ГЕНРИ ДЖЕЙМС

PICTURE AND TEXT

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Содержание

Henry James
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NOTE

Two of the following papers were originally published, with illustrations, in Harper's Magazine and the title of one of them—the first of titles has been altered from "Our Artists in Europe." The other, the article on Mr. Sargent, was accompanied by reproductions of several of his portraits. The notice of Mr. Abbey and that of Mr. Reinhart appeared in Harper's Weekly. That of Mr. Alfred Parsons figured as an introduction to the catalogue of an exhibition of his pictures. The sketch of Daumier was first contributed to *The Century*, and "After the Play" to *The New Review*.

BLACK AND WHITE

If there be nothing new under the sun there are some things a good deal less old than others. The illustration of books, and even more of magazines, may be said to have been born in our time, so far as variety and abundance are the signs of it; or born, at any rate, the comprehensive, ingenious, sympathetic spirit in which we conceive and practise it.

If the centuries are ever arraigned at some bar of justice to answer in regard to what they have given, of good or of bad, to humanity, our interesting age (which certainly is not open to the charge of having stood with its hands in its pockets) might perhaps do worse than put forth the plea of having contributed a fresh interest in "black and white." The claim may now be made with the more confidence from the very evident circumstance that this interest is far from exhausted. These pages are an excellent place for such an assumption. In Harper they have again and again, as it were, illustrated the illustration, and they constitute for the artist a series of invitations, provocations and opportunities. They may be referred to without arrogance in support of the contention that the limits of this large movement, with all its new and rare refinement, are not yet in sight.

I

It is on the contrary the constant extension that is visible, with the attendant circumstances of multiplied experiment and intensified research—circumstances that lately pressed once more on the attention of the writer of these remarks on his finding himself in the particular spot which history will perhaps associate most with the charming revival. A very old English village, lying among its meadows and hedges, in the very heart of the country, in a hollow of the green hills of Worcestershire, is responsible directly and indirectly for some of the most beautiful work in black and white with which I am at liberty to concern myself here; in other words, for much of the work of Mr. Abbey and Mr. Alfred Parsons. I do not mean that Broadway has told these gentlemen all they know (the name, from which the American reader has to brush away an incongruous association, may as well be written first as last); for Mr. Parsons, in particular, who knows everything that can be known about English fields and flowers, would have good reason to insist that the measure of his large landscape art is a large experience. I only suggest that if one loves Broadway and is familiar with it, and if a part of that predilection is that one has seen Mr. Abbey and Mr. Parsons at work there, the pleasant confusion takes place of itself; one's affection for the wide, long, grass-bordered vista of brownish gray cottages, thatched, latticed, mottled, mended,

ivied, immemorial, grows with the sense of its having ministered to other minds and transferred itself to other recipients; just as the beauty of many a bit in many a drawing of the artists I have mentioned is enhanced by the sense, or at any rate by the desire, of recognition. Broadway and much of the land about it are in short the perfection of the old English rural tradition, and if they do not underlie all the combinations by which (in their pictorial accompaniments to rediscovered ballads, their vignettes to story or sonnet) these particular talents touch us almost to tears, we feel at least that they *would* have sufficed: they cover the scale.

In regard, however, to the implications and explications of this perfection of a village, primarily and to be just, Broadway is, more than any one else. Mr. Frank Millet. Mr. Laurence Hutton discovered but Mr. Millet appropriated it: its sweetness was wasted until he began to distil and bottle it. He disinterred the treasure, and with impetuous liberality made us sharers in his fortune. His own work, moreover, betrays him, as well as the gratitude of participants, as I could easily prove if it did not perversely happen that he has commemorated most of his impressions in color. That excludes them from the small space here at my command; otherwise I could testify to the identity of old nooks and old objects, those that constitute both out-of-door and in-door furniture.

In such places as Broadway, and it is part of the charm of them to American eyes, the sky looks down on almost as many "things" as the ceiling, and "things" are the joy of the illustrator.

