

FOSTER JOSHUA JAMES

CHATS ON OLD
MINIATURES

Joshua Foster
Chats on Old Miniatures

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J. J. Foster

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PREFACE

Acceding to the wish of my Publishers that the following pages should be included in a certain well-known series, I have termed them "Chats on Old Miniatures," but confess that I consider the title somewhat of a misnomer, inasmuch as I have been accustomed to regard "a chat" as a conversation between two or more persons interested in a given subject; whereas in this little volume it is obvious that I have done all the talking.

In the interval which has elapsed since my larger works appeared the most important event in connection with the subject of Miniatures is, in my opinion, the Exhibition of Works of Art of the Eighteenth Century at the French National Library in 1906. The concluding chapter of this book gives the impressions afforded by that extremely interesting and instructive Exhibition.

In the hope that they will be of use to the general reader, I have amplified my references to the public collections of Miniatures in this country, especially those at Hertford House and the Jones Collection, so rich in the works of Petitot.

Miss E. M. Foster has been of much service in revising the proofs and passing this work through the press.

I have only to add one word, and that relates to the illustrations. I am fortunate in being able to put before my readers so large a selection of choice examples of the art of miniature painting.

This I owe to the generosity of the owners of the originals, to whom I desire once again to express my indebtedness and thanks.

J. J. FOSTER.

London,
Easter, 1908.

CHAPTER I

ON THE COLLECTING OF MINIATURES

You would like to make a collection of old miniatures, did I hear my reader say? and you want to know the best way to set about it? Well, I can suggest one way: it is to become a millionaire, and let it be known that you are interested in miniatures, then you will find that a collection can easily be made, and not only so, but people will actually make it for you, with an alacrity, ingenuity, and industry which may surprise you. Should you further inquire what the collection would be like when made, my reply would be: that depends upon your own taste, intelligence, knowledge of art in general, and of miniature painting in particular; upon the depth of your purse – and, I had almost said, on your luck. Let me take that last-named qualification first, and illustrate what I mean by luck in relation to a collection of miniatures. Some years ago the father of the present Duke of Buccleuch took to collecting miniatures, and the agent he employed to purchase them was the late Mr. Dominic Colnaghi, into whose shop there walked one day a man who said he had some little pictures to sell that he had bought with a "job lot" of old silver and gold from a working jeweller. These "little pictures" turned out to be no less a prize than a number

of miniatures formerly in the collection of Charles I., which, as we know, was dispersed at the time of the Commonwealth. In the days of the King's prosperity these had been catalogued and described by the Royal Librarian, the conscientious Dutchman Van der Doort, and these miniatures bore on their back a crown and the royal cipher, the entwined C's. Now, after all their vicissitudes, these priceless historical miniatures rest in Montagu House, Whitehall, barely a stone's throw from the window in the banqueting-hall of the palace whence their Royal one-time owner stepped forth upon the scaffold on that bitter winter morning of January 30, 1649. By the word "luck" in connection with this acquisition, I mean that they might have been taken to any one else but Dominic Colnaghi, in which case there is but little likelihood of their having formed part of the famous Buccleuch Collection.

In truth, it may be said that there is no royal road for the collection of miniatures, and especially in these days, when so many sharp eyes are on the look-out for them. If you go to the auction-room you are confronted with that iniquitous institution known as the "knock-out," which not only debars the owner from getting the full value of his property, but often prevents the would-be private purchaser from acquiring it at all.

To be a successful collector of miniatures demands that one should be conversant with their market value, which, in its turn, presupposes some knowledge of the various painters and the characteristics of their work. Here again, I make so bold as

to assert, there is no royal road. Knowledge of this sort, like most other knowledge worth possessing, has to be acquired by experience, by patience, and by degrees. The various handbooks which have appeared in such plenty of late years professing to teach "How to Identify this" and "How to Collect that" are, no doubt, valuable in their way, but, in my opinion, are apt to lead the inexperienced collector to believe that the discrimination and the judgment essential to safety are more easily acquired than is likely to be the case in so difficult a pursuit.

And it is difficult, because, as no doubt the reader will often have observed for himself, it is so very frequently the case that miniatures do not bear the names of either the person whom they are intended to represent, or of the artist who drew the likeness. So that the collector who would judge of some little head, it may be, is thrown back upon the necessity of having an intimate knowledge of the technical characteristics and qualities of the work before him, which is often the sole test that he can apply and the trifling clue he has to follow. In the case of old silver there are, at any rate, the stamps to guide the connoisseur, to say nothing of other differences which I need not stop to point out. Most old china, too, is marked.

Again, as with china, and also with silver, there is the forger to beware of, and he constitutes a very real danger, even to collectors of experience, because the forgery of miniatures is brought in these days almost to the level of a fine art, and the ingenuity employed to deceive is indeed remarkable. Take by

way of illustration the practice of painting miniatures upon old playing-cards – or what appear to be old playing-cards, for I am told that such things as the latter are expressly fabricated. In the days of the Stuarts miniatures were painted upon pieces of playing-cards, and when framed they were often backed up by one or two other pieces fitted in behind them. These latter pieces afford valuable opportunity for the forger's exertions. Old papier-mâché frames, from which some silhouette or comparatively worthless portrait has been taken, are employed to mislead the unwary. A copy, painted only the week before, is put into some old frame of the eighteenth century, and although costing but a few shillings (and dear at that), is offered at as many guineas to the confiding collector, who, if he falls into the trap, thinks he has got a bargain, as no doubt he would have if —*if* only the prize were an original, and what it professed to be.

Then the manufacture of copies of well-known examples in public collections is carried on unblushingly and upon a wholesale scale. I have had large leather cases of such things, containing tray after tray of them, offered me repeatedly, and "upon highly advantageous terms." These are the work of continental copyists, German and French. In Paris they may be found by the gross in the shops of the Rue de Rivoli and in the purlieu of the Palais Royal. And let not the collector make light of this persistent fabrication, because, remember, they *are* bought by somebody. The distribution of them is going on, as Americans say, "all the time." They become dispersed and

crop up again under all sorts of circumstances, from all kinds of sources; they have endless fictitious origins given to them. Generally you are told that they have been in the possessor's family for untold generations, and that the grandfather of the would-be vendor refused a fabulous sum for them.

