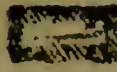


# Frank Brangwyn



AND HIS WORK  BY  
WALTER SHAW-SPARROW



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FRANK BRANGWYN

AND HIS WORK







A RIVER PROCESSION TO WESTMINSTER IN 1431; CITY AND TRADE BARGES  
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FRANK BRANOWYN  
AND HIS WORK 1911



A RIVER PROCESSION TO  
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# FRANK BRANGWYN AND HIS WORK. 1911



BY WALTER SHAW-SPARROW  
AUTHOR OF "OUR HOMES," "THE ENGLISH  
HOUSE AND ITS STYLES," &c., PART AUTHOR  
OF "THE GENIUS OF J. M. W. TURNER"

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TO  
CHARLES HOLME Esq.  
FOUNDER AND EDITOR OF  
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2013510





## PREFACE

I HAVE to express grateful thanks for assistance in many forms rendered to me during the production of this book. It is through the courtesy of M. Pacquement, the present owner of "Buccaneers," that I have been able to include a reproduction of that famous picture, the blocks being made specially in Paris. Much help has been received from the Skinners' Company, from Lloyd's Register, from the Royal Exchange, and from the Art Gallery of Leeds, by whose courteous permission seven copyright works are here illustrated. It is a great pleasure also to acknowledge with thanks the assistance given me by Mr. T. L. Devitt, Mr. R. H. Kitson, Mr. S. Wilson, Dr. Tom Robinson, Mr. Haldane Macfall, Mr. Warwick H. Draper, Mr. W. Gibbings, Mr. H. F. W. Ganz, Mr. B. W. Willett, and Mr. Frederic Whyte; by Mr. Collier of New York; by M. Pacquement, M. Stany Oppenheim, and M. Bramson of Paris; and by Herr Ernst Arnold of Dresden. To Messrs. Gibbings & Co. I am indebted for the use of their blocks of the illustration, "Queen Elizabeth going aboard the *Golden Hind*." To Messrs. Swain, the London blockmakers, and Mr. Edmund Evans, the printer of the colour-plates, I owe a special

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## *Preface*

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word of acknowledgment for the care and skill they have brought to their anxious work. The making of comparatively small illustrations of very large pictures is a matter of the greatest difficulty, more especially when the works in question involve special journeys to public buildings and to private galleries out of London.

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
PARENTAGE AND EARLY STUDIES . . . . .	I

## CHAPTER II

LATER STUDIES . . . . .	16
-------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III

CONTESTS OF CRITICISM: "A FUNERAL AT SEA," "THE BUC- CANEERS," "SLAVE TRADERS," AND "A SLAVE MARKET" .	36
---	----

## CHAPTER IV

CONTESTS OF CRITICISM: SUN-COLOUR AND RELIGIOUS ART .	53
---	----

## CHAPTER V

CHARACTERISTICS: LIGHT AND COLOUR . . . . .	74
---	----

## CHAPTER VI

LIGHT AND COLOUR ( <i>continued</i> ) . . . . .	88
---	----

## CHAPTER VII

SOME OTHER CHARACTERISTICS . . . . .	104
--------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VIII

DECORATIVE PAINTING . . . . .	118
-------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER IX

DECORATIVE PAINTING ( <i>continued</i> ) . . . . .	132
--	-----

---

# Contents

---

CHAPTER X	
POINTS OF VIEW IN DECORATIVE ART: AND THE SKINNERS' HALL . . . . .	PAGE 144
CHAPTER XI	
SKETCHES AND STUDIES . . . . .	164
CHAPTER XII	
WATER-COLOURS . . . . .	175
CHAPTER XIII	
ILLUSTRATIONS FOR MAGAZINES AND BOOKS—DESIGNS FOR POSTERS . . . . .	180
CHAPTER XIV	
ETCHINGS: AND SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS . . . . .	185
CHAPTER XV	
DESIGNS FOR HOUSE FURNISHING . . . . .	206
APPENDIX I	
PICTURES AND SKETCHES . . . . .	219
APPENDIX II	
ETCHINGS—CLASSIFIED . . . . .	236
APPENDIX III	
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	249
INDEX . . . . .	253

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## COLOUR PLATES

A RIVER PROCESSION TO WESTMINSTER IN 1453—CITY AND TRADE BARGES . . . . .	<i>Frontispicce</i>
<i>Reproduced by permission of the Skinners' Company, London. Copyright.</i>	
MONTREUIL: COTTAGE LANDSCAPE . . . . .	<i>Facing p. 8</i>
<i>Reproduced from a small Oil-Painting. Copyright.</i>	
THE BRIDGE OF ALCANTARA . . . . .	<i>" 12</i>
<i>Reproduced from the Water-Colour. Copyright.</i>	
THE BUCCANEERS . . . . .	<i>" 36</i>
<i>Reproduced by permission of M. Pacquement, Paris. Copyright.</i>	
HARVESTERS . . . . .	<i>" 48</i>
<i>Reproduced from the large Oil-Painting. Copyright.</i>	
THE RAJAH'S BIRTHDAY . . . . .	<i>" 84</i>
<i>Reproduced by permission of R. H. Kitson, Esq., Leeds. Copyright.</i>	
THE BRASS SHOP . . . . .	<i>" 88</i>
<i>Reproduced from the large Oil-Painting. Copyright.</i>	
MARS AND VENUS . . . . .	<i>" 92</i>
<i>Reproduced from the large Oil-Painting in the Municipal Art Gallery, Dublin. Copyright.</i>	
THE CARD PLAYERS . . . . .	<i>" 96</i>
<i>Reproduced from the large Oil-Painting. Copyright.</i>	

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## *List of Illustrations*

---

THE RETURN FROM THE PROMISED LAND . . . . .	Facing p. 100
<i>Reproduced by permission of the Art Gallery at Johannesburg. Copyright.</i>	
THE VENETIAN FUNERAL . . . . .	" 112
<i>Reproduced by permission of the Leeds Art Gallery. Copyright.</i>	
A STILL-LIFE STUDY OF LEEKS . . . . .	" 128
<i>Reproduced by permission of R. H. Kitson, Esq., Leeds. Copyright.</i>	
QUEEN ELIZABETH GOING ABOARD THE "GOLDEN HIND" . . . . .	" 132
<i>Reproduced by permission of Lloyd's Register. Copyright.</i>	
BLAKE'S RETURN AFTER THE CAPTURE OF THE PLATE SHIPS . . . . .	" 136
<i>Reproduced by permission of Lloyd's Register. Copyright.</i>	
THE FRUITS OF INDUSTRY . . . . .	" 144
<i>Reproduced from the large Panel in Tempera. Copyright.</i>	
RECEPTION OF GENERAL MONK AT THE SKINNERS' HALL, 4th April 1660 . . . . .	" 152
<i>Reproduced by permission of the Skinners' Company. Copyright.</i>	
LIFE AMONG THE RUINS, MESSINA, 1910 . . . . .	" 176
<i>Reproduced from a Water-Colour. Copyright.</i>	
THE DUOMO, MESSINA, 1910 . . . . .	" 180
<i>Reproduced from a Water-Colour. Copyright.</i>	
THE WEAVERS: A DECORATIVE PANEL IN THE LEEDS ART GALLERY . . . . .	" 212
<i>Reproduced by permission. Copyright.</i>	
DESIGN FOR A FAN . . . . .	" 216
<i>From "History of the Fan," by G. Woolliscroft Rhead. Copyright.</i>	



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# List of Illustrations

---

## COLLOTYPE PLATES

BLACKSMITHS . . . . .	Facing p.	6
<i>From a Wall-Panel in the Leeds Art Gallery. Copyright.</i>		
PLATELAYERS . . . . .	"	20
<i>From an Original Lithograph. Copyright.</i>		
THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST . . . . .	"	68
<i>From the Oil-Painting now in the Art Gallery at Stuttgart. Copyright.</i>		
THE WINDMILL, DIXMUDE . . . . .	"	80
<i>From an Original Etching. Copyright.</i>		
THE DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS . . . . .	"	104
<i>From a Decorative Panel belonging to the Proprietor of "Collier's Weekly," New York, U.S.A. Copyright.</i>		
SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE . . . . .	"	120
<i>From the Oil-Painting in the Wellington Art Gallery, New Zealand. Copyright.</i>		
OLD HOUSES, GHENT . . . . .	"	124
<i>From an Original Etching. Copyright.</i>		
MODERN COMMERCE . . . . .	"	140
<i>From the Fresco in the Royal Exchange, London. Copyright.</i>		
MUSIC . . . . .	"	164
<i>From an Original Lithograph. Copyright.</i>		
UNLOADING ORANGES AT LONDON BRIDGE . . . . .	"	168
<i>From an Original Lithograph. Copyright.</i>		
THE LOOM . . . . .	"	172
<i>From an Original Lithograph. Copyright.</i>		

---

## *List of Illustrations*

---

THE BLACK MILL, WINCHELSEA . . . . .	<i>Facing p.</i> 188
<i>From an Original Etching. Copyright.</i>	
THE TOW-ROPE . . . . .	" 192
<i>From an Original Etching. Copyright.</i>	
THE SAWYERS . . . . .	" 196
<i>From an Original Etching. Copyright.</i>	
OLD HAMMERSMITH . . . . .	" 200
<i>From an Original Etching. Copyright.</i>	
SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE . . . . .	" 204
<i>From an Original Etching. Gold Medal, Venice International Exhibition, 1907; Grand Prix, International Exhibition, Milan, 1906. Copyright.</i>	

# FRANK BRANGWYN

## AND HIS WORK

### CHAPTER I

#### PARENTAGE AND EARLY STUDIES

AS many painters have been affected throughout life by inherited gifts and inclinations, it is proper to note at once that Frank Brangwyn is partly Welsh and partly English; his father belonged to an Anglo-Welsh family living in Buckinghamshire, and his mother, *née* Griffiths, is a Welsh lady from Brecon. One cannot mention this blend of races without thinking of an earlier painter of note, Peter De Wint, whose parentage gave him two nationalities, Dutch and Scotch, and who developed traits from both in his personal character, and also in his landscape work. De Wint was a Scotsman in his deep and rich harmonies of colour, as well as in simple breadth of technique, while his favourite themes were as Dutch in their low horizons as flat country scenes in England would allow them to be. Again, De Wint is not a student of clouds, like Constable. His thoughts keep near to the earth, just as Dutch minds for centuries have concerned themselves with the dykes of Holland; and these things

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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denoting the influence of a pedigree, perhaps Brangwyn, like De Wint, inherits much from his parents. It is a question of very great interest, particularly when we connect it with the views held by Matthew Arnold on the Anglo-Celts.

Matthew Arnold's theory was that England has owed her finest poetry and art to a fusion of Celtic imagination with her own native qualities. Arnold never failed to use the word "Celtic," but, strictly speaking, this term applied to only one type of the inhabitants of Wales. The pure Celts were energetic men of great stature, with light hair and blue eyes; they were nomads by instinct, they travelled far, peopled France, and found their way across the Channel into Britain. Some ethnologists think that they then lost their own distinction, but their breed is found to this day in Wales, tall and fair, making contrasts with the primitive type of Welshman, who is short and sturdy, and whose lineage is probably as old as the Neolithic inhabitants of England. He is akin to the dark, short, oval-headed people with small features, whom we encounter also in Cornwall, the Isle of Man, Ireland, and the West of Scotland as far north as the Orkneys. Brangwyn—on the distaff side of his family—belongs to this dark breed of virile little men, whose life-struggle from prehistoric times has served to prove that imagination and quick emotion and tenacity may go hand in hand with indomitable pluck.

England owes innumerable debts of gratitude to Welsh and Celtic imagination and emotion; while from other races she gets a fitful energy and the joy she takes in wandering adventure.

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## *Parentage and Early Studies*

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These qualities you will find united in Frank Brangwyn. Whether the Welsh alone would ever develop great art is open to doubt, because their national love for music does not, as a rule, show a preference for stringed instruments; and their gifts for eloquent talk break through the self-discipline that art finds helpful. On the other hand, Anglo-Welshmen of talent are emotional in a steadier way, though routine worries them. Work between fixed hours does not "set their genius." When the impulse comes they toil as a racehorse runs, stopping when their emotion and energy are spent. I have never noticed in Anglo-Welsh artists a patience similar to that which Thackeray admired in his little painter-hero, "J. J." Certainly it is not a trait in Frank Brangwyn, who paints at a white heat or not at all. From Wales, too, I think, comes his great liking for what may be called tints of mountain colour—heather tints, the hues of dried ferns, lichen greys, blue distances, and the gleaming yellow of gorse blossoms. In his colour there is a mingling of Eastern sunlight with the magic of the Welsh hills. When painting an English landscape he sees deeper tones than do our English eyes; and in this he resembles De Wint, who found no place in his art for wet greens that flash into pale brilliance. But Brangwyn is not drawn to Wales by any strong feeling of affection, although his art owes so much to his mother's race and country, and although his father, Mr. Curtis Brangwyn, spoke always of Wales with great enthusiasm, and himself claimed some descent from that country.

Mr. Curtis Brangwyn<sup>1</sup> was a very remarkable man, and

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that an earlier Brangwyn had turned from business to art, and made a reputation for himself. This was Noah, a great-uncle, I believe, of Frank Brangwyn. He spelt the last syllable of his surname with an "i," Brangwin, and was

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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his name has been coupled with that of Pugin, for he greatly loved Gothic and helped to reawaken the public taste for mediæval arts and crafts. His temperament was Anglo-Welsh; and when he chose architecture as his profession, he did not know that building methods had lost their old-time freedom, and that they needed long office hours and stern business habits. Painting would have suited him much better; and although he gained the confidence and admiration of distinguished architects like G. E. Street and Sir Horace Jones, Mr. Curtis Brangwyn was thwarted all his life by his inability to be at the same moment an artist and a man of business. Many writers on architecture have deplored the effects of a mercantile routine on men of imagination. Fergusson went so far as to say that modern architects in practice "could never afford to give many hours to the artistic elaboration of their designs," and that they generally succeeded "more from their business-like habits than their artistic powers." Fergusson was right, and the career of Mr. Curtis Brangwyn was a case in point. The racehorse could not be broken to the plough; that is to say, the artist could not adapt himself to relentless methods of routine in a city office, so he worked in the employ of other men rather than bear the many responsibilities that Fergusson hated and condemned.

Mr. Curtis Brangwyn married early, and his education in architecture having brought him in touch with the energetic school of thought known as the Gothic Revival,

living at Henley-on-Thames in 1854, when he sent two pictures to the Royal Academy, entitled "Welsh Sheep" and "The Watchman." The following year he was represented by "The Ploughman's Meal," and in 1856 by "A Berkshire Lane." His name does not appear again in the R.A. catalogues. It has not been my good luck to see any of his work, but his subjects prove that he was attracted by rustic life.



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## *Parentage and Early Studies*

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he kept his home for some time by doing for church uses such work as many could afford to buy. Then, believing that life on the Continent would be less expensive than it was in London, he decided to make his home in Belgium, at Bruges; here he set up his quarters at No. 24 in the Rue du Vieux Bourg, and then opened workrooms for the reproduction of old embroideries for altar-cloths and vestments. At Bruges his son Frank was born, May the 12th, 1867. Mrs. Brangwyn was then twenty-three, and her husband twenty-seven. Frank Brangwyn was their third child. He had two sisters for playmates, and Bruges—she has been called the Dead City—was a quiet nursery. One thinks of Bruges as a fitting birthplace for a Fernand Khnopff or a Maeterlinck; but Brangwyn and Bruges? Have they anything more in common than Rubens had with *his* birthplace in a foreign land, the little town of Siegen, in the Duchy of Nassau?

