge of real strength in art: not that you should imitate the works of these men; but their artistic spirit, their artistic attitude, I think you should absorb that.

For in nations, as in individuals, if the passion for creation be not accompanied by the critical, the æsthetic faculty also, it will be sure to waste its strength aimlessly, failing perhaps in the artistic spirit of choice, or in the mistaking of feeling for form, or in the following of false ideals.

For the various spiritual forms of the imagination have a natural affinity with certain sensuous forms of art – and to discern the qualities of each art, to intensify as well its limitations as its powers of expression, is one of the aims that culture sets before us. It is not an increased moral sense, an increased moral supervision that your literature needs. Indeed, one should never talk of a moral or an immoral poem – poems are either well written or badly written, that is all. And, indeed, any element of morals or implied reference to a standard of good or evil in art is often a sign of a certain incompleteness of vision, often a note of discord in the harmony of an imaginative creation; for all good work aims at a purely artistic effect. ‘We must be careful,’ said Goethe, ‘not to be always looking for culture merely in what is obviously moral. Everything that is great promotes civilisation as soon as we are aware of it.’

But, as in your cities so in your literature, it is a permanent

canon and standard of taste, an increased sensibility to beauty (if I may say so) that is lacking. All noble work is not national merely, but universal. The political independence of a nation must not be confused with any intellectual isolation. The spiritual freedom, indeed, your own generous lives and liberal air will give you. From us you will learn the classical restraint of form.

For all great art is delicate art, roughness having very little to do with strength, and harshness very little to do with power. 'The artist,' as Mr. Swinburne says, 'must be perfectly articulate.'

This limitation is for the artist perfect freedom: it is at once the origin and the sign of his strength. So that all the supreme masters of style – Dante, Sophocles, Shakespeare – are the supreme masters of spiritual and intellectual vision also.

Love art for its own sake, and then all things that you need will be added to you.

This devotion to beauty and to the creation of beautiful things is the test of all great civilised nations. Philosophy may teach us to bear with equanimity the misfortunes of our neighbours, and science resolve the moral sense into a secretion of sugar, but art is what makes the life of each citizen a sacrament and not a speculation, art is what makes the life of the whole race immortal.

For beauty is the only thing that time cannot harm. Philosophies fall away like sand, and creeds follow one another like the withered leaves of autumn; but what is beautiful is a joy for all seasons and a possession for all eternity.

Wars and the clash of armies and the meeting of men in battle by trampled field or leagured city, and the rising of nations there must always be. But I think that art, by creating a common intellectual atmosphere between all countries, might – if it could not overshadow the world with the silver wings of peace – at least make men such brothers that they would not go out to slay one another for the whim or folly of some king or minister, as they do in Europe. Fraternity would come no more with the hands of Cain, nor Liberty betray freedom with the kiss of Anarchy; for national hatreds are always strongest where culture is lowest.

‘How could I?’ said Goethe, when reproached for not writing like Korner against the French. ‘How could I, to whom barbarism and culture alone are of importance, hate a nation which is among the most cultivated of the earth, a nation to which I owe a great part of my own cultivation?’

Mighty empires, too, there must always be as long as personal ambition and the spirit of the age are one, but art at least is the only empire which a nation’s enemies cannot take from her by conquest, but which is taken by submission only. The sovereignty of Greece and Rome is not yet passed away, though the gods of the one be dead and the eagles of the other tired.

And we in our Renaissance are seeking to create a sovereignty that will still be England’s when her yellow leopards have grown weary of wars and the rose of her shield is crimsoned no more with the blood of battle; and you, too, absorbing into the generous heart of a great people this pervading artistic spirit, will create

for yourselves such riches as you have never yet created, though your land be a network of railways and your cities the harbours for the galleys of the world.

I know, indeed, that the divine natural prescience of beauty which is the inalienable inheritance of Greek and Italian is not our inheritance. For such an informing and presiding spirit of art to shield us from all harsh and alien influences, we of the Northern races must turn rather to that strained self-consciousness of our age which, as it is the key-note of all our romantic art, must be the source of all or nearly all our culture. I mean that intellectual curiosity of the nineteenth century which is always looking for the secret of the life that still lingers round old and bygone forms of culture. It takes from each what is serviceable for the modern spirit – from Athens its wonder without its worship, from Venice its splendour without its sin. The same spirit is always analysing its own strength and its own weakness, counting what it owes to East and to West, to the olive-trees of Colonus and to the palm-trees of Lebanon, to Gethsemane and to the garden of Proserpine.

And yet the truths of art cannot be taught: they are revealed only, revealed to natures which have made themselves receptive of all beautiful impressions by the study and worship of all beautiful things. And hence the enormous importance given to the decorative arts in our English Renaissance; hence all that marvel of design that comes from the hand of Edward Burne-Jones, all that weaving of tapestry and staining of glass, that

beautiful working in clay and metal and wood which we owe to William Morris, the greatest craftsman we have had in England since the fourteenth century.

So, in years to come there will be nothing in any man's house which has not given delight to its maker and does not give delight to its user. The children, like the children of Plato's perfect city, will grow up 'in a simple atmosphere of all fair things' – I quote from the passage in the *Republic*– 'a simple atmosphere of all fair things, where beauty, which is the spirit of art, will come on eye and ear like a fresh breath of wind that brings health from a clear upland, and insensibly and gradually draw the child's soul into harmony with all knowledge and all wisdom, so that he will love what is beautiful and good, and hate what is evil and ugly (for they always go together) long before he knows the reason why; and then when reason comes will kiss her on the cheek as a friend.'

That is what Plato thought decorative art could do for a nation, feeling that the secret not of philosophy merely but of all gracious existence might be externally hidden from any one whose youth had been passed in uncomely and vulgar surroundings, and that the beauty of form and colour even, as he says, in the meanest vessels of the house, will find its way into the inmost places of the soul and lead the boy naturally to look for that divine harmony of spiritual life of which art was to him the material symbol and warrant.

Prelude indeed to all knowledge and all wisdom will this love

of beautiful things be for us; yet there are times when wisdom becomes a burden and knowledge is one with sorrow: for as every body has its shadow so every soul has its scepticism. In such dread moments of discord and despair where should we, of this torn and troubled age, turn our steps if not to that secure house of beauty where there is always a little forgetfulness, always a great joy; to that *città divina*, as the old Italian heresy called it, the divine city where one can stand, though only for a brief moment, apart from the division and terror of the world and the choice of the world too?

This is that *consolation des arts* which is the keynote of Gautier's poetry, the secret of modern life foreshadowed – as indeed what in our century is not? – by Goethe. You remember what he said to the German people: 'Only have the courage,' he said, 'to give yourselves up to your impressions, allow yourselves to be delighted, moved, elevated, nay instructed, inspired for something great.' The courage to give yourselves up to your impressions: yes, that is the secret of the artistic life – for while art has been defined as an escape from the tyranny of the senses, it is an escape rather from the tyranny of the soul. But only to those who worship her above all things does she ever reveal her true treasure: else will she be as powerless to aid you as the mutilated Venus of the Louvre was before the romantic but sceptical nature of Heine.

And indeed I think it would be impossible to overrate the gain that might follow if we had about us only what gave pleasure



to the maker of it and gives pleasure to its user, that being the simplest of all rules about decoration. One thing, at least, I think it would do for us: there is no surer test of a great country than how near it stands to its own poets; but between the singers of our day and the workers to whom they would sing there seems to be an ever-widening and dividing chasm, a chasm which slander and mockery cannot traverse, but which is spanned by the luminous wings of love.

And of such love I think that the abiding presence in our houses of noble imaginative work would be the surest seed and preparation. I do not mean merely as regards that direct literary expression of art by which, from the little red-and-black cruse of oil or wine, a Greek boy could learn of the lionlike splendour of Achilles, of the strength of Hector and the beauty of Paris and the wonder of Helen, long before he stood and listened in crowded market-place or in theatre of marble; or by which an Italian child of the fifteenth century could know of the chastity of Lucrece and the death of Camilla from carven doorway and from painted chest. For the good we get from art is not what we learn from it; it is what we become through it. Its real influence will be in giving the mind that enthusiasm which is the secret of Hellenism, accustoming it to demand from art all that art can do in rearranging the facts of common life for us – whether it be by giving the most spiritual interpretation of one's own moments of highest passion or the most sensuous expression of those thoughts that are the farthest removed from sense; in accustoming it to love

the things of the imagination for their own sake, and to desire beauty and grace in all things. For he who does not love art in all things does not love it at all, and he who does not need art in all things does not need it at all.