Perhaps the best advice that I, as one of some experience in such matters, can give, is to be summed up in the word "caution." I say, then, use caution, and always caution, and once more caution.

There remains the alternative of acquiring miniatures by private treaty, often a somewhat delicate matter.

It would not be difficult to write an essay on the Ethics of Collecting, but it might be hard to discriminate with nicety between the use the collector is justified in making of his superior knowledge, to the detriment of the possessor, because we must not forget that when a bargain is "picked up," the *owner* does not benefit much. It is of the essence of "a bargain" that the coveted object – whether it be old china, old furniture, jewels, or what not – shall be acquired below its customary, real, and interchangeable value. Well, that clearly is a transaction in which both parties cannot reap the advantage, and the gain of the one is measured exactly by the loss of the other. The tactics of the buyer are well understood in the East, where they are universally practised to-day, as they have been for untold centuries. Do we not read in Proverbs, "The buyer saith it is naught, it is naught, and when he goeth his way he rejoiceth"?

But enough on a matter which, after all, must be left to the individual conscience, always supposing a "collector" has one.

Uncertainty and confusion often arise in the mind of purchasers owing to miniature painters of widely different abilities bearing similar names, and sometimes owning the same initials. It is important, therefore, to be able to discriminate in such cases. Thus we shall find three "Arlands" and an "Artaud," though I suspect the last named is a misprint. It occurs on a miniature shown at Kensington in 1865.

Amongst the early men there represented were two Betts, or Bettes, Thomas and John, probably brothers, though their relationship is really uncertain.

One frequently hears a work described as an enamel by H. Bone. There were two – Henry, the father, a Royal Academician, and Henry Pierce Bone, his son. There were also two grandsons of Henry Bone, viz., W. and C. R., who practised between 1826 and 1851. The latter of these contributed no less than sixty-seven miniatures to the Royal Academy. In 1801 there was also an enamel shown at the Academy by P. J. Bone.

Lawrence Crosse must be distinguished from Richard Crosse, whom he preceded by many years.

As we all know, many good miniatures were painted by Maria, wife of Richard Cosway.

There were two Collins, both admirable miniaturists, but no relation to each other, viz., Samuel, master of Ozias Humphrey, R.A., and Richard Collins, pupil of Jeremiah Meyer, R.A.

Samuel Cooper had an elder and less accomplished brother, Alexander.

Alexander Day must not be confounded with Thomas Day, nor with Edward Dayes, whose wife was also a miniature painter.

William Derby had a son Alfred T. Derby, a miniature painter like his father.

Then we must distinguish between John Dixon, the pupil of Lely, who was made "Keeper of the King's picture closet" by William III.; John Dixon, the mezzotint engraver, and N. Dixon.

The last named was an excellent miniature painter who is well represented in the Buccleuch Collection, although unmentioned in Redgrave's "Dictionary." There were eleven works by him shown at the Winter Exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1879 portraits of the period of the Restoration and somewhat later. In the catalogue of this exhibition Dixon is called Nathaniel; Mr. Goulding, the Duke of Portland's librarian, informs me there is evidence at Welbeck that this artist's Christian name was Nicholas.

There were two Englehearts, viz., George and his less talented nephew, J. C. D.

William Essex had a son William B. Essex, also an enameller. I find two Ferriers, F. and L., probably father and son, and three Goupeys, Louis, also the brothers Joseph and Bernard.

Mrs. Mary Green was no relation to her contemporary, Robert Green, also a miniaturist.

Richard Gibson, the dwarf, had a daughter, Susan Penelope,

and a nephew William, who both followed his profession.

Charles Hayter was eclipsed as a miniature painter by his son, Sir George.

There was a Moses Haughton, or Houghton, an enameller, who had a nephew, also named Moses, a miniaturist.

D. Heins and John Heins, his son, both painted miniatures at Norwich.

Nicholas and Lawrence Hilliard, father and son, are probably often confused.

There are said to be two Hoskins, both John, also father and son.

Two out of the three Hones were miniaturists, viz., Nathaniel, R.A., and his grandson, Horace Hone, A.R.A.

Thomas Hopkins was an enameller, and William Hopkins a miniature painter.

There were several artists of the name of Lens, viz., Bernard Lens, enameller, who had a son Bernard, an engraver, and a grandson (also Bernard), enamel painter to George II.; whilst Andrew Benjamin Lens and Peter Paul Lens, each miniature painters, are assumed to have been sons of the last-named Bernard.

G. M. Moser, R.A., had a nephew an enameller, named Joseph Moser. His daughter Mary was celebrated as a flower painter, but I do not find that she painted miniatures.

The short-lived Richard Newton should be distinguished from Sir William John Newton.

Daniel and John O'Keefe were brothers, and both miniaturists.

Isaac and Peter Oliver were father and son.

Of the two Plimers, Andrew and Nathaniel, brothers, the latter was the inferior artist.

Alexander Pope, the poet, was an industrious amateur artist; but there was another Alexander Pope, an Irish miniature painter, who exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1787 to 1821, and who was also an actor; he played at Covent Garden in 1783.

Andrew Robertson, the well-known Scottish miniature painter, had two brothers, of inferior artistic ability to himself; they both had the same initial, namely A, one being Archibald, the other Alexander. There was a Mrs. A. Robertson who also painted miniatures; she was a Miss Saunders, niece of George Saunders the miniature painter. She worked in this country in the early part of the nineteenth century; going to St. Petersburg in 1847, she was elected a member of the Russian Imperial Academy. Two other Robertsons, the brothers Walter and Charles, practised in Dublin at the end of the eighteenth century, the latter excelling in female portraits.

The Petitots, father and son, were both named John.

One of the most familiar names amongst British miniature painters is that of Ross, and Sir William Charles Ross may be said to have been the last of the old school. His father (H. Ross) and mother both painted miniatures. Then there was also an H. Ross, jun., who exhibited at the Academy from 1815 to 1845;

a Miss Magdalene Ross, who became Mrs. Edwin Dalton, and exhibited for over twenty years, and finally a Miss Maria Ross.

There were two Sadlers, Thomas of the seventeenth century, and William Sadler, who flourished in the eighteenth century.

I shall mention only two Smiths, both sons of Smith of Derby, viz., Thomas Correggio, the elder and John Raphael Smith.

Two William Sherlocks exhibited miniatures at the Royal Academy in 1803.

Joseph and William Singleton were contemporary exhibitors during the last century.