And I find, too, that Brangwyn has very little to tell about his birthplace, though he remained there for eight years. Some recollections are clear-cut, but they have nothing to do with boyish mischief in the town. They are all connected with art. He remembers many a visit to his father's workrooms, where exquisite needlework lay on tables, shimmering with bright colours; and one day in his father's garden he found by chance a bundle of photographic negatives, half broken, and looking up from them he saw, against a background of houses and blue sky, a tree covered with red blossoms, such as the Japanese love in their lightly touched prints. Colour was to him what music was to the boy Mozart. He has related—in an article that appeared in *M.A.P.*, February 27, 1904—that

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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the home garden in old Bruges was an enchanted place to him, where great beasts lurked in the shadows, where trees were giants and ogres, and flowers little lords and ladies.

More important still, I think, is another recollection. There was a portfolio of prints at home, and the boy was allowed to play with it. A good many artists were represented, but only one really delighted him ; it was Charles Degroux, a painter of the Belgian poor, who died in 1870. Some critics have compared Degroux with J. Israëls, because both are masters of pathos. But Degroux is the better colourist, and his brushwork is nearer to John Phillip's than to that of the modern Dutchman. For the rest, Degroux loves cottages, garrets, taverns and alleys, and his feeling for the drama of poverty is so deep and true that he has been called the painter of social inequalities. Degroux never laughs in his work, like David Wilkie, nor does he pass through character into idylls, like William Hunt. It will be remembered how Ruskin praised Hunt's water-colour of an old peasant in the act of praying before he takes his dinner. Degroux painted a similar work, "Saying Grace," now in the Brussels Museum, but the emotion here has a subtle depth of effect that Hunt never felt in his presentation of character. The Belgian painter is not concerned with an idyllic piety ; he sees below the surface of life, and finds in the garret of a poor family that pathetic tragedy of temperament, that compulsion of circumstances, from which good and evil spring at the same moment.

Yet Brangwyn at the age of eight not only enjoyed Degroux, but struggled to copy from engravings after



*[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]*

**BLACKSMITHS.**  
*From a Wall-Panel in  
the Leeds Art Gallery.*







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## *Parentage and Early Studies*

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Degroux's pictures. The boy was father to the man. His present work (to a great extent) was foretold by his native tastes in childhood. The same inborn liking for what is typically modern and industrial may be found in the noble drawing by which he commemorated the funeral of Edward the Seventh—a drawing published in the *Standard* newspaper. Photographers, with one accord, took their stand in thronged streets. Brangwyn chose the railway station at Paddington, and in his rapid drawing a flash of sunlight comes down through the glazed roof and rests on King Edward's coffin and the mourners gathered about the train. This touches the heart of our time. The railway station looks as quiet as Westminster Hall, and it represents the genius of modern life and industry, as that Hall typifies for us the spirit of home in bygone ages.

At the beginning of 1875 Mr. Curtis Brangwyn left Bruges for England. "I remember dimly our embarkation, though it might have resulted in the days of my youth being ended once for all, for—at least, so I am told—I was discovered crawling along one of the sponsons of the steamer. From this highly perilous position I was rescued in the nick of time, and—here recollection becomes more vivid—soundly spanked and put to bed. In England I went first of all to a dame's school, and then to a big middle-class school, the name of which has totally escaped me. For reasons into which I need not enter, but which have nothing to do with myself, my schooldays came to an abrupt end, and I made myself useful in my father's office."

When Mr. Curtis Brangwyn arrived in London he

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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took an office at No. 6 John Street, Adelphi, and sent two architectural designs to the Royal Academy, "Hastings Town Hall," and "Schools of the Grocers' Company, Hackney." Next year, 1876, he exhibited again, "Design for Offices of the Board of Works at Greenwich," and also, in 1879, "Yarmouth Town Hall," and a fine sketch in water-colour of a pulpit at Canford Church. The R.A. catalogues give me no other information, but Mr. Curtis Brangwyn is permanently represented at the Victoria and Albert Museum by a beautiful piece of embroidery—a banner carried out from his designs in his own establishment. After a life of hard work, chequered with ups and downs, he died in December 1907.

It will be remembered that the seventies were very important years artistically. Æstheticism came into vogue, with its limp clothes and forlornly gentle ideals, looking very absurd in the pea-soup fogs of that time. In 1878 Whistler and Ruskin fought their battle in the law courts, and modern art won a new farthing as a shining plaster for its injuries. If Ruskin had been foreman of the jury perhaps the damages would have been higher, for he tried always to be fair when he held a position of trust as an on-looker. In those days, again, a very distinguished French artist, Alphonse Legros, was already at work in London, trying to recover for us the art of teaching the arts, that had been allowed to decline very much since the great era of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Turner. Professor Legros was the first of the foreign artists to whom England would soon owe many debts of gratitude, both directly and indirectly—directly, as in the work of Mr. Sargent, Mr. Abbey, Mr. J. J. Shannon, and others; indirectly through





MONTREUIL: COTTAGE  
LANDSCAPE.

*Reproduced from a small  
Oil-Painting.*



MONTREUIL: COTTAGE LANDSCAPE  
*Reproduced from a small Oil-Painting*



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## *Parentage and Early Studies*

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the English students who studied in continental schools and through the sale of the best foreign pictures in England. It was in 1877, after much hesitation, that the Paris Salon made its famous compromise with the Realists, accepting Manet's portrait of the singer Faure in the part of Hamlet, but rejecting his "Nana."

It is pleasant to recall the enthusiasms then in vogue: the earnest efforts, the talk about pictures, how dealers besieged many a painter, and that few persons ever dared to admit they had neglected to spend their shillings on exhibitions and on catalogues worth twopence apiece. The golden age of art had come to grim old London! Many thought so, and the belief lasted for some years, thanks to the fervour of those who went to the Grosvenor Gallery as pilgrims go to Mecca. Perhaps ordinary folk liked W. P. Frith at the Royal Academy very much better than E. Burne-Jones at the Grosvenor; but Rossetti assured all the world that pictures by Burne-Jones were unrivalled for "gorgeous variegation of colour, sustained pitch of imagination, and wistful, sorrowful beauty; all conspiring to make them not only unique in English work, but in the work of all times and nations." You remember? Art was very dreamful and serious. "*Have you seen Burne-Jones?*" was a question to awe any one, for it was spoken always with so much fervour that you could not say "No," lest your artistic reputation should die there and then. Yes, it was a keen, ardent time, and a boy like Frank Brangwyn, eager and quick, could see in many places during the next six years an unusual number of differing aims, and could get from them something for his own future. Millais, Orchardson, Watts, Leighton, Whistler, Tissot, Albert

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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Moore, Holman Hunt, Pettie, Herkomer, Legros, Bastien-Lepage, Alma-Tadema, Fantin-Latour, Cecil Lawson (he died in 1882, aged thirty-one), Rossetti, Oules, Frank Holl (elected A.R.A. in 1878), made some among the many contrasts that gave variety to picture galleries. Fred Walker (1840-1875) and George Mason (1818-1872) were dead, but their paintings were to be seen here and there, all high-minded, serene and sweet, but without the seriousness, the depth of perception, the vigour of drawing that appeal to us from the work of Brangwyn's fore-runners, Millet, Meunier, Degroux, and Legros. Is it not singular that Englishmen—a race of sportsmen and athletes—should prefer in art the more feminine qualities of style?

So, in an atmosphere of enthusiasm, when the Æsthetic period made great ado about Oscar Wilde and pre-Raphaelite visions, Frank Brangwyn began to find himself as an art student, after attending day schools for his general education. The etchings of Legros, exhibited in a shop near the British Museum, were one useful influence, and he was only about thirteen when he first found his way to the South Kensington Museum, pencil in hand, and made drawings of whatever struck his fancy. Visitors took notice of him, stopping to look at his work. Among them was Mr. Harold Rathbone, an artist, who at once offered criticisms, and then set him to work from the early Florentine sculptors. The lad was delighted. With a hard pencil he drew for months on very smooth white paper, copying the reliefs of Donatello, and doing whatever Mr. Rathbone wished. It is never easy to train a young hand to represent in hard outlines what the eyes are trying to analyse.

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## *Parentage and Early Studies*

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This long task has broken many a heart. For the eyes throughout a painter's life do at least four times as much work as the hand succeeds in doing; they are trained and very critical long before manual freedom has been gained by constant practice. It is certain, then, that very close and definite technique is a great help to a young student, teaching him to be patient and exact, to dwell lingeringly over the rhythm of each outline, and to store up in his memory what he has learnt. At the Brussels Academy I was set to draw eyes three feet long, and Van Saverdonck, my class master, insisted upon the same hard outlines that Brangwyn learned from Mr. Harold Rathbone. There was no waste of time over elaborate shading. Brangwyn remembers this with gratitude, for English students in those days often followed a routine of bad drawing methods. Any student who wished to enter the Royal Academy schools toiled for months on a single study from the antique, till his work became a wonderful and fearful thing stippled all over with minute dots. Such work never seemed to get finished, and nothing of any value was learnt from it.

Saved from this ineffectual routine, Brangwyn worked on at South Kensington until, one day, another visitor made friends with him. It was Mr. A. H. Mackmurdo, the architect and connoisseur, an artist of broad taste. It was he who founded the *Hobby Horse*, now dead, and prepared the way for all that is best in our magazines of art. His influence on Brangwyn was important. In those days at South Kensington there was a fine work by Mantegna, the sketch of a Roman triumph, with elephants, and Brangwyn was told to copy it. Mantegna



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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gripped him at once, taking a strong hold on his mind; and the same thing happened to François Millet when Mantegna was studied for the first time. Indeed Millet related that in looking at Mantegna's martyrs "there were moments when he felt as though the arrows of a Saint Sebastian pierced him. These masters are like mesmerists," Millet added, quite truly. It was fortunate that Brangwyn took his first painting lessons in a sternly noble school, where no weakness in the presentation of a chosen subject ever appears. Mantegna seems to build with his brush, for he paints with a sculptor's hand and knowledge, like Michael Angelo. You cannot be half-hearted when you try to copy him. Much work was done under Mr. Mackmurdo's supervision, relieved by visits to a country house where master and pupil studied plants together. But soon another turn was given to these early studies. One day, at South Kensington, William Morris spoke to Brangwyn, examined his work, and then asked him to collect details from old tapestries. Some critics have been puzzled to account for the command displayed by Brangwyn in practical methods of decorative design—an art unknown to ninety-nine painters in a hundred, perhaps. It is forgotten that his first knowledge in this very useful field came partly from his study of plants with Mr. Mackmurdo, and partly from his training under William Morris. For some time he worked at the Morris rooms in Oxford Street, not only doing odd jobs, but making full-sized working cartoons from his employer's sketches. This sounds easy, perhaps, but many artists of note would much rather see it done than sit down to do it themselves. For the work is not only





THE BRIDGE OF  
ALCANTARA.

*Reproduced from the  
Water-Colour.*



THE BRIDGE OF ALCANTARA  
*Reproduced from the Water-Colour*



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## *Parentage and Early Studies*

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decorative freehand drawing; it must be done at once, without bungling and hesitation, each motif falling pat into its right place, every detail in scale with its neighbours, and all within a space appointed with Procrustean rigour. Now, the tendency of every kind of drawing, whether you work from models or from memory, is to outgrow the limits of space fixed by your paper or canvas. Many a portrait painter, after years of practice, feels this when he begins to place even a single figure effectively. Consider, then, how useful it was to Frank Brangwyn to enlarge the sketch designs by William Morris, turning them quickly and correctly into full-sized cartoons for carpets, wall-papers, tapestries, and so forth. This was the exercise that gave him courage and self-confidence; it strengthened his hand; it taught his eyes not only to measure correctly, but to see on the paper before them the exact spacing of a big composition. So, then, instead of passing from life-class to life-class, he enjoyed from the first a practical training very well fitted to bring out the qualities of his temperament as an artist. There are many dangers in life-schools. This is proved by the fact that the most brilliant students—the prize-winners—seldom do anything first-rate in after years. Not only do they miss the encouragement of delighted masters, the enthusiasm of fellow-students, but their early success generates mannerisms, with a belief that they have done something—have even “arrived.” And then, all at once, disenchantment comes, and they learn that those who bore up against defeats in the schools were lucky fellows because they gained habits of persistent pluck. The less a student hears about “art,” and the more closely he is brought in

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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touch with practical methods, workmanlike and strong, the better it is for him. And here is another point connected with Brangwyn's early studies: they did not teach him to talk, did not make him facile of speech—a bad thing that nearly always accompanies weak craftsmanship. As soon as a painter begins to write about pictures, or to talk with fluency about his impressions, you may be quite certain that he will not have emotion enough for his own work. He is like a boiling kettle, the steam from which makes much ado while evaporating. A critic is made by talk; a painter by silence and energetic practice.

For the rest, William Morris offered to take Brangwyn into his employ, but events intervened, and the pupil passed on into a wider experience, that included trips to distant countries. Between his journeys he did some work for Morris, and gained much by his business intercourse with one of the most remarkable men of the last century. For Morris was born to attract and to lead. His convictions were magnetic, his presence was energy personified; and many a distinguished man now, like Mr. William De Morgan, thinks of him with veneration. If Brangwyn had been older, a young man instead of a wayward boy, it is probable that Morris, with his ardent and deep-rooted beliefs, would have gained too strong a hold of the pupil's mind. As it was, Brangwyn slipped away into a life of adventure, and there was no loss of personality while he learned all he could from the master spirit.

Not that everybody was satisfied with his work. Some of the boy's drawings were shown to Mr. W. Q. Orchardson,

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## *Parentage and Early Studies*

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who had become a Royal Academician in 1877. The great man was kind, but very far from pleased; he had no hopes at all for Brangwyn's future. Then other studies were taken to Mr. Colin Hunter, and this painter mingled encouragement with good advice, saying that fame in art could never be foreseen; it rested with each man's character. Tenacity, as well as talent, was essential.

## CHAPTER II

### LATER STUDIES

WHILE doing what he could to please William Morris—from about 1882 and 1884—Brangwyn saved from his earnings the sum of forty shillings, and prepared for a sketching tour in the country. It was a very natural feeling of discontent that urged him on. For all art students—unless they happen to be prigs—rebel from time to time against the artificialities that form around professional work an unchanging atmosphere. The same thoughts are discussed day after day, the same things are seen, almost the same things are done; and although the mind is active, it moves within limits set by custom, rather like the mechanism of a watch within its metal case. I know men to-day who hated modern art when I was a lad of fifteen at the Slade School. Their tastes then were all bred in museums among the primitive masters; and to this day they are antagonistic to any other painters. For thirty-two years they have kept their atmosphere unrefreshed. So, as custom is reason either fast asleep or only half awake, every art student ought to break free from familiar surroundings and the repetition of ordered studies. This was understood in England years ago, for Cozens, Girtin, Turner, De Wint, Cox, and many others, owed much more to independent observation out of doors than to lessons and methodical teaching.



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## *Later Studies*

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This applies also to Frank Brangwyn, whose real schools have been travel and the sea, distant countries and their ways of living. It was an education in light, in colour, and in wondrous varied towns, peoples and costumes. Luckily, too, it began at a time when he was too much of a boy to gather his impressions in a self-conscious way, as if he were a correspondent for a newspaper. It is ever indiscreet to trust a man who goes out deliberately to observe given events; he tries to be effective, and falsifies what he sees. Brangwyn's aim when he left Morris was to score a little off his own bat; he knew nothing of the world and its life, and was bored by a routine of talk about familiar subjects.

His first trip was to a village on the coast of Kent—Sandwich. Here there were fishermen with their boats, little cottages and their kindly womenfolk, gleaming sands, and the sea with its thousand moods. The boy painter lived as simply as the villagers.

“During the day I worked hard at my sketching, and by night I hobnobbed with the ships' captains who frequented the inn in which I lodged. One of these mariners was a man of some artistic ability, and soon we became great friends. Thus the time passed very pleasantly—until funds began to run low, and eventually ran out altogether. Expected supplies from home did not arrive. While the people of the inn were most kind and considerate, the situation was unpleasant, though I daresay my imagination made it worse than it was. Anyhow, when my friend, the artistic captain, suggested that I should make a voyage with him, I jumped at the chance” (*M.A.P.*, February 27, 1904).

