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# THE PRINT COLLECTOR'S QUARTERLY

EDITED BY  
CAMPBELL DODGSON, C.B.E.

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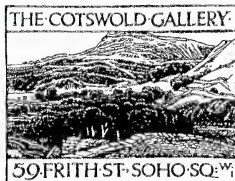
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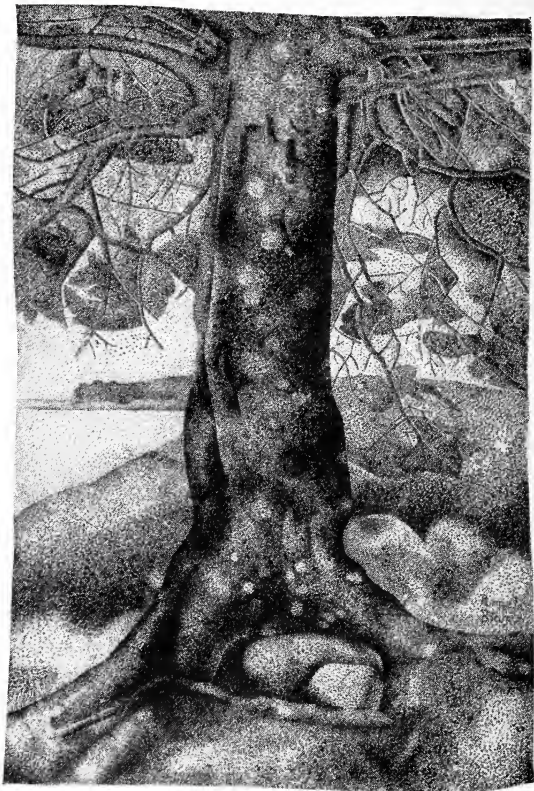
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FEBRUARY, 1923

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THE MASTER F V B

Vol. x., No. 1. February 1923




THE MASTER E. S. Pl. I. THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON. B. 7 L. 7. Dresden  
Size of the original engraving 193 × 141 mm,



## THE MASTER F V B

By MAX LEHR'S

N the history of German and Netherlandish engraving in the fifteenth century only six historically attested names stand out like lonely pillars: Martin Schongauer, Veit Stoss, Wenzel von Olmütz, Mair von Landshut, Israhel van Meckenem, and Alart Duhomeel. The writer was fortunate enough, years ago,<sup>1</sup> to discover a seventh, Jörg Syrlin the Younger, by whom, however, only a single print is known, a design for a holy water stoup which Bartsch<sup>2</sup> and Nagler<sup>3</sup> had attributed to a master with the monogram I S.

In all remaining cases—and their number is by no means small—the names assigned to the several monogrammists by various iconographers were not supported by documentary evidence. They remained, if not born entirely of imagination, the products of a childish and uncritical stage in the history of art, when the only object pursued was to find out, if possible, a name to suit every monogram.

Even the author of such an excellent book as the "Monogrammisten" of G. K. Nagler, published at Munich 1858–1879, cannot be wholly acquitted of this tendency. But other writers on art of that period, in which engraving was a favourite subject of study, were also fond of inventing names; witness Passavant, Andresen, Harzen, Frenzel, Weigel, Becker, Detmold,

<sup>1</sup> *Kunstchronik*, xix. (1884), 593.

<sup>2</sup> VI., p. 314.

<sup>3</sup> "Monogrammisten" IV., No. 399.

Wessely, etc. So arose such names as Albert Glockendon for the Monogrammist A G, Wolf Hammer for W H, Barthel Schoen for B S,<sup>1</sup> Hans von Windsheim for H W, Matthaeus Zasinger for M Z, Hans von Coeln for I C, and also for I A von Zwolle, or Hieronymus Bosch for Duhomeel—names which are devoid of any solid foundation, but still continue to haunt our sale catalogues to the present day, because the dealer finds them more profitable for business purposes than mere monograms.

The Master F V B, of whom we are now to speak, has fared no better. His life-work, a series of the most technically perfect engravings of the fifteenth century, has been attributed by believers in the simple and fabulous tales of an uncritical and garrulous author to the fictitious "Franz von Bocholt," although the engraver in all probability was neither named Franz nor born at Bocholt, but, as we shall see further on, has to be assigned to the school of the Netherlands.

Quadt von Kinckelbach writes in his book "Teutscher Nation Herligkeit," a work dictated by patriotic zeal which appeared at Cologne in 1609, in an excursus on the beginnings of engraving (p. 425), that the very first and earliest engraver of whom he had heard was F. van Bocholt, who was a shepherd in the country of Berg, and though the appearance of his works was somewhat wooden, they were done from life rather than from imagination. Soon after him followed, he continues, Israel von Meckenich (Meckenem), a native of the Eifel, and the unknown Master W (Wenzel von Olmütz), in whose works the influence of Bocholt is still to be recognised. Then came Martin Stock (Schongauer) who, indeed, excelled Meckenich and W,

<sup>1</sup> The monogram is now more correctly read as "b g."



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 2. THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON. B. 2 L. 2. First State  
British Museum

Size of the original engraving 261 × 220 mm.

but does not fail to show their influence, and so forth.

I repeat this tangle of topsy-turvy statements, although I have already attempted to unravel it in my monograph on Wenzel von Olmütz (p. 6), because I am anxious to show how weak is the base on which the legend of the shepherd F. van Bocholt rests. The Christian name "Franz," as we see, is not even derived from Quadt von Kinckelbach, but is the fruit of a further growth of the story. So far as I have been able to observe, it is first to be found in Johann Friederich Christ's "Anzeige und Auslegung der Monogrammatum," published at Leipzig in 1747. Heinecken in 1771 gave it wider currency, for in his "Idée générale d'une collection complete d'estampes," after speaking at first (p. 229) only of F V B and originating a hopeless chronological confusion,<sup>1</sup> he says on the following page that possibly this engraver may have been a pupil of Israhel van Meckenem at the town of Bocholt, named "Franz," although we have no certain knowledge of this. Only it did not appear to him quite rational that he could have been shepherd and at the same time the inventor of engraving.

Von Murr<sup>2</sup> keeps to the name "Franz" and Bartsch, who quotes Quadt inaccurately by writing "François"

<sup>1</sup> Heinecken says that he has seen the large *St. Antony* of Schongauer, on which, instead of the mark of that engraver, the mark of F V B has been put, with intention to deceive, and then a reversed copy from this print with the monogram F V B and a cross. This copy, he says, is to be found without the monogram in the Elector's Salon at Dresden. In his opinion F V B has copied the *St. Antony* of Israhel van Meckenem, and so forth. The truth is that the Master F V B copied Schongauer's engraving in reverse, and Meckenem afterwards substituted his own monogram on the plate of this copy, which he retouched, for the original monogram F V B. The impression at Dresden mentioned by Heinecken was Schongauer's original engraving, cut above the monogram, which perhaps at that time was placed with the work of Israhel van Meckenem, but at a later date was rightly placed with Schongauer, and was discarded only in 1915 in favour of a better-preserved impression with the signature.

<sup>2</sup> "Journal zur Kunstgeschichte" II. (1776), p. 237.



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 3. THE ANNUNCIATION. B. 3 L. 4

British Museum

Size of the original engraving 202 × 157 mm.

instead of "F.," even thinks it possible that the artist was a shepherd, but says in contradiction of Heineken that F V B, as Quadt had rightly supposed, must be earlier than Meckenem, because the latter retouched several prints by F V B. He thinks it proved that Meckenem stood in relations to F V B, and perhaps was his pupil and lived at Bocholt, and it is perhaps not an error to interpret the name as Franz von Bocholt, "all the more because no other contemporary artist is known to whom the letters can be applied."

After the specimens quoted it would, perhaps, be waste of time to follow the labyrinthine path of this *circulus viciosus*, and when Nagler sanctions "Franz van Bocholt, auch Bocholtz" by including his name in his "Künstler-Lexikon" (I. 549), and cites him as one of the few masters whose names have come down to us, we can on the contrary assert with justice that there can be no talk of any serious tradition.

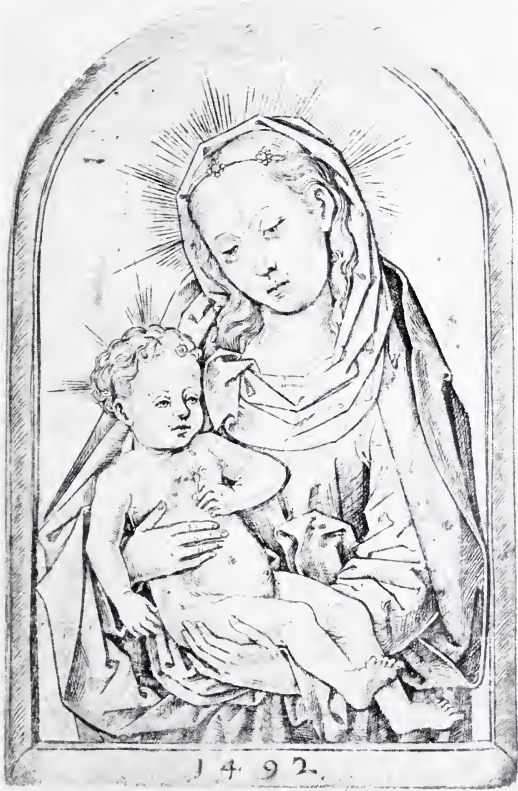
Passavant,<sup>1</sup> who has little new to say about our engraver, and wrongly asserts that the first interpretation of the monogram seems to be in Paul Behaim's MS. catalogue of his print collection (1618),<sup>2</sup> remarks expressly that C. Becker's search in the archives of Bocholt had been without result, because the records of the town from 1459 to 1480 had disappeared, and the artist must have been at work during this very time.

The re-touching of the plates, Nagler thinks,<sup>3</sup> must have been done after the death of the Master F V B, since Israhel would otherwise hardly have dared to

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II., p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> The catalogue, preserved in the Berlin Print Room, gives (p. 74) only the monogram F V B, beside which a later hand has added the name "Franz von Bocholt." Behaim accordingly did not know the hypothesis of Quadt, which had been published nine years earlier.

<sup>3</sup> "Monogrammisten" II., No. 2552.



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 4. THE VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH A FLOWER. L. 8  
British Museum (the date added by hand)  
Size of the original engraving 100 × 70 mm.

alter the original monogram into his own. However that may be, copper plates have always been a commodity easily removed, and there are many possible ways in which they may have come by fair means or foul into Israhel's hands.<sup>1</sup> I am inclined to think that the origin of the interpretation of the monogram as "Franz von Bocholt" should be sought in the reworking of some of his plates by the Bocholt goldsmith, Israhel van Meckenem, a circumstance which may have been noticed even before the time of Quadt von Kinckelbach. But Meckenem might have come into possession of the plates even if F V B worked at a distance from Bocholt, just as it can be proved that he retouched a number of plates by the Master E S, who worked on the Upper Rhine.<sup>2</sup>

We may thus dismiss the localising of the engraver at Bocholt in Westphalia with as little hesitation as his alleged Christian name "Franz." A better criterion of his locality would be the indication of style, a point on which the older iconographers express themselves quite vaguely. Bartsch has nothing to say about it, and Passavant, who finds his handling of the burin very skilful, and thinks he can recognise in it the hand of a goldsmith, who copied, it is true, some engravings by Schongauer, but also proved himself an inventive artist, thinks that his compositions betray the influence of the school of van Eyck. We will see whether a critical examination of his work does not produce more positive results.

Bartsch brings the list of the Master F V B's engravings up to 38 numbers, of which four (from the small series

<sup>1</sup> Among the 59 engravings by the Master six cases are known : Nos. 40, 42, 49, 56, 57 and 59.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Geisberg, "Meckenem," p. 263. who makes out a list of 24 plates.





THE MASTER F V B. PL. 5. THE VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH A PEAR. B. 4 L. 10  
British Museum  
Size of the original engraving 181 x 120 mm.

of Apostles, Nos. 12-24) were not known to him by actual inspection. Passavant adds seventeen, four of which, however, are by another hand,<sup>1</sup> so that the total is actually 51. In the list which follows this article the number is increased to 59, of which the *St. Andrew* of the small series of *Apostles*, No. 15, is still missing.

The majority of the prints are signed below in the centre, either within or outside the border-line, with the monogram F V B, which is accompanied on both representations of *St. Antony*, Nos. 38 and 40, by a cross following the initials, the meaning of which is unexplained, while a similar cross is placed before the monogram on the *Ornament with an owl*, No. 59. Nine prints<sup>2</sup> are unsigned, or seem to be so, since they are only extant in more or less cut impressions, and possibly the monogram may have stood outside the border and have been cut away. Only in case of the two oblong ornaments, Nos. 54 and 58, is the plate-mark preserved; they seem, therefore, from the first to have been unsigned.

The Master F V B impresses us as an independent and creative artist of unusual importance, although he has copied in reverse nine engravings by Schongauer, and in other prints shows himself dependent upon him, and in two cases also upon the Master E S, in details. His handling of the burin, which can be fully appreciated only in the very rare first-class impressions, points to Schongauer as his model, and displays a mastery in the distribution of light and shade which, in union with the deep black in which they are printed, confers on his engravings unusual colour and a brilliance little

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 42, 43, 47 and 48.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 3, 6, 8, 9, 41, 50, 54, 55 and 58.



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 6. THE SAVIOUR. L. 12  
British Museum  
Size of the original engraving 89 × 55 mm.

inferior to that of Schongauer's best prints. One must see the incomparable set of the large *Apostles* (Nos. 25-37) at Basel, of which some specimens are given here, or the *Christ Crucified* (No. 7) at Berlin, the *Annunciation* (No. 4) at Dresden, or the *St. Helen* (No. 46) at Paris in order duly to appreciate the full power of his burin.

This technical excellence is combined with brilliant drawing which far excels the average production of his contemporaries in the realism of his careful observation of Nature. The modelling of the heads, especially those of the old men with long, sometimes plaited, beards, and curly hair falling over their shoulders; the hands, so carefully finished and full of character; the taste in the arrangement of the drapery; the attention to material, as, for instance, the velvet coat of the man standing foremost on the right in the *Judgment of Solomon* (Pl. 2), or the fur on the judge's mantle on the left, speaking to the executioner who salutes him; the fine tracery of the canopy and the brocade of the dossal—all these speak an idiom very unlike the Bocholt dialect of the stiff and stilted Israhel van Meckenem, the idiom, in fact, of a totally different nationality. We feel the temperament of the Netherlands, and see in the austere but attractive heads of Madonnas and angels a kinship with Dirk Bouts, with Memling, and the great Flemish masters of Bruges.

And suddenly the thought flashes across one's mind: May not this Master F V B be "F. . . . van Brugge" rather than "Franz von Bocholt?" It is true, indeed, that the dependence on Schongauer is still to be reckoned with and that such dependence extends in isolated cases even as far as the Master E S, on whose older representation (L. 7—Pl. 1) the *Judgment of Solomon*



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 7. ST. PHILIP. B. 22 L. 19  
Berlin

Size of the original engraving 89 × 55 mm.

(No. 2) is obviously based. The two mothers with their children have evidently served the engraver as models, and the figure of the king also shows relationship to that by E S in type and attitude. Equally undeniable in certain respects is the dependence of the *St. Christopher* (No. 41) on that by the Master E S (L. 140): observe the swelling out of the cloak, the attitude of the left hand, the head, and the abundance of the hair. But in these cases it is the technical mastery of the example followed that has instigated the artist to imitation, and the engravings of the Master E S, like those of Schongauer, drifted about into the studios of remote countries, as is witnessed by their imitation not only in the Netherlands but also in Italy, in Spain, and even in the *Livres d'heures* of the Paris printers.