I will not dwell here on what I am sure has delighted you all in our great Gothic cathedrals. I mean how the artist of that time, handicraftsman himself in stone or glass, found the best motives for his art, always ready for his hand and always beautiful, in the daily work of the artificers he saw around him – as in those lovely windows of Chartres – where the dyer dips in the vat and the potter sits at the wheel, and the weaver stands at the loom: real manufacturers these, workers with the hand, and entirely delightful to look at, not like the smug and vapid shopman of our time, who knows nothing of the web or vase he sells, except that he is charging you double its value and thinking you a fool for buying it. Nor can I but just note, in passing, the immense influence the decorative work of Greece and Italy had on its artists, the one teaching the sculptor that restraining influence of design which is the glory of the Parthenon, the other keeping painting always true to its primary, pictorial condition of noble colour which is the secret of the school of Venice; for I wish rather, in this lecture at least, to dwell on the effect that decorative art has on human life – on its social not its purely artistic effect.

There are two kinds of men in the world, two great creeds, two different forms of natures: men to whom the end of life is action, and men to whom the end of life is thought. As regards

the latter, who seek for experience itself and not for the fruits of experience, who must burn always with one of the passions of this fiery-coloured world, who find life interesting not for its secret but for its situations, for its pulsations and not for its purpose; the passion for beauty engendered by the decorative arts will be to them more satisfying than any political or religious enthusiasm, any enthusiasm for humanity, any ecstasy or sorrow for love. For art comes to one professing primarily to give nothing but the highest quality to one's moments, and for those moments' sake. So far for those to whom the end of life is thought. As regards the others, who hold that life is inseparable from labour, to them should this movement be specially dear: for, if our days are barren without industry, industry without art is barbarism.

Hewers of wood and drawers of water there must be always indeed among us. Our modern machinery has not much lightened the labour of man after all: but at least let the pitcher that stands by the well be beautiful and surely the labour of the day will be lightened: let the wood be made receptive of some lovely form, some gracious design, and there will come no longer discontent but joy to the toiler. For what is decoration but the worker's expression of joy in his work? And not joy merely – that is a great thing yet not enough – but that opportunity of expressing his own individuality which, as it is the essence of all life, is the source of all art. 'I have tried,' I remember William Morris saying to me once, 'I have tried to make each of my workers an artist, and when I say an artist I mean a man.' For the worker then,

handicraftsman of whatever kind he is, art is no longer to be a purple robe woven by a slave and thrown over the whitened body of a leprous king to hide and to adorn the sin of his luxury, but rather the beautiful and noble expression of a life that has in it something beautiful and noble.

And so you must seek out your workman and give him, as far as possible, the right surroundings, for remember that the real test and virtue of a workman is not his earnestness nor his industry even, but his power of design merely; and that 'design is not the offspring of idle fancy: it is the studied result of accumulative observation and delightful habit.' All the teaching in the world is of no avail if you do not surround your workman with happy influences and with beautiful things. It is impossible for him to have right ideas about colour unless he sees the lovely colours of Nature unspoiled; impossible for him to supply beautiful incident and action unless he sees beautiful incident and action in the world about him.

For to cultivate sympathy you must be among living things and thinking about them, and to cultivate admiration you must be among beautiful things and looking at them. 'The steel of Toledo and the silk of Genoa did but give strength to oppression and lustre to pride,' as Mr. Ruskin says; let it be for you to create an art that is made by the hands of the people for the joy of the people, to please the hearts of the people, too; an art that will be your expression of your delight in life. There is nothing 'in common life too mean, in common things too trivial to be

ennobled by your touch'; nothing in life that art cannot sanctify.

You have heard, I think, a few of you, of two flowers connected with the æsthetic movement in England, and said (I assure you, erroneously) to be the food of some æsthetic young men. Well, let me tell you that the reason we love the lily and the sunflower, in spite of what Mr. Gilbert may tell you, is not for any vegetable fashion at all. It is because these two lovely flowers are in England the two most perfect models of design, the most naturally adapted for decorative art – the gaudy leonine beauty of the one and the precious loveliness of the other giving to the artist the most entire and perfect joy. And so with you: let there be no flower in your meadows that does not wreath its tendrils around your pillows, no little leaf in your Titan forests that does not lend its form to design, no curving spray of wild rose or brier that does not live for ever in carven arch or window or marble, no bird in your air that is not giving the iridescent wonder of its colour, the exquisite curves of its wings in flight, to make more precious the preciousness of simple adornment. For the voices that have their dwelling in sea and mountain are not the chosen music of liberty only. Other messages are there in the wonder of wind-swept heights and the majesty of silent deep – messages that, if you will listen to them, will give you the wonder of all new imagination, the treasure of all new beauty.

We spend our days, each one of us, in looking for the secret of life. Well, the secret of life is in art.

# HOUSE DECORATION

A lecture delivered in America during Wilde's tour in 1882. It was announced as a lecture on 'The Practical Application of the Principles of the Æsthetic Theory to Exterior and Interior House Decoration, With Observations upon Dress and Personal Ornaments.' The earliest date on which it is known to have been given is May 11, 1882.

In my last lecture I gave you something of the history of Art in England. I sought to trace the influence of the French Revolution upon its development. I said something of the song of Keats and the school of the pre-Raphaelites. But I do not want to shelter the movement, which I have called the English Renaissance, under any palladium however noble, or any name however revered. The roots of it have, indeed, to be sought for in things that have long passed away, and not, as some suppose, in the fancy of a few young men – although I am not altogether sure that there is anything much better than the fancy of a few young men.

When I appeared before you on a previous occasion, I had seen nothing of American art save the Doric columns and Corinthian chimney-pots visible on your Broadway and Fifth Avenue. Since then, I have been through your country to some fifty or sixty different cities, I think. I find that what your people need is not so much high imaginative art but that which hallows the vessels of everyday use. I suppose that the poet

will sing and the artist will paint regardless whether the world praises or blames. He has his own world and is independent of his fellow-men. But the handicraftsman is dependent on your pleasure and opinion. He needs your encouragement and he must have beautiful surroundings. Your people love art but do not sufficiently honour the handicraftsman. Of course, those millionaires who can pillage Europe for their pleasure need have no care to encourage such; but I speak for those whose desire for beautiful things is larger than their means. I find that one great trouble all over is that your workmen are not given to noble designs. You cannot be indifferent to this, because Art is not something which you can take or leave. It is a necessity of human life.

And what is the meaning of this beautiful decoration which we call art? In the first place, it means value to the workman and it means the pleasure which he must necessarily take in making a beautiful thing. The mark of all good art is not that the thing done is done exactly or finely, for machinery may do as much, but that it is worked out with the head and the workman's heart. I cannot impress the point too frequently that beautiful and rational designs are necessary in all work. I did not imagine, until I went into some of your simpler cities, that there was so much bad work done. I found, where I went, bad wall-papers horribly designed, and coloured carpets, and that old offender the horse-hair sofa, whose stolid look of indifference is always so depressing. I found meaningless chandeliers and machine-made furniture, generally

of rosewood, which creaked dismally under the weight of the ubiquitous interviewer. I came across the small iron stove which they always persist in decorating with machine-made ornaments, and which is as great a bore as a wet day or any other particularly dreadful institution. When unusual extravagance was indulged in, it was garnished with two funeral urns.

It must always be remembered that what is well and carefully made by an honest workman, after a rational design, increases in beauty and value as the years go on. The old furniture brought over by the Pilgrims, two hundred years ago, which I saw in New England, is just as good and as beautiful today as it was when it first came here. Now, what you must do is to bring artists and handicraftsmen together. Handicraftsmen cannot live, certainly cannot thrive, without such companionship. Separate these two and you rob art of all spiritual motive.

Having done this, you must place your workman in the midst of beautiful surroundings. The artist is not dependent on the visible and the tangible. He has his visions and his dreams to feed on. But the workman must see lovely forms as he goes to his work in the morning and returns at eventide. And, in connection with this, I want to assure you that noble and beautiful designs are never the result of idle fancy or purposeless day-dreaming. They come only as the accumulation of habits of long and delightful observation. And yet such things may not be taught. Right ideas concerning them can certainly be obtained only by those who have been accustomed to rooms that are beautiful and colours



that are satisfying.

Perhaps one of the most difficult things for us to do is to choose a notable and joyous dress for men. There would be more joy in life if we were to accustom ourselves to use all the beautiful colours we can in fashioning our own clothes. The dress of the future, I think, will use drapery to a great extent and will abound with joyous colour. At present we have lost all nobility of dress and, in doing so, have almost annihilated the modern sculptor. And, in looking around at the figures which adorn our parks, one could almost wish that we had completely killed the noble art. To see the frockcoat of the drawing-room done in bronze, or the double waistcoat perpetuated in marble, adds a new horror to death. But indeed, in looking through the history of costume, seeking an answer to the questions we have propounded, there is little that is either beautiful or appropriate. One of the earliest forms is the Greek drapery which is so exquisite for young girls. And then, I think we may be pardoned a little enthusiasm over the dress of the time of Charles I., so beautiful indeed, that in spite of its invention being with the Cavaliers it was copied by the Puritans. And the dress for the children of that time must not be passed over. It was a very golden age of the little ones. I do not think that they have ever looked so lovely as they do in the pictures of that time. The dress of the last century in England is also peculiarly gracious and graceful. There is nothing bizarre or strange about it, but it is full of harmony and beauty. In these days, when we have suffered so dreadfully from the incursions

of the modern milliner, we hear ladies boast that they do not wear a dress more than once. In the old days, when the dresses were decorated with beautiful designs and worked with exquisite embroidery, ladies rather took a pride in bringing out the garment and wearing it many times and handing it down to their daughters – a process that would, I think, be quite appreciated by a modern husband when called upon to settle his wife's bills.