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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Indeed, he gladly worked for his passage on the schooner *Laura Ann*, doing whatever came along. He stowed sails, handled ropes, helped the cook, washed dishes, made sketches of the ship, and sold them to the crew for sixpence apiece. It was a capital opportunity to learn every rope and spar on board a vessel; and Brangwyn got to know more about sea life than "The Cruise of the *Midge*" would have taught him. Here was an experience all alive with good subjects, and it did not end when the boat anchored in the Thames. A great liking for the sea remained, and his earliest paintings were of ships and sailors.

"The first money I earned was by painting the name on a vessel's hull. This work brought me sixpence. After that I made friends with the *Laura Ann*; then with some other coasters—not actually sailing, you know, though I had to work my passage more than once. At times I was actually on my beam-ends—but happy. On several occasions I had to assist in loading a vessel to get a supper, and once I was even harder pushed than that. A Welsh schooner came in, and I applied for a job. For a couple of days I ran a barrow across a plank backwards and forwards, and all the generous skipper gave me was a mouldy old biscuit. Still, I was following Art, so I just munched that biscuit and was content, though I mentally registered a vow never to work for a Welsh sea-captain again."

It was in the thick of these experiences that the boy painted his first picture, a small one in oil, "A Bit on the Esk," near Whitby; he sent it to the Royal Academy, and it was accepted and hung in 1885, when Brangwyn was just eighteen. Then for a while he lived

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## *Later Studies*

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in a single room at 18 Shepherd's Bush Green, doing work from time to time for William Morris. Besides that he designed for several manufacturers, passing from wall-papers to tiles, and from card backs to other utilities. Very low prices were paid for his drawings. In modern shop-expenses, advertisement is deemed of greater importance than well-paid designing; but Brangwyn somehow managed to save a few pounds, and with their help he tried his hand at a difficult picture, a seascape with a wrecked boat lying on a sandbank in rough weather. It was freely handled, it was true in dramatic feeling. The Royal Academy accepted this early work in 1886, and a shipowner bought it, and made friends with its author. He was a patron such as any young artist would wish to have; and in 1888 he allowed Brangwyn to give a certain number of sketches in return for a sea voyage on board one of his boats. The passage having been bought in this way, Brangwyn set sail for Asia Minor.

An active life was very pleasant, and the painter was so delighted with the East that he bargained for another trip, setting sail in the summer of 1890. This time he visited Tunis, Tripolis, Smyrna, Trebizond, Constantinople; sailed around the Black Sea, saw a part of Roumania, and made sketches on the Danube. At Constantinople he met with an adventure:—

“One evening I went for a stroll in company with two of the ship's engineers. In the course of time we came to a cypress grove, surrounded by a low wall. I don't think we had any particular intention in our minds, and certainly we had no thought of doing any harm, but we jumped over the wall. Hardly had our feet touched ground when a

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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ferocious-looking soldier rushed at us with drawn sword. I did not stop to argue the matter, but transferred myself to the other, and right side, of the wall with great rapidity. The two engineers, however, being Scots—as I should say ninety per cent. of ships' engineers are—wished to discuss the metaphysical aspects of the case with the soldier. This they proceeded to do in their broad and native Doric. Whether the soldier followed the points the two Scotties were endeavouring to make or not I can't say, but he enforced his own point with his sword, and with such vigour and earnestness that my comrades made an abrupt and unceremonious departure as I had done. We found out afterwards that we had unwittingly trespassed upon the gardens of the old Seraglio, not the one where the Sultan's womenfolk resided, but—what made our intrusion as offensive as if we had disturbed the sanctity of the harem—where the treasure-house was."

There were other travel adventures, but the painter declines to relate them, arguing that the only proper events to be told are those that directly influenced his work. He learned, then, very soon, what sunlight and colours meant in searching climates. In comparison with so much brilliance and so much heat, London seemed a town of perpetual twilight. But impression followed impression too rapidly, and the wish to work was sated before the struggle between handicraft and sunlight began. It is not often that a real painter does any finished work out of doors. Careful outlines, with a few touches of water-colour, were enough for Turner; and Brangwyn also, in his early travels, usually followed the same method, having confidence in that inward vision that dwells unimpaired in the



PLATELAYERS.

*From an Original Lithograph.*









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## *Later Studies*

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memory of those who are greatly fascinated by colour and sunlight. On his return to London, his sketches were exhibited at the Royal Arcade Gallery, Bond Street, in March 1891, under the title "From the Scheldt to the Danube." Only a few critics noticed their freshness and sparkle. I choose a notice from the *Star*, which says that Brangwyn was seen to the best advantage. "It is his own fault if he led one to suppose that he could paint only grey seas and stormy skies. At most exhibitions of late years he has been represented by pictures of a ship in a storm, or rough weather, until one thought there were but greys and pale browns on his palette. But in the Bond Street collection almost all the studies were made about Constantinople and in the South or East, and they glow with colour. There are waters of the most brilliant blue, glittering white roads under intense blue skies, bazaars and quays filled with gaily dressed crowds. Pink and white towns rise from the bright seas, radiant hills bound the horizon, and only in one or two canvases is there a reminder that Mr. Brangwyn has studied nature in her quieter moods. But it is curious to note in almost all the sketches how much more successful he has been in rendering colour than light; he gives the colour of the South, but not its sunlight. The cleverest are those of crowded streets and bazaars and quays, in which the figures are put in in a most delightful manner. Not the least charm of Mr. Brangwyn's work is the direct simple method of recording his impressions."

Other journeys followed in quick succession, and there had been a rapid one to Spain between these two Eastern trips. One journey took him to Russia, giving him experiences very different in kind, often cold and unpleasant;

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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while Spain was visited again early in 1891, this time with Mr. Arthur Melville, whose death we mourned in 1904, and whose name has often been coupled with that of Brangwyn because of his originality in thought, in composition, in colour and in technique. I may speak of Melville again in the chapter on Brangwyn's sketches in water-colour; the point to be noticed now is that he was encouraged by his friend's example to develop without fear his own style, even although the academic mind should be horrified. Some writers have supposed that he copied Melville's effects of palpitating heat obtained with swift dashes and blobs of water-colour; but there is no truth in that. They were kindred spirits as well as friends; both belong to the same native feeling for style that has formed at haphazard a sort of great little cosmopolitan school in which we find Cottet, Simon, the late H. B. Brabazon, and Mr. Sargent in his landscape work. These fine artists, like Melville and Brangwyn, owe something—each in his own way, by a large and free transmutation—to the French Impressionists; but their elective affinity has nothing whatever to do with conscious effort.

Brangwyn, then, in 1891, travelled with Melville in Spain, going first to Saragossa. Here they hired an old boat called the *Santa Maria*, paying twenty pesetas a day, this sum to include a crew and mules. It was their intention to be towed up the canal. "A one-eyed man named Rincon was signed on as captain, Antonio as crew and cabin-boy, and a muleteer to superintend the mules, gently or otherwise. The boat was simply A1; she rose high out of the water, pierced on either side with many windows, and having a carved figurehead of Neptune,

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## *Later Studies*

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although she was supposed to be a *Santa Maria*. The roof would have been the better for a bit of caulking, for whenever it rained we had to move our goods to the dry spots. The saloon, with its lockers round, and upholstered in yellow silk, made us feel slightly more luxurious than after-events warranted. At last, amid the jeers and cheers of the crowd, we were under-weigh. . . . The sun was setting, and the effect of light and colour stealing through the rows of dark poplars on the bank was fine; while in the distance loomed a mysterious uncanny-looking mountain which might have concealed a demon."

Two letters on this Spanish trip appeared in the first numbers of the *Studio*, April and May, 1893. They are vivid and lively. I will take from them a few quotations—a little revised by their author.

"The landscape is quaint, and decorated with rich yet subdued colouring: to some people it might seem monotonous, but there is a subtle pathetic charm in its monotony. On the banks we saw lightly clad girls with great bundles of washing: all this made glad the heart of a painter. Presently we came to a more hilly country: the canal winds by hills, treeless, scorched by the sun. Under the long shadows of the few poplars on the banks we could see a goatherd surrounded by flocks of black goats, looking like spots of ink on the sun-swept hills: above the swell of the hill hung a great white cloud . . ."

They reached a puebla called Catanillo—"a dead city, peopled with strange earth-coloured phantoms. To the day succeeded a night if possible more weird; masses of grey cloud swept over the sleeping town—here and there rifts of opalescent green." One day—it was at Galar—

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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Melville, "by some occult means, managed to get a goatherd with his flock down in the morning; so, after breakfast—otherwise a pint of coffee with a flavour of oil about it—we began our work. It was charming at first, till the frequent peregrinations of the goats over the hills caused me to think the goat was not the amiable animal one imagines him. We sweated in agony—not silent on my part. Melville made a good morning of it, but the wily goat proved too much for me."

They saw Huesca, where the old kings of Aragon used to live; they visited Huren, driving thence by Agerbe, through the pine forests of the Serra de Quarra, to ancient Jacca. Jacca, which claims to be the oldest town in Spain, would not allow them to sketch, its fortifications being under military law; and the painters at last hired an old carriage to drive over the Pyrenees into France, intending to return thence into Spain, this being the cheapest and swiftest route. At first their way went between snow-clad mountains, then amid great gloomy pine forests, through which torrents rushed foaming; until anon they emerged into fertile plains, and reached Oleron, from which place they booked to Pau, thence to Bayonne, Irun, and San Sebastian. From San Sebastian they moved on to Puerta de Passages, a narrow inlet from the sea, widening into a large bay of the deepest and bluest waters, surrounded with picturesque stone-built houses, once owned by the flower of the Guipposcoan nobility, but now tenanted by fishermen. "The architectural features of this city of one street are unique and interesting. It is a tiny Venice, with essentially Spanish features. The many-storeyed and balconied houses all look on the bay, and

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## *Later Studies*

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among these long-deserted palaces one comes across treasures of wood and stone carving. Its single street winds round the bay, and following its tortuous passages one can find many pictures: gloomy alleys, with a peep through of the bay bathed in sunlight; here and there a shrine, stone-covered, with its painted background, now rapidly succumbing to the wear of sun and wind. The place is as it was two hundred years ago. Time has only knocked the angles off. . . . I have been starting a tolerably large canvas here of some pilots looking out from the verandah across the bay, with its brilliant white houses opposite. I suppose no one will understand it when I bring it home." True. Few critics *did* when the picture hung in the winter exhibition at the Suffolk Street Galleries, 1892.

After this delightful holiday, Brangwyn went to South Africa with Mr. William Hunt, to make sketches for a London dealer, Mr. Larkin of Bond Street. They made a circuit of some hundreds of miles round about Cape Town, visiting the Paarl, with its main street eight miles long, red and sandy, its running brook, its avenue of trees, and surrounding vineyards. Brangwyn saw Berg River, Simon's Town, Kimberley, Libertas, Worcester, Jonker's Hoek, and Stellenbosch, &c.; visited an ostrich farm, went into fields where arum lilies thrived like daisies, looked into the canteens, and studied life generally as it found its hundred and one openings in the new colony. There was a greater native story to tell than he and Mr. Hunt told; but they made sketches of things which they believed would interest people at home, and they could do no more. Much good material was found in the old Dutch towns, with their



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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gabled roofs and their primitive home customs. Ancient Holland was busy there under a hot sky. Some of the old Dutch cleanliness was gone, killed by the heat, perhaps, but Brangwyn still talks with pleasure about the kindness he met with at Stellenbosch, Paarl, and Simonsburg—a melancholy place, its white houses almost without windows, for the early Dutch settlers had to guard themselves from attack. On his way home the painter stayed at Madeira, and made from there a short expedition to the West Coast of Africa.

His sketches were exhibited at the Japanese Gallery in Bond Street, March 1892. Many notices appeared in the Press, and opposite opinions were expressed, some critics being very pleased, while others declared that the sketches did not reveal the true *genius loci*—the genius of men and things in South Africa—as distinct from their mere aspects, as filmed on the memory of a rapid tourist. The *World* declared the sketches to be full of merit: “A most laudable love of cool grey tones distinguishes his work, and is prominent in ‘The Valley of Drakenstein’ and ‘The Courtyard of a Dutch Farm.’ He has a certain quaint poetic feeling, which is both characteristic and pleasing, that finds utterance in ‘An Idyll,’ representing a native woman with her piccaninny on her back and followed by another child, wandering along the seashore through sedge and sand in the twilight, while the moon rising over the sea is intercepted by the baby’s black head, which it frames, as it were, in a halo. The artist, however, does not confine himself alone to grey tones and twilight scenes. ‘The Fish Market, Funchal, Madeira,’ and ‘The Main Street, Paarl,’ prove that glaring sunshine and blazing colour also

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## *Later Studies*

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find in him an admirer and an exponent." The *Daily Telegraph* was encouraging also, saying that the general effect of the exhibition was almost magical, for on entering the room "one seemed really to be transported from our own cold, foggy, unsympathetic climate to the burning glory of Africa. The natives, their social life in primitive huts and dwellings, and the picturesque corners of their chief cities, as well as the more desolate regions characterised by the grandeur of mountain ranges, rivers, rocks, and veldts, introduce one vividly to a mighty country of which most of us have little knowledge."

Still it was impossible to please everybody; and I may notice that South Africans appear to have been almost as much offended with Mr. Brangwyn as Australians were with Mr. Froude. Several years after the exhibition closed, in 1895, the *African Critic* spoke with sorrow of Brangwyn's visit to the Cape, and hoped that a really competent artist would take advantage of "the present boom in African millionaires," doing pictures of up-country hunting and wagon life. Mr. C. W. Furse had just sailed in the *Dunottar Castle*, and it was to be hoped that he would be able to represent some part of the wonderful beauty to be seen at the Cape. To satisfy the local mind of a British dominion is a task beyond the power of a traveller's art, perhaps.

Brangwyn had periods of work in England between his voyages of enchantment. In 1886 he left Shepherd's Bush Green and set up his home at 39A Queen's Square, Bloomsbury. The following year he moved on to the Wentworth Studios, Chelsea, and in this art centre he met Mr. J. J. Shannon, as well as many painters fresh from the schools.



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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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The Chelsea period in his early work was one of gradual transition. He joined the Institute of British Artists, coming under the influence of the president, Mr. Whistler, at a time when that great man's likes and dislikes were as laws to many young fellows.<sup>1</sup>

The thing that counted then as the saving grace of style was *tone*, which may be described as a unifying mystery of colour that permeates a picture, and binds all its parts together, giving a sort of inner depth and richness. Brangwyn followed in the vogue and made studies in low tone. But he kept away from all the vicious tricks and pigments which at various times have been employed by devotees of the Goddess Tone. Bitumen, asphaltum, *lac Robert*, and glazing over unhardened paint, have ruined many thousands of pictures, including a good many by first-rate men. Reynolds in his quest for rich and luminous tone often forgot the chemical interaction between pigments, and prepared the way for deep cracks and perished colour. Whistler was far and away more scientific, and Brangwyn also tried to understand the value of tone in its relation both to nature and to good, simple, non-fugitive pigments. Nature is a vast unity with scattered parts, while art is a limited harmony; and it is tone that helps us to resolve profusion into a definite whole, true to the same key in every plot of colour. Tone arrives at a semblance of nature's infinity, not by searching for details, as amateurs believe, but by a subtle orches-

<sup>1</sup> I note here that one critic accused Whistler of copying from Brangwyn. This occurred in 1895, and the criticism appeared in the *Speaker* of October 18. Here are the words: "Mr. Whistler exhibits a study in red (at the New Gallery). This picture reminds me of Mr. Brangwyn, the juicy quality of whose work Mr. Whistler reproduces very well." What next?

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## *Later Studies*

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tration of each man's technical methods in their relation to what must be left out, which is the main problem of art.