It is just the same with the prints not directly copied from Schongauer but derived from him only as regards certain details. The model for the *Nativity* (No. 5) is to be recognised in the engraving B. 4, which has been used quite freely in the reversed figures of the Virgin and Child, as well as the ox and ass, whose bodies, so far as they were not shown in the original print, have been completed rather lamely. *The Madonna with a pear at a window* (Pl. 5) shows clearly in the action of the child, the pear, the cushion and window the influence of Schongauer's *Madonna with the parrot* (B. 29), which our engraver has also copied directly in No. 9. Galichon,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, is wrong in taking several figures of the small series of *Apostles* (Nos. 12-24) to be influenced by those of Schongauer and even asserting that *St. Peter* and *St. Bartholomew*

<sup>1</sup> *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1859, III., 332, 34-43.



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 8. St. SIMON. B. 19 L. 23  
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.  
Size of the original engraving 88 × 55 mm.

(Nos. 13 and 20) are copied directly from B. 34 and 39.<sup>1</sup> On his *St. John Baptist* (No. 43) he has freely copied the plant with leaves on the right below from that on the *St. John on Patmos* (B. 55) in a similar position, and in *St. Michael* (No. 44—Pl. 15) we recognise his acquaintance with Schongauer's archangel (B. 58), although it is very different in all particulars, and there can be no question of one depending directly on the other.

Few of Schongauer's contemporaries could avoid being impressed by his engravings, which were famous all the world over. Even so great and independent an artist as the Master of the Hausbuch shows himself dependent on him in a number of prints. Robetta and Nicoletto da Modena copied from him, and we find such masters as Gerard David, Geertgen tot Sint Jans, Mabuse, and "the Bruges Master of 1500" borrowing from his engravings.

On the other hand cases are very rare in which an engraver of the fifteenth century uses contemporary easel pictures, and of this there are several examples in the work of the Master F V B. Waagen<sup>2</sup> finds in the *St. Christopher* (No. 41) so great resemblance both in composition and style to a picture by Memling in the Arenberg Gallery at Brussels that he unreservedly pronounces the print to be Netherlandish. The picture, unfortunately, can no longer be identified, but the dependence of another engraving, the *Madonna with a Flower* (No. 8—Pl. 4) on the Bruges Master is proved; and here, too, Waagen considers the print decidedly Netherlandish, though he does not recognise in it the

<sup>1</sup> It is equally impossible to admit any such hypothesis in the case of the corresponding figures in the large series, Nos. 25-37, had he been confusing the two.

<sup>2</sup> "Treasures" I., p. 289.



hand of the Master F V B. The engraving agrees, except in some insignificant details, with a picture in London, belonging to the Earl of Northbrook, which Friedländer<sup>1</sup> attributes to a follower of Memling, while it figures in Voll's book on Memling (p. 132) among the pictures classed as doubtful or not genuine works by the master. In the picture there is a landscape background, and a carpet covers the windowsill. The attitude of the left arm of the child is also a little changed. Friedländer, as he writes to me, thinks it quite possible that both the picture and the engraving are based upon a lost original by Memling.

Friedländer would like to suppose a similar relation in the case of the *Madonna, half-length, on the Crescent* (No. 11). The position of her hand and the stiff attitude of the child show a striking resemblance to a Madonna by the Bruges painter, the Master of the Legend of St. Ursula, belonging to M. Leo Nardus, Suresnes, which was exhibited at Bruges in 1907,<sup>2</sup> Friedländer believes that this painter, who worked about 1480 at Bruges, and maintained himself by the use of other men's compositions, stealing from Rogier van der Weyden, for instance, in a picture at Aachen, in this case, too, was only drawing from the same source as the Master F V B, whose engravings, he also thinks, point to the neighbourhood of Rogier and Bouts, in the direction, that is, of Brussels and Louvain. He makes the South Netherlands, not Westphalia, the locality of the engraver.

Waagen's remark<sup>3</sup> that the *Annunciation* (No. 4—

<sup>1</sup> *Repertorium*, xxvi. (1903), 84, 140.

<sup>2</sup> Reproduced in Kervin de Lettenhove's "Les chefs d'œuvre d'art ancien à l'exposition de la Toison d'Or à Bruges en 1907" (Bruxelles, 1908), Pl. 44.

<sup>3</sup> "Kunstdenkmäler in Wien," II., 250, 891.

Pl. 3) shows the impression made on the artist by Rogier van der Weyden's altarpiece with *St. Luke* at Munich, of which the angel and certain accessories in the background are especially reminiscent, can only be understood in the sense that both works are animated by the same sentiment and speak the same national language, and that this language is decidedly not German but Flemish. Besides, it is quite possible that the composition wrought out with such loving care is also based upon a picture no longer extant, only I should not suppose such a picture to be by Rogier, since the types show much more kinship with Dirk Bouts. Also the charming *Annunciation* (No. 3), so full of sentiment, of which only three weak impressions without a monogram are preserved in two states, an engraving cited by Bartsch from Heineken in the appendix to Israhel van Meckenem, while Passavant ascribes it with just as little reason to the Master of Zwolle, may go back to a picture by one of the great Netherlandish painters as its model.

It will be seen that many clues lead to the Netherlands, and any one who turns over the illustrations to this article will see nothing in the types of the Master F V B to make it surprising that we should be inclined to locate the place of his activity at Bruges.

In the *Peasants Quarrelling at Skittles* (No. 51—Pl. 16) the artist shows himself in a sense the ancestor of Jan Brueghel and the Flemish genre painters Brouwer, Teniers, Ryckaert, Craesbeeck, etc. The somewhat indecent print with the woman spinning and the aggressive monk (No. 52) has also something decidedly Flemish in its coarse realism.

A less certain indication of Netherlandish origin is



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 9. St. JAMES THE GREATER. B. 8 L. 29. Basel  
Size of the original engraving 183 × 98 mm.

afforded by three prints from the small series of Apostles (Nos. 12, 20 and 22), with Flemish text on the back, in the British Museum, which are derived from a Netherlandish breviary, while the *Christ on the Cross* (No. 7) at Berlin, was found according to Nagler,<sup>1</sup> in a Cleves missal.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, there is to be found under a full-page miniature in a missal in the Kunstgewerbemuseum at Berlin, from the Church of St. John at Herford, the bust of the Saviour after the engraving No. 25.

A sort of negative evidence against a connection of the Master F V B with Bocholt is furnished by the watermarks of the papers which he used. I can refer to a considerable mass of material in this respect, for I have found more than 70 impressions with watermarks, and have made a tracing of at least one specimen of every sort that occurs. It is obvious that if the Master F V B had really lived at Bocholt along with Israhel van Meckenem he would frequently have used the same papers as Israhel was wont to use. But just the contrary is the case. Apart from single watermarks like the Gothic **p** with a flower, or hand with a flower, which were current all along the Lower Rhine, not a single watermark will be found in the papers of F V B's engravings which also occurs in those of Meckenem. In particular, his two most frequent watermarks, the crowned sun,<sup>3</sup> which occurs seven times, and heart with a cross,<sup>4</sup> which is found seventeen times, are peculiar to himself, and, with one exception,<sup>5</sup> I have

<sup>1</sup> "Monogrammisten" II., No. 2552, 7.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Sprickmann-Kerkerinck catalogue (Leipzig, 1853, No. 5), a Cologne missal.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Briquet, 13911.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Briquet, 4231-32.

<sup>5</sup> The heart occurs once on a print by the Master P W of Cologne.



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 10. ST. JAMES THE LESS. B. 16 L. 31. Basel  
Size of the original engraving 182 × 97 mm.

never found them in the works of other engravers of the fifteenth century. The same holds good of the very large and narrow Gothic **p** with a flower,<sup>1</sup> about 4in. high, which I have found four times in the prints of F V B but never elsewhere, and of the small shield with *fleurs-de-lis* and a detached crown over it<sup>2</sup> which is found on Nos. 2 and 7.

The dog with a flower points directly to the Netherlands. It is found afterwards only on prints by the Bruges engraver of the illustrations to Boccaccio, and is also mentioned by Briquet (3625) as occurring in 1489 at Bruges. I have also met with it in prints by the Master of Zwolle. The **y** with a cross<sup>3</sup> and the joined letters,<sup>4</sup> each of which is known to occur four times, are also almost isolated watermarks. The last-named is found once more on a print by Alart Duhameel; again, therefore, on Netherlandish soil. We need not, of course, consider the **p** with a flower and hand with a flower already mentioned, the pitcher with a cross or flower and a small bull's head with a nose, which are only to be found on plates by F V B in the second state, retouched by Meckenem, nor the more recent impressions from the old plates, dating from the sixteenth century or later, with the arms of Nuremberg, the small or the large high crown.<sup>5</sup>

As to date, one is inclined to take the 'eighties and 'nineties as the period in which the Master F V B was working. No engraving by him is dated, and there are only a few prints from which a *terminus ante quem* can be found, namely, the *Judgment of Solomon* (Pl. 2), the chief figure in which is twice copied in reverse in the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Briquet, 8682.

<sup>2</sup> Briquet, 1810.

<sup>3</sup> Briquet, 9183-84.

<sup>4</sup> Briquet, 9757, 9762, etc.

<sup>5</sup> See Nos. 11, 29, 33 and 35.



THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 11. ST. PHILIP. B. 10 L. 32. Basel  
Size of the original engraving 184 × 99 mm.

woodcuts of the "Chronica Hungarorum" of Johannes de Thwroc (Augsburg, 1488), fols. 54v and 79, as King Beysa I. and Charles.<sup>1</sup> The same print, which was evidently widely dispersed, is also used in an initial R of the miniatures of a Graduale in the Chapterhouse of Cracow Cathedral, omitting the mothers and children, and with alterations in a French MS. of the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris.<sup>2</sup>

The second date, 1492, is found in MS. under the *Madonna with a Flower* (No. 8—Pl. 4) in London, and the third, 1494, is unreliable since it indicates only the year of printing of a book<sup>3</sup> in which I found the *St. Antony* (No. 39) pasted on the front cover in the Munich Franciscan convent of Lechfeld. Of course, it may have been put into the book at a later date. As a fourth date, lastly, we may consider the year 1496, the date of a series of pictures, attributed, without any perceptible justification, to Hans Baldung Grien, in the Fürstenkapelle of the convent of Lichtenthal, near Baden-Baden.<sup>4</sup> The date occurs on a scroll over the ship of St. Ursula. On the first of these four pictures, St. Helen, copied in reverse from the print No. 46, stands besides SS. Apollonia and Kunigunda.

Passavant thinks that the *St. Veronica* (No. 48) is especially early, apparently because of its technical defects, but that tells us nothing while we are unable to establish limits of date between the early and late works.

<sup>1</sup> Some motives are also used in Schedel's "Chronicle of the World," 1493 (German edition), fol. 47v. See *Repertorium f. K.*, xiv. (1891), 399, 193.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 1173, fol. 34. Reproduced by A. Bium (who does not recognise the connection) in *Revue de l'Art Chrétien*, LIV. (1911), p. 364, fig. 5.

<sup>3</sup> "Mammotrectus," Hain \*10573.

<sup>4</sup> Reproduced in v. Térey, "Die Gemälde des Hans Baldung gen. Grien," Bd. II., Nos. 109-112. The date on No. 112 is there wrongly given as 1494.





THE MASTER F V B. Pl. 12. ST. THOMAS. B. 14 L. 35. Basel  
Size of the original engraving 184 × 99 mm.

That the Master F V B belonged, like the preponderating majority of fifteenth century engravers, to the guild of goldsmiths can hardly be questioned. His numerous panels of ornament, four of which are copied from Schongauer, while the other three are probably of the engraver's own invention, are evidence of this. The beautiful ornament, No. 57 (Pl. 17) illustrates how such prints, like the similar engravings of the Master E S and Schongauer, were intended for use as patterns, for it has been used in the initial U of a MS. in the Staatsarchiv at Düsseldorf.<sup>1</sup> The four flowers in the corners are there arranged about a St. Andrew's cross, and it is quite clear that the painter of the miniatures had the engraving set before him standing on its left narrow end. There are other evidences that the engravings of F V B were very popular and widely dispersed outside the boundaries of his home in the Netherlands.

In the prayer-book of Sibylla of Cleves (early sixteenth century) in the Staatsbibliothek at Munich<sup>2</sup> the St. Helen (No. 46) is copied without the cross, holding a book in her left hand and offering bread to a cripple, probably in the character of St. Elizabeth, and an imitation of the same engraving, enlarged to almost double the size, occurs on a design for painted glass by Hans Baldung Grien at Weimar.<sup>3</sup> I have found the St. Helen, a third time, drawn only to the knees, strongly influenced by the engraving, if not directly copied from it, on a picture belonging to Prince Liechtenstein at Feldsberg, in Lower Austria, and the occurrence of

<sup>1</sup> Cod. D. 17, fol. 117 r.

<sup>2</sup> Cod. Germ, 84, fol. 365v.

<sup>3</sup> See *Reperitorium f. K.*, xi. (1888), 232, 9 (L.). Reproduced in the second publication of the Prestel Society, No. 1.

the same saint, after F V B, at Lichtenthal has been mentioned above.

The larger series of *Apostles* (Nos. 25-37—Pl. 9-12) has also often served as a pattern. *The Saviour* was copied by Nicoletto da Modena,<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Lionel Cust drew my attention years ago to a book of North Italian drawings in the Malcolm collection, now in the British Museum,<sup>2</sup> in which the first fourteen leaves form a set of *Apostles* derived from German originals, and three of them, *SS. Peter, Paul and Matthew*, are copied from Nos. 26, 27 and 34 by the Master F V B. I have seen, lastly, the *St. Bartholomew* (No. 33) embroidered on a chasuble in the Darmstadt Museum.

That is all that I have to say about the Master F V B. The reader has every right to say that it is very little, but, after all, the history of art is composed merely of facts, and long and laborious enquiries are often needed to separate the chaff from the wheat and to extract a few meagre truths from the heap of suppositions, hypotheses, legends and misunderstandings. In the case before us we must be contented to know, with something like certainty, that the Master F V B was one of the most excellent engravers of the Netherlands, who trained himself technically by the art of Martin Schongauer, after whom he produced a number of excellent copies, while he occasionally shows himself dependent for details on the Master E S and the great Colmar engraver, but also copies pictures by the leading Flemish painters. He probably worked as a goldsmith at Bruges during the two last decades of the fifteenth century. Of his Christian name we know only the

<sup>1</sup> No. 25a of our list.


<sup>2</sup> "Originali bellissimo disegni del pittore Mantegna et altri.—Bologna addi 11 Febuario 1617." Malcolm Catalogue, p. 272-73, Nos. 28-30.

initial F, while the two other letters of his monogram, V B, may mean "van Brugge." With Bocholt in Westphalia he has nothing to do, except the fact that the Bocholt goldsmith Israhel van Meckenem, probably after our artist's death, retouched a number of his plates and unjustifiably altered the original monogram to his own.

[A catalogue of the engravings of the Master F V B, by Max Lehrs, with further illustrations, will follow in the next number.—THE EDITOR.]

## THE ETCHINGS OF WALTER SICKERT.

BY J. MIDDLETON MURRY

N these self-conscious days of groups and schools and principles and theories in art, when so many more people know what ought to be done than are apparently able to do it, when it is a commonplace that pictures ought not to have a literary interest, or, if they have, possess it at their peril, and that the last quality we have a right to expect from a portrait is that it should reveal the character of the sitter—in such dangerous days as these, to feel and express delight in the work of an artist largely because it shows a fairly constant preoccupation with human nature for its own sake, is very much like trying to pass an expectant bull in a pair of vermilion trousers.

Not that it is dangerous to praise Walter Sickert in the abstract. Oddly enough he is accepted by those whose theories seem to leave precious little room for him. Perhaps he is accepted because he is a rather formidable opponent. An artist with so keen an eye for the ubiquitous unique in what is so often called the grey monotony of middle class life, might find it useful in spying out the joints of an enemy's armour; moreover, Sickert has a *désinvolture* with the pen which some of us slaves of it do unashamedly envy. He is eminently indicated as a man to be let through the gate whether he can repeat the password or not. On the whole it might be best not

even to tell him what the password is. There is no knowing ; but he might say "Shibboleth" with a very comic and disturbing intonation.