Furnished apartments are useful to the artist, but a furnished country is still more to his purpose. A ripe midland English region is a museum of accessories and specimens, and is sure, under any circumstances, to contain the article wanted. This is the great recommendation of Broadway; everything in it is convertible. Even the passing visitor finds himself becoming so; the place has so much character that it rubs off on him, and if in an old garden—an old garden with old gates and old walls and old summer-houses—he lies down on the old grass (on an immemorial rug, no doubt), it is ten to one but that he will be converted. The little oblong sheaves of blank paper with elastic straps are fluttering all over the place. There is portraiture in the air and composition in the very accidents. Everything is a subject or an effect, a "bit" or a good thing. It is always some kind of day; if it be not one kind it is another. The garden walls, the mossy roofs, the open doorways and brown interiors, the old-fashioned flowers, the bushes in figures, the geese on the green, the patches, the jumbles, the glimpses, the color, the surface, the general complexion of things, have all a value, a reference and an application. If they are a matter of appreciation, that is why the gray-brown houses are perhaps more brown than gray, and more yellow than either. They are various things in turn, according to lights and days and needs. It is a question of color (all consciousness at Broadway is that), but the irresponsible profane are not called upon to settle the tint.

It is delicious to be at Broadway and to *be* one of the

irresponsible profane—not to have to draw. The single street is in the grand style, sloping slowly upward to the base of the hills for a mile, but you may enjoy it without a carking care as to how to "render" the perspective. Everything is stone except the general greenness—a charming smooth local stone, which looks as if it had been meant for great constructions and appears even in dry weather to have been washed and varnished by the rain. Halfway up the road, in the widest place, where the coaches used to turn (there were many of old, but the traffic of Broadway was blown to pieces by steam, though the destroyer has not come nearer than half a dozen miles), a great gabled mansion, which was once a manor or a house of state, and is now a rambling inn, stands looking at a detached swinging sign which is almost as big as itself—a very grand sign, the "arms" of an old family, on the top of a very tall post. You will find something very like the place among Mr. Abbey's delightful illustrations to, "She Stoops to Conquer." When the September day grows dim and some of the windows glow, you may look out, if you like, for Tony Lumpkin's red coat in the doorway or imagine Miss Hardcastle's quilted petticoat on the stair.

II

It is characteristic of Mr. Frank Millet's checkered career, with opposites so much mingled in it, that such work as he has done for Harper should have had as little in common as possible with midland English scenery. He has been less a producer in black and white than a promoter and, as I may say, a protector of such production in others; but none the less the back volumes of Harper testify to the activity of his pencil as well as to the variety of his interests. There was a time when he drew little else but Cossacks and Orientals, and drew them as one who had good cause to be vivid. Of the young generation he was the first to know the Russian plastically, especially the Russian soldier, and he had paid heavily for his acquaintance. During the Russo-Turkish war he was correspondent in the field (with the victors) of the New York *Herald* and the London *Daily News*—a capacity in which he made many out-of-the-way, many precious, observations. He has seen strange countries—the East and the South and the West and the North—and practised many arts. To the London *Graphic*, in 1877 he sent striking sketches from the East, as well as capital prose to the journals I have mentioned. He has always been as capable of writing a text for his own sketches as of making sketches for the text of others. He has made pictures without words and words without pictures. He has written some very clever ghost-stories, and drawn and painted

some very immediate realities. He has lately given himself up to these latter objects, and discovered that they have mysteries more absorbing than any others. I find in Harper, in 1885. "A Wild-goose Chase" through North Germany and Denmark, in which both pencil and pen are Mr. Millet's, and both show the natural and the trained observer.

He knows the art-schools of the Continent, the studios of Paris, the "dodges" of Antwerp, the subjects, the models of Venice, and has had much æsthetic as well as much personal experience. He has draped and distributed Greek plays at Harvard, as well as ridden over Balkans to post pressing letters, and given publicity to English villages in which susceptible Americans may get the strongest sensations with the least trouble to themselves. If the trouble in each case will have been largely his, this is but congruous with the fact that he has not only found time to have a great deal of history himself, but has suffered himself to be converted by others into an element—beneficent I should call it if discretion did not forbid me—of *their* history. Springing from a very old New England stock, he has found the practice of art a wonderful antidote, in his own language, "for belated Puritanism." He is very modern, in the sense of having tried many things and availed himself of all of the facilities of his time; but especially on this ground of having fought out for himself the battle of the Puritan habit and the æsthetic experiment. His experiment was admirably successful from the moment that the Puritan levity was forced to consent

to its becoming a serious one. In other words, if Mr. Millet is artistically interesting to-day (and to the author of these remarks he is highly so), it is because he is a striking example of what the typical American quality can achieve.