Brangwyn understood this early in his career. Tone gave him but little trouble; and in a good many of his early pictures there was a kinsmanship between his methods and those of George Morland. You will notice the same facile play with the brush, and a similar choice of tints, arising from a just belief that a simple palette is the best. Morland preached that lesson all his life, and his work has not changed without help from bungling restorers. Between Brangwyn's palette and Morland's I find a striking resemblance, for Brangwyn, even now, in his most Eastern effects of sun-colour, works with a few pigments that seem quite ascetic. Here they are: Flake white, yellow ochre, raw sienna, burnt sienna, cadmium, Venetian red, vermilion, and French blue. It is a little peal of bells upon which many carillon changes are rung all in tune.

With this restricted palette he worked in low grey tones at Chelsea, sending his work to the Academy, to Whistler's Gallery in Suffolk Street, and sometimes to the Institute of Oil Painters, of which he became a member in 1892. His subjects were plain landscapes and sea-pieces with figures, painted at a heat, and therefore free from the elaborate retouching that Millet and Bastien Lepage brought into vogue. From the first his touch has had fluency, for in his early studies there was no effort to go beyond the emotional reach of his knowledge and strength. That was very important. Many a young fellow has tried to bend the bow of Ulysses before he was strong enough, wasting his time over futile and disheartening struggles. As if

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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any good could ever be gained by making the study of art more troublesome than it is invariably!

There was a time in 1887 when Brangwyn was on the point of forsaking his colours like a bad recruit. He was very poor; his pictures did not sell; doing sketches to be pawned for a few shillings was not entertaining; and the sailor in his character was restive. Why not "chuck" art altogether, and go to sea? Londoners, busy with their own affairs, did little to help young painters; and during those hard times a wearisome inaction settled down upon his studio life. How ridiculous it would be to work when colours, canvases, brushes, frames, agents' fees, with travelling expenses for pictures, asked constantly for more money!

But at last, one day, the unhappy painter spoke of his troubles to his colourman, good and kind old Mr. Mills, who was a generous friend to many young artists. Mr. Mills believed firmly in youthful honour, and his confidence was always at its best when materials had to be given in exchange for promises of payment at some vague date afar off. The good man laughed, then hinted that the "blues" should be kept for palettes and fair skies. Youngsters who painted well did not go to sea; they accepted £2 a week for a year or two, gave up talking nonsense, and paid regularly in good work. So the crisis passed. With the capital supplied by Mr. Mills a new start was made, this time in Cornwall, at the little fishing village of Mevagissey, where Brangwyn worked at open-air effects. Among the pictures he then painted was a rustic scene in the vein of Millet, representing several men in the act of stripping bark off felled trees. This picture,

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## *Later Studies*

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exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1888, was rather in keeping with what is now known as the Newlyn School, whose grey brilliance was first seen in Brittany, at Pont Aven, Quimperlé, and Concarneau. The Cornish period in the forming of Brangwyn's style was important because it fixed his attention on subtle half-tones that vary infinitely out of doors; and the immediate effect of these studies gave charm to many seafaring pictures, some of which were hung at the Royal Academy and the Society of British Artists between 1889 and 1902. I will mention three or four.

R.A., 1889. "Home"—an ocean-going steamer brought towards harbour by a sturdy little tug that strains its heart out in a gallant effort. "Minutes are like Hours"—a pier-head with fisher-folk watching, and a vessel beating into harbour.

S.B.A., 1889, shortly after the painter's election. A picture entitled "Wraik Gatherers," representing a storm-beaten sea and a beach swept by waves; in the foreground three men gather wraik from the surf. For other works belonging to 1889, see my list of selected pictures.

S.B.A., 1890. "Conjecture"—a group of fishermen on a damp grey day standing on a wet quay and discussing some point about a ship that is just arriving into harbour. "It cannot be said that the picture is exactly interesting," said the *Times*; "but there is a solidity in the way in which the men are set upon their feet and a reality about their attitudes which show that Mr. Brangwyn has mastered at least some of the principal essentials of his art."

R.A., 1890. "All Hands Shorten Sail"—very successful at the Paris Salon of 1892.

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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S.B.A., 1890. "The Burial at Sea"—of which I shall speak in the next chapter.

R.A., 1891. "Assistance"—a large picture with merit; it represents a storm scene on board ship where sailors are in the act of lowering a boat to save life off a vessel in distress. Not fewer than fifteen men are shown in characteristic attitudes, and the air is filled with spray. The R.A. skied this painting, and several leading newspapers protested.

R.A., 1892. "The Convict Ship"—with its living freight of unfortunates, just freed in the Thames from the pilot's boat, of which a glimpse through the gangway is descried. The side of the vessel is lined with various groups, all well characterised, and in the centre stands a young man in chains—a captive to despair, his hands bound behind him. It is one of those pictures which, besides their instantaneous truth, their genuine appeal as art, have value as copyrights. "The Convict Ship" was medalled at the Chicago Exhibition, the jury making their decision known in 1894.

British Artists, 1892. "Pilots; Puerta de Passages"—a vigorous work, very striking in colour. "In the deep shadow of the verandah of a railed gallery overlooking the water picturesque mariners sit or stand by the rough wooden tables, drinking and gossiping. Without, on the opposite shore, are visible quaint irregularly built houses and a lofty green hillside, all in vivid sunlight. Relieved against this brilliant background, the figures become little more than silhouettes rich in colour, and with an individuality of contour which gives to them strongly marked character" (*Morning Post*). This picture caused much controversy.



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## *Later Studies*

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Some writers, when speaking of Brangwyn's seascapes, have coupled his name with R. L. Stevenson's. "Here," they say, "is the man to illustrate 'Treasure Island' and 'Kidnapped.'" They would be much nearer the mark if they called Brangwyn the Smollett among British marine painters. No kindred feeling unites him and Stevenson, while there is much in common between his marine pictures and those that Smollett drew in words, with brawny truthfulness, after getting knowledge at first-hand from a draggled life on board a battleship. Stevenson was not a realist. He hunted after romance; and when he chose the sea it was not because he knew a great deal about sailors, but because romance there attracted him even more than it did on land. To Brangwyn, in his sea pictures, romance counted for less than a presentation of character, and he showed from time to time a quality that parted him from Smollett and united him to another master of seascapes—Victor Hugo. That quality was a really deep feeling for the drama of circumstances. Victor Hugo's "Toilers of the Sea" brings before us many ocean pieces with a terrible impressiveness; we feel that the waves are sterile, merciless, and that men may grow to be like them in a life of maritime adventure. That is the drama of circumstances; and Brangwyn in his early days painted as Hugo wrote. This helps to explain why "The Funeral at Sea" and "The Buccaneers," when exhibited at the Paris Salon—the first in 1891 and the other in 1893—not only stirred the French public in a memorable way, but made Brangwyn better known and liked abroad than he was in his own country. Critics of many different schools—Max Nordau and Ary Renan, Henri Marcel, Lafenestre,

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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and Léonce Bénédite, to take just a few examples—welcomed him as a brave and original painter.

I had written the foregoing paragraph with its parallel between Brangwyn and Victor Hugo, when, in an article by Maurice Guillemot, I came upon a very similar thought, called forth this time by Brangwyn's etchings, their insistent energy and their grip of *farouche* character and humour. "*Certaines de ses planches font penser aux dessins de Victor Hugo avec, en plus, une technicité professionnelle.*" M. Guillemot is right. The sentiment of the handicraft, its impulsive emotion, sharp and quick and powerful, impatient under restraint, nerves and muscles at work together—all this may be seen plainly in both artists, and it is worth remembering.

We have now reached a point where Brangwyn's later studies may be said to have ended, because, after travelling here and there from clime to clime, and having passed through four or five phases, he had discovered what he really wished to do and by which methods he was most like to achieve his purpose. There had been a period of hesitation. He could not at first choose between tone in a low grey key and colour all aglow with brilliant sunlight. For indeed, after his varied training, which had taken him from William Morris to the North Sea, and from his Chelsea and Cornish periods through a sort of nautical pilgrimage from land to land, it was no easy task to resolve a chaos of impressions into a workable style. But he won his way at last to sunny daylight. Doubts went one by one, and Brangwyn entered with confidence into his own style. The rest belongs to a review of his art as a whole, beginning with the first pictures



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## *Later Studies*

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that challenged much attention; and let it be remembered, as we advance from stage to stage in a busy career, that the painter is only forty-three at the present time. What he has done, then, we may hope is only a small part of what he will do as he develops, one by one, all those hints and ideas on artistic presentation that appealed to him during his early and later studies—from his fondness for Degroux onward to his Eastern experiences.

## CHAPTER III

### CONTESTS OF CRITICISM: "A FUNERAL AT SEA," "THE BUCCANEERS," "SLAVE TRADERS," AND "A SLAVE MARKET"

**I**T is a battlefield always, the work done by gifted men ; year after year many critics fire their shots over it in all directions, aiming at things liked and disliked, and trying to make good shots, however painful to human targets. There have been Bisleys of art criticism, with much volley-firing, since picture-shows and newspapers became too numerous ; but when you pass the shooting in review, its frequent hits and its many wounds, do you not feel that there is little to be envied in this part of a painter's life? While going with care through the war of Press notices that Brangwyn had to face between the years 1889 and 1895, I have asked myself that question many times. Why should a workman ask to be fired at in the Newspaper Press? And as to the critics, what function do they serve? Biography cannot pass them by as of no account, because their influence acts in two powerful ways : either encouraging a man to make further efforts, or else hurting him terribly in those very moments of discontent that follow the excitement of creative efforts. "Every finished picture is a subject thrown away," said Lord Leighton ; and all true artists feel disenchanted after the stress and strain of their endeavours.



APPENDIX

[The following text is extremely faint and illegible due to the quality of the scan. It appears to be a list or index of names and dates, possibly related to the buccaneers mentioned in the title.]

THE BUCCANEERS.  
*Reproduced by permission  
of M. Pacquement, Paris.*



THE BUCCANERS  
*Reproduced by permission of M. Paquet, Paris.*



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## *Contests of Criticism*

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It is to be feared that critics do not often remember this drain on the self-confidence of painters and sculptors. Indeed, while thinking of the work before them, they are apt to forget the emotional man both in and behind the work, for you can never separate an artist from his children, his finished books, or pictures, or sculpture. I notice, too, that Brangwyn received many hard blows during the most tricky and uncertain period of his career, when he was passing from tragic or desolate marine pictures to the brilliant life and colour made known to him by foreign travel; but I believe he met with kinder help from the daily newspapers than from any other source. The great weeklies were often arrogant, and sometimes they were even cruel. I note this fact with regret. There is something pitiful in all criticism having blind eyes and a tongue that whips. For critics of that type soon die, leaving a poor record of service to the public; and presently their old bad tempers have to be recorded in the life of some distinguished man. "When *we* speak, let no painter call his soul his own"—this humour was too evident in many notices of Brangwyn's early work; and there are men even now who venture to write of him with a high-crested authority, as if they wished him to work within *their* atmosphere, forsaking his own. They object to his outlook in art; they do not understand his temperament as a man of genius; and their tastes are rather cobwebs of the study than a free result of knowledge acquired at first hand from nature and human life. And I mention this here for three reasons. First, we must allow every man of genius to have his own nature; next, we should study his work from within its own emotion; and again, it is impossible to have much sympathy with



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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Brangwyn if you go to him for anecdotes, prettinesses, literary refinements, these qualities having a subordinate place in the painter's art that he loves and explores. Foreigners understand all this; and but for their unfailing encouragement, which began in 1891, I do not think that Brangwyn would have gone successfully through the most critical time of his career. Our Royal Academy encouraged him at first, then gave him a cold shoulder; and after 1898, when his painting of "The Golden Horn" was hung so high that it could not be judged, he thought it discreet not to send in work to Burlington House, nor did he appear there again until 1904, the year in which he was elected A.R.A. Meantime, many honours were conferred upon him both by foreign critics and by foreign societies of artists. Brangwyn has gained many medals, including the great gold medal of honour granted from time to time by the Emperor of Austria. His work is to be found at the Luxembourg, at Venice, Stuttgart, Munich, Prague, Barcelona, Pittsburg, Chicago, Sydney, Wellington, and Johannesburg. Many of the continental print-rooms have made a choice from his etchings. It is not too much to say that his fame travelled to us from abroad and found us unready to receive it in a proper spirit. This will appear evident as we review his first successes, beginning with "The Funeral at Sea," that represents what is best in his first period.

It is a large picture. We are looking up the deck of a big merchant-ship. Midway, near the bridge, four rough sailors carry a dead comrade on a stretcher; other sailors stand near, listening while their captain reads the burial service: "We therefore commit his body to the deep."

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## *Contests of Criticism*

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In the foreground, on our left, stand an old salt and a boy of sixteen, facing the ceremony, and it is easy to read in their attitudes, as in those of the other mourners, what they feel. They are all English tars, these rugged, strong men in weather-stained clothes; they feel as Englishmen do under unusual circumstances, showing a certain constraint of manner, as if their part in life is to be ashamed when a sudden emotion grips them by the throat. The old salt has a clay pipe hidden in his right hand; the first mate, a bearded fellow, standing near the head of the stretcher, has thrust both hands into his coat pockets, and, his head drooping, he listens in awkward sorrow while the captain reads. No ocean drama, seen with our own eyes, could tell us more about the simple loyalty and good comradeship that unite a crew near the graveyard of our race—the sea. This work, so true, so poignant, is but a symbol of our national destiny. For England—"Our Lady of the Sea," as Camden named her—has all her fortunes on the deep, and one day they will be lost there and buried.

"C'est l'Angleterre," a Frenchman said of "The Funeral at Sea," feeling the sturdy characters of each sailor, the restrained grief, and the strange fatalism that cannot be kept away from those who toil above the ocean in the brave toys called ships. Nothing should take a sailor unawares, accustomed as he is to all the most terrible and majestic effects produced by winds and waves in their agitation and thunders. So the sorrow in this picture is not a bit like any grief that rough men show by a graveside in a churchyard. It is in keeping with the hazards of marine adventure, not with the ordered security that shelters

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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life on land. Ashore, death comes ever as a surprise; it seems abnormal, and we blind our windows from the light, and make our footsteps whisper with our voices. At sea, on the other hand, death is but the spirit of storms and the genius of triumphant waves. It is a part of that everlasting conflict in nature that breeds fatalism among those who earn their bread in the midst of great lonely forests, or vast mountains, or perilous ocean strife.

In this picture by Brangwyn, painted when he was only twenty-three, you will find—side by side with a few youthful shortcomings—as much true psychology as any painter has yet put into a typical scene from maritime experience. Nothing here is forced. Every sailor keeps his plane and place in the composition, and stands out of doors with the salt air all around him. His emotion belongs to his own character, and makes no direct appeal for our sympathies. A true seaman who happens to be a young man of genius has painted with penetrating judgment and sincerity a work that all other seamen will understand. One might suppose that the London public, dependent on the sea for all things worth having, would be quicker than the Parisian public to recognise the merit in Brangwyn's pathos and observation. Yet "The Funeral at Sea" was not very much noticed when it hung at the Galleries in Suffolk Street, while a great success was won by it immediately afterwards at the Paris Salon, where its pathos and its power were fully appreciated. Roger Marx was as delighted as A. Sylvestre; Léonce Bénédite<sup>1</sup> and Georges Lafenestre were as enthusi-

M. Bénédite wrote as follows: "Mais c'est encore un étranger, M. Brangwyn, un Anglais né dans les Flandres, qui nous fait assister avec le plus d'émotion et d'impression vraie, dans

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## Contests of Criticism

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astic as MM. Jacques, Groselande, Marcel, Wolff, and others. One critic, writing in the *République Française*, said that the sailors seemed to be alive: *on croit les voir soufflant*. The picture is still remembered in Paris, though its success belongs to 1891. The French Government wished to buy it for the Luxembourg, but the work had been bought by an Englishman.