I do not know ; it may be that Sickert would still be a fine artist were all the human interest sublimated out of his work by some process which will be discovered, let us hope, in time to prevent future generations acquiring the bad taste of their forefathers. But I do know that this expurgated artist (however fine) would not be Sickert, any more than Manet would be Manet if his women were not intriguing, or Degas Degas if his *ballerinas* were not flesh and blood. These great names are pertinent. To the tradition which they suggest Sickert indubitably belongs. If we add to them the names of Whistler and Pissarro we should probably complete the square of influences to which Sickert has at one time or another deliberately submitted himself. It is, perhaps, essentially a French tradition, but though this may account for the comparative isolation of Sickert among his English contemporaries, it is much less important than that the tradition is in the main one of interest in human life. Degas and Manet were certainly great technicians, and in their way great innovators ; but their technical gifts were made to serve their zest for men (and women) and manners.

Whether or not a predominant interest of these painters can, in some ideal kingdom governed by the laws of pure æsthetics, be put aside as irrelevant, it is obvious that for themselves it was not. If they had not possessed it, the chances are that they would have done neither so much nor so well. Given the faculty for extracting some quintessence from the spectacle before their eyes which they so eminently had, then it was



WALTER SICKERT. Pl. I. THE ACTING MANAGER. 1884  
Size of the original etching  $9\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$  inches

inevitable that if the spectacle included human beings, their humanity was part of the whole which the painter sought to render. If he were to have failed to take account of it and include it, then he would simply have failed. Instead they succeeded. When Degas paints a dancing-master, he *is* a dancing-master, down to the last glorious crease in his generous trousers; when Manet paints people at a window, they are people who would be at a window, and their eyes are the kind of eyes that enjoy looking out on the streets of the world. In other words, they achieve an evident psychological truth in their work which was obviously of great importance to them, because it requires much labour and insight to capture it, while it can be missed by anyone. It is certainly of great importance to us, for it provides an integral and most subtle part of our enjoyment.

This is the tradition, or the conception, of the painter's art, to which Sickert immediately adheres. As his painting is, so is his etching. They combine to form a single *œuvre*. But there was a period before his maturity when the full implications of this relation of art to life were apparently not so clear to him.

I do not know when Sickert began to etch. The earliest etching of his known to me is the portrait of Mrs. Doyly Carte, called *The Acting-Manager*, dated 1884.<sup>1</sup> It seems unlikely that this is one of his earliest attempts, for in its particular kind it is a mature piece of work. It is careful, elaborate and beautiful; but it is isolated in the sequence of his etchings. The relation to its successors, though not its own merit, might be indicated by calling it his "diploma etching." It

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written, I have learned that *Stephen Manuel*, 1883, is earlier than *The Acting Manager*.



inaugurates a period which ended roughly in or about 1890.

Of the work of this—let us call it once for all, Whistlerian—period, some twenty etchings can be traced. The few of them I have seen, I confess, do not greatly interest me. They are delicate, they are swift, they are, perhaps, even beautiful—one to which this epithet most securely belongs, *Little Louie Pinder*—is reproduced as an example of the manner—but they are slight to the point of evanescence. Sickert was at this time as evidently the disciple as he was eloquently the defender of the brilliant Anglo-American whom enthusiasts of the 'eighties called "*The Master*." But what he had to learn from Whistler could, perhaps, not be learned from him directly. Whistler was the exotic and sterile flower that grew from a cutting of the French tradition set in a thinnish soil; the flower is unique and precious, but it is lacking in substance and in seed. His etchings are, as it were, the *hokku* poems of the art—at their best immediate, lyrical and ravishing. The Whistlerian Sickert did not quite succeed in being any of these things. In this kind he is the disciple of talent with the master of genius beside him. There is the same swift work of the dry-point sketching directly the vision of the moment, but the slight and elusive perfection somehow escapes him.

The truth is that Sickert had in his whole composition scarcely a grain of the exotic. He came of a line of artists; the craft was in his bones. Like all hereditary craftsmen, he was naturally a coarse feeder. He was bound to re-act against the pre-digested nutriment on which Whistler so elegantly, and at times so unsatisfyingly, supported the life of his art. The time came—

and with it a more or less complete break in the sequence of his etchings—when Sickert seems to have felt the necessity of attaching himself more directly and more firmly to the tradition than by the silk and slender thread which passed through Whistler's gloved fingers.

This word "tradition" may be troublesome; it is often used nowadays as a kind of dignified, ancestral bludgeon to batter the heads of artists who do not accept their theories. For the purposes of this essay, however, the word "tradition" is not a weapon. It is intended as a shorthand description of the actual practice of the artists of the past who have remained considerable. We may, therefore, paraphrase and say that the most permanent element in the tradition is an honest research into the actual. It implies that men who cease in the effort to paint what they see, end by painting what nobody will ever want to see. It implies, among other things, that Giotto and El Greco are great artists because they did their level best to paint what they saw, and that Michael Angelo depicted real men on the walls of the Sistine. It implies, finally, that artists are only in danger of being cut off from the tradition when they fall into the habit of painting what other people see, or what they imagine other people see.

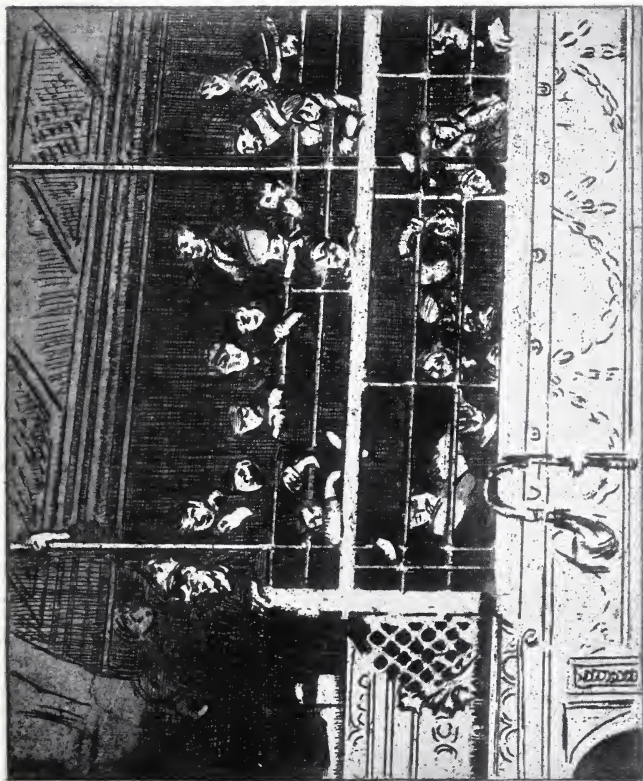
This business of seeing—here the conscientious writer comes into some kind of professional touch with the conscientious artist—is distressingly difficult. We are simply haunted by what we imagine we see. Let any artist who has become convinced (from bitter experience) that a writer is *bound* to talk nonsense about the plastic arts read the chapter on a street accident in Arnold Bennett's most admirable book, *The Author's Craft*,



WALTER SICKERT. Pl. 2 FAÇADE OF ST. MARK'S, VENICE. 1902  
Size of the original etching  $13\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$  inches

and he will discover that some, at least, of the problems of both arts are essentially the same. Where the writer so often fails as a critic of art is in his rash adventures into technical analysis of which he can know nothing ; perhaps more often still he fails simply because he is a bad writer, who, never having faced a problem in his own craft, yet presumes to admonish others on the best way to settle theirs. But enough of this awkward parenthesis. It will at least have sufficed to indicate that this essay will be as innocent of technical criticism as its author is empty of technical knowledge.

The point is this : during his Whistlerian period Sickert was perhaps less in touch with the tradition than his own immediate affiliation to "*The Master*" would suggest. If he touched fingers with Courbet through Whistler, it was with the fingers of one hand. With the other he was waving farewell, for he was seeing things through Whistler's rose-tinted spectacles. The breaking-away from Whistler was inevitable and violent : it was a minor cataclysm in which Sickert's very interest in etching seems to have been swept away. From roughly 1890 to 1906 there is only one etching—a beautifully transparent little picture of a street façade, called by some *La rue de la Halle au Blé* (1898), but now rightfully entitled *Retraite aux Flambeaux*. But from this solitary swallow it would be too much to deduce a spring. Sickert was not to give his hand to etching again until his connection of himself with the tradition through his painting was complete and final. One imagines him during these sixteen years with the word of Renoir in his mind if not on his lips : " Rentrons dans la ligne." To all intents and purposes Sickert became one, a highly individual and patient one, in the Impressionist

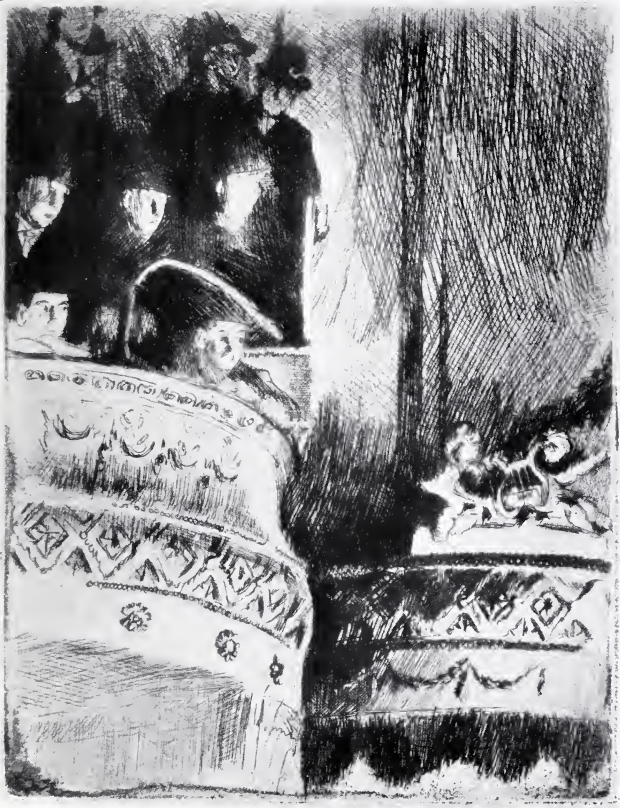


WALTER SICKERT. Pl. 3. NOCTES AMBROSIANE. 1906

Size of the original etching  $8\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$  inches

succession. He joined them in their research into the actual: in its threefold form—departure from the rigidities of academic composition, close investigation into real colour (as opposed to those unmitigated surfaces of brilliant paint that frequently go by the name), and a predilection for the familiar, the natural, the unstaged as his subject-matter. When he took up etching again in 1906, with the aquatint-etching *Noctes Ambrosianae*, it was with this threefold achievement behind him. His place as a painter was secure, though perhaps his market was not. He had established direct contact with life: his vein was, accordingly, prolific and inexhaustible.

The three aspects into which I have (no doubt arbitrarily) divided Sickert's method were quite simply carried over into his etched work. Two of them—the departure from academic composition and the predilection for a familiar world, uncontaminated by the stage-management of good taste—were directly transferable. The third—research into colour and shadow—appears in the etching as an almost complete elimination of heavy black. He works, as it were, in the open, with what seem to my inexperienced eyes the subtlest combinations of greys. His etched line is never lost in an inspissation of ink, not seldom used as a cloak to conceal an utter nakedness beneath. He seems to have absorbed all that was relevant to his purposes from the method of the master of whom he has confessed his admiration, Karel Dujardin. His etchings, whether they fail or succeed, are for the most part worked out to the bitter end: they are not merely “left off.” The expert and the connoisseur doubtless have their own opinions on these matters. I, as a mere lay admirer, will



WALTER SICKERT. Pl. 4. THE OLD BEDFORD MUSIC HALL, about 1908  
Size of the original etching  $4\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{8}$  inches

acknowledge mine. To me this method of Sickert's appeals, as a method, because it involves his laying all his cards on the table. The possibility of fudge is eliminated. I know I am not being deceived by pasteboard scenery. The bricks and the mortar are visible. I can count the bricks, or pick out the mortar with my penknife. Whatever "literary" impressions these etchings of Sickert's maturity may arouse in me—and henceforward this essay will be chiefly concerned with their literary interest—I feel that their foundations were well and truly laid as works of art.

Of the prints which may be assigned to the period between *Noctes Ambrosianae* and the first of the series published by Carfax & Co. in 1915, it is significant that all but one are more or less "psychological." Three of the prints are of music-halls: *The Old Bedford* (in Camden Town, now degraded into a cinema), *Noctes Ambrosianae*, a heavily etched picture on an aquatint ground of two rows of gallery "gods," and *The Old Middlesex* (of which a smaller version was later included in the Carfax series). Undoubtedly the mere *décor* of the music-hall has itself had a fascination for Sickert, as it has for all right-minded human beings: but his etchings show that he is at least as interested in the humanity the music-hall contains as in the exciting sweep of the lines of the amphitheatre, seen from unexpected angles, or the tarnished splendours of the gilt caryatids, to which he did justice once for all, and on a monumental scale, in the superb etching of *The New Bedford*. But the "gods" with their faded bowlers and limp cloth caps, their sprawling open-mouthed absorption in the spectacle, their listless concentration, their fatigued seriousness—this is what





WALTER SICKERT. Pl. 5. THE PASSING FUNERAL. 1913  
Size of the original etching  $13\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{3}{8}$  inches

Sickert eminently gives. A faint smell of beer and cheap cigar smoke seems to be exhaled from his music-hall prints: from them we catch an echo of the languid roaring of many choruses, such choruses as Sickert has preserved for us on his later plate *In memoriam: Harry Anderson*.

Beer, beer, glorious beer . . .  
Silence is the gold . . .  
My new pal  
Is my ole gal. . . .

The music-hall has been emasculated and civilised since those days: it has been bowdlerised either into a cinematograph theatre or a "refined variety entertainment." In the very month in which I write Marie Lloyd (than whom no finer comic actress has been seen in our day) and Chirgwin have died: the last threads that bind us to the music-hall and smoking-concert of the 'eighties and 'nineties are wearing thin. And our chief regret is that Sickert, who knew so well how to appreciate the inimitable savour of this bygone world, should not have perpetuated still more of it. After all, the cinema is a poor substitute for the old music-hall. The tired, eager, spell-bound faces are still there no doubt, but the auditorium is dark, and no one can see them.

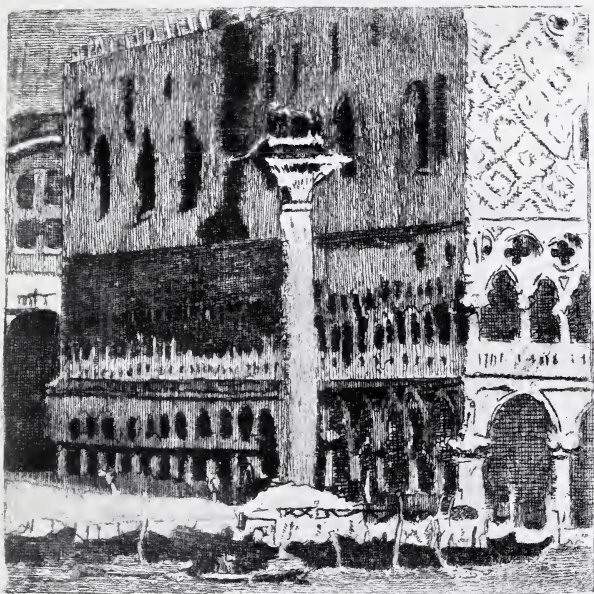
The dramatic etching *The Camden Town Murder*, 1908, on the other hand, though sinister, is a little vague. It is one of the few prints by Sickert in which I have to grope after his real intention, in vain. It suggests that the artist's extensive realisation of the possibilities of low life did not quite extend to homicide, and that some lack of real experience crippled him. It is impressive, but hardly in the open and above-board way which Sickert has made his own.