And how shall men dress? Men say that they do not particularly care how they dress, and that it is little matter. I am bound to reply that I do not think that you do. In all my journeys through the country, the only well-dressed men that I saw – and in saying this I earnestly deprecate the polished indignation of your Fifth Avenue dandies – were the Western miners. Their wide-brimmed hats, which shaded their faces from the sun and protected them from the rain, and the cloak, which is by far the most beautiful piece of drapery ever invented, may well be dwelt on with admiration. Their high boots, too, were sensible and practical. They wore only what was comfortable, and therefore beautiful. As I looked at them I could not help thinking with regret of the time when these picturesque miners would have made their fortunes and would go East to assume again all the abominations of modern fashionable attire. Indeed, so concerned was I that I made some of them promise that when they again appeared in the more crowded scenes of Eastern civilisation they would still continue to wear their lovely costume. But I do not believe they will.

Now, what America wants today is a school of rational art. Bad art is a great deal worse than no art at all. You must show your workmen specimens of good work so that they come to know what is simple and true and beautiful. To that end I would have you have a museum attached to these schools – not one of those dreadful modern institutions where there is a stuffed and very dusty giraffe, and a case or two of fossils, but a place where there are gathered examples of art decoration from various periods and countries. Such a place is the South Kensington Museum in London whereon we build greater hopes for the future than on any other one thing. There I go every Saturday night, when the museum is open later than usual, to see the handicraftsman, the wood-worker, the glass-blower and the worker in metals. And it is here that the man of refinement and culture comes face to face with the workman who ministers to his joy. He comes to know more of the nobility of the workman, and the workman, feeling the appreciation, comes to know more of the nobility of his work.

You have too many white walls. More colour is wanted. You should have such men as Whistler among you to teach you the beauty and joy of colour. Take Mr. Whistler's 'Symphony in White,' which you no doubt have imagined to be something quite bizarre. It is nothing of the sort. Think of a cool grey sky flecked here and there with white clouds, a grey ocean and three wonderfully beautiful figures robed in white, leaning over the water and dropping white flowers from their fingers. Here is no

extensive intellectual scheme to trouble you, and no metaphysics of which we have had quite enough in art. But if the simple and unaided colour strike the right keynote, the whole conception is made clear. I regard Mr. Whistler's famous Peacock Room as the finest thing in colour and art decoration which the world has known since Correggio painted that wonderful room in Italy where the little children are dancing on the walls. Mr. Whistler finished another room just before I came away – a breakfast room in blue and yellow. The ceiling was a light blue, the cabinet-work and the furniture were of a yellow wood, the curtains at the windows were white and worked in yellow, and when the table was set for breakfast with dainty blue china nothing can be conceived at once so simple and so joyous.

The fault which I have observed in most of your rooms is that there is apparent no definite scheme of colour. Everything is not attuned to a key-note as it should be. The apartments are crowded with pretty things which have no relation to one another. Again, your artists must decorate what is more simply useful. In your art schools I found no attempt to decorate such things as the vessels for water. I know of nothing uglier than the ordinary jug or pitcher. A museum could be filled with the different kinds of water vessels which are used in hot countries. Yet we continue to submit to the depressing jug with the handle all on one side. I do not see the wisdom of decorating dinner-plates with sunsets and soup-plates with moonlight scenes. I do not think it adds anything to the pleasure of the canvas-back duck to take it out

of such glories. Besides, we do not want a soup-plate whose bottom seems to vanish in the distance. One feels neither safe nor comfortable under such conditions. In fact, I did not find in the art schools of the country that the difference was explained between decorative and imaginative art.

The conditions of art should be simple. A great deal more depends upon the heart than upon the head. Appreciation of art is not secured by any elaborate scheme of learning. Art requires a good healthy atmosphere. The motives for art are still around about us as they were round about the ancients. And the subjects are also easily found by the earnest sculptor and the painter. Nothing is more picturesque and graceful than a man at work. The artist who goes to the children's playground, watches them at their sport and sees the boy stop to tie his shoe, will find the same themes that engaged the attention of the ancient Greeks, and such observation and the illustrations which follow will do much to correct that foolish impression that mental and physical beauty are always divorced.

To you, more than perhaps to any other country, has Nature been generous in furnishing material for art workers to work in. You have marble quarries where the stone is more beautiful in colour than any the Greeks ever had for their beautiful work, and yet day after day I am confronted with the great building of some stupid man who has used the beautiful material as if it were not precious almost beyond speech. Marble should not be used save by noble workmen. There is nothing which gave me a greater

sense of barrenness in travelling through the country than the entire absence of wood carving on your houses. Wood carving is the simplest of the decorative arts. In Switzerland the little barefooted boy beautifies the porch of his father's house with examples of skill in this direction. Why should not American boys do a great deal more and better than Swiss boys?

There is nothing to my mind more coarse in conception and more vulgar in execution than modern jewellery. This is something that can easily be corrected. Something better should be made out of the beautiful gold which is stored up in your mountain hollows and strewn along your river beds. When I was at Leadville and reflected that all the shining silver that I saw coming from the mines would be made into ugly dollars, it made me sad. It should be made into something more permanent. The golden gates at Florence are as beautiful today as when Michael Angelo saw them.

We should see more of the workman than we do. We should not be content to have the salesman stand between us – the salesman who knows nothing of what he is selling save that he is charging a great deal too much for it. And watching the workman will teach that most important lesson – the nobility of all rational workmanship.

I said in my last lecture that art would create a new brotherhood among men by furnishing a universal language. I said that under its beneficent influences war might pass away. Thinking this, what place can I ascribe to art in our education? If

children grow up among all fair and lovely things, they will grow to love beauty and detest ugliness before they know the reason why. If you go into a house where everything is coarse, you find things chipped and broken and unsightly. Nobody exercises any care. If everything is dainty and delicate, gentleness and refinement of manner are unconsciously acquired. When I was in San Francisco I used to visit the Chinese Quarter frequently. There I used to watch a great hulking Chinese workman at his task of digging, and used to see him every day drink his tea from a little cup as delicate in texture as the petal of a flower, whereas in all the grand hotels of the land, where thousands of dollars have been lavished on great gilt mirrors and gaudy columns, I have been given my coffee or my chocolate in cups an inch and a quarter thick. I think I have deserved something nicer.

The art systems of the past have been devised by philosophers who looked upon human beings as obstructions. They have tried to educate boys' minds before they had any. How much better it would be in these early years to teach children to use their hands in the rational service of mankind. I would have a workshop attached to every school, and one hour a day given up to the teaching of simple decorative arts. It would be a golden hour to the children. And you would soon raise up a race of handicraftsmen who would transform the face of your country. I have seen only one such school in the United States, and this was in Philadelphia and was founded by my friend Mr. Leyland. I stopped there yesterday and have brought some of the work here

this afternoon to show you. Here are two discs of beaten brass: the designs on them are beautiful, the workmanship is simple, and the entire result is satisfactory. The work was done by a little boy twelve years old. This is a wooden bowl decorated by a little girl of thirteen. The design is lovely and the colouring delicate and pretty. Here you see a piece of beautiful wood carving accomplished by a little boy of nine. In such work as this, children learn sincerity in art. They learn to abhor the liar in art – the man who paints wood to look like iron, or iron to look like stone. It is a practical school of morals. No better way is there to learn to love Nature than to understand Art. It dignifies every flower of the field. And, the boy who sees the thing of beauty which a bird on the wing becomes when transferred to wood or canvas will probably not throw the customary stone. What we want is something spiritual added to life. Nothing is so ignoble that Art cannot sanctify it.



# ART AND THE HANDICRAFTSMAN

The fragments of which this lecture is composed are taken entirely from the original manuscripts which have but recently been discovered. It is not certain that they all belong to the same lecture, nor that all were written at the same period. Some portions were written in Philadelphia in 1882.

People often talk as if there was an opposition between what is beautiful and what is useful. There is no opposition to beauty except ugliness: all things are either beautiful or ugly, and utility will be always on the side of the beautiful thing, because beautiful decoration is always on the side of the beautiful thing, because beautiful decoration is always an expression of the use you put a thing to and the value placed on it. No workman will beautifully decorate bad work, nor can you possibly get good handicraftsmen or workmen without having beautiful designs. You should be quite sure of that. If you have poor and worthless designs in any craft or trade you will get poor and worthless workmen only, but the minute you have noble and beautiful designs, then you get men of power and intellect and feeling to work for you. By having good designs you have workmen who work not merely with their hands but with their hearts and heads too; otherwise you will get merely the fool or the loafer to work for you.