Of the three Saunders, George L. is the most distinguished; the other two, Joseph and R., were father and son.

Finally, there were three Smarts known as miniaturists, viz., Samuel Paul and the two John Smarts, father and son, besides Anthony Smart and his two daughters.

I shall have something more to say later in this volume about several of the artists whom I have just mentioned, but here I may refer to a miniature painter who may well be placed in a class by herself, for she painted without hands or feet. This lady was a Mrs. Wright, *née* Sarah Biffin; nothing daunted by her apparently overwhelming physical disabilities, she learnt drawing, and in 1821 was awarded a medal by the Society of Arts.

I am not aware of other miniature painters handicapped as Miss Biffin must have been. But I know of several other artists who have worked without hands, *e. g.*, C. F. Felu, a Belgian painter, who was a familiar figure in the Antwerp Gallery,

where he painted for many years, and copied hundreds of the masterpieces therein. He held his palette with his left great toe placed through the orifice in which it is usual to put the thumb, and used the brush with his other foot with astonishing freedom and precision. I remember to have seen him fasten the small metal hooks of his colour box with the utmost ease and celerity. Then there was W. Carter, who, having neither hands nor feet, drew exquisitely with his mouth; and of late years Mr. Bartram Hiles, deprived of his arms by a tramcar accident, has shown what a noble enthusiasm to practise as an artist can enable a man to do.

ON THE CARE OF MINIATURES

"First catch your hare," said Mrs. Glass in her immortal cookery-book. And now, the reader having collected miniatures, or being their fortunate possessor by inheritance or otherwise, it is not unimportant to know how to take proper care of them. These delicate works of art are always subject to the attacks of two enemies, and they are insidious enemies, although of widely different natures. The one is sunlight, and the other is damp, which brings mildew and disfigurement in its train.

It is really melancholy to see, as one so often does, the terrible destruction which has been wrought by these two agencies, a destruction the nature and extent of which are, perhaps, only fully realised when one is fortunate enough to come across a work by

a fine miniature painter in anything like its pristine condition. I am talking of old miniatures, of course, and have in my mind as I write a portrait, by one of the Olivers, I think, of Henry, Prince of Wales, that I saw in one of those interesting historical exhibitions at the New Gallery; the Stuart it must have been. This miniature was surrounded by many others, ostensibly by the same artists, and by examples of contemporary painters. It doubtless had been kept covered up during the many years it had been painted, and thus had a freshness and vigour which was absolutely startling in comparison with the faded, ghostlike specimens to be seen around. Indeed, it is only when we see a good miniature in anything like its original condition that we can grasp and fully appreciate the strength and beauty of the earlier masters, and admit, without any doubt or qualification, their claim to our admiration.

Take another painter, Nicholas Hilliard. A most prolific artist he would seem to be, judging from the number of examples by him that I have met with; speaking generally, one may say that all his work is marked by flatness in the flesh-painting. This artist was appointed painter of miniatures to Queen Elizabeth, and we are told that he was instructed to paint her royal features without any shadows. My point is that nearly all his work is marked more or less by the same peculiarity. Now this may be the result of a fashion set by the Virgin Queen, and, as imitation is the sincerest form of flattery (and she was very fond of flattery), that may in part account for the frequently ghostlike effect of the faces in

Hilliard's work; but my own opinion is that in nearly all of them the carnations have flown, as artists say.

That constant source of mischief – exposure to light – is always to be guarded against. Owners are, it must be said, very careless in such matters. I have seen in the morning-rooms of great houses most valuable miniatures hung on the shutters, or stuck about on a screen, placed perhaps in the embrasure of a window. No doubt the owners like to be surrounded by such things, but they should at least have some consideration for posterity. In such a room as I have spoken of you may perhaps see a case of miniatures hung over the mantelpiece, with a hot chimney behind them. Within my own experience I have known most disastrous results, from that cause alone, in the case of historical miniatures of great value, belonging to a noble owner who shall be nameless.

Turning now to the other great disfigurement which so often besets miniatures – the ravages made by mildew. This, in some instances, can be traced to the fact of cases containing miniatures being hung against a damp wall. Probably the simple expedient of a piece of cork, fastened at each corner on the back of the case, would have proved a safeguard. This would prevent contact with the wall, and allow of a current of air passing up behind. Although the fungus which results from damp is terribly disfiguring, it dies off in time, leaving a yellow stain. This can be removed by a skilful hand and careful treatment, and, in so far, is a less-to-be-dreaded enemy than light, or I should say sunlight.

This latter, of course, can be easily guarded against by another simple expedient, which is, either to keep your miniatures locked up in drawers, or, if you must have them on your walls, have a small rod fastened to the top of your case, with a dark curtain on it which you can draw back at pleasure.

But I have heard some collectors say, "My miniatures have never been put against damp walls; they have been kept in cases always, yet they have mildew on them." Well, it must be admitted that this unsightly, objectionable fungus does appear unexpectedly and in the best regulated households. No doubt the germs were there, shut into the case; in due course they have been developed, bringing perplexity and dismay with them.

Miniatures of a comparatively recent type, that is to say upon ivory (as well-informed collectors know, it was not until the early Georgian period that this substance was used to paint on) – miniatures on ivory, I repeat, are subject to curl, warp, and crack; changes of temperature easily affect the thin slices which the artist uses; when one of these splits, as it often does, the only thing to be done is carefully to lay the pieces down on cardboard, joining the edges as skilfully as may be, a task only to be performed satisfactorily by an expert.

The large miniatures by Sir William Ross, Sir W. J. Newton, and R. Thorburn are particularly liable to this mischief, the reason for which is to be found in the practice of these artists in employing several pieces of ivory for one picture.

A large slab, the largest procurable, taken from the

circumference of a tusk, rolled flat under great pressure, was laid down by gutta-percha upon a well-seasoned mahogany panel; round this on all sides were laid other strips of ivory, the whole forming a large surface upon which it was possible to paint an elaborate composition, proportionately expensive, (for that, I take it, was the principal incentive to the artist). Such pictures as these represented great labour – for you cannot "wash in colour" on ivory – and being highly finished all over, warranted the artists in asking high prices, and they obtained them.