WALTER SICKERT. Pl. 6. JACK ASHORE. 1913  
Size of the original etching  $15\frac{1}{4} \times 10\frac{7}{8}$  inches

Two of the other prints which appeared before the Carfax series was begun are among Sickert's very finest. Both belong to 1913. *Jack Ashore*—a large print, of which for some reason of his own Sickert destroyed the plate—centres in a nude which is surely a masterpiece of drawing. The generous expanse of blonde flesh with which Jack has made his temporary home ripples with character. Out of it radiates a warm atmosphere of good-nature, which fills the shabby lodging-house bedroom. Here dramatic, psychological truth is attained directly through plastic truth. Simply because the woman is so splendidly drawn, we know the temperature of the room and the precise accent with which "Dearie" trickles out of her lazy lips. So it is, in an utterly different scene, with the second of the two prints, a large soft-ground etching called *The Passing Funeral*.<sup>1</sup> Two coster girls in a mean room: one stands looking out of the window with a dully expectant curiosity, the other sits on the bed and watches with a kind of listless resignation. It seems to me that into this single print Sickert has managed triumphantly to distil the very soul of the English "lower-class" woman. Her kindly tawdriness, her simplicity beneath her noisiness, her vacant pensiveness, all are somehow rendered in this curiously beautiful and strangely still design. The purist of etching might conceivably urge that the print contains no qualities which a drawing might not equally have given, and that the specific beauty of the medium is neglected. It may be so. I am no connoisseur of etching to refute the charge. Indeed, I am ignoramus

<sup>1</sup> It may be noted in passing that this is apparently the only occasion on which Sickert used the soft-ground process alone. *Jack Ashore* is a beautiful combination of soft-ground and direct etching. It may be that he feels something of the same contempt for the process that he has always felt and expressed for transfer-lithography.



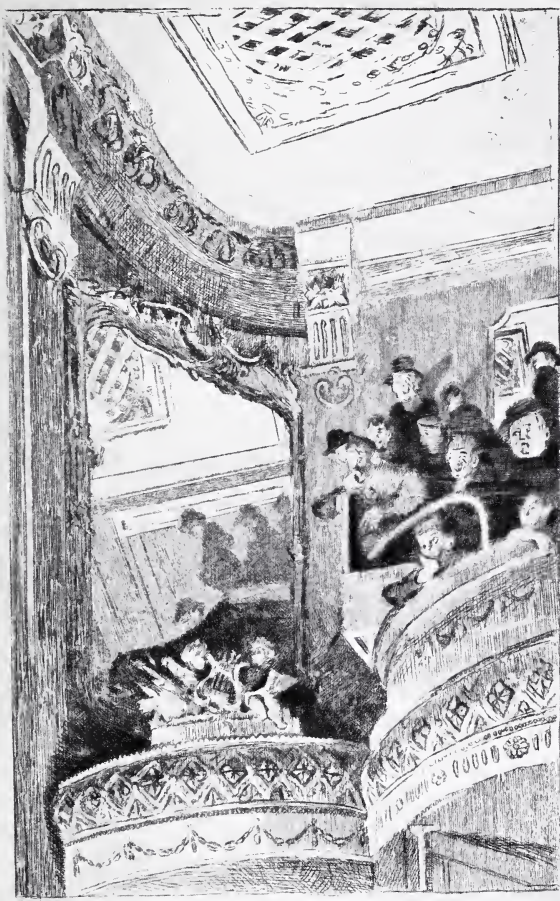
THE LION OF SAINT MARK

WALTER SICKERT. Pl. 7. THE LION OF ST. MARK. 1915  
Size of the original etching  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$  inches

enough to imagine that the chief beauty of the process consists in its permitting the artist to have his own work manifolded without the danger of a mechanical degradation. The sufficient reason why *The Passing Funeral* is an etching and not a drawing is the desirability of having twenty copies of a little masterpiece instead of one.

If this opinion is heterodox in these pages, it is at least appropriately heterodox, for there is some reason to believe that Sickert himself takes this view of the function of etching. I remember his once saying that etchings ought "to be printed like visiting cards," that is to say, that the etcher ought to leave his plate in such a condition that the printing should be a merely mechanical process of multiplication like the printing of a line block in a newspaper. In holding this opinion Sickert once more attaches himself to a sound tradition, for the cheapness of the final product has always been the true *raison d'être* of the etcher's craft. And again—let us hope the sentiment will not burn through the page of THE PRINT COLLECTOR'S QUARTERLY—he has declared that the collector whose attention is given to states as such degenerates immediately into a philatelist. In planning the Carfax series, which was lettered by a professional engraver, printed by a journeyman, and published at something like a half-guinea a print, Sickert put his theory into practice.

It may be that to the slap-up connoisseur the prints of the Carfax series are not rare enough to be truly absorbing. (Though he, too, may take heart from the assurance that they are now by no means so easy to come by as he may have imagined.) For my own part I find the whole series, with its old fashioned copper-plate title and subscriptions, delectable. As etchings they are, no



THE OLD BEDFORD

*The Old Bedford, by Walter Sickert.*

WALTER SICKERT. Pl. 8. THE OLD BEDFORD. 1915

Size of the original etching  $10\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  inches

doubt, unequal ; but some of Sickert's finest are among them. *The Lion of St. Mark* is a splendid example of the way in which he could turn to account in his etching his researches into light and shade. By means of the juxtaposition of greys the column of St. Mark and the square are suffused with a blonde and languid sunlight, an effect akin to that attained by still simpler methods in the later print of *Lansdowne Crescent*. The soft solidity of the column, which shares some quality of a fountain or a flower, is positively thrilling. Among the comparatively few etchings of his which have no human interest it seems to me to rank among the very best, together with the later prints of *Chagford*—a perfect miniature landscape—and *Pulteney Bridge, Bath*, and the rare etching (for which I can find no exact date) of a French Harbour, *The Quai Duquesne*, a re-worked plate, through which, in the only impression I have seen, the vestiges of a man's figure make a ghostly, but not altogether incongruous visitation in the sky. The plate was destroyed, probably for this reason ; but the loss is serious, for the row of quay side houses reveals the beauty of Sickert's line at its most sensitive.

Still, the most obvious thing to remark about the Carfax series is Sickert's increasing devotion to a subject-matter of human interest. There is but the one landscape ; three music-hall pieces (of which *The New Bedford* is the most beautiful, with its combination of plastic opulence and psychological observation) : and the rest are definitely " problem-pictures " or " dramatic pieces " or whatever the high-stepping *cognoscenti* prefer to call works of art whose attractiveness resides for us first and foremost where the artist meant it to be—in his revelation of human character by honest artistic means.





WALTER SICKERT. Pl. 9. ENNUI (small plate). 1916  
Size of the original etching  $8\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{8}$  inches

Of these, while none to my own sense quite attains the level of *Jack Ashore* or the *Passing Funeral*—none, indeed, are as big, in both meanings of the word—*Mother and Daughter*, *Et delator es* (in spite of the incongruous heaviness of some final engraved outlines<sup>1</sup>), and *A Little Cheque* are splendid examples of the artist's gift. *Mother and Daughter*, has, indeed, an obvious affinity to the *Passing Funeral*. The two women belong to the same class, they have something of the same attitude, and perhaps, in the case of the younger, the woman herself is the same. The other two prints have each their touch of cynicism. The epigram from Martial which gives *Et delator es* its title—

Et delator es, et calumniator,  
Et fraudator es, et negociator,  
Et fellator es, et lanista : miror  
Quare non habeas, Vacerra, nummos—

is, however, much more cynical than the artist's illustration of it. Sickert's cynicism is kindly : he is an amused and interested spectator of the "seamy" side of life, called seamy, I suppose, chiefly because you have to look on that side to see how the thing is put together. There is no contempt in his rendering of the relations between a man and a woman in *Et delator es* and *A Little Cheque*. The couples in both these prints have no illusions : neither has the artist. And that, in a sense, is all there is to be said about them. The *homme moyen sensuel* has in Sickert's eyes his own indefeasible right to existence. Scrutinise him narrowly enough, and you will find him unique. Sickert, when he seems most cynical, neither laughs nor frowns ; he merely smiles.

<sup>1</sup> Apparently Sickert was experimenting with the burin at this time, occasionally with unfortunate results. For example, the first state of *Harrington Crescent* is conspicuously better than the second, where the engraved outlines are discordant.



WALTER SICKERT. PL. 10. PULTENEY BRIDGE, BATH (No. 1). 1916

Size of the original etching  $5\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  inches

And he is most himself when his statement is as unemphatic as the facts themselves.

One of his most notable achievements in this art of illuminating life as it were by sheer transcription is the large plate of the etching called *Ennui*. The painting of which it is a version was beautiful enough. I well remember its exhibition at the New English where the excitement of its dirty browns—a museum specimen of the “mud” in which Sickert was once reputed to paint—made the majority of some two hundred other pictures simply dull and garish. Yet it seems to have lost little by its transfer to another medium. If he has had to sacrifice the harmony of his triumphantly dingy colour, he has gained something by an almost palpable concentration. Were it not that the notion of emphasis seems oddly inappropriate to an artist so unemphatic, one might say that the bareness and nudity give a kind of natural emphasis to its truth. Those two people are “just bored,” “just bored” with each other, with themselves, with the world, with life. The woman leans her head sideways on her hand against the mantel-piece, the man smokes on at his cheap cigar, goes on drinking his whiskey. There is nothing to be said, nothing to be done. Their lives will be one everlasting Sunday afternoon.

At this point a *rapprochement* which has long been threatening seems inevitable. Sickert has points of contact with the literary art and attitude of the Russian writer Tchegov. To some extent his *Ennui* is an English—a very English—counterpart of Tchegov's *Tedious Story*. But Tchegov's story is unbearably tragic, intolerably beautiful. Sickert does not go so deep, except by an implication for which he himself can

hardly be held responsible. But there is a kindred quality in the absolute fidelity of these two artists, at least sufficient to make one dream of imaginary illustrations by Sickert to certain of Tchegov's stories. Some of Tchegov's characters he can almost be said to have created independently. The utterly and absurdly pathetic *A Wicked Piece*—we have now passed away from the Carfax series to the latest period of Sickert's etching—is a perfect realisation of the gay lady whose encounter with the dentist is so marvellously told by the Russian. There are sides of Tchegov, of course, to which the English artist would hardly be adequate : but if we had to choose an artist to make plastic our conception of Tchegov's *The Cherry Orchard*—the only modern play with a living soul inside it—Sickert would be first and the rest nowhere. For of the things which Sickert sees in life, few other contemporary artists seem even to have a glimpse. Whether it is that they are frightened of the censure meted out to the " literary " artist, or whether they are incapable of seeing, perhaps it would be arbitrary to decide. But the chances are that they are incapable. For an artist, if he did see them, could scarcely restrain himself from trying to record what he saw. It may be that they leave " life " to the artists of *Punch* and its less respectable rivals. If so they are very foolish. *Nature morte* is no substitute for *nature vivante* : it is only easier.

However this may be, Sickert seems to have become more and more habituated to looking on the active spectacle, until the last trace of any sense of the model or the pose is eliminated from his work. He becomes more and more—let us say, the servant of life. His statement becomes continually more spare : all that is

otiose, merely decorative, to some senses all that is "artistic" is steadily diminished. If he can only catch the paradoxical quintessence of the living scene he is content. Beauty can look after herself. And, of course, Beauty, who knows perfectly well how she ought to be treated, does look after herself. She punctually attends on the pungent humour of such an etching as *Mon rêve, ça a toujours été d'avoir une armoire à glace*. It is the kind of Madame to whom Samuel Butler made his present of the sewing-machine: the bourgeoisie cocotte. And there she sits half-hidden behind her dream of satin-wood and bevelled mirror. She is indeed all but incorporated into it. She is happy and complacent: from behind her fortress of respectability she can at last look the world boldly in the eyes. Granted that all this criticism of life is contained in an etching—and it is there in *Mon rêve* for the dullest eye to see—then the etching is beautiful. It cannot help itself. A world, a vision of life, a social background is focussed into it. Yet how summary the statement is! A door with a knob—why is it Sickert's door-knobs are so ominously central, as it were *omphaloi* of an encircling universe that swings between the poles of the shabby-genteel and the fried fish shop?—and the end of a bed. It is less luxurious even than the setting of *Ennui*. I cannot help feeling that Sickert has made a science of this reduction of his *décor*. He can get as much, and enable us to get as much, out of the end of a cheap iron bedstead as the great Cuvier did from the fossil bone from which he reconstructed the mammoth. He has whittled away surroundings until they have become symbols which have power in themselves to recreate a *milieu*. So in *The New Tie*, he is able quite boldly to use precisely the same



WALTER SICKERT. Pl. II. MON RÊVE, ÇA A TOUJOURS ÉTÉ D'AVOIR UNE ARMOIRE À GLACE  
Size of original etching  $11\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$  inches

setting as that for *Mon rêve*. We know that anyone who uses that room as his own, sees life through a certain window, thinks certain thoughts, dreams certain dreams, uses certain adjectives and swears certain oaths: we can hear what the trier-on of the new tie is saying because we know his gamut. The extremes of the keyboard are given in the bed-end and the door-knob: on this instrument "une armoire à glace" is indeed the richest of phrases.

There are, I believe, some who remember with regret the delicacy of Sickert's earlier landscapes and cannot repress a shudder at the "vulgarity" of his investigations into Camden Town. Apparently they cannot see that the same delicacy of perception is at work in conditions that prevent it from losing its fineness. In certain aspects of life half the artist's work is already done for him by tradition and taste, and then he languishes on too fine a diet. But when his work is wholly his own and he cuts his own path towards his discovery, people are far more reluctant to follow. The broad, smooth, familiar road reassured them. They knew the epithets and exclamations for it. They said "How broad! How smooth!" with the comforting conviction that it was a perfectly safe thing to say, since it had been said by generations before them. And it was true enough to be a truism. But the chief merit of a road is that it should take us somewhere, the nearer to the heart of the matter the better. Sickert's rough and practical path takes us as near to that as—to my own sense nearer than—any made by his contemporaries.

Much has been said in this essay of the literary interest of Sickert's etched work. Now, by way of epilogue, it may be well to clear up a possible misunderstanding



and to disarm the critics whose swords are already half-way out of their scabbards. "Literary interest" in art means many things, and they are carelessly confused together. In this essay it has been used as meaning the revelation of the mind and character of human beings. As such, it is as much the appointed subject-matter of art as the beauty that descends upon an arrangement of lines, an equipoise of masses, or a relation between colour and shadow in the inanimate world. Human beings have their moments of irradiation, when their outward and visible disposition seems exactly to correspond with their inward and spiritual state, when their plastic conformations are, for a sudden lapse of minutes, the exact and precise symbol of their being. The only way to seize and fix this fleeting significance is by a swift and solid representation of forms, defined by line and colour. That is to say, an artist can only have a real and enduring literary interest in so far as he combines with his power of psychological perception a power of swift and unhesitating plastic statement, above all power as a draughtsman. Real literary interest, true psychological significance in a work of art is therefore not only not an impertinence (as the extreme modern theorists continually suggest), not only not an irrelevance (as the more moderate incline to hold), but actually a test of artistic value. Where it is achieved, there you have a work of art. And, secondly, the attempt so frequently made nowadays to eliminate beforehand the literary interest from the subject-matter of art is a mistake of precisely the same order as that made by artists—Whistler was not above offending—who think to make their pictures more artistic by introducing works of art into them. The artist who doctors his

material ends by starving himself. "I don't care a button about soul," said a brilliant young artist the other day to his sitter—one of the "super-geese" about whom Sickert used to make merry—"I shall paint your face as I paint a bottle." Instead of saying "But my face is not a bottle" and going away, the lady stayed. She deserves all she gets. But the brilliant young artist has a great deal to learn. He denies the finest richness of art, and art will have its revenge by denying him its finest achievements. Sickert, on the contrary, has rediscovered the fullness of the tradition for himself: he has accepted life, tried to know it intimately, and to render it fully. Whether he is a great artist or not, we know that his work will last. It is built to last: the foundations are there.