He began by having an excellent pencil, because as a thoroughly practical man he could not possibly have had a weak one. But nothing is more remunerative to follow than the stages by which "faculty" in general (which is what I mean by the characteristic American quality) has become the particular faculty; so that if in the artist's present work one recognizes—recognizes even fondly—the national handiness, it is as handiness regenerate and transfigured. The American adaptiveness has become a Dutch finish. The only criticism I have to make is of the preordained paucity of Mr. Millet's drawings; for my mission is not to speak of his work in oils, every year more important (as was indicated by the brilliant interior with figures that greeted the spectator in so friendly a fashion on the threshold of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1888), nor to say that it is illustration too —illustration of any old-fashioned song or story that hums in the brain or haunts the memory—nor even to hint that the admirable rendering of the charming old objects with which it deals (among which I include the human face and figure in dresses unfolded from the lavender of the past), the old surfaces and tones, the stuffs and textures, the old mahogany and silver and brass—the old sentiment too, and the old picture-making vision—are in the direct tradition of Terburg and De Hoogh and Metzu.

III

There is no paucity about Mr. Abbey as a virtuoso in black and white, and if one thing more than another sets the seal upon the quality of his work, it is the rare abundance in which it is produced. It is not a frequent thing to find combinations infinite as well as exquisite. Mr. Abbey has so many ideas, and the gates of composition have been opened so wide to him, that we cultivate his company with a mixture of confidence and excitement. The readers of Harper have had for years a great deal of it, and they will easily recognize the feeling I allude to—the expectation of familiarity in variety. The beautiful art and taste, the admirable execution, strike the hour with the same note; but the figure, the scene, is ever a fresh conception. Never was ripe skill less mechanical, and never was the faculty of perpetual evocation less addicted to prudent economies. Mr. Abbey never saves for the next picture, yet the next picture will be as expensive as the last. His whole career has been open to the readers of Harper, so that what they may enjoy on any particular occasion is not only the talent, but a kind of affectionate sense of the history of the talent, That history is, from the beginning, in these pages, and it is one of the most interesting and instructive, just as the talent is one of the richest and the most sympathetic in the art-annals of our generation. I may as well frankly declare that I have such a taste for Mr. Abbey's work that I cannot affect a judicial

tone about it. Criticism is appreciation or it is nothing, and an intelligence of the matter in hand is recorded more substantially in a single positive sign of such appreciation than in a volume of sapient objections for objection's sake—the cheapest of all literary commodities. Silence is the perfection of disapproval, and it has the great merit of leaving the value of speech, when the moment comes for it, unimpaired.

Accordingly it is important to translate as adequately as possible the positive side of Mr. Abbey's activity. None to-day is more charming, and none helps us more to take the large, joyous, observant, various view of the business of art. He has enlarged the idea of illustration, and he plays with it in a hundred spontaneous, ingenious ways. "Truth and poetry" is the motto legibly stamped upon his pencil-case, for if he has on the one side a singular sense of the familiar, salient, importunate facts of life, on the other they reproduce themselves in his mind in a delightfully qualifying medium. It is this medium that the fond observer must especially envy Mr. Abbey, and that a literary observer will envy him most of all.

Such a hapless personage, who may have spent hours in trying to produce something of the same result by sadly different means, will measure the difference between the roundabout, faint descriptive tokens of respectable prose and the immediate projection of the figure by the pencil. A charming story-teller indeed he would be who should write as Mr. Abbey draws. However, what is style for one art is style for other, so blessed is

the fraternity that binds them together, and the worker in words may take a lesson from the picture-maker of "She Stoops to Conquer." It is true that what the verbal artist would like to do would be to find out the secret of the pictorial, to drink at the same fountain. Mr. Abbey is essentially one of those who would tell us if he could, and conduct us to the magic spring; but here he is in the nature of the case helpless, for the happy *ambiente* as the Italians call it, in which his creations move is exactly the thing, as I take it, that he can least give an account of. It is a matter of genius and imagination—one of those things that a man determines for himself as little as he determines the color of his eyes. How, for instance, can Mr. Abbey explain the manner in which he directly *observes* figures, scenes, places, that exist only in the fairy-land of his fancy? For the peculiar sign of his talent is surely this observation in the remote. It brings the remote near to us, but such a complicated journey as it must first have had to make! Remote in time (in differing degrees), remote in place, remote in feeling, in habit, and in their ambient air, are the images that spring from his pencil, and yet all so vividly, so minutely, so consistently seen! Where does he see them, where does he find them, how does he catch them, and in what language does he delightfully converse with them? In what mystic recesses of space does the revelation descend upon him?