Other dangers there are, arising from the cupidity excited by the value of these little works, so easily removed, and often in valuable settings. But risks from those who break through and steal are common to all valuables, and owners of property are alive to them. Yet these few words of reminder and caution against pilferers will, I trust, not be deemed out of place.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN OF THE ART

When we come to get a little familiar with old miniatures, to have learned their language, as it were, we shall find that, if they are authentic portraits, they possess, in addition to their high personal interest, other and distinct values as illustrations of art, of history, and of costume. They are, in fact, when genuine and contemporary, precious documents, some of which go back several centuries, and are of great service in reading the history of the past. They have, like other works of art, their definite origins; and so, too, they have their own separate and distinct characteristics, and it is upon these and such-like aspects of the study that I propose now to say a few words.

As in the case of so many arts and religions, it is to the Orient, that cradle of them all, as far as our present knowledge allows us to know, that we must turn our eyes, if we wish to find the earliest source of the practice. There is no doubt whatever that the Egyptian papyri were rubricated, and we may safely conclude that the use of gold, silver, and colour in the ornamentation of MSS. found its way from the valley of the Nile into Greece. Thence Greek artists took it to Rome, and from Rome the use spread throughout Europe.

Many choice historical miniatures have long pedigrees, and it

may be worth while to see how far back we can definitely trace the practice of the fascinating art which gave them birth.

On this point I may quote the opinion of the late Keeper of the Department of Engravings in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, M. Henri Bouchot. He had made, as is well known, a close and profound study of the art of the French "Primitifs," and therefore the conclusions that he arrived at may, I think, be very safely taken on this subject.

Writing many years ago in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, he said the origin of miniature painting "is lost in the obscurity of the ninth century." He contended that the heads which are to be found in MSS. of that period, the work of monkish artists, are intended to represent some well-known prince, emperor, or pope of that time. He suggested that the painter, shut up in his monastery, could only paint such a portrait from hearsay, and from information which he gathered from brethren of his Order, or from neighbouring great nobles with whom he came in contact, and who, in their turn, had seen the original of such a portrait or portraits.

If this distinguished French critic be right, it follows that at that remote date such representations could have been little less than pure inventions; and such, indeed, he would have us suppose to be the case for several centuries more. But at the commencement of the fourteenth century it would seem that the illuminators set themselves to render the real portraiture of individuals; and here, from our point of view, the especial interest

of the subject may be said to begin.

The art, then, may be traced to the illuminated devotional manuscripts, Books of the Hours, or Lives of the Saints, enshrining minute, exquisite, and loving labour. Who these early artists of the Scriptorium were we shall never know; but the manuscripts which have escaped the wreck of Time have come down to us, silent yet eloquent testimonies of their authors' patience and skill. It is in connection with their beautiful work that the word "miniature" came into existence, the term being derived from the Latin *minium*, or red lead, that being the pigment in which the capital letters in the manuscripts were drawn. The art of medieval illumination was expressed by the Latin verb *miniare*; the word thus will be seen to be closely allied to our term "rubric." The persons employed in this work seem to have been classified as *Miniatori*, *Miniatori Caligrifi*, or *Pulchri Scriptores*. The first named painted scenes from Scripture stories, also the exquisite borders and arabesques. To the others would be entrusted the writing of the body of the book.

But whilst we may thus go back to medieval times for the origin of the name, it can hardly be said to have been in use with us before the beginning of the eighteenth century. Thus Samuel Pepys never uses the word, while Horace Walpole constantly does so. An entry in the Diary of the former, made in 1668, speaks of his wife's picture which Samuel Cooper painted for him; and earlier – that is, in 1662 – John Evelyn relates how he was called in to the closet of the King (Charles II.), and "saw Mr.

Cooper, the rare limner, crayoning of the King's face and head to make the stamps by for the new milled money now contriving."

The reader will observe that no mention of the word "miniature" is made by either writer. And there is something arbitrary in the use of the word now and always, for it is restricted to portraits in water-colours or gouache, whether on vellum, paper, or ivory. Yet figures when painted in oil, even though as small as Gerard Dow's, or not more than two or three inches high, are called small pictures. When the most important exhibition of miniatures ever held in this country – namely, the collection which was brought together at South Kensington, in 1865 – was being arranged, its organisers were confronted with the difficulty attaching to a definition of the term; and it may be worth while to give the conclusion they arrived at.

In reply to the question, What constitutes a miniature portrait? they remark that miniatures may be drawn on any material, painted in any medium, and in every style of art. Commencing with the head only, to which the skill of some of our early "face painters" was limited, we find their works followed by miniature half-lengths, whole-lengths, and groups; but from these no technical, accepted definition of the term "miniature" can be derived. Without, therefore, attempting to lay down a rule, it was deemed best in the interests of the exhibition to accept all such works as were drawn to a small scale and were, in manner, of a miniature character, except paintings on porcelain.

Returning to the origin of the term, we see that it was the

ornamentation of the office of the Mass in use in the Christian Church which really gave rise to it. Under the protection of Constantine, Christian art may be said to have come into existence in the fourth century at Byzantium. Work of this period has a very strongly marked and sufficiently familiar character of its own. The Canterbury Gospels in the British Museum are ascribed to the eighth century, and the Louvre possesses a noble work in the shape of the Prayer Book of Charlemagne, which belongs to the ninth century. It is to Charlemagne that we owe the Carolingian school, and when the tomb of the great Emperor, at Aix-la-Chapelle, was opened, a copy of the Gospels was found upon his knees.

Another very interesting school is the Hibernian, sometimes called Anglo-Celtic. A characteristic feature of this work is the inferiority of the figure-drawing, but the elaborate and beautiful interlacing of the geometrical patterns is no less remarkable. Perhaps the best-known example of this school is the Book of Kells, preserved in Trinity College, Dublin. Brought from the abbey church of Kells in 1621 by Archbishop Ussher, it was confiscated during the Commonwealth, but restored to Trinity College by Charles II. after the Restoration.

Still dealing with the early work of this nature, I may briefly refer to what is known as *Opus Anglicum*, of which the Benedictional of St. Ethelwald, belonging to the Duke of Devonshire, is the most celebrated example. This belongs to the latter part of the tenth century, as we know by a Dedication

it contains, showing that it was made for Ethelwald, Bishop of Winchester from 963 to 984 A.D. The Bishop "commanded a certain monk subject to him (the scribe Godeman) to write the present book, and ordered also to be made in it certain arches, elegantly decorated and filled up with various ornamental pictures expressed in divers beautiful colours and gold."