## RUBENS AS ETCHER

BY ARTHUR M. HIND



RUBENS is an important name in the history of engraving, not for what he did himself, but for the direction and encouragement he gave to the art of reproduction. He realised the value of engraving for the popularisation of his works and trained several of his pupils—notably Lucas Vorsterman and Paul Pontius—specially for the reproduction of his own works in line-engraving. In some cases he would supply them with his own drawings; but for the most part left the engraver to make the drawing from the original painting, or employed some painter-assistant, such as Van Dyck, to make the drawings for the engraver to use.

Being so directly in contact with the engravers in his own studio, it would have been surprising if he had made no attempts at engraving or etching himself. Possibly he may have done preliminary work with the graver or needle on some of the plates completed in his studio, but except in two of the examples cited below there is little evidence on this point. Apart from such conjectures and possibilities, there are thirteen plates known to me which have been attributed to him as etcher, and none of these, in my opinion, is worthy or characteristic of the master except the *St. Catherine*.

Before further discussion I would give a list of the plates attributed, with reference to the following works<sup>1</sup> :—

F. Basan, *Catalogue des Estampes gravées d'après Rubens*. Paris, 1767.

C. G. Voorhelm Schneevoogt, *Catalogue des Estampes gravées d'après Rubens*. Haarlem, 1873.

Henri Hymans, *La Gravure dans l'École de Rubens*. Brussels, 1879.

Eugène Dutuit, *Manuel de l'Amateur d'Estampes*. École Flamande et Hollandaise, Tome III. (1885).

Max Rooses, *L'œuvre de Rubens*. Antwerp, 1886–92.

#### A.

##### BY RUBENS.

1.—ST. CATHERINE IN THE CLOUDS. B. p. 83, 15—V.S., p. 114, 35—H. p. 142, 2—D. p. 131, 15.  $11\frac{5}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ .

- I. Before cross-hatching in various places (*e.g.*, on arm holding sword); the two square ends of wood (bolts?) below the two steel teeth on the broken wheel are blank; before signature. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK (counterproof).
- II. Cross-hatching and flicks between the lines added in certain places (*e.g.*, on arm holding sword); a few horizontal lines of shading on the square ends noted.
- III. Signature added lower l., *P. Paul. Rubens fecit*; the plate surface polished, *e.g.*, false biting on r. margin near sword and in lower r. is now less visible.

#### B.

##### THE PRELIMINARY ETCHING ATTRIBUTED TO RUBENS.

2.—BUST OF SENECA. B. p. 163, 5—V.S. p. 140, 42—H.p. 142, 8—D. p. 208, 5—R. 813.

Plate (I.),  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ ; work,  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ .

- I. Light etching. Before letters.
- II. Work added throughout with the graver; lettered L. ANNÆUS SENECA *Pet. Paul Rubens pinxit. Luc. Vorstermans sculpsit.*

<sup>1</sup>All the subjects and states described are in the British Museum, except 1. I and 3, II, where reference to locality is given, and the early states of 10, 11 and 14 (cited by Dutuit).



RUBENS. ST. CATHERINE IN THE CLOUDS. H. 1, 1. Counterproof touched by Rubens  
Metropolitan Museum, New York  
Size of the original etching  $11\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$  inches

3.—OLD WOMAN AND A BOY WITH CANDLES. V. S. p. 153, 134—  
H. p. 142, 5—D. p. 167, 46—R. 862.  
Plate,  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$ ; work,  $8\frac{5}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ .

- I. Preliminary Etching. Before letters.
- II. Elaborated in etching and with the graver. PARIS (BIBL. NAT.)
- III. Signed: *Pet. Paul Rubenius invenit et excud,* and lettered *Cum. Privilegiis Regis christianissimi Serenissimæ infantis et ordinum confederāt,* and with two verses:  
*Quis vetet apposito lumen de lumine tolli*  
*Mille licet capiant, deperit inde nihil.*

C.

ATTRIBUTED TO RUBENS, BUT LACKING THE REQUISITE QUALITY.

4-9.—THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON: A SERIES OF SIX PRINTS. V. S. p. 35, 202—H. p. 142, 7.

Each plate measuring about  $4\frac{7}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$ . Numbered lower l., 1-6.

The first plate inscribed: *De Verloren Soon door P. P. Rubbens. Le fils debauche dessiné & gravé par P. P. Rubbens. tot Amsterdam by P. v. d. Berge exc. cum Privil. in de Calverstraat in de Groene berg.*

Nos. 2-6 signed: *P. P. Rubbens fec.*

10.—ST. FRANCIS RECEIVING THE STIGMATA. B. p. 70, 9—  
V. S. p. 97, 22—H. p. 141, 1—D. p. 114, 9.

$5\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ .

Signed: *P. Paul Rubbens.*

Dutuit cites early states of this and the following before the signature (Del Marnol Collection).

11.—THE REPENTANT MAGDALENE. B. p. 86, 28—V. S. p. 116, 56—H. p. 142, 3—D. p. 134, 28.

$5\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ .

Signed: *P. Paul Rubbens.*

A companion print to No. 10.

12.—PASTORAL: SHEPHERD AND SHEPHERDESS STANDING BY A TREE. B. p. 123, 60—V. S. p. 150, 117—H. p. 142, 4.

$7\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ .

I. Before signature.

II. Signed: *P. P. Rubbens. f.*

13.—PASTORAL: A COUNTRY DANCE. B. p. 123, 61—V. S. p. 151, 118—D. p. 171, 61.

Plate,  $10\frac{3}{8} \times 14$ ; border line,  $9\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{7}{8}$ .

Signed in margin lower r.: *Joannes Thomas fecit.* Six



RUBENS. ST. CATHERINE IN THE CLOUDS. H. I, III.

British Museum

Size of the original etching  $11\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$  inches

verses in three couplets. *Ne pens pas a mal. . . se leve par le Vent.*

- 14.—PORTRAIT BUST OF A YOUNG MAN, IN AN OVAL. B. p. 154, 86—V. S. p. 187, 284—H. p. 142, 6—D. p. 201, 86—R. Vol. IV., p. 321, after 1149.

Plate,  $5\frac{5}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ ; oval,  $4\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ .

Signed: *P. P. Rubbens. f.*

Dutuit cites an early etched state (Del Marmol collection).

- 15.—BUST OF A BEARDED MAN IN FUR CAP, IN PROFILE R. Undescribed.

$3\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{9}{16}$ .

Signed lower r.: *P. P. Rubens fecit 165.*

With regard to the authenticity of the signatures there is no reason to doubt that on No. 1, while those of No. 2 and 3 are in regular forms used by the master but do not claim anything beyond the design for Rubens. Of the remainder, the majority (*i.e.*, Nos. 4–12 and 14) are signed *Rubbens*, a form not used as far as I know, by Rubens himself; No. 15 is signed in a possible form, but the etching is very slight and hardly such a work as one would expect the master to sign, even if he might have made such a hurried sketch on the copper. I cannot explain its 165 unless a last figure in the date had been cut off at edge of plate. If a date at all, it places it after Rubens's death. Gerard Seghers etched certain heads somewhat of this type, which is reminiscent, too, of the fancy heads etched by G. B. Castiglione under Van Dyck's influence. Finally, No. 13 is not lettered on the plate, but signed on a cut impression in the British Museum, *P. P. Rubens. su. aq. f.*, apparently in MS. (possibly in printer's ink, and with intent to deceive, as it looks very like etching). The phrase *su. aq. f.* is strange, and I am baffled as to whether it could be interpreted *sua aqua forti* or *sc (ulpsit) aqua forti*, each of which could be either ungrammatical or illogical.





RUBENS. BUST OF SENECA  
British Museum  
Size of original drawing  $4\frac{7}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$  inches

In any case, there is no reason to doubt Jan Thomas being the etcher, or to suspect Rubens's collaboration. It is certainly the most vigorous of Thomas's few etchings, and the most attractive of all the plates described in my group C.

Now that I have started at the nether end, I will complete the discussion of these less probable attributions before returning to the three more important plates at the beginning of my list.

The *St. Francis* (10) and the *Repentant Magdalene* (11) are companion prints by the same hand, and by some etcher immediately inspired by Rubens, and very possibly, as Hymans suggested, by his pupil, Theodor van Thulden.

The series illustrating the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (4-9) claims on its title to be the original work of Rubens. But this title is almost certainly posthumous, as Rubens died in 1640, and the printer, Pieter van den Berge, who was an etcher and mezzotinter himself, can hardly have been working before 1648, and is known to have been publishing from the address of *de Groene berg* as late as 1695. Moreover, there is another series of plates of the same subjects, very slightly larger (each plate measuring about  $5\frac{1}{8} \times 4$ ), in which both etching and design is claimed by Theodor van Thulden. The title-plate of this set is inscribed, *A Boudan excud. Cum Pri Regis Theodor van Thulden Inven et fecit*. It is more lightly etched than the "Rubens" set, and on the whole has subtler artistic quality. And it is certainly more probable that a pirate would counterfeit the great name of Rubens, than that Rubens's own pupil would claim his master's designs as his own. Finally, the reversal of the compositions on the plate is definitely in favour



x marmore antique.  
Belmeant A.V. Dyck.

Vandijck. Seest die Seest. is taer.

RUBENS or VAN DYCK. BUST OF SENECA. H. 2, 1.

British Museum

F

Size of the original etching  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$  inches

of Van Thulden's series being the original. For example, in the second subject, the *Departure of the Prodigal*, the so-called Rubens plate gives the father and son grasping left and not right hands, as in the other set.

The second pastoral subject, with *Shepherd and Shepherdess standing by a tree* (12) has none of Rubens's masculine vigour. It is nearer to Van Dyck, and essentially the work of an imitator of Van Dyck in his later and more affected phase. It has the more feminine touch that is seen in followers like Lely. I doubt the ordinary attribution to Jan Thomas, but can make no definite suggestion as to authorship.

The last of these apocryphal pieces to call for comment is the *Portrait of a Young Man in an Oval* (14). It has been described in all the catalogues as an English Protestant Minister, but I see no reason to suspect this young man with his light brush of moustache and beard and fur collar of being either English or even a Protestant Minister. On the whole, the costume seems to point to the Netherlands and to a date about 1650, and in any case I see no justification for thinking that Rubens was the author of the portrait, much less of the etching. Hymans, apparently accepting the old title, thought that it might be by Richard Gaywood, but his work seldom has the hard regularity of this dark plate, and I am not at all inclined to accept the attribution.

We are now left with three etchings, those of group A and B of the list, the question of whose authenticity demands more serious consideration.

The *St. Catherine in the Clouds* (1) corresponds roughly to one of the ceiling paintings done by Rubens



*P. P. Rubens f. v.*

*Diogenes fecit*

RUBENS (attributed to). OLD WOMAN AND BOY WITH CANDLES. H. 3, I.  
British Museum

Size of the original etching  $9\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$  inches

in 1620-21 for the Jesuits' church at Antwerp. To judge from the drawings mentioned in the footnote the composition is apparently reversed in the etching, and St. Catherine's raised foot rests on the wheel instead of on the prostrate body of a Roman soldier. A counter-proof of the first state from the Spencer Sale (Christies, June 25th, 1919, No. 155) now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, is touched in sepia (an indication of deepening of shadows carried out in the succeeding state) in a manner thoroughly characteristic of Rubens, and I have no doubt by his own hand. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility of the etching having been done, or at least completed, by an assistant in Rubens's studio under the master's direction. Van Dyck was still with the master until the latter part of 1620, and the intrinsic quality and vigour of the work hardly permit the thought of any other of the school, apart from Rubens. But in its technical character it has not the peculiarly incisive force of Van Dyck's signed etchings, and with its complete affinity to Rubens's style of draughtsmanship, and a signature which there seems no reason to doubt, there appears every reason to accept this plate as an essay on the copper done throughout by the master himself. The British

<sup>1</sup>The contract of March 20th, 1620, stipulated that the paintings were to be done by Van Dyck and others of the best pupils of Rubens, and completed by the master. They were destroyed by fire in 1718. The compositions of thirty-six out of thirty-nine subjects are preserved in a series of engravings by J. Punt, 1747-63, after drawings made by Jacob de Wit in 1711 and 1712. There are two series of Jacob de Wit's water-colours (thirty-six in Lord Rendlesham's collection, and thirty in the Plantin-Moretus Museum, Antwerp), while the British Museum acquired in 1921 a more finished series of thirty-six drawings in red chalk which were the immediate originals used by Punt in his engravings, except for the title-page, a thirty-seventh drawing, which was engraved in another form. This latter series of drawings came from the Warwick Collection (sale 1896, lot No. 103). It should be noted that off-sets as well as the original red chalk drawings figured in Jacob de Wit's sale in 1755, probably made so that the engraver could more easily retain the original direction of the subjects.



RUBENS (attributed to). OLD WOMAN AND BOY WITH CANDLES. H. 3, 1.

From a counterproof, touched by Rubens

British Museum

Size of the original etching  $9\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$  inches

Museum only possesses the second and third states of this subject.

The plate of the *Bust of Seneca* (2) is a more complex problem, and here it is more difficult to dogmatise as to whether Rubens or Van Dyck is responsible for the etching, for there is, again, no question of any other. Of its first state, the preliminary etching, which is the only part attributed to Rubens, only one impression is known, that in the British Museum. It bears two MS. inscriptions, both probably of the eighteenth century : (1) *Ex marmore antiquo delineavit A. V. Dyck* ; (2) *Van dijck heeft dit Geest. is raer*. On the other hand, the lettering of the plate as completed by Lucas Vorsterman reads *Pet. Paul. Rubens pinxit*. The original drawing is also in the British Museum. As we know that Rubens used Van Dyck to make drawings for the engravers, it is possible that such a drawing might have been one of these done after a painting by Rubens based on the antique. Now the drawing is still on Jonathan Richardson's mount, and here, as in the case of the etching, the attribution is to Van Dyck, with the following note : [*Se*]neca in the Bath in the Villa Borghese in Rome. See the Notes J. R. Jun. [*V*]an Dyck Etch'd this Head. I have seen one Print of it w<sup>ch</sup> my Lord Somers once shew'd me, I could never find another. A pencil inscription in German in a nineteenth-century hand refers the attribution to Rubens, which is now generally accepted. Richardson refers to the statue once regarded as representing *Seneca* (formerly in the Villa Borghese, and now in the Louvre) as the original on which the drawing was based. The same statement, and the same attribution are given in the "Account of some of the Statues in Italy, with Remarks by Mr. Richardson,





RUBENS (attributed to). OLD WOMAN AND BOY WITH CANDLES. H. 3, II.  
 Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris  
 Size of the original etching  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{3}{8}$  inches

Sen. and Jun., London, 1722, p. 297" : " *Van Dyck* has Etch'd the Bust of this, but 'tis exceeding rare, I don't remember ever to have seen it, though my father has. He has, however, the Drawing where the head is finely finished by that Master, and another (a slight one only) by *Rubens*."<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, I agree with most recent critics that Richardson's attribution of the drawing to Van Dyck is erroneous. The curving lines of the drawing are much more in Rubens's style than Van Dyck's. The latter tends to the use of straight lines and greater angularity in his pen drawings.

Also it appears that the drawing and etching were based on an antique bust in Rubens's own collection. The unsigned engraving by Cornelius Galle I. in the Plantin edition of Seneca's works, Antwerp, 1615 (Rooses 1307; V.S., p. 140, 41) is from the same bust, and Balthasar Moretus, in his address to the reader, specifically refers to its original. The Borghese sculpture, now in the Louvre, originally represented an African fisherman, but was restored with the addition of a marble bath to represent the dying Seneca, and so adapted by Rubens in his Munich picture. Though the features are similar, the head is bald on top in the Borghese version.

The etching is directly based on the drawing, but Vorsterman's inscription on the later state evidently refers to the painting after the bust, which was done about 1616 for the publisher, Balthasar Moretus (R. 813). Though inclined to accept the drawing as Rubens, I see no reason why the old attribution of the etching

<sup>1</sup>Probably one of two slighter studies of the same head in the British Museum.