The questions flow from the beguiled but puzzled admirer, and their tenor sufficiently expresses the claim I make for the admirable artist when I say that his truth is interfused

with poetry. He spurns the literal and yet superabounds in the characteristic, and if he makes the strange familiar he makes the familiar just strange enough to be distinguished. Everything is so human, so humorous and so caught in the act, so buttoned and petticoated and gartered, that it might be round the corner; and so it is—but the corner is the corner of another world. In that other world Mr. Abbey went forth to dwell in extreme youth, as I need scarcely be at pains to remind those who have followed him in Harper. It is not important here to give a catalogue of his contributions to that journal: turn to the back volumes and you will meet him at every step. Every one remembers his young, tentative, prelusive illustrations to Herrick, in which there are the prettiest glimpses, guesses and foreknowledge of the effects he was to make completely his own. The Herrick was done mainly, if I mistake not, before he had been to England, and it remains, in the light of this fact, a singularly touching as well as a singularly promising performance. The eye of sense in such a case had to be to a rare extent the mind's eye, and this convertibility of the two organs has persisted.

From the first and always that other world and that qualifying medium in which I have said that the human spectacle goes on for Mr. Abbey have been a county of old England which is not to be found in any geography, though it borders, as I have hinted, on the Worcestershire Broadway. Few artistic phenomena are more curious than the congenital acquaintance of this perverse young Philadelphian with that mysterious locality. It is there

that he finds them all—the nooks, the corners, the people, the clothes, the arbors and gardens and teahouses, the queer courts of old inns, the sun-warmed angles of old parapets. I ought to have mentioned for completeness, in addition to his pictures to Goldsmith and to the scraps of homely British song (this latter class has contained some of his most exquisite work), his delicate drawing's for Mr. William Black's *Judith Shakespeare*. And in relation to that distinguished name—I don't mean Mr. Black's —it is a comfort, if I may be allowed the expression, to know that (as, to the best of my belief, I violate no confidence in saying) he is even now engaged in the great work of illustrating the comedies. He is busy with "The Merchant of Venice;" he is up to his neck in studies, in rehearsals. Here again, while in prevision I admire the result, what I can least refrain from expressing is a sort of envy of the process, knowing what it is with Mr. Abbey and what explorations of the delightful it entails—arduous, indefatigable, till the end seems almost smothered in the means (such material complications they engender), but making one's daily task a thing of beauty and honor and beneficence.

IV

Even if Mr. Alfred Parsons were not a masterly contributor to the pages of Harper, it would still be almost inevitable to speak of him after speaking of Mr. Abbey, for the definite reason (I hope that in giving it I may not appear to invade too grossly the domain of private life) that these gentlemen are united in domestic circumstance as well as associated in the nature of their work. In London, in the relatively lucid air of Campden Hill, they dwell together, and their beautiful studios are side by side. However, there is a reason for commemorating Mr. Parsons' work which has nothing to do with the accidental —the simple fact that that work forms the richest illustration of the English landscape that is offered us to-day. Harper has for a long time past been full of Mr. Alfred Parsons, who has made the dense, fine detail of his native land familiar in far countries, amid scenery of a very different type. This is what the modern illustration can do when the ripeness of the modern sense is brought to it and the wood-cutter plays with difficulties as the brilliant Americans do to-day, following his original at a breakneck pace. An illusion is produced which, in its very completeness, makes one cast an uneasy eye over the dwindling fields that are still left to conquer. Such art as Alfred Parsons'—such an accomplished translation of local aspects, translated in its turn by cunning hands and diffused by a wonderful system of

periodicity through vast and remote communities, has, I confess, in a peculiar degree, the effect that so many things have in this age of multiplication—that of suppressing intervals and differences and making the globe seem alarmingly small. Vivid and repeated evocations of English rural things—the meadows and lanes, the sedgy streams, the old orchards and timbered houses, the stout, individual, insular trees, the flowers under the hedge and in it and over it, the sweet rich country seen from the slope, the bend of the unformidable river, the actual romance of the castle against the sky, the place on the hill-side where the gray church begins to peep (a peaceful little grassy path leads up to it over a stile)—all this brings about a terrible displacement of the very objects that make pilgrimage a passion, and hurries forward that ambiguous advantage which I don't envy our grandchildren, that of knowing all about everything in advance, having trotted round the globe annually in the magazines and lost the bloom of personal experience. It is a part of the general abolition of mystery with which we are all so complacently busy today. One would like to retire to another planet with a box of Mr. Parsons' drawings, and be homesick there for the pleasant places they commemorate.