Some good notices were written in England—just a few, but visitors to the Suffolk Street Galleries cared no more for the subject than they did for the year one. For there was no prettiness, no sentimentalism; it was a quiet picture; and because it asked for as much thought as was freely given to sports and games, it seemed “heavy” as art to Londoners.

The *Daily Telegraph* spoke well of “The Funeral at Sea,” finding it well-grouped and finely depicted in solemn greys, pervaded also with an indescribable salt-air-like touch. The *Manchester Examiner* threw in a technical criticism with much praise, finding the sea too blue on a grey day, while the *Pall Mall Gazette* described the picture as excellently designed. Mr. Frederick Wedmore wrote two encouraging criticisms at a time when his good words were very welcome. The first one was in the *Academy*: “It must at least be said that this picture shows . . . dramatic power . . . fine and accurate observation, and good craftsmanship,” all “at the service of a genuine

un tableau d'un titre discutable, mais naïf, *Un Enterrement à bord*, au dernier acte de ces existences éternellement ballottées, dont les restes ne trouvent même pas le repos après la mort. Sur le pont du navire en marche, respectueusement découverts, les visages se dessinant rouges et hâlés dans l'atmosphère humide sur le gris continu du ciel, l'équipage écoute religieusement le capitaine qui lit la Bible devant le corps du vieux compagnon de luttés qui va glisser par-dessus bord, dans la mer aux eaux d'un bleu profond d'indigo.”

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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imaginative gift." In the *Magazine of Art*, Mr. Wedmore referred to the painters who had clung to the British Artists after the secession of Mr. Whistler:—

"Really first among them in importance I place Mr. Brangwyn's sea-funeral, 'We therefore commit his body to the Deep.' Mr. Brangwyn—beginning perhaps with forcible little visions of smoky steam-tugs in dirty weather making manfully for the port—has developed into one of the most important and original of living painters of the marine. His grey schemes of Anglo-French colour interpret successfully enough the deck scenes to which he now most frequently addresses himself. A greater range of hue, a far more opulent palette, would be wanted if he saw the sea in its variety, from the infinite agate of the waters off Whitby to the opal and amethyst of the Sussex coast and the sapphires of Cornwall. But these—in their mystery or their splendour—he leaves to others: to Mr. Edwin Hayes, Mr. Henry Moore, and Mr. Hook. And, retaining his neutral tints—concentrating himself wholly upon themes which it is possible for them to interpret—he seeks, in such scenes, story and dramatic effect to which the pure or noble colourist may perchance be indifferent. And this winter (1890–91), at the 'British Artists,' he shows us that he has conceived with dignity, yet with homely truth, the aspect of things upon an unimportant merchant vessel when a rough and shy but, one is sure, humane skipper is called upon to read the noble words which bespeak, for our dear brother here departed, a resurrection even from the changeful sea—the 'vast and wandering grave' of 'In Memoriam.'"

The fact is that Brangwyn just painted the marines that



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## *Contests of Criticism*

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appealed to him most powerfully. It mattered not to him what colour or what calm days attracted Mr. Hook or Mr. Henry Moore, or Mr. Edwin Hayes. Nor had he any wish to vie with Mr. Somerscales or Mr. J. R. Reid. Having known storms at sea, under many lowering skies, the tragedy of ships was to him what the dangers of collieries were to Constantin Meunier. It was a question of standpoint determined by emotion and experience. An old fisherman from the North Sea, if endowed suddenly with a genius for art, would not paint the infinite agate of the waters off Whitby, nor the opal and amethyst of the Sussex coast. His whole nature would tell him that the mercilessness of rough waters, their terrific sublimity in agitation, their appalling heaviness when they roll into crested mountains and deep valleys, will for ever have a more memorable impressiveness than any day of peaceful glamour around our English coasts. It was in this spirit that Brangwyn ventured among the shoals and reefs of marine painting.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, at the very time when Mr. Wedmore implied—quite without meaning it, I am sure—that Brangwyn had settled down for life to a meagre palette of Anglo-French greys, other critics complained because his trips to the East had made known to him the splendour of bright tints in a clear atmosphere of searching heat. “The Buccaneers” brought to a climax this attack on his aims and methods, for it offended many writers in England when it hung at the Grafton Galleries in February 1893.

<sup>1</sup> “The Funeral at Sea” passed into the collection of the late Sir John Kelk, that came up for sale at Christie’s on Saturday, March 11, 1899. The Brangwyn was bought by Lewis for 105 guineas; and to-day it belongs to the Glasgow Corporation.

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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The *Spectator* said that Mr. Brangwyn, naturally a black-and-white painter, had been letting about him with strong colours, like Mr. Melville. The *Manchester Guardian* sniffed, and fired out the words "garish and aggressive." The *Saturday Review* was very indignant, sneering at "The Buccaneers" as an example of slap-dash painting and aggressive riotous colour that might well serve to show that violence could never be vigour. *Truth* had a different view, though not more favourable, since Mr. Brangwyn's work looked much more like a piece of mosaic pavement than a picture; and the *Pall Mall Budget* hit upon another little novelty in abuse. It said that Mr. Brangwyn's production was the war-cry of *fin-de-siècle* barbarism. As to the *Daily Telegraph*, it assured him that his flaming piece of impressionism, with the air left out, proved decidedly that he was following a wrong road. But here and there a criticism was favourable. The *Athenæum* was certain that when the observer's eye had grown accustomed to Mr. Brangwyn's intense pigments, he would find that the picture possessed many striking, and even great qualities, which required only refining to become admirable. That was praise indeed, for the *Athenæum* in those days was often as old-fashioned as it well could be. It was the *Morning Post*, however, that got nearest to the merit of the picture, forestalling, at least to some extent, the verdict passed at the Salon a few weeks later:—

"A large work of great power is 'The Buccaneers' of Mr. Frank Brangwyn. To the sea-rovers therein is dealt out poetic justice. Their daring attack on a vessel lying in the roadstead has failed, and they strain at the oars with all their available strength the sooner to gain the shelter of



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## *Contests of Criticism*

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their own ship. But many of the swarthy-skinned crew are wounded; the foremost rower has just been hit, and involuntarily relinquishes his efforts, while the pirates' destined prey is peppering them with its guns, and an avenging boat is in full pursuit. The incident occurs on a day when the sun blazes down with intense heat. The rocky shore, the white houses of the town, and the poplars are defined clearly where the sunlight strikes them, but their forms when shadowed are blurred with haze. The white boat and its picturesquely clad crew are relieved with sharp contrast against the dark blue of the water, whose hue, exaggerated in depth as it may appear to eyes accustomed to look on Northern seas, may nevertheless be characteristic of the Mediterranean. The picture needs to be seen from a sufficient distance, for the execution is of the boldest, most vigorous kind, and the colouring is intensely vivid."

It was a complex problem that Brangwyn had set himself to solve: namely, how to suggest with vigorous truth the play of searching sunlight on gay colours and a boatful of brown cut-throats. It was a drama of sun-colour in full action, and he wished to make of it a decorative whole. If R. L. Stevenson had described it in a story, speaking of the white boat, the heavy blue waters, the wonderful red flag at the stern, and the character of each sea-rover, no critic would have complained; but no sooner was a scene of astonishing action made real in its own artistic medium, than its author became a target in England for sneering rebukes. To Brangwyn, whose eyes were still attuned to the radiance of the East, it seemed best to work mainly

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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with primary colours, placing them side by side in such contrastive harmonies that they lost their crudeness and united into atmospheric reds, blues, yellows, whites, and browns, all transfigured by scorching sunlight. To compose with pure pigments, as if they were bright flowers to be made into a perfect bouquet, needs a very subtle eye for colour; and I am sure that Brangwyn succeeded, however melodramatic his work may have seemed to critics living in grey London. As to his brushwork, it was in keeping with his subject. What accord would there have been between delicate technique and the actions of ruthless pirates? Is Caliban to have a dainty language in the British art of painting? Some London critics implied as much as that.

Then the picture went to Paris, and was welcomed there as a revelation. Fashions sprang up in Brangwyn reds, and people flocked to see his buccaneers, till the carpet on the floor of the gallery was worn out all around that one painting. By critics, also, with just two or three exceptions, Brangwyn was welcomed with enthusiasm, and most painters rejoiced in him as a new young master with courage enough to do fine things in his own way. M. Besnard was not pleased, and M. Gustave Geffroy saw in "The Buccaneers" a ragoût of Delacroix and Manet, but he was promptly corrected by other writers. M. Kersant told him that Brangwyn was strong enough to be loyal to himself, and that his methods had no resemblance with those of Delacroix, as a visit to the Louvre would prove to any observer. Apart from this, there was not in the whole Salon a picture that possessed the intensity of colour and life flashing from Brangwyn's paint. "Oh! les bons

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## *Contests of Criticism*

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Boucaniers. Qu'ils sont vrais dans leur sauvagerie et leur grossièreté voulues ! Comme on les devine, ce qu'ils étaient, aussi prêts à écorcher un homme qu'un boeuf, pillards intrépides et joyeux, héros de sac et de corde !”

That was the general note. The painter was judged from within the atmosphere of his work ; he was not whipped and ridiculed because he had dared to treat a desperate scene in a rigorously dramatic manner. M. Léonce Bénédite still remembers with delight the impression made upon him by “The Buccaneers.” As a member of the purchasing committee he hoped that the picture would be bought for the Luxembourg ; two other members shared his enthusiasm ; but the majority chose a work less modern in its audacious outlook, that could not surprise any person. And they were right. It is not the business of any State to encourage at once a new and successful departure from the routine of academic painting. A conservative outlook among officials enables the public to revise first impressions and to wait for further evidence. I note, then, that “The Buccaneers” was seen again at Paris in 1907, in Georges Petit’s rooms, at the time when the picture was purchased by M. Pacquement from its first owner, M. Stany Oppenheim ; and I am told in a criticism by Maurice Guillemot that although the picture had been very much imitated, the enchantment of its colour remained, and was still, as in 1893, a surprise. This opinion is confirmed by M. Henri Marcel, who says : “The pure tones in this picture were extraordinary, and amazed and disgusted the Philistines, but its reappearance at the Salle Petit last year showed whose judgment was the right one. The passage of fifteen years had softened its violent contrasts, and the

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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astonishing rightness of its harmonies of colour had allowed it to age without the development of a single dissonant note.'

M. Gaston Migeon, in 1893, was among the admirers of the new Brangwyn; and so were M. Roger Marx, M. Ary Renan, and M. Raoul Sertat. Ary Renan was amazed that the painter could pass with ease and success from "The Funeral at Sea" to "The Buccaneers." "*Comment, dis-je, est-il possible que ce soit le même M. Brangwyn qui nous éblouisse aujourd'hui? Les rouges, les bleus, les tons heurtés et sûrs de sa nouvelle toile sont tout simplement d'une incomparable maîtrise, et l'école romantique n'a jamais rien fait de plus puissant.*" Raoul Sertat was equally enthusiastic, praising the picture as a striking symbol of that instinctive belligerency in man, that drives him even into crime for pleasure, because he desires to be active in the thick of dangers. "*Rarement, en vérité, vit-on cette fureur et ce bonheur de vivre mieux exprimés que par le peintre des Boucaniers, dont le style, suivant de près son inspiration et s'y appropriant avec une merveilleuse souplesse, se déchaîne, cette fois, en une irrésistible véhémence, où les coups de brosse fougueux, les colorations chaudes et sonores, fortes et radieuses, concourent à l'effet le plus passionné et le plus vibrant.*" But, meantime, British protests were heard even from Paris. I find one written in a Belgian paper, and attributed to a British writer with a Scotch name. Another appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*. It told the world that Brangwyn's picture "scarce deserved the unstinted praise being lavished upon it in Paris"—a point that the French critics were very well able to decide for themselves.



HARVESTERS.

*Reproduced from the  
large Oil-Painting.*





HARVESTERS  
*Reproduced from the large original painting*





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## *Contests of Criticism*

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I might close here my review of the seafaring pictures in Brangwyn's first period, but I find in the *Times* of October 29, 1892, welcome reference to another picture that disturbed our English writers on art. It was called "Slave Traders," and represented a group of Arabs seated on the deck of their dhow, the sun beating fiercely upon a white cabin and the gay colour of the men's dresses, with a brilliant note of red in the burnous of one figure. The *Times* considered this in every way a brilliant performance: "Taken altogether, it is the most interesting picture at the Institute; the only one, perhaps, that seems like a promise of great things to come from the painter of it. Mr. Brangwyn, who knows the sea as only a born seaman can, has till now painted only scenes from our northern latitudes, with ships tossing on the grey waves, and sea and sky gloomy and lowering. His work has always been full of ability, but it has been monotonous and always sad in colour. But now it seems that some kind fate has taken him southwards, and shown him the sunlight blazing on the coasts of Africa; and he has painted a picture which, for glow of colour, beats anything here, anything that an Englishman has ventured upon for a long time."

Contemporary with this work was a companion picture, "A Slave Market," showing yet more clearly Brangwyn's transition from menacing storms at sea to vivid sunlight on shore. It was hung at the Royal Academy in 1893, with another painting, "Turkish Fishermen's Huts." The "Slave Market" set reviewers by the ears. R. A. M. Stevenson was betwixt and between: "We cannot overlook the great change which has come in the aspect of

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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Mr. Brangwyn's work. His 'Slave Market' glows with the most vivid colours, laid on frankly, and without much attention to value. We admire, but suffer from the absence of light and air, which prevents our finding our way about the picture." This sort of thing used to be said in France about the brilliant and able *pochades* that poor Regnault exhibited at the Salon, for it is always difficult for western and northern eyes to accept in a painting the insistent East, its glare and its flashing tints. The *Manchester Guardian*, unwilling to be oriental with Brangwyn, acted as a surgeon, performing an operation with self-assurance, and then bandaging the wound with care and self-satisfaction: "Mr. Frank Brangwyn has . . . suddenly passed from the green-blue-grey tonality of Newlyn to the flaming scarlets and unmitigated blues of Africa. His colours are splendid enough in their way, but they are the colours of stained-glass windows, not of paintings. In this 'Slave Market,' for instance, the total lack of atmosphere in a scene of outdoor sunlight renders the assault made on the eyes by the fiercely red draperies and the wall of blue sky intolerable. Mr. Brangwyn is even here by no means *le premier venu*, and when he has sown his wild oats he will no doubt return to a saner style of treatment." What this critic would have said had he seen the slave market itself, sweating in a sunlight that almost seared the eyes, who can say? It is a pity that artists cannot hold a sort of annual tribunal at which all their principal reviewers would be obliged to attend, for the pleasure of explaining and confirming their printed opinions. What fun there would be! And if any critic broke down under cross-examination, he could be sent

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## *Contests of Criticism*

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home all alone in a taxi, so that no cruel eyes might watch the slow and painful return of his wounded self-belief.

The *Athenæum* mourned over Brangwyn, giving some reasons: "This artist, who has done much for us at sea and on shipboard, and brought large knowledge to aid very clear views of nature, has, we hope only for a time, left the mists and stormy weather of the northern seas and English coasts for the fiery lustre of the Mediterranean, the contrasting splendour and dark shadows of Algerian streets. His 'Slave Market' belongs to the same category as his 'Buccaneers,' and is pitched in the same high keys of light and most fervid colours. He has added Arabs and others, in vivid yellow, green, white, and red robes, attending the selling of negresses, whose naked blackness is good colour, while the dark bronze of the other nudities in the market is creditable to Mr. Brangwyn's taste and judgment. A powerful kaleidoscopic effect is, not without harmony, produced by these means; but we confess to thinking that the unity, simplicity, and energy of his pictures of Atlantic subjects are far superior to barbaric splendours such as these, and we hope Mr. Brangwyn will soon think so too."

Why compare opposed subjects? Is day bad because night is welcome? Is the East unfit to be painted because northern themes are attractive?