And so we might go on to consider the various Continental schools – the Flemish and German, the French and Italian – but the subject is too large to be dealt with here. Those of my readers who care to pursue a fascinating study will find ample illustration in the freely displayed treasures of the British Museum, where fine examples of every school may be seen. At Hertford House the Wallace Collection, amongst its multifarious treasures, contains some initial letters which have been cut out of MSS., no doubt on account of their beauty. They are obviously portraiture. The example here shown is Italian work, and is taken from a fifteenth-century missal.

Whilst I am unable to enter upon details of the earliest schools, I may observe that the material upon which work of this nature was done has a practical bearing upon our subject. It was upon vellum, sometimes stained purple, upon which the letters were written in gold or silver. There is a magnificent example of this work, known as the Codex Purpureo-Argenteus, preserved at Upsala, in Sweden. This has been dated as early as A.D. 360. And I remember the pride with which the monks in the remote monastery on the Isle of Patmos showed me five pages

of one of the Gospels, also on vellum, stained purple, which had been preserved in their library with religious care for unknown centuries. The surface of the vellum, naturally greasy, would have to be carefully prepared for the art of the "steyners," as they came to be called. When so prepared it was called *Pecorella*.

To vellum succeeded cardboard. Nicholas Hilliard and the great English miniature painter Samuel Cooper commonly used old playing cards; and a very good substance for the purpose they were, not being so liable to cockle as vellum, nor to crack, curl, and split as ivory under certain conditions is liable to do. It has already been noted that ivory did not come into use for such purposes until about the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century.

This is a very important point in detecting forgeries, and, indeed, in determining the age of any work about which doubt may exist.

The way to paint miniatures is no part of the subject of this book; nevertheless, by way of giving a practical value to its pages, I may state the method employed by a miniature painter with whom I was well acquainted and whose work I greatly admired, and this seems a convenient place to do so. The artist to whom I refer was the late Robert Henderson, a self-taught man, born in Dumfries. He lived to the close of the nineteenth century, but the manner of his execution was essentially that of the mid-Victorian painters, and whilst it had not quite the brilliancy of the flesh tones of Sir William Ross, for example, whose work he greatly

admired, it was always conscientious, sound, and excellent.

Without being laboured, it was always marked by a careful finish. He was a frequent exhibitor in the Royal Academy, but was indifferent to the distinction, having constant employment from Messrs. Dickinson for a long series of years, during which he painted a large number of the British aristocracy. I am able to subjoin some account of his method of working and choice of colours from particulars he gave me himself, and as they may be useful to others, I extract them pretty much in his own words: —

"Having chosen a piece of ivory of good colour and even texture, prepare its surface by rubbing it with the finest glass paper. The first step is to draw the likeness with a blacklead pencil on paper, not on the ivory itself, because, if any corrections are needed, they cannot be made without smudging and making the ivory dirty, a thing to be studiously avoided. This drawing should then be carefully transferred to the surface of the ivory by means of a piece of tracing paper.

"Now take a nice flat sable brush, and wash the face all over with a flesh colour, then indicate the features, eyes, and so forth, touching in the nostrils and mouth. Next prepare a grey tint, made of cobalt or ultramarine with a tinge of red to give it a lilac tint. Wash this all round the outer part of the face – not touching the centre of the face. Then with a little blue mixed with the flesh colour, work up the face until you get somewhat the effect of an engraving. This being done, you may proceed to put in the deepest shadows, *e. g.*, under the nose and eyebrows, with a warm

colour composed of a light red with a little blue in it. Having got your deep shadows in, use the grey again, this time with a little more flesh colour, and blend the whole together.

"For a flesh colour I used to employ rose madder and cadmium yellow in about equal proportions; for men's complexions light red alone makes a good flesh wash. There is a new red brought out which is warranted to be thoroughly permanent; it is a useful colour, called mazarine, and comes in for everything. There have been suspicions cast upon rose madder, but I have found it stand well enough in ordinary miniature painting. Carmine was used by Sir William Ross and Thorburn, certainly, but that was apt to go dark in colour. The madders are very delicate colours.

"Eyes – for hazel use burnt sienna and French ultramarine, real ultramarine being very expensive. For ordinary dark brown eyes nothing is better than sepia; for blue eyes it depends on the shade – if bright strong blue, cobalt is the best colour; for grey eyes use cobalt and a little light red – the latter very sparingly. Cat's eyes (by which I mean greenish) require peculiar colouring, which must depend on circumstances and be treated accordingly.

"Hair is a troublesome thing to get right. For golden hair I use a very thin wash of burnt sienna; for the half tones a purple tint – blue and red mixed in equal parts, and for the deep shadows burnt sienna. For ordinary dark hair nothing is better than sepia, and for the high lights a purple grey – blue and a touch of red – that gives a glossiness to the hair. For grey hair simply mix sepia and

ultramarine; for red hair burnt sienna is used principally, shaded with sepia in the dark parts.

"Backgrounds – for the ordinary, deep, plain, brownish, the best thing is a wash of burnt sienna and ultramarine, in proportions as required to obtain warmer or cooler effects. For a cloudy sky or background use cobalt for the blue and light red mixed with cobalt for the deeper shadows; where the shadows come near the figure, use brown madder and cobalt; touch the edges of the clouds with light red alone, to give a warm, cloudy effect.

"Draperies – for a man's black coat use blue-black and cobalt, mixed in about equal proportions, and a little madder lake; put in the shadows with sepia. For a lady's black silk use much the same, only less blue-black and more cobalt, with a little light red in it; use sepia again for the shadows, as it gives a warmer tone than black itself. If lights are required on a black coat when it is too black, body colour must be used – white, with a little light red mixed with it."

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING ENAMELS AND ENAMEL PAINTERS

The subject of enamel has a close relation to that of these pages, although its uses, as need hardly be said, far transcend the limits of portraiture. Every substance, whether earthenware, stone, or metal, to which a vitreous substance can be made to adhere by heat may be enamelled, but this term is usually restricted to metalwork ornamented by a vitreous glaze. As in the case of illuminated manuscripts, we find the earliest instances of the use of enamel in Egypt, and Dr. Birch is our authority for believing that there was a method of inlaying glass, jasper, and lapis lazuli, which resembled enamel in effect, employed as far back as the Fourth Egyptian Dynasty – that is to say, some four thousand years before the Christian era. The Chinese have had it in use for unknown centuries, and it was applied by the Etruscans and Greeks to enrich their jewellery. It has been found employed for horse trappings and for human ornaments, such as brooches, bracelets, and rings, both in this country and in Ireland, under circumstances which lead us to assign it to pre-Roman days.