*Quis veteri apposito, lumen de lumine tolli.  
Mille licet capiant, deperit inde nihil.*

*Pr. Pbd. Pictoribus inuenerit et cetera.*

*Com. Pictoribus Pictoribus  
Pictoribus Pictoribus  
Pictoribus Pictoribus  
Pictoribus Pictoribus*

RUBENS (attributed to). OLD WOMAN AND BOY WITH CANDLES. H. 3, III.  
British Museum

Size of the original etching  $9\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$  inches

to Van Dyck should not be correct,<sup>1</sup> as he may very well have done this after Rubens's drawing while in the master's studio. Making this allowance, the style of etching is quite compatible with that of Van Dyck's original portrait etchings, which are all, probably, of a later date. It is certainly nearer to these portraits in technical quality than to the *St. Catherine in the Clouds*.

Finally we come to the plate of the *Old Woman and a Boy with Candles* (3). The engraved inscription, which gives no engraver's name, only claims the design and publication as Rubens. On the other hand, a counter-proof of the first state in the British Museum, which is touched in sepia and white, almost certainly by Rubens himself, is signed in MS. in a contemporary hand, P P R F.

A proof of the second state in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, is inscribed in Rubens's own hand with the verses which are engraved on the later state, and also bears the MS. inscription (partially erased), *P. Pontius fecit*. Another proof of the first state in the British Museum is signed in MS. *P. P. Rubens Jrv. Diepenbeck fecit*, in pen-and-ink, possibly of the eighteenth century, over what may have been an earlier inscription in pencil or black chalk. Only one signed etching by Abraham Diepenbeck is known (a *Peasant with a Donkey*, of 1630), and it offers no points of comparison.

On the other hand, the attribution of the plate to Pontius, which was accepted by so good a connoisseur as Mariette, appears to me very probably

<sup>1</sup> Carpenter (*Pictorial Notices of Van Dyck*, 1844, p. 130) broke from Richardson's tradition and attributed the etching to Rubens.

correct. A certain limit is given to the dating of the plate by the form of words in regard to the copyright, which covers France, Flanders and Holland. Rubens obtained these copyrights (which by no means invariably secured him against pirates) in 1619, while Flanders, coming in the name of the Infanta Isabella alone, places the print after the death of the Archduke Albert in 1621.

Vorsterman is the only other engraver to whom the plate has been attributed, and while he severed connection with Rubens in 1622, Pontius appears from about the same time to have started working in Rubens's studio, and the peculiar quality of the work seems to me decidedly in favour of Pontius as the author rather than Vorsterman.

With regard to the preliminary etching, I am completely unable to dogmatise, but on the whole I should be inclined to think Pontius was responsible for the whole work, done, as the British Museum counterproof clearly shows, under Rubens's immediate supervision. The whole question is much on a par with the attribution of the preliminary etching of certain engravings by Vorsterman, and Pontius in Van Dyck's *Iconography* to the Van Dyck himself.<sup>1</sup>

The original painting on which the print is based appears to be the version in Lord Feversham's collection at Duncombe Park (R. 862). To judge from the number of engraved copies, the subject was a popular one. I mention four of these in conclusion merely as English iconographical curiosities, for they have no bearing on my argument. Pieter Soutman's plate (V.S., p. 153,

<sup>1</sup> See A. M. Hind, *PRINT COLLECTOR'S QUARTERLY*, Vol. V. (1915), Nos. 1 and 2.

135) appears to have found its way to England, as its latest state is inscribed :—

“ You won't be angry with me, mother,  
For taking one light from another ?  
For one may kindle thousands more  
And shine as brightly as before.”

Another copy is one of the few mezzotints by Francis Wheatley. It is after the same original, when in the collection of George Rogers, and is inscribed as after a painting by Schalcken, a natural error with a candle-light subject (V.S., p. 153, 136 *bis.*).

Another mezzotint copy in the British Museum is cut close to the work, but is probably the plate attributed by Laborde<sup>1</sup> to Jac. Meheux (Maheux), who signed mezzotints of the *Rich Man and Death* (painter not given) and of *St. Jerome* after Ribera (both published by Audran in Paris), and is probably a relation of another English engraver of the name, Francis Meheux, who signed a mezzotint of *St. Anthony*, after Mignard, *Fran. Meheux Anglus sculp. Romae.* The latter Meheux is given by Laborde as born at Dover in 1644. The print after Rubens is much rougher than the two signed plates of J. Meheux, and comparable in quality to an unsigned mezzotint view of Norwich Castle, which is attributed in the British Museum to J. Meheux.

A fourth copy (and there are still three more which I have no reason to mention) is the only mezzotint I have seen signed Joshua London (V.S., p. 153, 137), and published by John Smith (*Joshua London fecit. J. Smith ext*) in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Perhaps some reader of this article may have further information as to Joshua London's identity and other work.

<sup>1</sup> *Historie de la Gravure en Manière Noir*, Paris, 1839, p. 294.

## VALENTIN SEZENIUS

By CAMPBELL DODGSON

**F**AMILIARITY with the many accomplished engravers of ornament who worked in the goldsmiths' shops of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century is only possible for those who have ample opportunities for study in the special collections devoted to this branch of engraving. These are generally annexed to the libraries of the important museums of industrial art, such as the Kunstgewerbemuseum at Berlin (Catalogue by P. Jessen, 1894), the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry at Vienna (Catalogue in 3 vols. by F. Schestag, 1871, and F. Ritter, 1889 and 1919), and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, where a fine collection of ornament prints forms part of the Department of Engraving, Illustration and Design, though there is, as yet, no published catalogue. There are smaller collections in the Kunstgewerbemuseum at Leipzig (catalogue by E. von Ubusch, 1889) and, I believe, at Hamburg. A fine collection of ornament prints, largely derived from the Foulc collection, forms part of the Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie, founded by M. Jacques Doucet, and now belonging to the University of Paris, at 16, rue Spontini, Paris (XVIe.). In some other collections, such as the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, and the

Bibliothèque Royale at Brussels (catalogue by H. Hymans, 1907), the collection of ornament prints forms part of the chief national collection of engraving of the respective countries and takes its part in the historical representation of the whole development of engraving without, as a rule, being cultivated with any special care. There are also special dealers and private collectors on the look-out for this class of prints, and so few specimens have survived the wear and tear of practical use in the shops of goldsmiths and other artificers of the late Renaissance in Germany and the Netherlands, France, and Italy, that complete sets and even single specimens of these graceful and ingenious arabesques and other dainty devices are eagerly sought for by those initiated in the mysteries of this branch of collecting. The fine collection of ornament prints formed by the greatest expert in such matters of recent times in England, Max Rosenheim (1849-1911), will be sold in the early summer of the present year by order of the executors of his brother Maurice, who died in 1922.

There drifted lately by chance into the Print Room of the British Museum a little set of prints, entirely unknown, by one of the rarest of the early seventeenth-century engravers of this class, Valentin Sezenius. The brevity of references to this engraver, even in the special literature on ornament prints, and the strange, exotic beauty of his designs, have induced me to search out what is known or conjectured about him, and I hope that the illustrations, reproducing specimens from all the known sets which he engraved, will do more than any verbal description to win appreciation for them.

We meet him first in a set dated 1619-20, of which





(a)



(b)

VALENTIN SEZENIVS Pl. I

TWO ORNAMENT PRINTS. Austrian Museum for Art and Industry, Vienna  
 Size of the original engravings: (a) 52×69 mm.; (b) 51×70 mm.

there are five prints at Vienna<sup>1</sup> and three (including the title-page) at Berlin.<sup>2</sup> Whether they all belong to the same set might be doubted, for the two upright subjects are of larger dimensions than the three oblong ; all, however, in the Vienna set are cut slightly within the platemark. The fact that both upright and oblong plates are found together at Berlin as well as Vienna is in favour of their belonging to the same set. Four of the five are reproduced here, and there is no need to describe them. The fifth, signed at the bottom " V. S. 1620," has in the upper corners two birds flying outwards, and in the lower corners a snail and a house fly, facing inwards, while a dragon-fly and another large winged insect fly towards the central feature of the ornamental design itself, a graceful and symmetrical pattern of similar character to the specimen reproduced. There is more variety among the oblong pieces, that with the pair of lovers in Jacobean costume seated on a bough balanced like a seesaw, being most original and amusing. The material of the costumes has a velvety richness in the print itself to which photography cannot do justice. Here we see already the kind of tree which is most characteristic of Sezenius, with its convex, drooping lumps of foliage, like Chinese umbrellas or mandarins' hats, growing on some of the branches, and tufts like moss, or seaweed out of water, hanging from the ends of others. Note, too, as specially characteristic, on the third oblong plate, the elongated reclining figure on the left and the thin gesticulating goblin on the right with the legs and arms of an insect and the beak of a

<sup>1</sup> F. Schestag, " Ill. Kat. d. Orn. Stichsammlung," 1871, p. 50. Two specimens are reproduced in " Das K. K. Oesterr. Mus. f. Kunst u. Industrie, 1864-1914," Wien 1914, pl. 209. See Nagler, Mon. v. No. 1376.

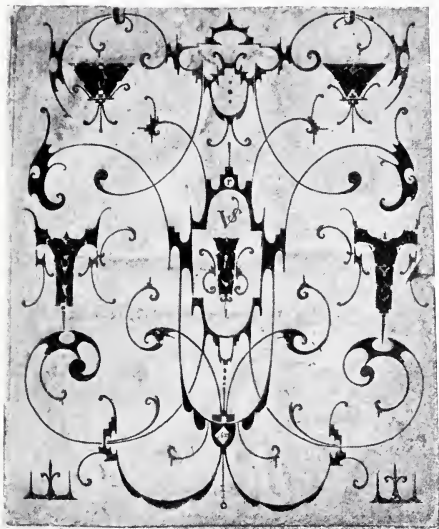
<sup>2</sup> Not in the catalogue. Information from Geheimrat P. Jessen.

bird ; a nimble creature, no less marvellously alive, with all its oddity, than the two wonderful dogs in counterpoise to one another on a higher stage of the arabesque.

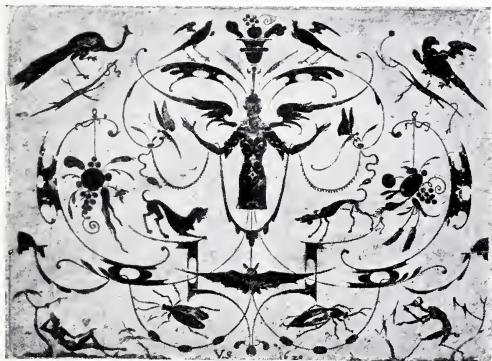
Next in date comes the set of six at Paris of the year 1622,<sup>1</sup> of which we give two specimens, the title-page with Apollo and Daphne and a Latin motto—note the implements of the goldsmith-engraver's craft, hammer, compasses and burin—and one of the two double plates with a pair of narrow subjects, one over the other. The subjects of this set are either mythological or sporting, or a combination of the two. One of the plates represents Actæon with the antlers sprouting from his head in the presence of Diana and her nymphs ; another Orpheus, playing the violin to beasts and birds, which include a stag, an unicorn, a monkey, an ostrich, a cock, an owl, a parrot, and a number of lesser birds in flight or perched on branches. The other single subject represents a man with a spear, running, with two hounds, in pursuit of a boar ; a third hound has paused to drink at a well. On the upper part of the second double plate we see again a man with a hunting spear ; his hound is tethered to a post near a pollard willow ; a tiny man, carrying a hare slung on a pole over his shoulders, is climbing on the left to a little house with a millwheel behind it, perched upon piles ; below we see a man fishing near another pollard willow, a fisherman on shore holding a net, and another in a boat ; and in both there are the Sezenius trees with tufts of moss and the Sezenius birds in flight or perched upon the slender twigs.

<sup>1</sup> Mentioned twice by D. Guilmard, " Les Maitres Ornemanistes," Paris, 1880 : p. 311, where Sezenius is placed with the Italian School, and p. 396, where he is placed with the German. Guilmard seems to be quite unconscious of the repetition, and only p. 311 is cited in the index. He gives the number of pieces as eight, with a query ; there are, in fact, eight subjects on six plates.

If a suspicion that Sezenius knew something about Chinese art may have arisen even from the plate with the Jacobean lovers at Vienna, it is deepened by the willow-pattern landscapes of the Paris set, and strengthened to conviction by study of the New Testament set of 1623-24 in the British Museum, which positively reminds us, by its fantastic, artfully-composed vegetation and bodies lightly poised in air, of the *chinoiseries* of French rococo art. The set, consisting, so far as we know it, of three subjects from the early life of Christ, which are probably only the chance survivors of a larger number, is entirely undescribed. One of the subjects, the Nativity, had been in the museum since 1836 in an obviously late impression, which has now been transferred to the Victoria and Albert Museum. I was always puzzled by the monogram, which is precisely that of Virgil Solis, who died sixty-one years before this plate was engraved. But it was not till the other subjects were acquired that I formed the conjecture that the monogram could be that of Sezenius—a conjecture entirely confirmed by study of the Paris and Vienna sets, on which both the monogram and the full name occur. The latest and most mature, it is also beyond doubt the most interesting and delightful, of the extant sets. The more one studies it, the more does one marvel at the ingenuity and grace of the compositions, especially of the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Flight into Egypt. One thing after another attracts the eye : the balance of the composition with all its avoidance of strict symmetry ; the fertility of invention, the exquisite drawing of the animals and birds, the ingenuity with which, in the two upright pieces, a night effect is suggested by the moon and stars and the torch in



*a*



*(b)*

VALENTIN SEZENIUS. PL. 2

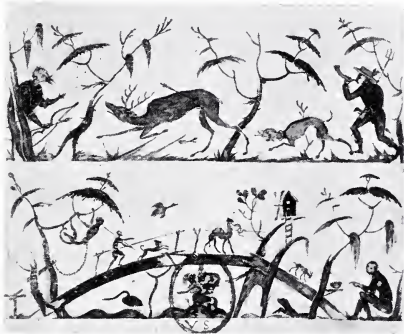
TWO ORNAMENT PRINTS. Austrian Museum for Art and Industry, Vienna  
Size of the original engravings: (a) 70×58 mm.; (b) 48×65 mm.

Joseph's hands. The subtlety with which light is thrown up by the Babe cradled in straw upon the figures and faces bending over Him, can only be appreciated in the original. Another interesting technical peculiarity of the Nativity plate, unique in Sezenius' work, may be noticed in the reproduction, though not so clearly as in the original. A patch of goldsmith's engraved ornament, with a white design upon black, which is made to do duty for Our Lady's robe, is entirely different in treatment from the rest of the work, which is all dark-grey in effect, rather than absolutely black, and suggests at first sight by its gradations in tone a kind of aquatint or certainly some use of acid.

This is refuted, however, by examination of a copper plate, at first supposed to be the original, which turned up in the Rosenheim collection, where I had an opportunity of inspecting it in November, 1922. It appeared to me, on examining the plate, that the whole of the work must have been hammered, for the back of the copper plate shows the entire design standing up in relief; the patch of ornament on the robe has been produced by different tools, for it is in much higher relief at the back than the rest. The plate has since been pronounced by experts to be an electrotype, but it is so close a facsimile of the original that it affords a close insight into the technique of the engraver. It has been examined by Sir Frank Short, R.A., P.R.E., and Mr. Martin Hardie, R.E., to whose courtesy I owe some observations about the method of engraving. "Both Short and I," he writes, "always thought that in the case of seventeenth-century prints of this niello type the dark parts were etched out with acid. The Sezenius plate shows that this is not the case. The portions that



(a)



(b)

VALENTIN SEZENIVS. PI 3

TWO ORNAMENT PRINTS. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Size of the original engravings: (a) 46×56 mm.;

(b) 45×55 mm

show as a black mass in the print are quite definitely cut out or worked with a burin. In any case (this one would always see from worn impressions of these prints), the bottom of the bigger open spaces was worked over with a network of fine lines to hold the ink. Some of the bigger hollows, or, at any rate, the large one, on the Sezenius plate, may have been struck with a die cut to the right shape, though the edges may have been cut sharp and the bottom covered with criss-cross lines."