There are many things to be said about his talent, some of which are not the easiest in the world to express. I shall not, however, make them more difficult by attempting to catalogue his contributions in these pages. A turning of the leaves of Harper brings one constantly face to face with him, and a

systematic search speedily makes one intimate. The reader will remember the beautiful Illustrations to Mr. Blackmore's novel of *Springhaven*, which were interspersed with striking figure-pieces from the pencil of that very peculiar pictorial humorist Mr. Frederick Barnard, who, allowing for the fact that he always seems a little too much to be drawing for Dickens and that the footlights are the illumination of his scenic world, has so remarkable a sense of English types and attitudes, costumes and accessories, in what may be called the great-coat-and-gaiters period—the period when people were stiff with riding and wicked conspiracies went forward in sanded provincial inn-parlors. Mr. Alfred Parsons, who is still conveniently young, waked to his first vision of pleasant material in the comprehensive county of Somerset—a capital centre of impression for a painter of the bucolic. He has been to America; he has even reproduced with remarkable discrimination and truth some of the way-side objects of that country, not making them look in the least like their English equivalents, if equivalents they may be said to have. Was it there that Mr. Parsons learned so well how Americans would like England to appear? I ask this idle question simply because the England of his pencil, and not less of his brush (of his eminent brush there would be much to say), is exactly the England that the American imagination, restricted to itself, constructs from the poets, the novelists, from all the delightful testimony it inherits. It was scarcely to have been supposed possible that the native point of view would embrace

and observe so many of the things that the more or less famished outsider is, in vulgar parlance, "after." In other words (though I appear to utter a foolish paradox), the danger might have been that Mr. Parsons knew his subject too well to feel it—to feel it, I mean, *à l'Américaine*. He is as tender of it as if he were vague about it, and as certain of it as if he were *blasé*.

But after having wished that his country should be just so, we proceed to discover that it is in fact not a bit different. Between these phases of our consciousness he is an unfailing messenger. The reader will remember how often he has accompanied with pictures the text of some amiable paper describing a pastoral region—Warwickshire or Surrey. Devonshire or the Thames. He will remember his exquisite designs for certain of Wordsworth's sonnets. A sonnet of Wordsworth is a difficult thing to illustrate, but Mr. Parsons' ripe taste has shown him the way. Then there are lovely morsels from his hand associated with the drawings of his friend Mr. Abbey—head-pieces, tailpieces, vignettes, charming combinations of flower and foliage, decorative clusters of all sorts of pleasant rural emblems. If he has an inexhaustible feeling for the country in general, his love of the myriad English flowers is perhaps the fondest part of it. He draws them with a rare perfection, and always—little definite, delicate, tremulous things as they are—with a certain nobleness. This latter quality, indeed. I am prone to find in all his work, and I should insist on it still more if I might refer to his important paintings. So composite are the parts of which any distinguished talent is made up that

we have to feel our way as we enumerate them; and yet that very ambiguity is a challenge to analysis and to characterization. This "nobleness" on Mr. Parsons' part is the element of style—something large and manly, expressive of the total character of his facts. His landscape is the landscape of the male vision, and yet his touch is full of sentiment, of curiosity and endearment. These things, and others besides, make him the most interesting, the most living, of the new workers in his line. And what shall I say of the other things besides? How can I take precautions enough to say that among the new workers, deeply English as he is, there is comparatively something French in his manner? Many people will like him because they see in him—or they think they do—a certain happy mean. Will they not fancy they catch him taking the middle way between the unsociable French *étude* and the old-fashioned English "picture"? If one of these extremes is a desert, the other, no doubt, is an oasis still more vain. I have a recollection of productions of Mr. Alfred Parsons' which might have come from a Frenchman who was in love with English river-sides. I call to mind no studies—if he has made any—of French scenery; but if I did they would doubtless appear English enough. It is the fashion among sundry to maintain that the English landscape is of no use for *la peinture sérieuse*, that it is wanting in technical accent and is in general too storytelling, too self-conscious and dramatic also too lumpish and stodgy, of a green—*d'un vert bête*—which, when reproduced, looks like that of the chromo. Certain it is that there are many hands which are

not to be trusted with it, and taste and integrity have been known to go down before it. But Alfred Parsons may be pointed to as one who has made the luxuriant and lovable things of his own country almost as "serious" as those familiar objects—the pasture and the poplar—which, even when infinitely repeated by the great school across the Channel, strike us as but meagre morsels of France.