Another critic regretted that there were no outcasts among the slaves to be sold. "They are mostly Hottentot Venuses," with "none of the pathos that would be discovered in a group of fifty-year-old coal-miners or chain-makers of our country. A gang of English wage-slaves

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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after twoscore years of wage-slavery would present a far more tragic group than Mr. Brangwyn's ebon beauties." But this critic, after wandering so far from the picture before him, rejoiced that "The Slave Market," when compared with a similar work by Edwin Long, R.A., stood out "as a solid graphic composition of masterly colouring, against a weak and meretricious composition of feeble colour." Why, then, did he ask for something else? Did he expect a young painter to be perfect?

It will be noticed how very rarely the painter's intention was considered. He was little more than a boy in 1893; but because his gifts were riper than his years, he was often treated as a master who had fallen short of his usual mark through inattention to his usual methods of work. And I have dwelt upon these matters, giving quotations, because the first contests of criticism are more difficult to bear than any others. Youth longs for the hope of encouragement, just as plants thirst for water and the sunlight.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONTESTS OF CRITICISM: SUN-COLOUR AND RELIGIOUS ART

**W**HAT the French call the orientation of modern art is a subject of great interest to all students of painting. It began, tentatively, among Englishmen of the eighteenth century. John Webber, R.A. (1752-1793), sailed with Captain Cook on the eventful last voyage in 1776; and William Alexander (1767-1816) visited China in 1792 as draughtsman to Lord Macartney's mission. Several painters went out to India, like William Daniell, R.A. (1769-1837), but they carried England in their paint-boxes, and came home with very little oriental light and colour. When Brangwyn exhibited "The Buccaneers" and "The Slave Traders," J. F. Lewis, R.A. (1805-1876), and poor and great William Müller (1812-1845), were the only painters of the East whose works attracted much attention, and it was often asked why Brangwyn did not work in the manner of J. F. Lewis, whose rendering of details could not be excelled. The people who put this question would have been ashamed to ask why a lion was not a leopard, or a nightingale a full-fledged eagle.

Of course J. F. Lewis is excellent and delightful in his own way. Usually with transparent colours he



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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painted quickly on panels, finishing a given part at each sitting; the ground upon which he worked was a hard and polished white surface specially prepared for him; and as he belonged to the same school that made Frith and the early style of David Wilkie, he gave infinite, loving care to his treatment of details, never acquiring that freer vision and more robust style that came to John Phillip in his Spanish journeys and studies. Phillip is to be placed among Brangwyn's lineal forerunners, side by side with William Müller, who gained from his travels in Egypt, in Greece, and in Lycia, an outlook in art and an amplitude of style that will ever be remarkable in British schools. Müller, so to speak, was the Brangwyn of 1845, but he did not live long enough to overcome official opposition. The Royal Academy, like the British Institution, treated him as a sort of riotous innovator—a person who could not expect to be tolerated in London. Meantime, artists went to Müller for lessons, like David Cox, who sat at the feet of the young master, and spoke of him always with unstinted enthusiasm. Müller died at the age of thirty-three, leaving a brave record of good work in water-colour and in oils. He delighted in vigour and in size, like Brangwyn; his colour was very fine, and he worked with marvellous freedom. Behind his large picture of "The Eel-Pots," painted in a single day, Müller wrote: "Left for some fool to finish!"—words that Brangwyn might use in connection with many of his oil sketches. I cannot help thinking that if Müller and John Phillip had been remembered by London critics between 1891 and 1895, fewer attacks would have

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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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been made on Frank Brangwyn, for it would have been clear then that he belonged to a tradition in British art.

Even M. Léonce Bénédite, who has given much time and thought to the study of Brangwyn's work, has failed to discover among his predecessors in England any direct ancestor in the orientation of his outlook and style. In France, on the other hand, where oriental painting has been one of the principal founders of the modern school, M. Bénédite finds several masters with whom Brangwyn has an elective affinity, mentioning Delacroix, Decamps, and the brave Dehodencq, whom Brangwyn knows only by name, and who played with sonorous effects of colour like an organist with notes and chords. It is quite true that Brangwyn would be more at home among these big Frenchmen than he is at exhibitions in London; but you will find a certain kinship of temperament between him and several Scotch painters, for the Scotch have been original colourists from the days when they invented their plaids. John Phillip I have mentioned, and to him we may add Sir William Allan (1782-1850), who visited Turkey and other countries. As to Sir Henry Raeburn, who, like Turner and Bonington and Holland, owed much to the Italian sunlight, he delighted in a play of brush that appeals very strongly to Brangwyn, and I have often wished that a great exhibition could be held of all those British painters who have brought into our schools some influence or other from sunny countries in Europe and from the East. A great many of our artists have inherited their birth-right of sun-colour away from the British Isles.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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It was in "The Buccaneers" that Brangwyn showed for the first time with success what he had newly learnt from the East, passing on rapidly to other experiments—"Trade on the Beach" (bought by the Luxembourg in 1895), "The Scoffers," "The Adoration of the Magi," and "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes."

These two last pictures bring us to a series of works that I do not care to describe as scriptural, because Bible art is associated with time-honoured conventions; but they were and are religious within those modern limits that have been made familiar to us by François Millet, Max Liebermann, and Professor von Uhde. When Millet was asked to paint for the Pope a picture of the Immaculate Conception, he did not swerve from his usual style, but chose for his model a humble peasant girl, and, reverent in the manner of "The Angelus," strove to reach poetry and mystery through the door of the life that he knew well and loved best. Was not religion an essential in his own life, and therefore present and modern? True, modernism in sacred art has been carried too far by some artists, as by Jean Béraud, but it marks an attempt to make Bible subjects less remote from to-day, and so more contemporary with ourselves. It is always far and away better than the rose-tinted and honey-sweet prettiness that Bouguereau and others have imported into a biblical art very much valued in copyrights; and sometimes it has notes of pathos, of deep and touching sincerity, that will last as long as any religious picture by Portaels or by the late Mr. Holman Hunt.

Brangwyn's contributions to this movement were tenta-

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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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tive, but they had great interest, though our English critics very often missed their merits. Perhaps they were right to complain of the "Eve," exhibited at the Grafton Galleries at the same time as "The Buccaneers." Not only was this Eve very fleshy in a Rubenesque way, but she lacked the impersonality of Rubens; and as Brangwyn placed his Eve in a tangle of tropical fruits and foliage, and was more concerned with the vagaries of real light than the great Fleming ever was, he used greenish reflected tints in his flesh colour. Several critics objected to this, and one of them asked: "Once admit an emerald Eve, and how can a puce Adam be resisted, or a mauve Abel, or a cobalt Cain?" The *Saturday Review* happened to be more favourable, saying that the picture "had a certain decorative distinction and qualities of tone and colour that are distressingly absent from 'The Buccaneers.'" After all, the picture was just a study of the nude seen in the light of a tropical wood; there was no need to introduce the Serpent. Criticism needs no provocation, for unkind words are easier to write than kind. The *National Review* declared that a modest amateur might say to himself that were he Adam, and Mr. Brangwyn's Eve the tempter, there would have been no Fall; and the same modest amateur might go so far as to hint that he could find surpassing skill, but little creative art, in Mr. Whistler's well-known "Lady Meux."

How clearly those old times return with these boomerangs of criticism! When Brangwyn, in 1893, exhibited at the New Gallery his Adoration of the Magi, "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh," critics had quite a good time, so opposed were they in their verdicts. That a young painter

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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in his twenty-fifth year should have chosen so difficult a subject and placed it in a deep and mysterious moonlight was a thing to be encouraged. It showed a determination to grapple with the biggest problems that painting offers for solution. Yet here is the criticism that the *Spectator* published: "Readers of Heine will remember his dream of a bas-relief of Balaam and the Ass, in which the Ass was an excellent likeness. Now, in a Nativity the Madonna ought to be a possible likeness, and bits of likeness to other parts and people in the scene must have very extraordinary merit to excuse so essential a defect. The picture has merits and ability, but it is a shocking Nativity." What Balaam has to do with all this one cannot say, unless that critic wished to imply that he could develop fair long ears like Bottom the Weaver. Certainly he ought to have known that the young painter's subject and its lighting would have taxed the powers of a Veronese or a Tintoretto. The composition, too, did not try to evade difficulties; it sought for them as problems to be solved for the sake of exercise and knowledge. An easy type of composition would have placed the Virgin on our left, well in the foreground, but not too near the frame; then the Magi would come down the picture towards her, showing their full faces. Brangwyn chose a far more difficult setting. The Madonna, dressed in white, is seated in the middle distance, a little towards our right hand, a verandah trellised with faded vines overhead, and behind a grey house shimmers in faint moonlight. St. Joseph stands near, leaning against one of the wooden posts that support the roof of trellis-work. He is plainly a man of the people, a humble carpenter, but his features are unattractive in profile; they seem rather outside the



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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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painter's sympathy and emotion. From the brown earth near St. Joseph some tall white lilies grow; and a negro boy, who accompanies the Magi, carries an offering—a big golden bowl. The Magi themselves, having passed up the picture from our left towards the Madonna, stand erect, one in profile, the others with their backs turned to the spectator. They are stately and quiescent figures, clothed in picturesque Moorish robes, and around them the moonlight plays as a ghostly presence. Beyond the Magi, in various attitudes of curiosity, are other pilgrims.

This being the theme, try to imagine to yourself its many difficulties. You have to make real in paint a subject that brings you into competition with a great many noble old pictures, all familiar to educated persons; and a good many of Brangwyn's reviewers were as vexed as they would have been if some young poet had asked them to review a play of his own called "Hamlet" or "Othello." The *Standard* was among a few exceptions, admitting that, whatever the picture lacked, it was nowhere marred by insincerity of intention or flippancy of purpose; in colour it had the fascination of an ordered reticence, and in line that dignity which counted always for so much as an element in style. But listen, now, to the *Athenæum*: "Another ambitious mistake on a needlessly large scale is Mr. Brangwyn's version of the Adoration of the Magi, really an ill-composed group of life-size lay figures, nearly all back views, heavily draped in colours of low keys: a shadowless, flat and feebly toned example which possesses none of the vigour of his 'Slave Market' at the Academy. It is a pity so good an artist has thrown himself away so completely."



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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From this attempt to browbeat a young artist I wish to pick out one word, because it tells you at once how small was the amount of original observation that the fault-finder thought necessary in art criticism. He speaks of the figures as "flat," not knowing that moonlight invariably produces an effect of flatness. Brangwyn knew this, while a good many of his critics did not. Max Nordau, on the other hand, like Léonce Bénédicté, understood the young painter's aim, and described his researchful effort as a night-piece reposefully coloured and marvellously deep. It is true that several foreign critics thought the Magi inferior to the Buccaneers, but there was no need to compare unlikes. Moreover, it is not at all difficult to explain why this picture has defects here and there. The painter, when he started his work, was, I think, like a modern Bassano, painting with a countrified simplicity and reverence; but no sooner did he come to the gilded haloes than his emotion underwent a change, those ancient symbols of the Divine being somehow at odds with the rusticity implied by a carpenter's life and work. Later, when he endeavoured to paint the Magi, he began to feel in sympathy with that austere reserve, that haughty and calm self-control that belongs to many peoples in the East. If Brangwyn had chosen the Adoration of the Shepherds his first emotion would have lasted throughout the subject, and his picture would have been finer and more sympathetic, as well as much nearer to the real bent of his genius.

"Rest," another religious piece, is a Holy Family, new in feeling, vague and fascinating. Mary, with the Infant Jesus asleep in her arms, sits on a well-side shaded by trees; she is wrapped in contemplation over her Child,

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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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while a passer-by stops and drinks water from his hands. Mr. George Moore reviewed this picture, taking for his standpoint the minute subtleties of atmospheric treatment that the French Impressionists were trying to make popular. He said: "This picture is an example of the Glasgow school of painting; and the method of that school seems to be a complete suppression of what is known as values. By values I mean the black and white relation of tones, the relation of this shadow to that shadow, of this light to that light. Aerial perspective and chiaroscuro are attained by a delicate perception of and a delicate distribution of values. Now, if you look at 'Rest' you will see that values have been systematically ignored; there is therefore neither light nor air in the picture; its beauty is that of a Turkey carpet. But a Turkey carpet is beautiful and harmonious, and so is Mr. Brangwyn's picture."

I cannot follow Mr. Moore entirely in this analysis, for a photograph of the picture shows that the painter's aim was entirely decorative, and that the relations of tone, translated into black and white, give a most interesting result.

The *Standard* was of this opinion seemingly, for its critic admired "Rest" because "its great quality of massiveness" had a "beautiful and delicately studied relationship of part to part," and because "its balance of low tones" went hand in hand with a "large decorative effect." "Rest" to my eyes needs but one thing: more attention might have been given to the choice of a model for the Virgin, because painters ought never to forget that each historic ideal of womankind has formed for itself an ideal beauty that artists may treat variously, but never

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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with such character as recalls the day-by-day realism of life. For any ideal held by mankind is imagination, is poetry, sanctified by long inheritance. From existing portraits we may suppose, for example, that Mary Queen of Scots was not beautiful, but no artist ought ever to dispute the old and popular belief in her loveliness. Joan of Arc, again, as typified by Bastien Lepage, has fine rustic character, but never in this world will that realism be accepted by the chivalry of men. Joan must stir all hearts with her radiant face and bewitching fervour; no artist can create a beauty too noble for her, as she belongs for all time to a universal admiration that forms vaguely exalted ideas of womanly graciousness. The Welsh peasant who said of Queen Victoria, in grievous disappointment, "Ah, but her face is just a mother's, look you," is an example of the yearning for something unusual that accompanies all popular idealisations. Yet modern art, misunderstanding this matter, has offended against a good many ancient and lasting ideals. It has forgotten that there are times when realism must rise from Mother Earth like a lark from its nest, and be near at the same moments to the dual points of heaven and home.

But if Brangwyn in his Virgin Mary had not enough confidence in his imagination, he certainly discovered a winning type of motherhood.

Turn we now to another religious painting, "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes," a work not without defects, but noble in conception. When this subject first occurred to him, Brangwyn consulted one of his most helpful friends, Dr. Tom Robinson, of London, who said, "Yes, and why should not Christ be strong enough

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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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physically to draw a net?" With this hint in mind the painter made some studies, only to find that his mind and hand recoiled from the perils of trying to represent the Saviour as the principal figure in a picture. It would be better to think of Christ as a distant spectator of His miracle, and from this standpoint the painting must be judged.

"The Miraculous Draught of Fishes" was first exhibited at the New Gallery in 1894, and then at the Paris Salon of the following year. It was, perhaps, the least tentative of the larger religious pictures that Brangwyn painted in those early days. In London, to be sure, it was too often criticised as if its painter had suddenly weakened, after an experience of thirty years; but he was gradually being recognised as a leader of our young painters, perhaps because his great successes in Paris were valued by Englishmen. M. Ary Renan had said a strong word for him in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, after speaking about the bizarre antiquity that our Academic school was then trying to revive. It was not the heroic antiquity to be found at the British Museum, said Ary Renan; it was a little decadent antiquity, a powdered and patched antiquity, curled and tawdry, mere fashion and imitation. "Where must you go in London to find a conscientious painting of life and light, of man and nature? Are there painters of reality? Are they all lumped together among the rejected whose acquaintance I should be so pleased to make?" It was at this point that M. Ary Renan remembered Brangwyn, and though he recognised that so young a man must be immature and uneven, he made haste to say: "No matter; the eye is happy before the frames of

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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this new-comer ; the eye opens and takes in a real joy. In France we shall be sincerely disappointed if Mr. Brangwyn does not keep the promises he is giving in his art."