But it is with the seat of Roman power on the Bosphorus, namely, Byzantium, in the early Christian centuries, that antique enamels seem most closely associated; and the museums of

Europe contain great numbers of marvellous works of this description originating from that source. What has come down to us is for the most part intended for ecclesiastical use; reliquaries, diptychs, triptychs, the covers of missals, chalices, crosses, and objects of a like nature abound. On many of these there are what may, in a sense, be termed portraits of saints and ecclesiastical dignitaries; but it is obvious that no attempt at likeness, as we moderns understand it, can have been made in this work of the fourth to the eleventh centuries. This Byzantine style and influence, which have left such a deep mark in art, may be said to survive to this day in the ritual of the Greek Church; but that is another story. I may remark that the Byzantine work is for the most part what is called *cloisonné*; this term, and one of a somewhat similar sound, namely *champlevé*, is constantly used in descriptions of old enamel, and it may be well, therefore, to define what is meant by each respectively.

The former has been described by M. Lebarthe as being made in the following manner: "The plate of metal intended as a foundation was first provided with a little rim to retain the enamel. Slender strips of gold of the same depth as the rim were then bent in short lengths and fashioned to form the outline of the pattern. These short bits were then fixed upright upon the plate. The metal outline being thus arranged, the intervening spaces were filled with the different enamels, reduced to a fine powder and moistened into a paste. The piece was then placed in the furnace, and when the fusion was complete, was withdrawn, with

certain precautions that the cooling might be effected gradually. The enamel, when thoroughly cold, was ground and polished. It is easy to comprehend that the old artists must have used very pure gold and extremely fusible enamels, in order that the plate might not be injured from the action of the fire or the thin strips of metal be melted by the heat which fused the paste."

The method of preparing *champlevé* is as follows: "A slender line of metal shows on the surface the principal outlines of the design; but the outline, instead of being arranged in detached pieces, is formed out of a portion of the plate itself. The artist, having polished a piece of metal about a quarter of an inch thick, generally copper, traced upon it the outlines of his subject; then, with proper tools he hollowed out all the spaces to be filled with the different enamels, leaving slender lines level with the original surface to keep them distinct. The vitreous matter, either dry or reduced to a paste, was then introduced into the cavities, and fusion was effected by the same process as in the *cloisonné* enamels. After the piece had become cold it was polished, and the exposed lines of copper having been gilded, it was returned to the fire. The gilding only required a moderate temperature, not high enough to injure the incrustations of enamel."

Byzantium, as I have said, was a great seat of the *cloisonné* process, and the celebrated "Pala d'oro," a magnificent altar front now preserved at St. Mark's, Venice, was made at Constantinople about the year 1100. In *champlevé* enamelling, although the art was practised in the Rhenish provinces of Germany, it was

at Limoges, in France, that the finest work was done, and in the thirteenth century *opus Lemoviticum* was in high favour. A century later, when the city was sacked by the troops of Edward the Black Prince, the manufacture received a great check. But with the Renaissance came a renewed demand for enamels, which were used in combination with articles of domestic utility, and in the reign of Francis the First the enamellers of Limoges, among whom Suzanne de Court, Laudin, Jehan Courtois, and Pierre Reymond are well known, produced decorative works of the most costly and beautiful nature. Whole families devoted themselves to the art, and their traditions were handed on from generation to generation. But perhaps the most famous name in connection with this French work is that of Léonard Limousin, and three others, namely, Jean, Joseph, and François, of the same family.

Léonard Limousin, who was appointed painter to the king, François I., has expressed in numerous pieces which have come from his hand the very spirit of the Renaissance, partly devotional and still more strongly classical and sensuous in feeling and treatment. Old Limoges enamel, as we all know, is extremely valuable; single pieces from the Hamilton Palace Collection were sold at Christie's in the celebrated sale for something like £2,000 apiece.

The subject is far too wide to be treated exhaustively in this book, but at the Victoria and Albert Museum examples will be found of the various styles, and the varied uses to

which they were applied. The British Museum of late years has been enriched by what is known as the Waddesdon Collection, bequeathed by the late Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild; and in Paris the Cluny Museum, and especially the Salle d'Apollon in the Louvre, are extremely rich in works of this nature.

All these collections contain portraiture in enamel, but one would hesitate to say that the portrait is the primary object in the production of these works, in which undoubtedly a decorative feeling largely predominates.

Although in the general treatment they were feeling their way to a larger palette, no attempt seems to have been made by these earlier artists to get anything approaching reality in the flesh tones; they were left a uniform cold white. Until one has got a little used to this absence of colour, and the metallic hardness which the use of oxide of tin in the paste of the enamel gave rise to, and until one recognises that it is the conventional mode of treating them, the pallor of the faces, contrasted, as it generally is, with a deep blue, or sometimes shining black background, is somewhat repellent.

Take, for example, the large medallion of the Cardinal de Lorraine, Charles de Guise, uncle to Mary Stuart, a piece which cost the nation £2,000, and may be seen at Kensington. It represents the Cardinal in scarlet robes and a biretta. The head, fully seven inches long, is painted upon a deep blue ground; his hair is black, the eyes are blue, and the effect of the whole is, it must be admitted, extremely hard, in spite of

the distinguished name its author, Léonard Limousin, bears in the ranks of medieval enamellers. The work is as different as possible from the exquisite minuteness which characterises other enamel painters, like Petitot, for instance, to whom we shall come by and by.

The same lack of modelling and of half-tones may be observed in the portraits in the Waddesdon room at the British Museum, to which reference has already been made. See, for example, the large panel, 9 inches by 12, or thereabouts, of Catherine de Lorraine, Duchess de Montpensier. This lady wears her hair in a golden and jewelled net; her open collar is laced with pearls; this piece is also signed Limousin, and may be regarded as a typical sixteenth-century portrait.