V

In speaking of Mr. George H. Boughton, A.R.A., I encounter the same difficulty as with Mr. Millet: I find the window closed through which alone almost it is just to take a view of his talent. Mr. Boughton is a painter about whom there is little that is new to tell to-day, so conspicuous and incontestable is his achievement, the fruit of a career of which the beginning was not yesterday. He is a draughtsman and an illustrator only on occasion and by accident. These accidents have mostly occurred, however, in the pages of Harper, and the happiest of them will still be fresh in the memory of its readers. In the *Sketching Rambles in Holland* Mr. Abbey was a participant (as witness, among many things, the admirable drawing of the old Frisian woman bent over her Bible in church, with the heads of the burghers just visible above the rough archaic pew-tops—a drawing opposite to page 112 in the handsome volume into which these contributions were eventually gathered together); but most of the sketches were Mr. Boughton's, and the charming, amusing text is altogether his, save in the sense that it commemorates his companion's impressions as well as his own—the delightful, irresponsible, visual, sensual, pictorial, capricious impressions of a painter in a strange land, the person surely whom at particular moments one would give most to be. If there be anything happier than the impressions of a painter, it is the impressions of two, and

the combination is set forth with uncommon spirit and humor in this frank record of the innocent lust of the eyes. Mr. Boughton scruples little, in general, to write as well as to draw, when the fancy takes him; to write in the manner of painters, with the bold, irreverent, unconventional, successful brush. If I were not afraid of the patronizing tone I would say that there is little doubt that if as a painter he had not had to try to write in character, he would certainly have made a characteristic writer. He has the most enviable "finds," not dreamed of in timid literature, yet making capital descriptive prose. Other specimens of them may be encountered in two or three Christmas tales, signed with the name whose usual place is the corner of a valuable canvas.

If Mr. Boughton is in this manner not a simple talent, further complications and reversions may be observed in him, as, for instance, that having reverted from America, where he spent his early years, back to England, the land of his origin, he has now in a sense oscillated again from the latter to the former country. He came to London one day years ago (from Paris, where he had been eating nutritively of the tree of artistic knowledge), in order to re-embark on the morrow for the United States; but that morrow never came—it has never come yet. Certainly now it never *can* come, for the country that Mr. Boughton left behind him in his youth is no longer there; the "old New York" is no longer a port to sail to, unless for phantom ships. In imagination, however, the author of "The Return of the *Mayflower*" has several times taken his way back; he has painted

with conspicuous charm and success various episodes of the early Puritan story. He was able on occasion to remember vividly enough the low New England coast and the thin New England air. He has been perceptibly an inventor, calling into being certain types of face and dress, certain tones and associations of color (all in the line of what I should call subdued harmonies if I were not afraid of appearing to talk a jargon), which people are hungry for when they acquire "a Boughton," and which they can obtain on no other terms. This pictorial element in which he moves is made up of divers delicate things, and there would be a roughness in attempting to unravel the tapestry. There is old English, and old American, and old Dutch in it, and a friendly, unexpected new Dutch too—an ingredient of New Amsterdam —a strain of Knickerbocker and of Washington Irving. There is an admirable infusion of landscape in it, from which some people regret that Mr. Boughton should ever have allowed himself to be distracted by his importunate love of sad-faced, pretty women in close-fitting coifs and old silver-clasped cloaks. And indeed, though his figures are very "tender," his landscape is to my sense tenderer still. Moreover, Mr. Boughton bristles, not aggressively, but in the degree of a certain conciliatory pertinacity, with contradictious properties. He lives in one of the prettiest and most hospitable houses in London, but the note of his work is the melancholy of rural things, of lonely people and of quaint, far-off legend and refrain. There is a delightful ambiguity of period and even of clime in him, and he rejoices in that inability to depict the

modern which is the most convincing sign of the contemporary. He has a genius for landscape, yet he abounds in knowledge of every sort of ancient fashion of garment; the buckles and button-holes, the very shoe-ties, of the past are dear to him. It is almost always autumn or winter in his pictures. His horizons are cold, his trees are bare (he does the bare tree beautifully), and his draperies lined with fur; but when he exhibits himself directly, as in the fantastic "Rambles" before mentioned, contagious high spirits are the clearest of his showing. Here he appears as an irrepressible felicitous sketcher, and I know no pleasanter record of the joys of sketching, or even of those of simply looking. Théophile Gautier himself was not more inveterately addicted to this latter wanton exercise. There ought to be a pocket edition of Mr. Boughton's book, which would serve for travellers in other countries too, give them the point of view and put them in the mood. Such a blessing, and such a distinction too, is it to have an eye. Mr. Boughton's, in his good-humored Dutch wanderings, holds from morning till night a sociable, graceful revel. From the moment it opens till the moment it closes, its day is a round of adventures. His jolly pictorial narrative, reflecting every glint of October sunshine and patch of russet shade, tends to confirm us afresh in the faith that the painter's life is the best life, the life that misses fewest impressions.