That the beauty of life is a thing of no moment, I suppose few people would venture to assert. And yet most civilised people act as if it were of none, and in so doing are wronging both themselves and those that are to come after them. For that beauty which is meant by art is no mere accident of human life which people can take or leave, but a positive necessity of life if we are to live as nature meant us to, that is to say unless we are content to be less than men.

Do not think that the commercial spirit which is the basis of your life and cities here is opposed to art. Who built the beautiful cities of the world but commercial men and commercial men only? Genoa built by its traders, Florence by its bankers, and Venice, most lovely of all, by its noble and honest merchants.

I do not wish you, remember, 'to build a new Pisa,' nor to bring 'the life or the decorations of the thirteenth century back again.' 'The circumstances with which you must surround your workmen are those' of modern American life, 'because the designs you have now to ask for from your workmen are such as will make modern' American 'life beautiful.' The art we want is the art based on all the inventions of modern civilisation, and to suit all the needs of nineteenth century life.

Do you think, for instance, that we object to machinery? I tell you we reverence it; we reverence it when it does its proper work, when it relieves man from ignoble and soulless labour, not when it seeks to do that which is valuable only when wrought by the hands and hearts of men. Let us have no machine-made

ornament at all; it is all bad and worthless and ugly. And let us not mistake the means of civilisation for the end of civilisation; steam-engine, telephone and the like, are all wonderful, but remember that their value depends entirely on the noble uses we make of them, on the noble spirit in which we employ them, not on the things themselves.

It is, no doubt, a great advantage to talk to a man at the Antipodes through a telephone; its advantage depends entirely on the value of what the two men have to say to one another. If one merely shrieks slander through a tube and the other whispers folly into a wire, do not think that anybody is very much benefited by the invention.

The train that whirls an ordinary Englishman through Italy at the rate of forty miles an hour and finally sends him home without any memory of that lovely country but that he was cheated by a courier at Rome, or that he got a bad dinner at Verona, does not do him or civilisation much good. But that swift legion of fiery-footed engines that bore to the burning ruins of Chicago the loving help and generous treasure of the world was as noble and as beautiful as any golden troop of angels that ever fed the hungry and clothed the naked in the antique times. As beautiful, yes; all machinery may be beautiful when it is undecorated even. Do not seek to decorate it. We cannot but think all good machinery is graceful, also, the line of strength and the line of beauty being one.

Give then, as I said, to your workmen of today the bright

and noble surroundings that you can yourself create. Stately and simple architecture for your cities, bright and simple dress for your men and women; those are the conditions of a real artistic movement. For the artist is not concerned primarily with any theory of life but with life itself, with the joy and loveliness that should come daily on eye and ear for a beautiful external world.

But the simplicity must not be barrenness nor the bright colour gaudy. For all beautiful colours are graduated colours, the colours that seem about to pass into one another's realm – colour without tone being like music without harmony, mere discord. Barren architecture, the vulgar and glaring advertisements that desecrate not merely your cities but every rock and river that I have seen yet in America – all this is not enough. A school of design we must have too in each city. It should be a stately and noble building, full of the best examples of the best art of the world. Furthermore, do not put your designers in a barren whitewashed room and bid them work in that depressing and colourless atmosphere as I have seen many of the American schools of design, but give them beautiful surroundings. Because you want to produce a permanent canon and standard of taste in your workman, he must have always by him and before him specimens of the best decorative art of the world, so that you can say to him: 'This is good work. Greek or Italian or Japanese wrought it so many years ago, but it is eternally young because eternally beautiful.' Work in this spirit and you will be sure to be right. Do not copy it, but work with the same love, the same reverence, the same freedom

of imagination. You must teach him colour and design, how all beautiful colours are graduated colours and glaring colours the essence of vulgarity. Show him the quality of any beautiful work of nature like the rose, or any beautiful work of art like an Eastern carpet – being merely the exquisite graduation of colour, one tone answering another like the answering chords of a symphony. Teach him how the true designer is not he who makes the design and then colours it, but he who designs in colour, creates in colour, thinks in colour too. Show him how the most gorgeous stained glass windows of Europe are filled with white glass, and the most gorgeous Eastern tapestry with toned colours – the primary colours in both places being set in the white glass, and the tone colours like brilliant jewels set in dusky gold. And then as regards design, show him how the real designer will take first any given limited space, little disk of silver, it may be, like a Greek coin, or wide expanse of fretted ceiling or lordly wall as Tintoret chose at Venice (it does not matter which), and to this limited space – the first condition of decoration being the limitation of the size of the material used – he will give the effect of its being filled with beautiful decoration, filled with it as a golden cup will be filled with wine, so complete that you should not be able to take away anything from it or add anything to it. For from a good piece of design you can take away nothing, nor can you add anything to it, each little bit of design being as absolutely necessary and as vitally important to the whole effect as a note or chord of music is for a sonata of Beethoven.

But I said the effect of its being so filled, because this, again, is of the essence of good design. With a simple spray of leaves and a bird in flight a Japanese artist will give you the impression that he has completely covered with lovely design the reed fan or lacquer cabinet at which he is working, merely because he knows the exact spot in which to place them. All good design depends on the texture of the utensil used and the use you wish to put it to. One of the first things I saw in an American school of design was a young lady painting a romantic moonlight landscape on a large round dish, and another young lady covering a set of dinner plates with a series of sunsets of the most remarkable colours. Let your ladies paint moonlight landscapes and sunsets, but do not let them paint them on dinner plates or dishes. Let them take canvas or paper for such work, but not clay or china. They are merely painting the wrong subjects on the wrong material, that is all. They have not been taught that every material and texture has certain qualities of its own. The design suitable for one is quite wrong for the other, just as the design which you should work on a flat table-cover ought to be quite different from the design you would work on a curtain, for the one will always be straight, the other broken into folds; and the use too one puts the object to should guide one in the choice of design. One does not want to eat one's terrapins off a romantic moonlight nor one's clams off a harrowing sunset. Glory of sun and moon, let them be wrought for us by our landscape artist and be on the walls of the rooms we sit in to remind us of the undying beauty of the sunsets that

fade and die, but do not let us eat our soup off them and send them down to the kitchen twice a day to be washed and scrubbed by the handmaid.

All these things are simple enough, yet nearly always forgotten. Your school of design here will teach your girls and your boys, your handicraftsmen of the future (for all your schools of art should be local schools, the schools of particular cities). We talk of the Italian school of painting, but there is no Italian school; there were the schools of each city. Every town in Italy, from Venice itself, queen of the sea, to the little hill fortress of Perugia, each had its own school of art, each different and all beautiful.

So do not mind what art Philadelphia or New York is having, but make by the hands of your own citizens beautiful art for the joy of your own citizens, for you have here the primary elements of a great artistic movement.

For, believe me, the conditions of art are much simpler than people imagine. For the noblest art one requires a clear healthy atmosphere, not polluted as the air of our English cities is by the smoke and grime and horridness which comes from open furnace and from factory chimney. You must have strong, sane, healthy physique among your men and women. Sickly or idle or melancholy people do not do much in art. And lastly, you require a sense of individualism about each man and woman, for this is the essence of art – a desire on the part of man to express himself in the noblest way possible. And this is the reason that the

grandest art of the world always came from a republic, Athens, Venice, and Florence – there were no kings there and so their art was as noble and simple as sincere. But if you want to know what kind of art the folly of kings will impose on a country look at the decorative art of France under the *grand monarch*, under Louis the Fourteenth; the gaudy gilt furniture writhing under a sense of its own horror and ugliness, with a nymph smirking at every angle and a dragon mouthing on every claw. Unreal and monstrous art this, and fit only for such periwigged pomposities as the nobility of France at that time, but not at all fit for you or me. We do not want the rich to possess more beautiful things but the poor to create more beautiful things; for every man is poor who cannot create. Nor shall the art which you and I need be merely a purple robe woven by a slave and thrown over the whitened body of some leprous king to adorn or to conceal the sin of his luxury, but rather shall it be the noble and beautiful expression of a people's noble and beautiful life. Art shall be again the most glorious of all the chords through which the spirit of a great nation finds its noblest utterance.

All around you, I said, lie the conditions for a great artistic movement for every great art. Let us think of one of them; a sculptor, for instance.