The step forward which was to elevate the art of painting in enamel to the highest possible pitch of technical execution, of artistic treatment and minute finish, was taken by Jean Petitot, a Genevan, born in 1609. Apart from the wonderful skill of the artist, who, in respect of technique, must be considered absolutely unique, the means by which such beautiful, delicate, and minute effects could be produced in so difficult an art as that of fusing colours would be in itself an interesting study.

Probably it is to Jean Toutin, an obscure French goldsmith, who lived at Châteaudun, and, assisted by Isaac Gribelin, a painter in pastels, and doubtless by his son, Henri Toutin, of Blois, produced, about 1632, a variety of colours which he found could be laid upon a thin ground of white enamel, and passed

through a furnace with scarcely any change of tint, that Petitot owed the richness of his palette. From Toutin, and from Pierre Bordier, another French goldsmith, to whom he was apprenticed, Petitot gained the insight into enamelling which bore such rich fruit when he came to this country in his twenty-eighth year, attracted, there is little doubt, by the reputation then enjoyed by our king, Charles I., as a patron of art.

The English monarch had in his service as physician at that time a certain Sir Turquet de Mayerne, himself a Genevan and a chemist of European celebrity. He and Petitot pursued scientific research into the nature and properties of the metallic oxides with such ardour and success that the miniature painter's palette became greatly enriched, and he was able to express all the *nuances* of flesh colouring in a way which had never before been approached and, I may add, has never been surpassed.

When one realises the extraordinary minuteness and exquisite finish of a work of Petitot, and the difficulties of the method – by which I mean the risks attending the firing – it is almost incredible that such success could be attained; but probably there were large numbers of failures of which the world knows nothing.

In some of the Limoges work we see attempts at colouring the cheeks; but the result is not satisfactory; whereas in Petitot it leaves absolutely nothing to be desired, and the most minute differences of character find expression in the art of this wonderful man. Take as an example the two portraits of Louis

XIV., to be seen in the Jones Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum, one representing the Grand Monarque when young, the other in more advanced years; or, from the same Collection, take the portraits of Mme. de Montespan and Mlle. de la Vallière; and compare these again with the insipidity and monotony of Lely and Kneller, the two artists most in vogue in this country at that time; here you have upon a small piece of gold, perhaps hardly bigger than a finger-nail, nearly all that may be looked for in a portrait, coupled with a perfection of technical execution to which it is impossible to do justice in words. One comes away from an examination of that admirable collection which the nation owes to the generosity of Mr. John Jones with a paramount feeling of astonishment, wondering how such work was done.

Of course Petitot has had innumerable imitators; and although the standard of the Collection to which reference has just been made is very high, there are in it examples which are instructive, and serve to show how supreme the master was in his own line. A contemporary pupil, namely Jacques Bordier, was a cousin of the Pierre Bordier, Petitot's old master and colleague, of whom I have just spoken. According to M. Reiset this Jacques Bordier also worked in England with Petitot. Like Petitot, he returned to the Continent, and did a great deal of work in Paris upon watch-cases; the two men married two sisters, Madeleine and Margaret Cuper, in 1651. Pierre Bordier stopped in this country and executed an elaborate watch-cover, designed as a

memorial of the Battle of Naseby, presented to General Fairfax, and described in the catalogue of the sale of Strawberry Hill, where it was sold. It was, doubtless, the troubles of the Civil War which drove the great enameller back to France, where he was well received by Louis XIV., and commissions flowed in upon him until the close of his life; indeed, he is said to have retired to Vevey to escape the importunity of his patrons; and there he died, at an advanced age, in the year 1691.

The art of which this incomparable miniaturist was such a great exponent was peculiarly adapted to a form of patronage much in vogue at that time; that is to say, it was employed in the adornment of costly and exquisite snuff-boxes. These *boites aux portraits*, as they were called, were extensively used for diplomatic purposes, and portraits of the Grand Monarque were ordered by the dozen at a time. The presentation of boxes of such a character with a portrait on, or inside, the lid, with or without a setting of brilliants, as the rank and importance, or otherwise, of the fortunate recipient required, were part of the ceremonial usage and Court etiquette of the day. The Collection left to South Kensington by Mr. Gardiner, the extremely choice examples in the Wallace Collection, and the still larger collection left by the Lenoirs to the Louvre, show the extravagant pitch to which work of this kind was carried, the diamond settings alone often running to a cost of many thousands of francs. For example, a portrait of Louis XVI., when Dauphin, was presented to Marie Antoinette. The portrait was painted by the most eminent miniature painter

of his day, namely Pierre Adolphe Hall; the artist received 2,684 francs, and the cost of the box and brilliants was over 75,000 francs.

Petitot may be studied to full advantage at the Jones Collection, even better than at the Louvre, whilst at Hertford House there are only a couple of examples attributed to him. In private collections there are some notable works which passed from Strawberry Hill into the possession of the late Baroness Burdett Coutts; and the Earl of Dartrey also owns a number. The portrait, shown in this book, of Petitot le Vieux, is from this nobleman's collection, which, by the way, is also rich in examples by the brothers Hurter. These two enamellers came from Schaffhausen, being introduced to the British aristocracy by the Lord Dartrey of that day. Some thirty examples of their work were shown at the Loan Exhibition at South Kensington in 1865 by the then Lord Cremorne. At Althorp is a portrait of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire by John Henry Hurter; and Lord Dartrey has a portrait of Queen Charlotte painted by J. F. C. Hurter.

There is a large, though not particularly attractive, example of Boit's to be seen in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford; but specimens of his art are not very common, and are not nearly so often met with as those by C. F. Zincke, whose spick-and-span style and bright blue draperies are well known; Oxford is rich in them.

This Dresden miniature painter, whose features are familiar

to print collectors from the mezzotint of him and his wife by Faber, came to England in 1706 and obtained the patronage of George II., although that uninteresting monarch hated "boetry and bainting." Zincke's work is, indeed, typically early Georgian, and repeats the insipidities of Kneller on a small scale, with a persistent consistency which is monotonous in the extreme. Horace Walpole had a high opinion of his work; he declared that it surpassed that of Boit and rivalled Petitot, an opinion which few who know the merits of Petitot's exquisite art are likely to endorse.

Failure of eyesight led Zincke to retire in 1746; but he lived some twenty years longer. During the forty years that he practised his art he must have executed an enormous number of portraits, for he was the fashionable artist of his day, and so great was the patronage bestowed upon him that he raised his prices to limit the number of his patrons.