The tone of that criticism gave the painter heart to work on, despite all opposition. He was told by one writer that "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes" was a big picture pretentiously conceived, that the disciples in it were effective, but in an Algerine pirate sort of way, and that the figure of Christ was painfully weak and conventional. Well now! Christ was represented in the distance ; and as the picture was lighted by an after-glow of sunset growing dim and misty, the Saviour was intended not to be *seen* in the composition, but *felt* there as a vague presence. It is very pleasant to remember that Mr. G. F. Watts was delighted with Brangwyn's intentions, and followed his doings from year to year. "I always admire your work very much and look out for it," he wrote on September 30, 1894. "I hope you won't give up your grand schemes of colour," he added the following day ; and again, "I think your treatment of broad masses of colour just the right thing for fresco." And here, too, are the opinions expressed by an American artist and writer, Mr. Lorado Taft, on "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes":—

"The picture was delightfully novel and individual in its point of view. The iridescent hues of the fishes were repeated in some sort throughout the entire canvas. Though in a sense an arbitrary or fanciful scheme—a dream picture—it was yet, withal, the work of a man whose every touch expressed vigour and confidence. I liked it. And what is considerably more important, the big French artists did likewise. Our good friend, Raffaelli, told me



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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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that there were just two pictures *aux Champs Elysées* that interested him—Henri Martin's big decoration for the Hotel de Ville, and Brangwyn's *Pêche Miraculeuse*." (*Arts for America*, December 1897.)

From the Paris Salon Mr. Taft came to London, and saw the Royal Academy and the New Gallery (1895). At both he found a picture by Brangwyn. "Rest" hung at the Academy. "There was nothing of the conventional religious painting in it, but still, in a way, it suggested the Holy Family. It impressed me as something weird and mighty, like a great half-hewn block in Michael Angelo's workshop, as it might have looked in the evening dusk; only here, again, was a charm of rich colouring. Portions recalled possibly Vedder's chocolates and greys, but instead of using these tones monotonously, they were flecked here and there with rich warm accents, as though a flood of orange and gold and colour of flame had been poured over the figures and foliage, while the background had a dull glow of live coals. Coming, as I had, from the realism of the French, and already well wearied by the indescribable fatuity and feebleness of the work around me, I turned to this triumphant canvas with a feeling of refreshment and pleasure difficult to describe."

The New Gallery came next:—

"I had scarce stepped into the principal hall when I became conscious of yet another of these strange, fascinating works. It was at the other end of the room . . . and when I reached it . . . I was indeed in the presence of one of the masterful pictures of our time. The impression was something tremendous: a great gaunt figure of a dying man seated upon a platform of rock, his emaciated



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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body supported by a rude wooden post. Opposite him, and subordinate, a priest and a young acolyte, who offer the agonised fanatic his last communion. A second glance and one perceives through the unusual perspective of the scene that its subject—and we as well—are supposed to be elevated to a great height; our lone sufferer can be no other than St. Simeon Stylites of old, upon the elevated column which he fondly hoped would bring him nearer God. Away down a dizzy depth and stretching to a far horizon were the streets and buildings of the city which the saint had renounced years before, and in the yet more distant distance a wall of darkening mountains and the blue waters of a shoreless sea. All was bathed in the golden haze of sunset, and it was glorious with colour and power. How it spoiled the little works about it! How thin and artificial they all looked! . . . Can the author of St. Simeon be a Londoner, a brother of the men who paint these things?"

This criticism can be put side by side with most of those that appeared in English papers. Its standpoint is different—more objective, free from dilettante prejudices, and responsive to vigour of treatment and to fine new schemes of colour. The ardent young American and Mr. G. F. Watts at the age of seventy-eight were greatly moved by the same qualities. But it is right and necessary for me to say that the picture of St. Simeon Stylites caught Brangwyn in two moods, and that he made a mistake when he departed from the composition of his original sketch.<sup>1</sup> Here St. Simeon was alone, dying in complete solitude,

<sup>1</sup> It was purchased by Mr. William O. Cole of Chicago. The other picture hangs in the Gallery of Modern Art at Venice.

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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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but finding his beliefs a companionship of resignation. Add to this any other figures and your work begins to speak of picture-making, and onlookers are disturbed because they begin to wonder how a priest and his acolyte mounted a pillar twenty-four yards high, or more, according to the legend. But after all, the story as told by the finished work is a matter of indifference. It is the wonderful harmony of good paint that makes this picture so expressive. "It is late in the day; twilight is approaching; the last ray of sunlight is finely sprinkled through the air around the figures above the roofs of the Syrian town, from which rises a transparent cloud, so thin that it is rather a breath, an exhalation, than a vapour; it is more surmised than seen. A flight of swallows glides past the saint; and the birds, with their arrow-swift and pleasing motions, observed in the precise Japanese way, greatly help to produce an impression of height and airiness . . ." <sup>1</sup> M. Ary Renan was not so well pleased, while M. Jourdain continued for some years to speak of the picture as "*l'inoubliable Siméon Stylite—une fouguese et superbe toile où les tons, violemment juxtaposées, se fondent pourtant dans un lumineux ensemble.*"

Still, religious art cannot be looked at exclusively from a modern point of view, and I remember a criticism that contrasted Brangwyn with Flandrin. It appeared in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, and was written by M. Lafenestre, who at that time was director of the Louvre. No judge could have been fairer than M. Lafenestre. He had studied Brangwyn's "Adoration of the Magi," <sup>2</sup> and although he

<sup>1</sup> "Art and Artists," by Max Nordau, pp. 233-234. T. Fisher Unwin.

<sup>2</sup> This painting belongs to Mr. E. Seegar of Berlin.

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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noticed several weak points, notably a lack of response in tenderness of technique to the poetry of the Madonna, he was much impressed by the way in which the three Magi told in their attitudes that they had indeed found the shrine where their gifts were to be offered. "*Ils ont des attitudes si graves et si recueillies, l'harmonie sourde et grise qui les enveloppe dégage tant de calme et d'apaisement, qu'on se surprend à rester, comme eux, en contemplation devant cette mère et cet enfant.*" M. Lafenestre noticed also that the painter's dominant feeling as a craftsman made his work more robust and more audacious than Flandrin's. True, Flandrin belonged to an earlier school of modern religious painting. There was a classical coldness in his rhythm of line, and he approached Bible subjects with a sort of timid dignity, unlike Tintoretto, Veronese, Michael Angelo, and Titian. Flandrin was quiescent in his moods, like Burne-Jones, and his manner was decorative, not pictorial. That was Flandrin's real merit; but he, like Burne-Jones, would not have hesitated to put aside a physical law if it threatened to impart a vigorous action to his regulated style, whose movement was as ordered as a clock keeping good time. I think here of two lines in a poem by Baudelaire:—

"Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes,  
Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris."

Yes, Flandrin could have said: "I hate the movement that upsets the lines, and never do I weep, and never do I laugh."

Now that form of religious art is not great in psychology. The Bible is the book of man; it contains an infinite



*[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]*

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.  
*From an Original Oil-Painting, now  
in the Art Gallery at Stuttgart.*









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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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variety of human nature and conduct, all seen in actions briefly related ; and any painter who would take his inspirations from this great volume of dramatic poems, must respond in his emotions to the life of each subject chosen, both in its outward aspects and in its inward and spiritual meaning. Flandrin did not realise the truth of this because he had set ideas about beauty, and was afraid to ruffle the composure of his quiet and mannered adherence to rules. His ideal of beauty had a slow pulse, very little of passion or desire, and very calm nerves. There are minds to whom this ideal of beauty is a joy ; others enlarge it just a little, adding some human warmth ; but if you press for a definition of beauty from each of a dozen critics, you will understand why artistic criticism is usually so little catholic. The beauty that appeals to Brangwyn is in accordance with the definition given by Lord Morley in an article on Browning's "The Ring and the Book." Beauty cannot mean anything more than such an arrangement and disposition of the parts of a work as, first kindling a great variety of dispersed emotions and thoughts in the mind of the spectator, finally concentrate them in a single mood of joyous, sad, meditative, or interested delight. A sculptor, a painter, a musician, a poet, have each a special means of producing this final and superlative impression ; each is bound, in one direction and another, by certain limits of expression imposed upon him by the medium in which he works. A painter is greatly favoured in three ways : from first to last, and in a second, he can judge his effect as a whole, unlike writers, so that his art is less difficult in composition ; next, his human actions are made real in a witchery of colour ; and then, his critics

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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see what he has done all at once, as in a vision that appears suddenly, while in literature we have to read till the piece ends, and our judgment is determined by two difficult things: practice in reading with attention and practice in remembering what we read.

If we misunderstand a painter's aim it is our own fault, because we can stand before his work and see it as a whole, without any effort of memory. The useful and necessary thing is to clear our minds of all dogmatising about classic beauty, and to see whether the painter has done justice, in his own way, to his conception of a chosen subject. He has taken a given theme—that is to say, a given set of actions, all alive with human character and emotion; and this theme has a definite setting, and is subject to the magic play of light and colour. If the painter feels in a dramatic manner each part of his composition, the sentiment of his technique will respond to the sentiment of each part, just as Shakespeare is a child in one rôle, a woman in another, and a murderer in a third. When a painter is young there are always sudden breaks in the changing emotion shown by his craftsmanship, for he is drawn to things that he does with the least difficulty and therefore with the greatest enjoyment; and it was for this reason that M. Lafenestre dwelt upon the strong points in Brangwyn's "Adoration of the Magi," without attacking any weakness.

In England, on the other hand, such attacks were perhaps inevitable, because many of our critics were then accustomed to a mannered kind of historical painting, so they disliked the realisation of life in religious work. "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes" was condemned,

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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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more than once, because Brangwyn, having in his mind the uncommon weight of the fishes, had given energy to the bearded disciple who strained at the fishing net. There would have been nothing miraculous in a little draught easy to be landed, so that muscular action belonged to the poetry of the scene; but the painter did not allow this truth to be too prominent, since he veiled it with evening light. One may see in all this what M. Geffroy has noticed—“*l'imagination est celle d'un poète.*”

For the rest, while painting these religious pictures, Brangwyn exhibited a good many other works, mainly incidents from African and Eastern life, like his “Trade on the Beach,” his “Orange Market,” and “The Goat-herds,” a picture of life-sized figures, perhaps a little too rugged in handling, but proving that the artist had found his own style. M. Ary Renan said that he shone “*comme un morceau de corail dans l'arène battue par tous*”; and it is not often that a young painter attains a good and distinctive manner. Indeed, modern education and work act on the young as running water acts on pebbles, wearing away their individuality and giving to them all a similar polish. Brangwyn was withdrawn from this mediocrity by a youth of hard experience; that is why London critics did not always know what to make of his free strength and naturalness. Every one of his sunny pictures met with a very mixed reception. Here, for example, are two criticisms of “Trade on the Beach,” one by the *Athenæum*, and the other by the *Morning Post*:—

*Athenæum.*—“A large, heavily painted, not to say coarse, badly composed group of costumes rather than men, placed upon a sandy shore. The scene is supposed

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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to be African, the effect that of hot and intense sunlight. At no point has the painter succeeded; in fact he has completely failed in nearly every respect. Such work as this may be bold, but it is not fine art."

*Morning Post*.—"Admirably realises the effect of hot sunshine, and is to be commended for its beauty of colour and equal grace and vigour of general execution. The plan of the picture necessitates the intervention of plenty of space between the spectator and the painting. The work is altogether one of such eminent merit as cannot fail to bring fresh access of fame to a painter who has already achieved well-deserved celebrity."

I forget now who wrote for the *Morning Post* between 1890 and 1895, but his opinions on Brangwyn's work were all confirmed on the Continent, and they were encouraging at a time when abuse was common.

Better times were coming, little by little, bringing with them patrons like Mr. T. L. Devitt, Dr. Tom Robinson, Mr. Kitson, Mr. Kenneth S. Anderson, Mr. Mansergh, Mr. MacCulloch, and others; as well as sympathetic critics like the editor of the *Studio Magazine*, ever a true friend. Since then there has been no concession to any popular notions as to what attractive painting should be. For Brangwyn, like Mr. Rudyard Kipling, has formed his own style, and his progress has followed the line of least resistance, developing those qualities that come to him unsought, like his joy in colour, and his feeling for breadth, scale, power, and decorative arrangement. At this moment he stands at the head of all those British painters who from time to time have turned from easel pictures to the larger and bolder conventions of style that belong to

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## *Sun-Colour and Religious Art*

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art in its relation to mural decoration. He is a workman in the old, big way, but in a manner distinctively his own. It is quite unnecessary for him to sign his name. We know his work as we know the music of Wagner, the prose of Hugo and Carlyle; and whether it attracts you or repels you, its life is spontaneous and organic. Of Brangwyn's art at its best we may say what Cardinal Newman said of something else: "Such work is always open to criticism, and it is always above it."

And this being so, we can study its later characteristics, not year by year, as we have done in the first pictures, but from wider standpoints, remembering that no artist ever progresses without set-backs. Ill-health, unsatisfactory commissions, troubles, bereavements, came to him every now and again; and criticism must pass by in silence all defects of art arising from such causes.



## CHAPTER V

### CHARACTERISTICS: LIGHT AND COLOUR

**M**ODERN painting has taken for its motto the last words spoken by Goethe—"More light"; and Goethe, like modern painting, developed theories on colour. This hobby became an obsession, and the great man believed that science ought to adopt his careful observations. But the phenomena of light are like mirages, and the poet's theories on colour are forgotten. Have painters succeeded where Goethe failed? Have they found some great new ways of manipulating paint, as variously charming as those conventional colour-schemes that we still enjoy in the work of Old Masters? If so, is painting to creep nearer and nearer to an imitation of things seen? or should we own frankly that because tubes of pigment cannot give us real daylight and sun-colours, it matters not what methods and conventions a painter adopts or in part invents, if only he belongs to his own time and is born to delight us with a poetry of coloured forms nobly orchestrated into uncommon harmonies? Briefly, can art ever approach too near to nature?

If these questions could be answered conclusively, modern art would benefit very much, and criticism of art would become ampler and more charitable. Turner was

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## *Characteristics*

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ridiculed, Cotman died broken-hearted in great poverty, and many others have had long and stern battles against routine prejudices, like Brangwyn. Are we ever to possess great painters without foolish efforts to break their courage? Surely it is high time that a critical appreciation of art arrived at some catholicity in common sense and goodwill.

But there are many difficulties to be overcome. First of all, critics may be divided into two classes with strongly opposed limitations. In one class we find the most modern men, whose aims are often sectarian, backing up this or that little group of experimentalists. Some of them even try to like the abortive rubbish that appears in certain foreign magazines as a valuable new discovery in æsthetic ideals. Perhaps it may lead to something good, but at present it is nothing more than a bungled trial-trip, and ought therefore to be kept away from public criticism, just as men of science leave in the dark their fruitless experiments. Why should art display to all the world her tentative efforts, her laboratory research? A horrible vanity tells many young craftsmen to publish their failures, regardless of the harm they do to a whole profession; for the people jeer and take sides with the other school of criticism, whose likes and dislikes are very conservative and dogmatic. Nothing could be worse than that. For, indeed, consider how a conservative critic has formed his opinions. He will speak to you by the hour about the Old Masters, and presently you see that all his ideas on light and colour are out of date even as regards those Masters, because colour is greatly changed by time and varnish, and none can tell now what it was like when the strong men of the

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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past finished their work. Was Rubens garish? Was Veronese crude? Did Correggio become too dappled in his values? We do not know, neither can we learn from criticisms contemporary with the pictures; for these are useless for such a purpose because methods of art used to be accepted as a matter of course, like fashions in costumes. What the eyes look at day by day is never seen quite truly. But we may be sure that when the Old Masters painted for the dim light of churches they gave their schemes of colour a high key, and did not mind when their effects looked crude in a stronger light.

Conservative critics forget all this, and imagine that the best of all educations for the sense of colour is a pilgrimage through galleries filled with old pictures. By this means they attune their eyesight to varnished colours hundreds of years old; and then they import their misinstruction into their written comments on modern painting. At one time they blamed John Constable because of his high lights, which they called his "snows." Constable replied that a few years would give tone to every part, and already his work is becoming too dark. To-day a conservative critic meets with many painters who, at times, annoy that fine old museum, his mind, and Brangwyn is among them. Let us remember, then, that while modern painting has been trying to get nearer in its colour to the subtleties and gradations of tone that sunlight produces out of doors, a growing cult of the Old Masters has tried to bring into vogue a liking for such colour harmonies as time and varnish have deepened and matured.