VI

Mr. Du Maurier has a brilliant history, but it must be candidly recognized that it is written or drawn mainly in an English periodical. It is only during the last two or three years that the most ironical of the artists of *Punch* has exerted himself for the entertainment of the readers of Harper; but I seem to come too late with any commentary on the nature of his satire or the charm of his execution. When he began to appear in Harper he was already an old friend, and for myself I confess I have to go through rather a complicated mental operation to put into words what I think of him. What does a man think of the language he has learned to speak? He judges it only while he is learning. Mr. Du Maurier's work, in regard to the life it embodies, is not so much a thing we see as one of the conditions of seeing. He has interpreted for us for so many years the social life of England that the interpretation has become the text itself. We have accepted his types, his categories, his conclusions, his sympathies and his ironies, It is not given to all the world to thread the mazes of London society, and for the great body of the disinherited, the vast majority of the Anglo-Saxon public. Mr. Du Maurier's representation is the thing represented. Is the effect of it to nip in the bud any remote yearning for personal participation? I feel tempted to say yes, when I think of the follies, the flatnesses, the affectations and stupidities that his teeming pencil has made

vivid. But that vision immediately merges itself in another—a panorama of tall, pleasant, beautiful people, placed in becoming attitudes, in charming gardens, in luxurious rooms, so that I can scarcely tell which is the more definite, the impression satiric or the impression plastic.

This I take to be a sign that Mr. Du Maurier knows how to be general and has a conception of completeness. The world amuses him, such queer things go on in it; but the part that amuses him most is certain lines of our personal structure. That amusement is the brightest; the other is often sad enough. A sharp critic might accuse Mr. Du Maurier of lingering too complacently on the lines in question; of having a certain ideal of "lissome" elongation to which the promiscuous truth is sometimes sacrificed. But in fact this artist's P truth never pretends to be promiscuous; it is avowedly select and specific. What he depicts is so preponderantly the "tapering" people that the remainder of the picture, in a notice as brief as the present, may be neglected. If his *dramatis personæ* are not all the tenants of drawing-rooms, they are represented at least in some relation to these. 'Arry and his friends at the fancy fair are in society for the time; the point of introducing them is to show how the contrast intensifies them. Of late years Mr. Du Maurier has perhaps been a little too docile to the muse of elegance; the idiosyncrasies of the "masher" and the high girl with elbows have beguiled him into occasional inattention to the doings of the short and shabby. But his career has been long and rich, and I allude,

in such words, but to a moment of it.

The moral of it—I refer to the artistic one—seen altogether, is striking and edifying enough. What Mr. Du Maurier has attempted to do is to give, in a thousand interrelated drawings, a general satiric picture of the social life of his time and country. It is easy to see that through them "an increasing purpose runs;" they all hang together and refer to each other—complete, confirm, correct, illuminate each other. Sometimes they are not satiric: satire is not pure charm, and the artist has allowed himself to "go in" for pure charm. Sometimes he has allowed himself to go in for pure fantasy, so that satire (which should hold on to the mane of the real) slides off the other side of the runaway horse. But he remains, on the whole, pencil in hand, a wonderfully copious and veracious historian of his age and his civilization.

VII

I have left Mr. Reinhart to the last because of his importance, and now this very importance operates as a restriction and even as a sort of reproach to me. To go well round him at a deliberate pace would take a whole book. With Mr. Abbey, Mr. Reinhart is the artist who has contributed most abundantly to Harper; his work, indeed, in quantity, considerably exceeds Mr. Abbey's. He is the observer of the immediate, as Mr. Abbey is that of the considerably removed, and the conditions he asks us to accept are less expensive to the imagination than those of his colleague. He is, in short, the vigorous, racy *prosateur* of that human comedy of which Mr. Abbey is the poet. He illustrates the modern sketch of travel, the modern tale—the poor little "quiet," psychological, conversational modern tale, which I often think the artist invited to represent it to the eye must hate, unless he be a very intelligent master, little, on a superficial view, would there appear to be in it to represent. The superficial view is, after all, the natural one for the picture-maker. A talent of the first order, however, only wants to be set thinking, as a single word will often make it. Mr. Reinhart at any rate, triumphs; whether there be life or not in the little tale itself, there is unmistakable life in his version of it. Mr. Reinhart deals in that element purely with admirable frankness and vigor. He is not so much suggestive as positively and sharply representative. His facility, his agility, his universality are a truly

stimulating sight. He asks not too many questions of his subject, but to those he does ask he insists upon a thoroughly intelligible answer. By his universality I mean perhaps as much as anything else his admirable drawing; not precious, as the æsthetic say, nor pottering, as the vulgar, but free, strong and secure, which enables him to do with the human figure at a moment's notice anything that any occasion may demand. It gives him an immense range, and I know not how to express (it is not easy) my sense of a certain capable indifference that is in him otherwise than by saying that he would quite as soon do one thing as another.