If a modern sculptor were to come and say, 'Very well, but where can one find subjects for sculpture out of men who wear frock-coats and chimney-pot hats?' I would tell him to go to the docks of a great city and watch the men loading or unloading



the stately ships, working at wheel or windlass, hauling at rope or gangway. I have never watched a man do anything useful who has not been graceful at some moment of his labour; it is only the loafer and the idle saunterer who is as useless and uninteresting to the artist as he is to himself. I would ask the sculptor to go with me to any of your schools or universities, to the running ground and gymnasium, to watch the young men start for a race, hurling quoit or club, kneeling to tie their shoes before leaping, stepping from the boat or bending to the oar, and to carve them; and when he was weary of cities I would ask him to come to your fields and meadows to watch the reaper with his sickle and the cattle driver with lifted lasso. For if a man cannot find the noblest motives for his art in such simple daily things as a woman drawing water from the well or a man leaning with his scythe, he will not find them anywhere at all. Gods and goddesses the Greek carved because he loved them; saint and king the Goth because he believed in them. But you, you do not care much for Greek gods and goddesses, and you are perfectly and entirely right; and you do not think much of kings either, and you are quite right. But what you do love are your own men and women, your own flowers and fields, your own hills and mountains, and these are what your art should represent to you.

Ours has been the first movement which has brought the handicraftsman and the artist together, for remember that by separating the one from the other you do ruin to both; you rob the one of all spiritual motive and all imaginative joy, you isolate the

other from all real technical perfection. The two greatest schools of art in the world, the sculptor at Athens and the school of painting at Venice, had their origin entirely in a long succession of simple and earnest handicraftsmen. It was the Greek potter who taught the sculptor that restraining influence of design which was the glory of the Parthenon; it was the Italian decorator of chests and household goods who kept Venetian painting always true to its primary pictorial condition of noble colour. For we should remember that all the arts are fine arts and all the arts decorative arts. The greatest triumph of Italian painting was the decoration of a pope's chapel in Rome and the wall of a room in Venice. Michael Angelo wrought the one, and Tintoret, the dyer's son, the other. And the little 'Dutch landscape, which you put over your sideboard today, and between the windows tomorrow, is' no less a glorious 'piece of work than the extents of field and forest with which Benozzo has made green and beautiful the once melancholy arcade of the Campo Santo at Pisa,' as Ruskin says.

Do not imitate the works of a nation, Greek or Japanese, Italian or English; but their artistic spirit of design and their artistic attitude today, their own world, you should absorb but imitate never, copy never. Unless you can make as beautiful a design in painted china or embroidered screen or beaten brass out of your American turkey as the Japanese does out of his grey silver-winged stork, you will never do anything. Let the Greek carve his lions and the Goth his dragons: buffalo and wild deer are the animals for you.

Golden rod and aster and rose and all the flowers that cover your valleys in the spring and your hills in the autumn: let them be the flowers for your art. Not merely has Nature given you the noblest motives for a new school of decoration, but to you above all other countries has she given the utensils to work in.

You have quarries of marble richer than Pantelicus, more varied than Paros, but do not build a great white square house of marble and think that it is beautiful, or that you are using marble nobly. If you build in marble you must either carve it into joyous decoration, like the lives of dancing children that adorn the marble castles of the Loire, or fill it with beautiful sculpture, frieze and pediment, as the Greeks did, or inlay it with other coloured marbles as they did in Venice. Otherwise you had better build in simple red brick as your Puritan fathers, with no pretence and with some beauty. Do not treat your marble as if it was ordinary stone and build a house of mere blocks of it. For it is indeed a precious stone, this marble of yours, and only workmen of nobility of invention and delicacy of hand should be allowed to touch it at all, carving it into noble statues or into beautiful decoration, or inlaying it with other coloured marbles: for the true colours of architecture are those of natural stone, and I would fain see them taken advantage of to the full. Every variety is here, from pale yellow to purple passing through orange, red and brown, entirely at your command; nearly every kind of green and grey also is attainable, and with these and with pure white what harmony might you not achieve. Of stained and variegated

stone the quantity is unlimited, the kinds innumerable. Were brighter colours required, let glass, and gold protected by glass, be used in mosaic, a kind of work as durable as the solid stone and incapable of losing its lustre by time. And let the painter's work be reserved for the shadowed loggia and inner chamber.

This is the true and faithful way of building. Where this cannot be, the device of external colouring may indeed be employed without dishonour – but it must be with the warning reflection that a time will come when such aids will pass away and when the building will be judged in its lifelessness, dying the death of the dolphin. Better the less bright, more enduring fabric. The transparent alabasters of San Miniato and the mosaics of Saint Mark's are more warmly filled and more brightly touched by every return of morning and evening rays, while the hues of the Gothic cathedrals have died like the iris out of the cloud, and the temples, whose azure and purple once flamed above the Grecian promontory, stand in their faded whiteness like snows which the sunset has left cold.

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I do not know anything so perfectly commonplace in design as most modern jewellery. How easy for you to change that and to produce goldsmiths' work that would be a joy to all of us. The gold is ready for you in unexhausted treasure, stored up in the mountain hollow or strewn on the river sand, and was not

given to you merely for barren speculation. There should be some better record of it left in your history than the merchant's panic and the ruined home. We do not remember often enough how constantly the history of a great nation will live in and by its art. Only a few thin wreaths of beaten gold remain to tell us of the stately empire of Etruria; and, while from the streets of Florence the noble knight and haughty duke have long since passed away, the gates which the simple goldsmith Gheberti made for their pleasure still guard their lovely house of baptism, worthy still of the praise of Michael Angelo who called them worthy to be the Gates of Paradise.

Have then your school of design, search out your workmen and, when you find one who has delicacy of hand and that wonder of invention necessary for goldsmiths' work, do not leave him to toil in obscurity and dishonour and have a great glaring shop and two great glaring shop-boys in it (not to take your orders: they never do that; but to force you to buy something you do not want at all). When you want a thing wrought in gold, goblet or shield for the feast, necklace or wreath for the women, tell him what you like most in decoration, flower or wreath, bird in flight or hound in the chase, image of the woman you love or the friend you honour. Watch him as he beats out the gold into those thin plates delicate as the petals of a yellow rose, or draws it into the long wires like tangled sunbeams at dawn. Whoever that workman be help him, cherish him, and you will have such lovely work from his hand as will be a joy to you for all time.

This is the spirit of our movement in England, and this is the spirit in which we would wish you to work, making eternal by your art all that is noble in your men and women, stately in your lakes and mountains, beautiful in your own flowers and natural life. We want to see that you have nothing in your houses that has not been a joy to the man who made it, and is not a joy to those that use it. We want to see you create an art made by the hands of the people to please the hearts of the people too. Do you like this spirit or not? Do you think it simple and strong, noble in its aim, and beautiful in its result? I know you do.

Folly and slander have their own way for a little time, but for a little time only. You now know what we mean: you will be able to estimate what is said of us – its value and its motive.

There should be a law that no ordinary newspaper should be allowed to write about art. The harm they do by their foolish and random writing it would be impossible to overestimate – not to the artist but to the public, blinding them to all, but harming the artist not at all. Without them we would judge a man simply by his work; but at present the newspapers are trying hard to induce the public to judge a sculptor, for instance, never by his statues but by the way he treats his wife; a painter by the amount of his income and a poet by the colour of his necktie. I said there should be a law, but there is really no necessity for a new law: nothing could be easier than to bring the ordinary critic under the head of the criminal classes. But let us leave such an inartistic subject and return to beautiful and comely things, remembering that the art

which would represent the spirit of modern newspapers would be exactly the art which you and I want to avoid – grotesque art, malice mocking you from every gateway, slander sneering at you from every corner.

Perhaps you may be surprised at my talking of labour and the workman. You have heard of me, I fear, through the medium of your somewhat imaginative newspapers as, if not a ‘Japanese young man,’ at least a young man to whom the rush and clamour and reality of the modern world were distasteful, and whose greatest difficulty in life was the difficulty of living up to the level of his blue china – a paradox from which England has not yet recovered.

Well, let me tell you how it first came to me at all to create an artistic movement in England, a movement to show the rich what beautiful things they might enjoy and the poor what beautiful things they might create.