It now remains to see what indications we can gather from his works, since documents are entirely wanting, of the personality of Sezenius or the region in which he worked. There is not the slightest reason to suppose, with Nagler, Guilnard and Ubisch, that he belonged to the Italian school or worked in Italy. His designs, with all their freakishness and originality, betray their connection with other works of the German late Renaissance. They remind me even, in some respects, of a South-German engraver who worked a hundred years before Sezenius, the sculptor Hans Leinberger. It has been suggested with some plausibility that "Sezenius" may be a latinized form of the Hungarian name Szechenyi. St. Valentine was one of the patron saints of Passau, but that does not prevent a native of any other diocese from bearing the name, and it is said to be in common use in Hungary. A more definite clue to the locality to which he probably belonged as an engraver is to be found in the striking similarity of his prints to those of Mathias Beitler, who belonged to an older generation and worked at Ansbach, where he published two sets of prints as early as 1582. I do not know his early work, but the prints by Beitler at Vienna, belonging to various sets, some of which are dated 1612 and 1616, are so





(a)



(b)



(c)

VALENTIN SEZENIUS. PL. 4

(a) THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT (b) THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS (c) THE NATIVITY  
British Museum.

Size of the original engravings: (a) 45×56 mm.; (b) 55×45 mm.; (c) 56×44 mm.

remarkably like the engravings of Sezenius, both in style and technique, that I should be tempted to ascribe them to the later engraver, if they were not all signed with Beitler's full name or monogram. The engravings of Beitler contain monkeys, birds, scorpions, insects, and trees exactly in the style of Sezenius, and there is also a religious subject — a *St. Jerome in Penitence*—signed with the monogram “M. B.” over the skull, which comes very near indeed to the style of the New Testament set. The conclusion is irresistible, that Sezenius, whose work bears later dates, was a pupil of Beitler, and was trained in his workshop at Ansbach. If so, he was not so original an artist as one would like to believe. But I repeat that this conclusion rests entirely on circumstantial evidence. Nothing can deprive his prints, at any rate, of the attraction which they possess, not perhaps for the general taste, but certainly for the more sophisticated palate that appreciates the piquancy of their minute and exquisite craftsmanship, and is amused by their surprising anticipation of a certain phase of eighteenth-century ornament.

#### CATALOGUE OF ENGRAVINGS BY SEZENIUS

1-5.—THE SET OF 1619-20. Vienna (Oesterreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie); Nos. 1, 3 and 5 also at Berlin (Kunstgewerbemuseum).

1. Title-page, signed with the full name and dated 1619; obl.,  $52 \times 69\frac{1}{2}$ mm.
2. Pair of lovers, signed *V S l.*, dated 1620 r.; obl.,  $51 \times 70$ mm.
3. Arabesque with peacock, parrakeet, dogs, insects, etc., signed below in middle, *V.S 1620*; obl.,  $48 \times 65$ mm.
4. Arabesque without living creatures, signed with monogram; upr.,  $70 \times 58$ mm.

5. Arabesque with birds, insects and snail, signed below in middle, *V.S.* 1620 ; upr.,  $69 \times 57\frac{1}{2}$ mm.
- 6-11.—THE SET OF 1622. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, Orfèvrerie, tome ii., Le. 52a).
6. Title-page, signed with the full name and dated ; obl.,  $46 \times 56$ mm.
7. Two designs on one plate. Upper : Huntsman and tethered hound, mill, etc. ; Lower : Fisherman, willow, etc., signed in lower margin, *V.S.* ; obl.,  $48 \times 57$ mm.
8. Two designs on one plate. Upper : Two huntsmen, hound and wounded stag. Lower : Camel, etc., crossing a bridge ; a monkey swings in a tree ; signed in lower margin, *V.S.* ; obl.,  $45 \times 55$ mm.
9. A boar hunt ; a squirrel in a tree l., signed in lower margin, *V.S.* ; obl.,  $44 \times 54$ mm.
10. Actæon, with a hound in leash, stands before Diana and two nymphs ; signed in lower margin, *V.S.* ; obl.,  $45 \times 55$ mm.
11. Orpheus charming beasts and birds by his violin ; signed, on a stone, VALENTIN SEZEN. ; obl.,  $45 \times 56$ mm.
- 12-14.—NEW TESTAMENT SET, 1623-24. London (British Museum). The Victoria and Albert Museum has a late impression of No. 13, printed before 1836 (from the Sheepshanks collection).
12. The Annunciation to the Shepherds, signed with monogram and date, 1623, on a stone ; upr.,  $55 \times 45$ mm.
13. The Nativity, signed on sky with monogram and date 1623 ; upr.,  $56 \times 44$ mm.
14. The Flight into Egypt, signed on the sky with monogram and date 1624 ; obl.,  $45 \times 56$ mm.
- 15†.—SINGLE PIECE (DOUBTFUL) Gentleman receiving a drinking-vessel from a seated lady ; not signed ; punched work ; obl.,  $44 \times 57$ mm. Leipzig (Kunstgewerbemuseum) mentioned by E. von Uebisch, *Kat.*, 1889, p. 109.

† Prof. R. Graul was kind enough to send me a photograph of this engraving. It bears a general resemblance in design to the works of Sezenius, but is very different from them in execution, and I consider it at the most an imitation of Sezenius (or of Beitler ?) by another hand. The composition is clumsy, and the drawing of the trees with their feathery leafage is utterly unlike the clear-cut lines that we know from the signed prints.



A. B. HOUGHTON. MY TREASURE. *Good Words*, 1862  
Size of the original woodcut  $6\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$  inches

## ARTHUR BOYD HOUGHTON—I

### AN ARTISTS' ARTIST

By EDMUND J. SULLIVAN

“**H**OUGHTON? Boyd Houghton? How do you spell it? Oh, you pronounce it Howton—not Hawton? I seem to remember a man who used to call himself Hawton something or other, a double-barrelled name—actor, writer, or Q.C. (I forget which). No, I never knew of *Boyd* Houghton. Who was he? What did he do?”

Lovers of the work of Boyd Houghton, who was one of the finest artists England ever had, must be prepared for this, if they are not already well accustomed to it.

As to the first question, “Who was he?” details are scanty. His own family has little record, scarcely anything in the way of papers remaining, the probability being that the majority, belonging, as they did, to the fighting Services, were accustomed to “travel light” and to destroy such papers as were of no immediate concern. To such, the past is done with; so that unfortunately there is no less-documented life than that of Boyd Houghton.

His daughter, Mrs. Davis, recalls vividly the great pleasure and amusement the children found when their father's letters arrived from America, full of fun and amusing description, further enlivened by sketches. It

was always thought that these were being carefully kept by his mother—but after her death not one could be traced.

Even his place of birth seems slightly uncertain. Mrs. Davis writes that her aunt, Mrs. Houghton, always heard that he was born in Bombay (? 1836), when his father, Captain Michael Houghton, was private secretary to Sir John Malcolm, Governor of Bombay. Mrs. Davis had been under the impression that he was born on board ship in the Persian Gulf, while Captain Houghton, who was in the Indian Navy, was engaged upon his survey of the Gulf. His charts of this survey are to be seen at Trinity House, and it is believed are still in use. Mrs. Davis is more likely to be correct, for I find that Sir John Malcom was appointed Governor of Bombay in 1827 after being six years in England. He left India for the last time in 1830, and died in 1833, so that A. Boyd Houghton, who died *ætat* 39 in 1875, could not have been born during his father's secretaryship to the distinguished Governor.

After a stay in England on their return from India, the Houghton family went to Jersey. It is not known where the son was educated.

As a child he lost the sight of one eye from an accident with a playfellow, who appears to have fired a toy gun or cannon at him. Meeting many years later, the playfellow somewhat brutally rallied him with "Hallo, Houghton! Still wearing the old patch, I see!" Whereupon Houghton, who till then had borne no malice or resentment, promptly knocked him down.

It will be seen that Dr. Williamson, in a reference to him in his monograph upon Pinwell, refers to him as a "trained medical man," so that he appears to have

walked the hospitals—at any rate, for a time. It is to be conjectured that he deserted them without becoming qualified.

H. Stacy Marks, writing to Mr. Leggatt (February 26th, 1888), recalls the fact that they were fellow-students at Leigh's in Newman Street.

After Leigh's death his academy came under the direction of Mr. Heatherley. It is, I think, Leigh's Academy, or was it Sass's?—which is immortalised as Gandish's by Thackeray in "The Newcomes"—though that Thackeray would have so caricatured Leigh as the eminent Mr. Gandish of Soho during his lifetime is unlikely. At any rate, it must have been into such a Bohemia as Thackeray describes, that Houghton found his way: a Bohemia of "honest moustaches, scowling whiskerandoes, jaunty velvet jackets, queer figures, queer vanities and kind hearts . . . gentle creatures, loving their friends, their cups, feasts, merry-makings, and all good things—the kindest folk alive. They open oysters with their yataghans, toast muffins on their rapiers, and fill their Venice glasses with half-and-half. If they have money in their purses, be sure they have a friend to share it. . . . What jovial suppers on threadbare cloths, and wonderful songs after; what pathos, merriment, humour does not a man enjoy who frequents their company! Mr. Clive Newcome . . . avers that his life as an art student . . . was the pleasantest part of his whole existence."

"Leigh's" had become "Heatherley's" by 1862, by which time the country was being flooded with a tide of illustrated magazines, "Once a Week," "Good Words," and the "Cornhill" all having started almost simultaneously. Millais, Holman Hunt and Rossetti

had already appeared in the Moxon "Tennyson" of 1859, still working with the full intensity of pre-Raphaelism—but with the advent of the magazines, which made a wider and homelier appeal than the early poetry of Tennyson, a freer, more spontaneous art was called for, and, in the main, a choice of subject that should reflect something of the life of the time in such a way that the ordinary stay-at-home person could recognise a certain common humanity between himself, his friends, and the characters to whom the "pictures" introduced him; just indeed as he thought he could recognise the types in Dickens's novels. An art was speedily evolved that was not "out of reach." It did not even profess to be "high." It took an interest in the actual people of the day where the pre-Raphaelites, in their "return to Nature," had been inclined to return to natural man only when he was clothed in pre-Raphaelite costume, as though the days of romance were over for ever. The "grand style" of historical picture had given way to the more anecdotic and accurate—at any rate, to the believable, in which the desire was shown to represent the actors as human, rather than as classically grouped and heroic beings, such as never were on land or sea. Gandish's "Boadishia" was "demodé"; and, if he had only had the wits to represent his home life as Thackeray depicts it for us, he would have been "in the movement" instead of running backwards out of it, translating his wife and daughters into ancient Britonesses from "Hangli" into "Hangeli," and his son into the infant "'Ercules," "stranglin' the serpent over the piano."

At Leigh's Stacy Marks says of Boyd Houghton: "We all admired his great and precocious talent";





A. B. HOUGHTON. AGE AND YOUTH. *Home Thoughts and Home Scenes*, 1865  
Size of the original woodcut  $7\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{8}$  inches

and, speaking of him apparently rather as a painter than as a draughtsman, he continues: "There is little doubt that had he lived he would have taken a high position in the English school."—Letter to Leggatt, February 26th, 1888.

To speak of his talents as "precocious" points to his having attended Leigh's fairly young—in 1862, when it became Heatherley's, he would have been twenty-six. Fred Walker, who was younger, had already made long strides towards his own reputation by that time. The Dalziels, George and Edward, who knew all these men intimately, tell us that "among his early friends Houghton was called the Young Genius, and that his first efforts in art showed that he well deserved that appellation. He did not require the model set before him—to look at the subject was sufficient. It was like a "snapshot" fixed on the brain, and memory was enough for the purpose. He had a vivid fancy and was brimming over with the finest qualities of the designer's art. He was a most delightful companion—his fine sense of humour was coupled with a pleasant tinge of satire, such as comes from a man who knows the world in its various phases of life, but was always cultured and refined."

The only traceable connection of the family with the arts is through Flaxman, who married a relative of Captain Houghton. This lady was Anne Denman, who, upon Sir Sidney Colvin's authority, "was a woman of attainments in letters and to some extent in art," and "a devoted companion," so that Flaxman's life is an uneventful record of private affection and contentment.

Arthur Boyd Houghton married Susan Gronow, of an ancient family, originally settled in N. Wales, where they had large landed possessions. Sir Tudor ap Gronow



A. B. HOUGHTON. THE ENEMY ON THE WALL. *Home Thoughts and Home Scenes.* 1865  
Size of the original wood-block  $7 \times 5\frac{1}{4}$  inches

was grandfather to Owen Tudor, who married the widow of King Henry V., and whose son Jasper Tudor, Earl of Richmond, was the father of Henry VII. Susan Gronow's home was Ash Hall, Glamorganshire. The match, which was a romantic love affair, was most probably a runaway one. It appears to have met with so little approval with the bride's family that her mother is reputed to have cursed her upon her death-bed, such habit of cursing being apparently among the sequelæ of the disease of lack of humour induced by a sense of pedigree (dating indeed to savage times) and a religion dating from the pre-Christian era to match.

If this is correct the curse appears only to have intensified the love of the young couple. Both for his wife and children Houghton had a passionate attachment, and he delighted in observing and drawing them. This was so marked that the Dalziels say: "One of his characteristics was his great love of children. It was a pleasure to him to get a party of young people together and go off to the fields to romp and play all sorts of games and antics." His taste in that way is fully shown in the set of thirty or more drawings he made for them of "Child Life," which they published through Routledge, as "Home Thoughts and Home Scenes."

The charm of womanhood in his drawings is one of the traits which mollify the criticism of some to whom his work in general makes little appeal. This is largely owing to Mrs. Houghton, who was a beautiful woman, with glorious hair, which he was never tired of drawing, as may be seen not only in *My Treasure* ("Good Words"), which is obviously an intimate family group, and similar subjects, but in much of his imaginative work, notably in *The Princess Parisade carrying the singing*



A. B. HOUGHTON. "SANCHO KEPT CLOSE TO HIS SIDE." *Don Quixote*. 1866  
Size of the original woodcut  $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4$  inches

*tree* in "The Arabian Nights." She had glorious eyes too, judging particularly by the little portrait head of her in oil, in the possession of Mrs. Davis, even allowing a certain amount for a lover's exaggeration.

He seemed, indeed, never happier than in spending all his art upon the simple life of home. There is a painting of his father, a magnificent white-bearded old gentleman, telling tales to his grandchildren, and it is likely that among the comforters of Job in his drawing, in the possession of Mr. Harold Hartley, made for Dalziel's Bible (though it was not published by them, being, I believe, first reproduced in the "Art of Illustration"; Chapman & Hall), the white-bearded man leaning over Job is at least reminiscent of his father. Mr. Laurence Housman, to whom Houghton lovers are indebted for an admirably produced selection from his work<sup>1</sup>, remarks upon his love of drawing glorious hair and magnificent beards, and I have little doubt that this is owing largely to the love he bore his father and his wife.

Mrs. Davis tells me (and of course she must be believed!) that on one occasion she had her hand deep in a narrow-necked jampot as her father came in. In her haste she had difficulty in pulling it out, to her father's delight, not at catching her *flagrante delicto*, but at catching the pose, in which she had to remain while he sketched her, immortalising the *peccadillo* in "Home Thoughts and Home Scenes."

The death of his wife within a few days of the birth of their third child was an irreparable loss to Houghton, and a blow which left its mark heavy on the few wild years left to him, which have survived him in the traditions of Bohemia.

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Boyd Houghton. Kegan Paul. 1896. 4to.



A. B. HOUGHTON. "REACH HITHER THY HAND AND FEEL HOW MANY TEETH ARE WANTING."  
*Don Quixote.* 1866

Size of the original woodcut  $4 \times 4$  inches.