For it is true that the admirer of his work rather misses in him that intimation of a secret preference which many strong draughtsmen show, and which is not absent, for instance (I don't mean the secret, but the intimation), from the beautiful doings of Mr. Abbey. It is extremely present in Mr. Du Maurier's work, just as it was visible, less elusively, in that of John Leech, his predecessor in *Punch*. Mr. Abbey has a haunting type; Du Maurier has a haunting type. There was little perhaps of the haunted about Leech, but we know very well how he wanted his pretty girls, his British swell, and his "hunting men" to look. He betrayed a predilection; he had his little ideal. That an artist may be a great force and not have a little ideal, the scarcely too much to be praised Charles Keene is there (I mean he is in *Punch*) to show us. He has not a haunting type—not he—and I think that no one has yet discovered how he would have liked his pretty girls to look. He has kept the soft conception too much

to himself—he has not trifled with the common truth by letting it appear. This common truth, in its innumerable combinations, is what Mr. Rein-hart also shows us (with of course infinitely less of a *parti pris* of laughing at it), though, as I must hasten to add, the female face and form in his hands always happen to take on a much lovelier cast than in Mr. Keene's. These things with him, however, are not a private predilection, an artist's dream. Mr. Reinhart is solidly an artist, but I doubt whether as yet he dreams, and the absence of private predilections makes him seem a little hard. He is sometimes rough with our average humanity, and especially rough with the feminine portion of it. He usually represents American life, in which that portion is often spoken of as showing to peculiar advantage. But Mr. Reinhart sees it generally, as very *bourgeois*. His good ladies are apt to be rather thick and short, rather huddled and plain. I shouldn't mind it so much if they didn't look so much alive. They are incontestably possible. The long, brilliant series of drawings he made to accompany Mr. Charles Dudley Warner's papers on the American watering-places form a rich *bourgeois* epic, which imaginations haunted by a type must accept with philosophy, for the sketches in question will have carried the tale, and all sorts of irresistible illusion with it, to the four corners of the earth. Full of observation and reality, of happy impressionism, taking all things as they come, with many a charming picture of youthful juxtaposition, they give us a sense, to which nothing need be added, of the energy of Mr. Reinhart's pencil. They are a final

collection of pictorial notes on the manners and customs, the aspects and habitats, in July and August, of the great American democracy; of which, certainly, taking one thing with another, they give a very comfortable, cheerful account. But they confirm that analytic view of which I have ventured to give a hint—the view of Mr. Reinhart as an artist of immense capacity who yet somehow doesn't care. I must add that this aspect of him is modified, in the one case very gracefully, in the other by the operation of a sort of constructive humor, remarkably strong, in his illustrations of Spanish life and his sketches of the Berlin political world.

His fashion of remaining outside, as it were, makes him (to the analyst) only the more interesting, for the analyst, if he have any critical life in him, will be prone to wonder *why* he doesn't care, and whether matters may not be turned about in such a way as that he should, with the consequence that his large capacity would become more fruitful still. Mr. Reinhart is open to the large appeal of Paris, where he lives—as is evident from much of his work—where he paints, and where, in crowded exhibitions, reputation and honors have descended upon him. And yet Paris, for all she may have taught him, has not given him the mystic sentiment—about which I am perhaps writing nonsense. Is it nonsense to say that, being very much an incarnation of the modern international spirit (he might be a Frenchman in New York were he not an American in Paris), the moral of his work is possibly the inevitable want of finality, of intrinsic character, in

that sweet freedom? Does the cosmopolite necessarily pay for his freedom by a want of function—the impersonality of not being representative? Must one be a little narrow to have a sentiment, and very local to have a quality, or at least a style; and would the missing type, if I may mention it yet again, haunt our artist —who is somehow, in his rare instrumental facility, outside of quality and style—a good deal more if he were not, amid the mixture of associations and the confusion of races, liable to fall into vagueness as to what types are? He can do anything he likes; by which I mean he can do wonderfully even the things he doesn't like. But he strikes me as a force not yet fully used.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.