One summer afternoon in Oxford – ‘that sweet city with her dreaming spires,’ lovely as Venice in its splendour, noble in its learning as Rome, down the long High Street that winds from tower to tower, past silent cloister and stately gateway, till it reaches that long, grey seven-arched bridge which Saint Mary used to guard (used to, I say, because they are now pulling it down to build a tramway and a light cast-iron bridge in its place, desecrating the loveliest city in England) – well, we were coming down the street – a troop of young men, some of them like myself only nineteen, going to river or tennis-court or cricket-field –

when Ruskin going up to lecture in cap and gown met us. He seemed troubled and prayed us to go back with him to his lecture, which a few of us did, and there he spoke to us not on art this time but on life, saying that it seemed to him to be wrong that all the best physique and strength of the young men in England should be spent aimlessly on cricket-ground or river, without any result at all except that if one rowed well one got a pewter-pot, and if one made a good score, a cane-handled bat. He thought, he said, that we should be working at something that would do good to other people, at something by which we might show that in all labour there was something noble. Well, we were a good deal moved, and said we would do anything he wished. So he went out round Oxford and found two villages, Upper and Lower Hinksey, and between them there lay a great swamp, so that the villagers could not pass from one to the other without many miles of a round. And when we came back in winter he asked us to help him to make a road across this morass for these village people to use. So out we went, day after day, and learned how to lay levels and to break stones, and to wheel barrows along a plank – a very difficult thing to do. And Ruskin worked with us in the mist and rain and mud of an Oxford winter, and our friends and our enemies came out and mocked us from the bank. We did not mind it much then, and we did not mind it afterwards at all, but worked away for two months at our road. And what became of the road? Well, like a bad lecture it ended abruptly – in the middle of the swamp. Ruskin going away to Venice,



when we came back for the next term there was no leader, and the ‘diggers,’ as they called us, fell asunder. And I felt that if there was enough spirit amongst the young men to go out to such work as road-making for the sake of a noble ideal of life, I could from them create an artistic movement that might change, as it has changed, the face of England. So I sought them out – leader they would call me – but there was no leader: we were all searchers only and we were bound to each other by noble friendship and by noble art. There was none of us idle: poets most of us, so ambitious were we: painters some of us, or workers in metal or modellers, determined that we would try and create for ourselves beautiful work: for the handicraftsman beautiful work, for those who love us poems and pictures, for those who love us not epigrams and paradoxes and scorn.

Well, we have done something in England and we will do something more. Now, I do not want you, believe me, to ask your brilliant young men, your beautiful young girls, to go out and make a road on a swamp for any village in America, but I think you might each of you have some art to practise.

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We must have, as Emerson said, a mechanical craft for our culture, a basis for our higher accomplishments in the work of our hands – the uselessness of most people’s hands seems to me one of the most unpractical things. ‘No separation from

labour can be without some loss of power or truth to the seer,' says Emerson again. The heroism which would make on us the impression of Epaminondas must be that of a domestic conqueror. The hero of the future is he who shall bravely and gracefully subdue this Gorgon of fashion and of convention.

When you have chosen your own part, abide by it, and do not weakly try and reconcile yourself with the world. The heroic cannot be the common nor the common the heroic. Congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant and broken the monotony of a decorous age.

And lastly, let us remember that art is the one thing which Death cannot harm. The little house at Concord may be desolate, but the wisdom of New England's Plato is not silenced nor the brilliancy of that Attic genius dimmed: the lips of Longfellow are still musical for us though his dust be turning into the flowers which he loved: and as it is with the greater artists, poet and philosopher and songbird, so let it be with you.

# LECTURE TO ART STUDENTS

Delivered to the Art students of the Royal Academy at their Club in Golden Square, Westminster, on June 30, 1883. The text is taken from the original manuscript.

In the lecture which it is my privilege to deliver before you to-night I do not desire to give you any abstract definition of beauty at all. For, we who are working in art cannot accept any theory of beauty in exchange for beauty itself, and, so far from desiring to isolate it in a formula appealing to the intellect, we, on the contrary, seek to materialise it in a form that gives joy to the soul through the senses. We want to create it, not to define it. The definition should follow the work: the work should not adapt itself to the definition.

Nothing, indeed, is more dangerous to the young artist than any conception of ideal beauty: he is constantly led by it either into weak prettiness or lifeless abstraction: whereas to touch the ideal at all you must not strip it of vitality. You must find it in life and re-create it in art.

While, then, on the one hand I do not desire to give you any philosophy of beauty – for, what I want to-night is to investigate how we can create art, not how we can talk of it – on the other hand, I do not wish to deal with anything like a history of English art.

To begin with, such an expression as English art is a

meaningless expression. One might just as well talk of English mathematics. Art is the science of beauty, and Mathematics the science of truth: there is no national school of either. Indeed, a national school is a provincial school, merely. Nor is there any such thing as a school of art even. There are merely artists, that is all.

And as regards histories of art, they are quite valueless to you unless you are seeking the ostentatious oblivion of an art professorship. It is of no use to you to know the date of Perugino or the birthplace of Salvator Rosa: all that you should learn about art is to know a good picture when you see it, and a bad picture when you see it. As regards the date of the artist, all good work looks perfectly modern: a piece of Greek sculpture, a portrait of Velasquez – they are always modern, always of our time. And as regards the nationality of the artist, art is not national but universal. As regards archæology, then, avoid it altogether: archæology is merely the science of making excuses for bad art; it is the rock on which many a young artist founders and shipwrecks; it is the abyss from which no artist, old or young, ever returns. Or, if he does return, he is so covered with the dust of ages and the mildew of time, that he is quite unrecognisable as an artist, and has to conceal himself for the rest of his days under the cap of a professor, or as a mere illustrator of ancient history. How worthless archæology is in art you can estimate by the fact of its being so popular. Popularity is the crown of laurel which the world puts on bad art. Whatever is popular is wrong.

As I am not going to talk to you, then, about the philosophy of the beautiful, or the history of art, you will ask me what I am going to talk about. The subject of my lecture to-night is what makes an artist and what does the artist make; what are the relations of the artist to his surroundings, what is the education the artist should get, and what is the quality of a good work of art.

Now, as regards the relations of the artist to his surroundings, by which I mean the age and country in which he is born. All good art, as I said before, has nothing to do with any particular century; but this universality is the quality of the work of art; the conditions that produce that quality are different. And what, I think, you should do is to realise completely your age in order completely to abstract yourself from it; remembering that if you are an artist at all, you will be not the mouthpiece of a century, but the master of eternity; that all art rests on a principle, and that mere temporal considerations are no principle at all; and that those who advise you to make your art representative of the nineteenth century are advising you to produce an art which your children, when you have them, will think old-fashioned. But you will tell me this is an inartistic age, and we are an inartistic people, and the artist suffers much in this nineteenth century of ours.

Of course he does. I, of all men, am not going to deny that. But remember that there never has been an artistic age, or an artistic people, since the beginning of the world. The artist has always been, and will always be, an exquisite exception. There

is no golden age of art; only artists who have produced what is more golden than gold.

*What, you will say to me, the Greeks? were not they an artistic people?*

Well, the Greeks certainly not, but, perhaps, you mean the Athenians, the citizens of one out of a thousand cities.

Do you think that they were an artistic people? Take them even at the time of their highest artistic development, the latter part of the fifth century before Christ, when they had the greatest poets and the greatest artists of the antique world, when the Parthenon rose in loveliness at the bidding of a Phidias, and the philosopher spake of wisdom in the shadow of the painted portico, and tragedy swept in the perfection of pageant and pathos across the marble of the stage. Were they an artistic people then? Not a bit of it. What is an artistic people but a people who love their artists and understand their art? The Athenians could do neither.

How did they treat Phidias? To Phidias we owe the great era, not merely in Greek, but in all art – I mean of the introduction of the use of the living model.

And what would you say if all the English bishops, backed by the English people, came down from Exeter Hall to the Royal Academy one day and took off Sir Frederick Leighton in a prison van to Newgate on the charge of having allowed you to make use of the living model in your designs for sacred pictures?

Would you not cry out against the barbarism and the

Puritanism of such an idea? Would you not explain to them that the worst way to honour God is to dishonour man who is made in His image, and is the work of His hands; and, that if one wants to paint Christ one must take the most Christlike person one can find, and if one wants to paint the Madonna, the purest girl one knows?

Would you not rush off and burn down Newgate, if necessary, and say that such a thing was without parallel in history?

Without parallel? Well, that is exactly what the Athenians did.

In the room of the Parthenon marbles, in the British Museum, you will see a marble shield on the wall. On it there are two figures; one of a man whose face is half hidden, the other of a man with the godlike lineaments of Pericles. For having done this, for having introduced into a bas relief, taken from Greek sacred history, the image of the great statesman who was ruling Athens at the time, Phidias was flung into prison and there, in the common gaol of Athens, died, the supreme artist of the old world.

And do you think that this was an exceptional case? The sign of a Philistine age is the cry of immorality against art, and this cry was raised by the Athenian people against every great poet and thinker of their day – Æschylus, Euripides, Socrates. It was the same with Florence in the thirteenth century. Good handicrafts are due to guilds not to the people. The moment the guilds lost their power and the people rushed in, beauty and honesty of work died.

And so, never talk of an artistic people; there never has been such a thing.

But, perhaps, you will tell me that the external beauty of the world has almost entirely passed away from us, that the artist dwells no longer in the midst of the lovely surroundings which, in ages past, were the natural inheritance of every one, and that art is very difficult in this unlovely town of ours, where, as you go to your work in the morning, or return from it at eventide, you have to pass through street after street of the most foolish and stupid architecture that the world has ever seen; architecture, where every lovely Greek form is desecrated and defiled, and every lovely Gothic form defiled and desecrated, reducing three-fourths of the London houses to being, merely, like square boxes of the vilest proportions, as gaunt as they are grimy, and as poor as they are pretentious – the hall door always of the wrong colour, and the windows of the wrong size, and where, even when wearied of the houses you turn to contemplate the street itself, you have nothing to look at but chimney-pot hats, men with sandwich boards, vermilion letterboxes, and do that even at the risk of being run over by an emerald-green omnibus.