His home he shared with his father, now a stricken old man who lived in his chair ; and with his mother, who appears to have exercised a somewhat awful rule in the eyes of the children, whom he would rush off somewhere by the sea " right away from granny, all by ourselves," where they were made to order the dinner and become generally masters of the revels.

They lived in King Henry's Road, St. John's Wood ; and here Mrs. Davis remembers the crossing-sweeper who did not appear to be doing very well one snowy day, when her father, who was something of a dandy, borrowed his broom, did the sweeping, took up the collection in his topper, much to the benefit of the owner of the pitch and the delight of the children at the window.

Mr. Harold Speed tells me, on his father's authority, that one Christmas Houghton went out into the streets, got hold of all the tramps and loafers he could find, brought them in, and gave them a feast with as much to drink as they wanted.

A constant guest was Tourrier, with whom he shared his studio, hard by Marlborough Road Station, now in the occupation of Mr. Reid Dick, A.R.A., the sculptor. Tourrier was an artist whose work found some small acceptance with the public and the publishers, but hardly enough apparently to make the sharing more than a very lop-sided arrangement between the friends. Houghton's purse was notoriously open to any needy brother of the brush, to say nothing of the broom, as we have seen. The Dalziels say of him that " he was the essence of kindness and generosity. His impulsive nature knew no bounds. If any case of distress to a brother artist came before him he was the first to offer help. We could give many special instances where he emptied





A. B. HOUGHTON. "DON QUIXOTE HUNG ABOUT SANCHO'S NECK." *Don Quixote*. 1866  
Size of the original woodcut  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$  inches

his pockets that he might help those in immediate want."

This characteristic is strongly borne out by a specific case. Mr. Harold Speed's grandmother, the wife of the late L. C. Henley, the artist, had someone coming to dinner whom she particularly wanted Houghton to meet. Thinking it useless to engage him ahead of the time, knowing how liable he was to forget, she sent an urgent message by hand the same day. The reply was that he would come, but though they waited and waited, no Houghton turned up, till late in the evening he rushed in breathless, his apology being that he had had such difficulty in getting hold of any money, but had managed to borrow twenty pounds, which he hoped would be sufficient for the present. The urgent message had made him jump to the conclusion that the Henleys were hard up; but as this was not the case at the moment, Mrs. Henley asked him to give her the money to keep for him, as he was so often hard up himself. She used to dole it out as he was in need, so that he said "he never knew twenty pounds go so far."

His constant friends, admirers and patrons were the Dalziels, those fine old gentlemen and craftsmen. It was at their house that Pinwell met Houghton, and a firm friendship was struck up between them. Edward Dalziel says that his son and Houghton were Pinwell's most constant companions. He himself saw so much of them that he loved them both "in spite of their eccentricities."

Dr. Williamson, in his monograph on Pinwell, says that "Pinwell learnt many a lesson from Houghton, and taught much on his part as to colour and poetry." (It is not quite clear what is intended to be conveyed by



A. B. HOUGHTON. "THE DUCHESS WAS CONVULSED WITH LAUGHTER." *Don Quixote*. 1866  
Size of the original woodcut  $4\frac{3}{4} \times 4$  inches

“poetry” in this connection. Dr. Williamson says, “Why allude to the delicate emotion of Houghton, etc.,” apparently as a point of superiority over Pinwell, “when each in his way was masterly?” “In character,” he continues, “the two men were very different, but this very antithesis made them the more close friends.”

It is often thought that Houghton made a special journey to the East for his illustrations of “The Arabian Nights,” but this is not the case. As the Dalziels say, “he had special advantages to assist him in that work, in that he had been born in India. His father, brothers and many relatives were Indian army men, who had fine collections of articles of vertu, curios, costumes, and every sort of thing invaluable for the illustrators’ purposes, much of which he placed at the disposal of Thomas Dalziel, thus enabling both to work with uniformity in all necessary details.”

Apart from his famous journey to America for *The Graphic*, the only record I find is that of his visit to Ventnor, to accompany Pinwell in his search for health, accompanied by Miss Dora Dalziel and her brother.

Here they stayed six weeks ; but Pinwell got no better, and was ordered to Africa in (I think) 1870. One trait the friends had in common, and it is delightful to find Houghton actually rallying Pinwell on his love of children ! “You would make an ideal father, and ought to have a round dozen of them !” Pinwell’s reply is characteristic. “What should I do ? My wife has enough to do already to look after her one big baby !”

Whether the journey to Ventnor preceded or was later than his American journey I do not know. The *Telegraph* in its obituary notice says, “Soon after the establishment of our contemporary *The Graphic*, the artist under-



A. B. HOUGHTON. "ANSELMO WAS SEIZED WITH AN INCLINATION ONE DAY  
TO LISTEN AT THE DOOR." *Don Quixote*. 1866  
Size of the original woodcut  $4 \times 3\frac{1}{2}$  inches

took an extended tour through the United States, and thence he sent home a series of drawings which were engraved under the title of *Graphic America*, and which portrayed with amazing vigour and quickness of apprehension the more melodramatic and grotesque aspects of American life. The picture of one of the corridors in the prison called *The Tombs* in New York, showing the visitors conferring through the grate cell doors, with the incarcerated wretches within was in many respects worthy to rank, so far as dramatic pathos was concerned, with the famous *Casuals* of Mr. Luke Fildes. Yet Americans were apt to insist that Mr. Houghton exaggerated all he saw ; and they angrily refused to accept his fantastic group of Broadway belles and his weird torchlight processions and mass-meetings as faithful transcripts of American manners. The truth would seem to be that the artist saw everything as in a glass, not darkly, but luridly, and that he was as yet—for want of stern self-discipline—unable to control the vagaries of a too-facile and imaginative pencil. He drew poetry, so to speak, and poetry of the most erratic order, when he should have drawn prose.

At a little dinner to Godefroi Durand, given by junior members of the staff of *The Graphic*, at which the writer was present, Mr W. L. Thomas, the founder, in reply to some question by Mr. A. S. Hartrick about Houghton, said “ All I know is, he did us a lot of harm ! ”

It is to be regretted that the engraved blocks of this series were destroyed, so that it is impossible to re-issue them in their original condition, as was at one time projected by the author. They shared the fate, already mentioned, of his illustrated letters home from America.

Mrs. Davis informs me that he fell in on this trip with

Buffalo Bill, then in his active hunting days, and that it was he who took him into the wilds among the Indians.

Turning over the *Graphic America* illustrations we come in the accompanying letterpress upon a description in which the word "Jamboree," now common, is probably used for the first time on this side of the water.

On his return he still did drawings for *The Graphic*, but it is probable that they found not much more favour with the public they represented than had the American series, and that the work of others was more generally popular. The work of E. J. Gregory shows the strongly marked influence of Boyd Houghton in a swirling vigour of line, notably in his drawings of the Paris Commune.

Apart from the slight popular appeal which his work appears to have made, it is probable too that an increasingly Bohemian habit of life made him unreliable in the punctual delivery of drawings, a necessity in the case of a newspaper, unless the work is what used to be known as "stock"—work which, while it may be more or less topical, is not of a definite urgency for publication.

Those were the days of practical jokes—and one day Tourrier and he had been posing for each other in costume, as the regular model had not turned up. Houghton was magnificent in the blazing scarlet rig-out of a mediæval German baron, all puffed and slashed, with huge ostrich feather plumes waving from his beaver.

It was a fine day, so having done work—what more natural than to take a little fresh air, and as there was a milkman's cart unattended just outside the door—what more natural than to take a drive?

In jumped Houghton and Tourrier, and away they went with a crack o' the whip and a high jerry ho! lickety-split, —1 for Leather, up to Jack Straw's Castle,

Houghton's plumes streaming out behind, as when knighthood was in flower, the milkcans rattling and clattering like old armour, and a puffing and cursing milkman chasing after them. Having pacified the milkman, the walk home downhill all the way was a most stately and dignified affair, assisted in by every urchin in Hampstead.

It was some such hair-brained escapade that landed him into an unpleasant predicament, light-heartedly borne. My recollection is now vague of what, to begin with, was a somewhat indefinite account, and it is even possible that one episode is mixed with another. He had been commissioned by Mr. Thomas, on the occasion of a Lord Mayor's show, a Royal visit to the City, or some such function, to go out and "find subjects." On leaving the office, at that time just by St. Clement Danes (on the other side of the Strand from the end of Holywell Street and Wych Street, both long ago pulled down) he had provided himself with a pile of handbills announcing the special forthcoming number. In the jostling crowd he stumbled across a stool or orange box, upon which he mounted and harangued the multitude, like a cheap-jack at a fair, waving his handbills, his announcement being that on application at the office each person would receive a golden sovereign or (sotto voce) its value. An absolute block of course was the result, and he was "run in" for causing riot and obstruction. As a result *The Graphic* received, instead of sketches of experiences in the crowd, a series of crowded experiences of solitary confinement in a cell at Bow Street, which was published. It would be interesting, in order that history may be written, to turn up the Bow Street records, to arrive at the facts in the case.



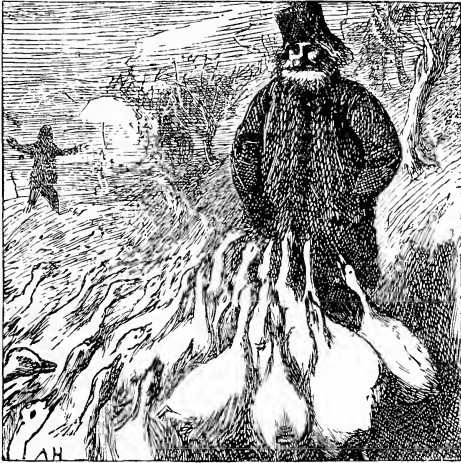


A. B. HOUGHTON. THE PIG. *Krilof's Fables*. 1869  
Size of the original woodcut  $2\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  inches

After his wife's death indeed he seems to have lived a feverish life of such excitement as the Bohemia of the day provided. A tale of a drinking bout with an Indian chief may lie behind the "Jamboree" already mentioned, wherein the honour of England as a drinking nation which "could give your Hollander a vomit," as maintained by the gravedigger in "Hamlet," was worthily upheld by the special artist of *The Graphic* against as redoubtable an opponent as the United States could produce. This was evenly contested till the supply of whisky ran out, when it was continued through the night on brandy, glass for glass, Houghton eventually being adjudged the winner "on points," as the Indian had to retire from the circle on the verge of bursting.

Gargantuan bouts were held in the studio by Marlborough Road, when boon companions who were so inclined would sleep upon the floor. From time to time, when supplies failed, a horn was blown, when the potman of the "Eyre Arms," who understood the signal, would hurry round with beer, brandy, or whisky, according to the call. In the morning the model coming in through the still unbolted door might stumble his way across a dozen or more slumbering guests.

C. J. Staniland told me a curious tale that had grown up round this studio—that it was occupied by a friend of Houghton's, who was going away for awhile, and who offered it to him rent free to keep warm for him during his absence. On his return, getting no reply to his knocking, and finding no sign of life, he put a ladder to the window and looked in. The whole aspect of the place was changed by rows of pews or benches, so that it could not possibly be used as a studio. On enquiry at the "Eyre Arms," he learnt that Mr. Houghton had not been



A. B. HOUGHTON. THE GEESE. *Krifol Fables*. 1869  
Size of the original woodcut  $2\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  inches

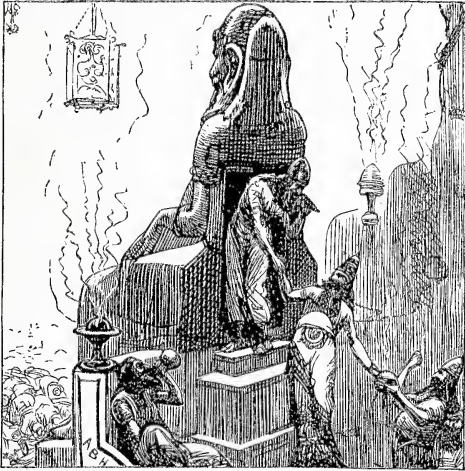
seen for some time. "As to the studio? Oh, the studio is let—It's a synagogue now!"

That there is some truth in this appears from Mrs. Davis's remembrance of being taken by her father to watch the arrival of the congregation from behind the curtain—and it is highly probable that a certain knowledge of Eastern character was obtained by Houghton from observations made at the time. The rest of the story is probably less "vero" than "ben trovato"—as it is hardly likely that a whole congregation of so astute a nation would sign an agreement with a person holding so shadowy a title. It is probable that Tourrier on return from an absence was surprised to find his friend flitted, though Houghton was doubtless the responsible tenant. This is a possible explanation.

Hartrick tells a tale of him in a tavern. Seeing a burly navy blowing the froth from a pewter before raising it to his lips, Houghton placed a warning hand upon the man's arm and said in a ghostly voice like the Ancient Mariner, "Beware! it was through drinking out of just such a pot as that that I lost my eye!" The voice, the detaining hand, the blank of one eye, and the glare of the other, were together so impressive that the man put down his tankard untasted, and hurried out.

It is out of such poor bits and scraps of fact, legend, and hearsay that we have to build up as best we can a picture of a man who was, for many, but particularly for artists, one of the very finest England has produced.

Dr. Williamson says: "Pinwell much regretted the life that Houghton led, and rebuked him for it plainly more than once; but Houghton, who as a trained medical man, understood his disease, and whose life was ruined through the death of a young wife to whom he was



A. B. HOUGHTON. THE ORACLE. *Krilof's Fables*: 1869  
Size of the original woodcut  $2\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  inches

greatly attached, seemed bent upon running out his years in full and lavish excitement, and without any regard to the future."

Pinwell died on September 8th, 1875. Fred Walker had died on June 5th, and Morten also died that year. Houghton was present at Pinwell's funeral, and said to his friends as they stood round the grave after the burial, " Ah, my boys, you will be planting me here also before three months."

This was the exact truth, for he died at the end of the November following. He died with the little portrait of his wife, with the glorious eyes already spoken of. in his hands ; and it seems as though he had aimed, since her death, at his own, in the simple faith that they would meet again. A kindly yet balanced contemporary estimate of his work may be gathered from the obituary notice of him in the *Telegraph* of December 1st, 1875, already quoted from. " He was only thirty-nine years of age, and has been snatched away from the pursuit of a vocation in which his progress has been rapid and brilliant. A classicist the deceased artist most certainly could not be termed ; and his ultra-romantic style of treating his subjects may have been of a nature to scandalize Academical purists. Mr. Houghton's graphic eccentricities were indeed too often aggravated to a degree which incensed the friendliest among his critics, who could not without indignation behold every canon of artistic decorum violated by his insubordinate cartoons. Yet such ire was only of the kind excited by the wilfulness of a troublesome but charming child, full of playfulness, high spirits, and buoyancy, which only needed to be curbed by the discipline of time and experience. The artist was brimful of the most genuine



A. B. HOUGHTON. TOM, TOM, THE PIPER'S SON. Drawing on the wood.  
Size of the original  $3\frac{7}{8} \times 5$  inches

genius ; and those who carefully examine his illustrations . . . must acknowledge that about the young man so early cut off there was much in common with the Goyas, the Deverias, and the Tony Johannots of the Continent, with a great deal more in the way of boldness, originality and fancy which was undoubtedly Mr. Houghton's own . . . It is probable that the graphic eccentricities of his youth would have mellowed into artistic maturity of the noblest form . . . He accomplished in the brief span allotted to him some very splendid labour ; but of late years physical suffering—borne with marvellous cheerfulness and patience—retarded his industry, and at last the night has come, when no man can work.”

Edward Dalziel mourned the loss of Pinwell and Boyd Houghton “ as good men as well as great artists.”

\* \* \*

This unpretentious sketch of the man is put forward in the hope that survivors among his friends or relatives and any others having information of any kind may be good enough to supply it to the author, so that inaccuracies may be put right, and at some future date, should opportunity occur, a worthier monument may be set up than this poor tribute to a most lovable character, and a great artist. In the next number of the *Quarterly* the writer proposes to devote an article to a consideration of the position which Houghton holds in British Art.



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