A pupil of Zincke's was William Prewitt, who is not, I think, very well known. There is an example by him to be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum, a body-colour drawing. The Duke of Buccleuch has a portrait of Horace Walpole when young, also painted by Prewitt.

Another miniaturist who was especially an enameller was Charles Muss, said by some to be an Italian, and by others to have been born at Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1779. He was enamel painter to George III. and George IV.; and devoted himself especially to copying old masters. Examples of his work in this direction will

be found in the Plumley Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

A much better-known enameller is Nathaniel Hone, an Irishman of a self-assertive, not to say aggressive, personality, if one may judge by the tone of his remarks when he quarrelled with the Academy, of which he was a full member, over his picture called "The Conjuror." This indifferent painting excited an amount of attention of which it was quite undeserving from the tongue of scandal, which asserted that Sir Joshua Reynolds and Angelica Kauffmann were satirised in the composition, and that one of the naked figures dancing in the background was intended for the fair Academician.

Hone essayed the various branches of art with varying success. There is a characteristic portrait of himself in the Diploma collection of the Royal Academy. He, too, had a share of Royal patronage, and painted many of the notabilities of his day, including the lovely Misses Gunning. He had a son, Horace Hone, who was made an Associate of the Academy, and who also practised as a miniature painter. His work is considered inferior to that of his father.

John Plott, another miniaturist, was also a pupil of the elder Hone, and was born at Winchester, where he studied law. Forsaking that pursuit, he came to London, and was at first a pupil of Richard Wilson R.A.

Two other Academicians associated with this period, and both enamellers of exceptional ability, are George Michael Moser and

Jeremiah Meyer. Moser was the son of a sculptor, and was born at St. Galle, in 1704. Upon his arrival in this country he found employment with the Royal Family, and, being a fine medallist, was commissioned to design the King's Great Seal. No doubt he had social gifts, and he certainly enjoyed the respect and friendship of Sir Joshua Reynolds. He was one of the most active founders of the Royal Academy, and was made its first Keeper.

His only child, Mary Moser, was a flower painter of great reputation in her day. She married a Captain Lloyd, but is reported to have gone about the country in the company of Richard Cosway, who at the beginning of the century was separated from his wife, Maria. This Mary Moser, by the way, was a lady Royal Academician, like the fair Angelica Kauffmann.

Jeremiah Meyer, the other enameller whom I have mentioned, was also a foundation member of the Royal Academy; he was, moreover, a very fine miniature painter. Great refinement of colour, excellent drawing, perfect finish, and, what is perhaps more rare in miniature work, truth to life, distinguish his miniatures. He came to London when he was fourteen, and was a pupil of Zincke for two years. Fifteen years later, when only twenty-nine, he was made enameller to George III. He was a constant exhibitor at the Academy, where he showed some twenty pieces. He was born at Tubingen, in 1735, and died in 1789, some three years before Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose work is said greatly to have influenced his style.

The palette of the enamel painter is a very rich one, but

not all the colours to be found amongst the metallic oxides fuse at the same temperature. Hence the artist must be able to judge most accurately the length of time that each will stand the heat without melting too much and running one into the other. Such acquaintance can only be acquired by pains-taking practice, and it is obvious how greatly the difficulties of portraiture are enhanced under such conditions. It is usual to place these opaque colours upon the enamel ground, on a gold or copper plate, applying the hardest vitrifiable colour first, then the less hard, and so on. It is perhaps not surprising that so delicate a process, liable to be attended by failure at every step, has fallen out of fashion in these days, and as a matter of fact it is now scarcely attempted in this country at all – that is to say, in the way of portraiture.

Formerly, however, it was carried on here with more or less success, and one interesting practice of the art may be named before we leave this part of our subject. I refer to what are known as the Battersea enamels. In the middle of the eighteenth century, under the management of S. J. Jansen, many articles, such as candlesticks, patch-boxes and snuff-boxes, and such like, were produced. These are fairly well drawn and coloured, and consist largely of flowers, birds and fruit, and so forth, generally on a white ground. But beside all these there are a number of contemporary portraits, produced by means of transfers from copper plates. Amongst these are the beautiful Misses Gunning, the Royal Family of the day, Gibbon, and many others. Some

may be seen in the Franks Collection at the British Museum, and a more important collection is at the Victoria and Albert, brought together by the late Lady Charlotte Schreiber.

To a somewhat later period than that we have been discussing belongs Henry Bone, R.A., who, like so many other artists, came from the West of England, having been born at Truro, in 1755. The circumstances of his early life doubtless somewhat affected the direction which his artistic efforts took, he having been apprenticed in a china manufactory at Plymouth. He removed with it to Bristol in 1778, and, coming to London, was employed in painting devices in enamel on trinkets. He first attracted attention in London by an enamel of the "Sleeping Girl," after Sir Joshua Reynolds, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1780. This led to his being appointed enamel painter to Royalty, and George, Prince of Wales, extended his patronage to him. Academical honours followed; he was made an Associate in 1801, and full member ten years later.

Bone stands out as the enameller *par excellence* of the English school; and he was astonishingly successful in many large and ambitious pieces. For example, he was paid two thousand guineas for a plaque measuring 18 by 15 inches, a copy of Titian's "Bacchus and Ariadne," in the National Gallery. He devoted himself especially to copying the works of the great masters, such as Raphael, Titian, and Murillo. He also executed a series of 85 copies of portraits of the statesmen and others who lived in "the spacious days of great Elizabeth." But whilst a large measure of

success may be ungrudgingly accorded him in respect of these works, the flesh tones in his painting often leave something to be desired; there is a suggestion of painting on porcelain, and of the smoothness and want of vitality that characterise that kind of work, and are so fatal to its artistic completeness. It would be a little curious to trace this tendency to what may be termed ceramic smoothness to the early training of Bone as a china-painter. At any rate, it may be recognised as characteristic of his style.

His son, Henry Pierce Bone, followed his father's footsteps in painting a great number of copies from the old masters. The elder Bone died in 1834, the younger lived some twenty years longer. Besides these two, there was a P. J. Bone, who exhibited an enamel at the Royal Academy in 1801; and there were also two other Bones, whose names appear in the catalogues, namely, W. Bone and C. R. Bone. They were the grandsons of Henry, and exhibited up to 1851, the latter alone contributing 67 miniatures to the Academy.

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