Is not art difficult, you will say to me, in such surroundings as these? Of course it is difficult, but then art was never easy; you yourselves would not wish it to be easy; and, besides, nothing is worth doing except what the world says is impossible.

Still, you do not care to be answered merely by a paradox. What are the relations of the artist to the external world, and what



is the result of the loss of beautiful surroundings to you, is one of the most important questions of modern art; and there is no point on which Mr. Ruskin so insists as that the decadence of art has come from the decadence of beautiful things; and that when the artist can not feed his eye on beauty, beauty goes from his work.

I remember in one of his lectures, after describing the sordid aspect of a great English city, he draws for us a picture of what were the artistic surroundings long ago.

Think, he says, in words of perfect and picturesque imagery, whose beauty I can but feebly echo, think of what was the scene which presented itself, in his afternoon walk, to a designer of the Gothic school of Pisa – Nino Pisano or any of his men<sup>28</sup>:

On each side of a bright river he saw rise a line of brighter palaces, arched and pillared, and inlaid with deep red porphyry, and with serpentine; along the quays before their gates were riding troops of knights, noble in face and form, dazzling in crest and shield; horse and man one labyrinth of quaint colour and gleaming light – the purple, and silver, and scarlet fringes flowing over the strong limbs and clashing mail, like sea-waves over rocks at sunset. Opening on each side from the river were gardens, courts, and cloisters; long successions of white pillars among wreaths of vine; leaping of fountains through buds of pomegranate and orange: and still along the garden-paths, and under and through the crimson of the pomegranate shadows, moving slowly, groups of the fairest women that

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<sup>28</sup> *The Two Paths*, Lect. III. p. 123 (1859 ed.).

Italy ever saw – fairest, because purest and thoughtfullest; trained in all high knowledge, as in all courteous art – in dance, in song, in sweet wit, in lofty learning, in loftier courage, in loftiest love – able alike to cheer, to enchant, or save, the souls of men. Above all this scenery of perfect human life, rose dome and bell-tower, burning with white alabaster and gold: beyond dome and bell-tower the slopes of mighty hills, hoary with olive; far in the north, above a purple sea of peaks of solemn Apennine, the clear, sharp-cloven Carrara mountains sent up their steadfast flames of marble summit into amber sky; the great sea itself, scorching with expanse of light, stretching from their feet to the Gorgonian isles; and over all these, ever present, near or far – seen through the leaves of vine, or imaged with all its march of clouds in the Arno’s stream, or set with its depth of blue close against the golden hair and burning cheek of lady and knight, – that untroubled and sacred sky, which was to all men, in those days of innocent faith, indeed the unquestioned abode of spirits, as the earth was of men; and which opened straight through its gates of cloud and veils of dew into the awfulness of the eternal world; – a heaven in which every cloud that passed was literally the chariot of an angel, and every ray of its Evening and Morning streamed from the throne of God.

What think you of that for a school of design?

And then look at the depressing, monotonous appearance of any modern city, the sombre dress of men and women, the meaningless and barren architecture, the colourless and dreadful

surroundings. Without a beautiful national life, not sculpture merely, but all the arts will die.

Well, as regards the religious feeling of the close of the passage, I do not think I need speak about that. Religion springs from religious feeling, art from artistic feeling: you never get one from the other; unless you have the right root you will not get the right flower; and, if a man sees in a cloud the chariot of an angel, he will probably paint it very unlike a cloud.

But, as regards the general idea of the early part of that lovely bit of prose, is it really true that beautiful surroundings are necessary for the artist? I think not; I am sure not. Indeed, to me the most inartistic thing in this age of ours is not the indifference of the public to beautiful things, but the indifference of the artist to the things that are called ugly. For, to the real artist, nothing is beautiful or ugly in itself at all. With the facts of the object he has nothing to do, but with its appearance only, and appearance is a matter of light and shade, of masses, of position, and of value.

Appearance is, in fact, a matter of effect merely, and it is with the effects of nature that you have to deal, not with the real condition of the object. What you, as painters, have to paint is not things as they are but things as they seem to be, not things as they are but things as they are not.

No object is so ugly that, under certain conditions of light and shade, or proximity to other things, it will not look beautiful; no object is so beautiful that, under certain conditions, it will not look ugly. I believe that in every twenty-four hours what is

beautiful looks ugly, and what is ugly looks beautiful, once.

And, the commonplace character of so much of our English painting seems to me due to the fact that so many of our young artists look merely at what we may call 'ready-made beauty,' whereas you exist as artists not to copy beauty but to create it in your art, to wait and watch for it in nature.

What would you say of a dramatist who would take nobody but virtuous people as characters in his play? Would you not say he was missing half of life? Well, of the young artist who paints nothing but beautiful things, I say he misses one half of the world.

Do not wait for life to be picturesque, but try and see life under picturesque conditions. These conditions you can create for yourself in your studio, for they are merely conditions of light. In nature, you must wait for them, watch for them, choose them; and, if you wait and watch, come they will.

In Gower Street at night you may see a letterbox that is picturesque; on the Thames Embankment you may see picturesque policemen. Even Venice is not always beautiful, nor France.

To paint what you see is a good rule in art, but to see what is worth painting is better. See life under pictorial conditions. It is better to live in a city of changeable weather than in a city of lovely surroundings.

Now, having seen what makes the artist, and what the artist makes, who is the artist? There is a man living amongst us who unites in himself all the qualities of the noblest art, whose work

is a joy for all time, who is, himself, a master of all time. That man is Mr. Whistler.

But, you will say, modern dress, that is bad. If you cannot paint black cloth you could not have painted silken doublet. Ugly dress is better for art – facts of vision, not of the object.

What is a picture? Primarily, a picture is a beautifully coloured surface, merely, with no more spiritual message or meaning for you than an exquisite fragment of Venetian glass or a blue tile from the wall of Damascus. It is, primarily, a purely decorative thing, a delight to look at.

All archaeological pictures that make you say ‘How curious!’ all sentimental pictures that make you say ‘How sad!’ all historical pictures that make you say ‘How interesting!’ all pictures that do not immediately give you such artistic joy as to make you say ‘How beautiful!’ are bad pictures.

\* \* \* \* \*

We never know what an artist is going to do. Of course not. The artist is not a specialist. All such divisions as animal painters, landscape painters, painters of Scotch cattle in an English mist, painters of English cattle in a Scotch mist, racehorse painters, bull-terrier painters, all are shallow. If a man is an artist he can paint everything.

The object of art is to stir the most divine and remote of the chords which make music in our soul; and colour is, indeed, of

itself a mystical presence on things, and tone a kind of sentinel.

Am I pleading, then, for mere technique? No. As long as there are any signs of technique at all, the picture is unfinished. What is finish? A picture is finished when all traces of work, and of the means employed to bring about the result, have disappeared.

In the case of handicraftsmen – the weaver, the potter, the smith – on their work are the traces of their hand. But it is not so with the painter; it is not so with the artist.

Art should have no sentiment about it but its beauty, no technique except what you cannot observe. One should be able to say of a picture not that it is ‘well painted,’ but that it is ‘not painted.’

What is the difference between absolutely decorative art and a painting? Decorative art emphasises its material: imaginative art annihilates it. Tapestry shows its threads as part of its beauty: a picture annihilates its canvas; it shows nothing of it. Porcelain emphasises its glaze: water-colours reject the paper.

A picture has no meaning but its beauty, no message but its joy. That is the first truth about art that you must never lose sight of. A picture is a purely decorative thing.

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## NOTE

Part I. includes all the authorised editions published in England, and the two French editions of *Salomé* published in Paris. Authorised editions of some of the works were issued in the United States of America simultaneously with the English publication.

Part II. contains the only two 'Privately Printed' editions which are authorised.

Part III. is a chronological list of all contributions (so far as at present known) to magazines, periodicals, etc., the date given being that of the first publication only. Those marked with an asterisk (\*) were published anonymously. Many of the poems have been included in anthologies of modern verse, but no attempt has been made to give particulars of such reprints in this Bibliography.

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December 13. UN AMANT DE NOS JOURS. *Court and Society Review*, Vol. IV. No. 180, page 587.

December 16. \*ARISTOTLE AT AFTERNOON TEA. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVI. No. 7098, page 3.

December 17. \*EARLY CHRISTIAN ART IN IRELAND. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVI. No. 7099, page 3.

December 25. \*ART AT WILLIS'S ROOMS. *Sunday Times*,



No. 3376, page 7.

December 25. FANTAISIES DÉCORATIVES. I. LE PANNEAU. II. LES BALLONS. Illustrated by Bernard Partridge. *Lady's Pictorial* Christmas Number, pages 2, 3.

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January. LITERARY AND OTHER NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. I. No. 3, page 132.

January 20. \*THE POETS' CORNER. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVII. No. 7128, page 3.

February. LITERARY AND OTHER NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. I. No. 4, page 180.

February 15. THE POETS' CORNER. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVII. No. 7150, page 3.

February 24. \*VENUS OR VICTORY. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVII. No. 7158, page 2.

March. LITERARY AND OTHER NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. I. No. 5, page 229.

April. CANZONET. *Art and Letters*, Vol. II. No. 1, page 46.

April 6. \*THE POETS' CORNER. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVII. No. 7193, page 3.

April 14. \*M. CARO ON GEORGE SAND. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVII. No. 7200, page 3.

October 24. \*THE POETS' CORNER. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7365, page 5.

November. A FASCINATING BOOK. A NOTE BY THE EDITOR. *Woman's World*, Vol. II. No. 13, page 53.

- November 2. \*MR. MORRIS ON TAPESTRY. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7373, page 6.
- November 9. \*SCULPTURE AT THE 'ARTS AND CRAFTS.' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7379, page 3.
- November 16. \*THE POETS' CORNER. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7385, page 2.
- November 16. \*PRINTING AND PRINTERS. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7385, page 5.
- November 23. \*THE BEAUTIES OF BOOKBINDING. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7391, page 3.
- November 30. \*THE CLOSE OF THE 'ARTS AND CRAFTS.' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7397, page 3.
- December. A NOTE ON SOME MODERN POETS. *Woman's World*, Vol. II. No. 14, page 108.
- December 8. ENGLISH POETESSES. *Queen*, Vol. LXXXIV. No. 2189, page 742.
- December 11. \*SIR EDWIN ARNOLD'S LAST VOLUME. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7046, page 3.
- December 14. \*AUSTRALIAN POETS. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLVIII. No. 7409, page 3.
- December. THE YOUNG KING. Illustrated by Bernard Partridge. *Lady's Pictorial* Christmas Number, page 1.

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- January. THE DECAY OF LYING: A DIALOGUE. *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. XXV. No. 143, page 35.
- January. PEN, PENCIL, AND POISON: A STUDY.

*Fortnightly Review*, Vol. XLV. No. 265, page 41.

January. LONDON MODELS. Illustrated by Harper Pennington. *English Illustrated Magazine*, Vol. VI. No. 64, page 313.

January. SOME LITERARY NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. II. No. 15, page 164.

January 3. \*POETRY AND PRISON. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7425, page 3.

January 25. \*THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO WALT WHITMAN. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7444, page 3.

January 26. \*THE NEW PRESIDENT. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7445, page 3.

February. SOME LITERARY NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. II. No. 16, page 221.

February. SYMPHONY IN YELLOW. *Centennial Magazine* (Sydney), Vol. II. No. 7, page 437.

February 12. \*ONE OF THE BIBLES OF THE WORLD. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7459, page 3.

February 15. \*POETICAL SOCIALISTS. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7462, page 3.

February 27. \*MR. BRANDER MATTHEWS' ESSAYS. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7472, page 3.

March. SOME LITERARY NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. III. No. 17, page 277.

March 2. \*MR. WILLIAM MORRIS'S LAST BOOK. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7475, page 3.

March 25. \*ADAM LINDSAY GORDON. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7494, page 3.

March 30. \*THE POETS' CORNER. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7499, page 3.

April. SOME LITERARY NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. II. No. 18, page 333.

April 13. MR. FROUDE'S BLUE-BOOK. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7511, page 3.

May. SOME LITERARY NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. ii. No. 19, page 389.

May 17. \*OUIDA'S NEW NOVEL. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7539, page 3.

June. SOME LITERARY NOTES. *Woman's World*, Vol. II. No. 20, page 446.

June 5. \*A THOUGHT-READER'S NOVEL. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7555, page 2.

June 24. \*THE POETS' CORNER. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7571, page 3.

June 27. \*MR. SWINBURNE'S LAST VOLUME. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. XLIX. No. 7574, page 3.

July. THE PORTRAIT OF MR. W. H. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. CXLVI. No. 885, page 1.

July 12. \*THREE NEW POETS. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. I. No. 7587, page 3.

December. IN THE FOREST. Illustrated by Bernard Partridge. *Lady's Pictorial* Christmas Number, page 9.

(Set to music by Edwin Tilden and published by Miles and Thompson, Boston, U.S.A., 1891.)

1890

January 9. REPLY TO MR. WHISTLER. *Truth*, Vol. XXVII. No. 680, page 51.

February 8. A CHINESE SAGE. *Speaker*, Vol. I. No. 6, page 144.

March 22. MR. PATER'S LAST VOLUME. *Speaker*, Vol. I. No. 12, page 319.

May 24. \*PRIMAVERA. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. LI. No. 7856, page 3.

June 20. THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY. *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* (July), Vol. XLVI. No. 271, page 3.

(Containing thirteen chapters only.)

June 26. MR. WILDE'S BAD CASE. *St. James's Gazette*, Vol. XX. No. 3135, page 4.

June 27. MR. OSCAR WILDE AGAIN. *St. James's Gazette*, Vol. XX. No. 3136, page 5.

June 28. MR. OSCAR WILDE'S DEFENCE. *St. James's Gazette*, Vol. XX. No. 3137, page 5.

June 30. MR. OSCAR WILDE'S DEFENCE. *St. James's Gazette*, Vol. XX. No. 3138, page 5.

July. THE TRUE FUNCTION AND VALUE OF CRITICISM; WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING NOTHING: A DIALOGUE. *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. XXVIII. No. 161, page 123.

July 2. 'DORIAN GRAY.' *Daily Chronicle and Clerkenwell News*, No. 8830, page 5.

July 12. MR. WILDE'S REJOINDER. *Scots Observer*, Vol. IV. No. 86, page 201.

August 2. ART AND MORALITY. *Scots Observer*, Vol. IV. No. 89, page 279.

August 16. ART AND MORALITY. *Scots Observer*, Vol. IV. No. 91, page 332.

September. THE TRUE FUNCTION AND VALUE OF CRITICISM; WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING NOTHING: A DIALOGUE (*concluded*). *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. XXVIII. No. 163, page 435.

1891

February. THE SOUL OF MAN UNDER SOCIALISM. *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. XLIX. No. 290, page 292.

March. A PREFACE TO 'DORIAN GRAY.' *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. XLIX. No. 291, page 480.

September 26. AN ANGLO-INDIAN'S COMPLAINT. *Times*, No. 33,440, page 10.

December 5. 'A HOUSE OF POMEGRANATES.' *Speaker*, Vol. IV. No. 101, page 682.

December 11. MR. OSCAR WILDE'S 'HOUSE OF POMEGRANATES.' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. LIII. No. 8339, page 2.

1892

February 20. PUPPETS AND ACTORS. *Daily Telegraph*, No. 11,470, page 3.

February 27. MR. OSCAR WILDE EXPLAINS. *St. James's Gazette*, Vol. XXIV. No. 3654, page 4.

December 6. THE NEW REMORSE. *Spirit Lamp*, Vol. II. No. 4, page 97.

1893

February 17. THE HOUSE OF JUDGMENT. *Spirit Lamp*, Vol. III. No. 2, page 52.

March 2. MR. OSCAR WILDE ON 'SALOMÉ.' *Times*, No. 33,888, page 4.

June 6. THE DISCIPLE. *Spirit Lamp*, Vol. IV. No. 2, page 49.

TO MY WIFE: WITH A COPY OF MY POEMS; AND WITH A COPY OF 'THE HOUSE OF POMEGRANATES.' *Book-Song, An Anthology of Poems of Books and Bookmen from Modern Authors*. Edited by Gleeson White, pages 156, 157. London: Elliot Stock.

[This was the first publication of these two poems. Anthologies containing reprints are not included in this list.]

1894

January 15. LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE THIRTEEN CLUB. *Times*, No. 34,161, page 7.

July. POEMS IN PROSE. ('The Artist,' 'The Doer of Good,' 'The Disciple,' 'The Master,' 'The House of Judgment.') *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. LIV. No. 331, page 22.

September 20. THE ETHICS OF JOURNALISM. *Pall Mall*

*Gazette*, Vol. LIX. No. 9202, page 3.

September 25. THE ETHICS OF JOURNALISM. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. LIX. No. 9206, page 3.

October 2. 'THE GREEN CARNATION.' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. LIX. No. 9212, page 3.

December. PHRASES AND PHILOSOPHIES FOR THE USE OF THE YOUNG. *Chameleon*, Vol. I. No. 1, page 1.

1895

April 6. LETTER ON THE QUEENSBERRY CASE. *Evening News*, No. 4226, page 3.

1897

May 28. THE CASE OF WARDER MARTIN. SOME CRUELITIES OF PRISON LIFE. *Daily Chronicle*, No. 10,992, page 9.

1898

March 24. LETTER ON PRISON REFORM. *Daily Chronicle*, No. 11,249, page 5.