This leads inevitably to much bad criticism. For a hundred years, or rather more, the art world has been

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## *Characteristics*

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shaken by cyclones of controversy, always arising from some realistic tendency that appeared wrong to a talkative dogmatism bred in museums. Some painters have lived as martyrs, and many others have been driven by opposition from quiet study into self-conscious chatter about themselves and their theories. The French Impressionists were very ill-treated. It is true they were not men of great imaginative genius, but they loved colour passionately, and there was nothing remarkable in their wish to represent it by means of a new convention in the use of paint. Their persecution was not only a crime ; it was silly, and for that no excuse can be made. At the very moment when science was doing the most marvellous things, the artistic world had nothing better to do than to treat with cruel ignorance the research-work of Manet, Monet, Degas, and their companions ; and the cause of all the disturbance was merely in paint what Goethe had done peacefully in words ; that is to say, it was an attempt to revise earlier fixed ideas on light and colour.

It is necessary for us to consider here how Brangwyn stands in relation to this phase of art, but without recalling one by one the main principles for which the Impressionists fought. Scientifically, they were right principles, but science and art are not near and friendly neighbours. It is certain, too, that the science of Impressionism will soon be excelled by instantaneous photography in colour. Sisley and Monet are excellent as mechanics of light ; they are minor poets of the sun. Mr. George Moore has fought a brave fight on behalf of the French Impressionists, but some prefer the analysis given by another of their critics, Camille Mauclair :—

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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“There has been a disparity between Realism and the technique of Impressionism. Its realistic origin has sometimes made it vulgar. It has often treated indifferent subjects in a grand style, and it has too easily beheld life from the anecdotal side. It has lacked psychologic synthesis (if we except Degas). It has too willingly denied all that exists hidden under the apparent reality of the universe, and has affected to separate painting from the ideologic faculties which rule over all art. Hatred of academic allegory, defiance of symbolism, abstraction and romantic scenes, have led it to refuse to occupy itself with a whole order of ideas, and it has had the tendency of making the painter beyond all a workman. It was necessary at the moment of its arrival, but it is no longer necessary now, and the painters understand this themselves. Finally, it has too often been superficial even in obtaining effects; it has given way to the wish to surprise the eyes, of playing with tones merely for love of cleverness. . . . It has indulged in useless exaggerations, faults of composition and of harmony, and all this cannot be denied.”<sup>1</sup>

In plain words, the French Impressionists were brilliant and ardent students, not imaginative painters of a lofty rank. And yet, with all their narrowness, they achieved one result which has had a world-wide influence, giving hints to all painters of note who have risen into fame since Monet in 1885 made his first luminous pictures. That one result is not light on the surface of things such as the Old Masters produced with their conven-

<sup>1</sup> “The French Impressionists,” by Camille Mauclair. Translated by P. G. Konody. Duckworth.



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## *Characteristics*

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tional methods; it is sunlight enveloping things on all sides, bathing them in its rays, and forming an atmosphere of enchantment, that changes as the sun in its day's journey goes from east to west. Monet proved to the world that a haystack is transfigured by the radiance of sunset as plainly as a lake of water, and that a common pebble, lighted by the travelling sunshine, is a jewel with chameleon tints. Turner had shown vastly more than that, uniting new and exquisite discoveries in artistic colour to a majesty of design unrivalled in the art of any country; but Monet and his companions have been more useful to other painters, just because their pictures as a rule were studies only, not works of inventive imagination. Their defects were so evident that only foolish youngsters copied them, while Cottet and Sorolla, Sargent and Brangwyn, Segantini and Michetti, Liebermann, Thaulow, Lavery, Harrison, Zuloaga, and Émile Claus, got an invaluable hint here and there. Nothing can be more surprising than the variety of individual fine work that would never have been what it is if the French Impressionists had not dared to offend against the tenets of academic criticism. Compare Théo van Rysselberghe with Rusiñol, Brangwyn with Besnard, Kroyer with Guthrie, Verheyden with Dario de Regòyos, Heymans with Boldini, or with Ménard and Le Sidaner.

From the first, if we set aside two or three pictures, Brangwyn sowed no wild oats in the least like those which to this day show in German painting how harmful Impressionism can be when devotees have neither humour nor individuality of judgment. The first thing that a man of genius learns when he begins to search into his



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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colour-box for more light and colour, is to be afraid of the very things after which he seeks, because the nearer his art gets to nature the more conscious he becomes that his pigments are coarse and his effects neither art nor nature. Lesser men, on the other hand, when they decline to work within the limits of a school convention, often get so enthralled by the sunlight that they feel scorn for other qualities and enjoyments. For instance, when Sisley was at work on a snow-scene, his one aim was to show the effect of a certain light on snow, and he did not care a row of pins for anything else. His trees were often badly indicated, and I don't remember any picture of his in the least charmed with human life and labour. Light and colour were his only actors. And this applies also to the bulk of Monet's work. Now this passion for light goes too far; it is a sort of drunkenness, and painters have something better to do than to over-excite their optic nerves.

Brangwyn understood this from the first, for he made no experiments in light and colour unassociated with difficult problems of design and character-painting. It was fortunate that he chose this different road. Had he trained himself to be content with sketches and notes, he would have feared the risk of trying to pass from rapid impression into a completed picture; like many a clever student who paints well in a life-class and fails hopelessly in a commissioned portrait. Brangwyn, then, has never looked upon his work as light and colour only, but as colour and light in their relation to other problems of art; and he believes, quite justly, that a painting should always look well and be attractive as a black and white. Not



THE WINDMILL, DIXMUDE.  
*Reproduced from an Original Etching.*





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## *Characteristics*

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only ought it to be distinctive in its form, in its design, but its presentation of life and character needs dramatic sensibility. In other words, a painter should be emotional in many ways outside his passion for subtleties of atmosphere.

Take the question of landscape-painting and consider it largely, keeping in mind any works of Brangwyn that you know well, whether Eastern subjects, or glimpses of the Thames through wreathing smoke, or a romance of old houses felt with an emotion akin to that in Piranesi and Méryon. Landscapes of this kind are not only human; they have their own literature, inasmuch as they compel us to feel and think, to pass from their value as things observed to their poetry as historic backgrounds to the drama of human life. Méryon has such a feeling for old architecture that some of his etched plates are quite uncanny with awe and pathos, as if bygone generations haunt ancient homes in presences unseen, that Méryon enables us to feel. This comes from a great, instinctive liking for the history suggested by the derelicts of time; and Brangwyn has shown the same rare quality in landscapes of several kinds, ranging from old houses at Hammersmith to stranded men-of-war, and from a storm beating over tall trees along a road to a great windmill standing out, huge and gaunt, against a wind-blown sky full of clouds. To paint in this way is to realise that landscape belongs to man and to human history, and owes its importance in art to that fact mainly, if not entirely.

This was understood by the old painters who composed classic landscapes, for they never failed to touch



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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the educated mind of their times by introducing ruined temples, broken columns, and figures from ancient poetry and mythology, so that their work might awaken memories and associations. Turner passed through this old school into a Wordsworthian mood of style, as in the "Frosty Morning," and Wordsworth himself was preceded by the sweet serene manliness of Gainsborough's rustic art. "There is a charm," says Allan Cunningham, "about the children running wild in the landscapes of Gainsborough, which is more deeply felt by comparing them with those of Reynolds. The children of Sir Joshua are indeed beautiful creatures, free, artless, and lovely; but they seem all to have been nursed on velvet laps, and fed with golden spoons. There is a rustic grace, an untrained wildness about the children of the other, which speak of the country and of neglected toilets. They are the offspring of Nature, running free among woods as wild as themselves." It is all quite true; and do you suppose that Gainsborough could have done that with equal success if his eyes and thoughts had been like Monet's, or Sisley's, for ever seeking for minute gradations of colour under the influence of ever-changing light?

Yes, too much attention may be given to that part of the daily inspiration that painters take from things seen. Find your own gamut of colour as soon as you can, and then use it as a medium in which to unify all the other emotional qualities that imaginative work needs. Brangwyn has followed that method, freeing himself from all hypersensitive cravings for more light and colour than his paint will give him without injury to his subject.

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## *Characteristics*

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Even in his "Rajah's Birthday,"<sup>1</sup> where his impression of Indian sunlight at midday is not only radiant but quite near to the spectator, transfiguring objects in the foreground, his gamut of colour is unstrained, and his handling everywhere is free, ample, and joyous. There is not a trace of tired manipulation. The blaze of light being intense, your eyes do not at first resolve the plots of colour into the merry scene which they represent; but presently the many-tinted figures in the crowd, emerging one by one from the sunshine, begin to jostle around the great elephants; and you see that the noble animals, bedecked like houris, have a half-humorous look in their eyes, that elephants of state assume when little human creatures amuse themselves in a noisy and feeble way. That is how a mammoth must have looked if he ever stooped from his dignity and allowed himself to work for the diminutive hairy men who made their homes in caves. A mammoth might have done that as a sort of joke, just as elephants do, apparently.

I saw "A Rajah's Birthday" this year at the White-chapel Art Gallery, where it hung in company with many good pictures that represented the history of British art during the last twenty years; and its triumph was very remarkable. It was alive, while all the other works were paint and skill more or less animated. To pass from canvas to canvas noticing the qualities of each, and seeing their varieties of expert skill, was gentle exercise on

<sup>1</sup> The reproduction of "A Rajah's Birthday" given in this book shows a large picture in a small plate. This means, inevitably, a great loss of scale, and much sunlight has vanished from the colour. Chromatic processes get their best results from dark pictures, because the yellow block, so important in sunny effects, is always the most defective and troublesome.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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a rare hot day, and quite entertaining. But "A Rajah's Birthday" had a very different effect. It was a great surprise. How had such life and colour been achieved? How had the East been summoned to Whitechapel? Why should paint have organic life in this one picture only? Across the hall was a fine canvas by the late Mr. C. W. Furse; it represented a great team of cart-horses splashed with sunlight, and pulling with all their might at a low wagon laden with timber. They moved over uneven ground, and behind them a bank of yellow sand glittered with spangled lights and shadows. I turned from this picture to Brangwyn's, again and again, marvelling at the difference between them. They might represent British art anywhere and win admiration. But Furse, despite his great talent, despite his keen observation, despite his subtleness of handling, had accomplished much less than Brangwyn, though Brangwyn had worked at a heat without pausing to consider whether this or that detail might be considered unintelligible. For one thing, Furse had missed truth of impression in the most essential part of his subject. The wheels of his wagon were wrong in weight and strength; they could not possibly bear the immense strain put upon them by four powerful horses hauling a dead weight of timber along a gully of sand. And no sooner did this mistake become evident, than the whole picture became unsteady on those ill-felt wheels. On the other hand, Brangwyn's impressionism was balanced and complete. It had the right proportion of action and quietness; and there was no break in the nervous energy of its handling, though some parts are more felicitous than others.



THE RAJAH'S BIRTHDAY.

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THE RAJAH'S BIRTHDAY.  
*Reproduced by permission of R. H.  
Kitson, Esq., Leeds.*





THE RAJAH'S BIRTHDAY  
*Reproduced by permission of R. H. Kitson, Esq., Leeds*





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## *Characteristics*

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Although I have spoken of "A Rajah's Birthday" as impressionism, I do not mean any such impressionism as the French experimentalists would have given. Far from that. Brangwyn's colour and technique are not outside a direct descent from the boldest painters of the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> Their originality continues a tradition of virile and direct skill; and it does not try to make real all the effects of full sunlight. For instance, when rays of sunshine are intensely ardent, the objects around which they play seem to lose much of their solidity, becoming variously unsubstantial; and Monet is praised by Camille Mauclair because his midday scenes show how all material silhouettes—in trees, in rocks, in hayricks—are annihilated, volatilised by the fiery vibration of the dust of sunlight, so that a beholder gets really blinded, just as he would in actual sunlight. "Sometimes even there are no more shadows at all, nothing that could serve to indicate the values and to create contrasts of colour. Everything is light, and the painter seems easily to overcome these terrible difficulties, lights upon lights, thanks to a gift of marvellous subtlety of vision." Yes; but there is another side to this matter. Monet's colour, after a few years of maturing, is not more luminous than Brangwyn's, while his peculiar brushwork has often a texture rather like those pictures in tinted wools that ladies worked at the end of the eighteenth century. Trees, earth, water, skies, architecture, have pretty much the same weight and volume, though the eyes always feel that however fiercely the sun pours down, buildings must have more solidity

<sup>1</sup> Ojetti, the great Italian critic, is very urgent on this point.

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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than their waving flags, and tree-trunks greater bulk than their massed but quivering foliage. There are values of weight and substance as well as values of tone and tint, and art can never afford to pass them by as non-existent.

We see, then, that there are two forms of impressionism, one having for its aim the realisation of atmosphere, and the other showing that art is concerned with life in all its manifestations, and with substance in all its varieties and gradations. "A Rajah's Birthday" is in the open air and its colour has beauty and brilliance, but the sunlight does not prevent us from seeing that elephants are ponderous, that a bustling crowd moves, and that banners are heavier than turbans and dress materials.

Still, a biographer has no right to be one-sided, and I must mention the fact that some critics agree that "A Rajah's Birthday" is too bright with sunlight, and if they find it so, then for them it is too bright. While I looked at this picture in the Whitechapel Gallery, an artist came up with a lady, and I overheard an exchange of opinion, running something like this:

*Artist.* "Great Scot! Magnificent! *Ripping!* Only one man could do that. Lord, how thin and useless my own work seems by comparison. Hang it!"

*Lady.* "I'm beginning to see something after screwing up my eyes. This picture needs a big parasol. But I like those elephants now I begin to see them. Yes, and that crowd of lively figures grows into distinctness. Still, why paint movement and fun if they are not to be seen *at once*? I hate full sunlight out of doors—blink at it like an owl; and this picture bothered my eyes at first."

Points of view are always interesting, and a good

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## *Characteristics*

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picture creates many. Ruskin argued very well that although the right of being obscure is not one to be lightly claimed, yet all distinct drawing must be bad drawing, and nothing can be right till it is unintelligible. "Excellence of the highest kind, without obscurity, cannot exist." Why a critic should wish to see everything all in one glance I do not know, but you must have noticed that in art-criticism Englishmen are fond of two phrases—"too obscure" and "too obvious." Let a painter miss one of these verdicts, and behold! the other awaits him.

It is certainly possible for an artist to be *too* obscure; he may forget that his own vision adds distinctness to hinted forms, the eyes seeing what the mind wants them to see. This occurred in a very remarkable way when Lombroso found much evidence of criminality in photographs of very reputable Parisian market-women, these photographs having been sent to him by mistake for portraits of criminals. Plainly, then, it is necessary for all craftsmen to revise their own impressions of the work they do, so as to be sure that what is distinct to them will be sufficiently clear to onlookers also; and this applies above all to painters of great force, who put so much energy into their swift technique that they sometimes fear to change a defect lest they should add a patch to a homogeneous bit of painting. Then the mind begins to work, and soon the defect is no longer noticed by obedient eyes. I believe that Brangwyn has stumbled into this pitfall on two or three occasions, like every other rapid master of the brush; but years bring patience, and he finds already that he studies with enjoyment many things which would have fretted him a few years ago.

## CHAPTER VI

### LIGHT AND COLOUR—*continued*

ONE thing in "A Rajah's Birthday" is particularly interesting; it is the fact that light and glowing colour are found in it together—not by any means a common thing in pictures. One might suppose that because every tint in nature is simply an irradiation of light, composed of the same elements as the sun's rays, a sensation of luminous air would be attained inevitably in paint by truthful values, or by using the seven tints of the spectrum in spots of colour juxtaposed, leaving their individual rays of light to blend when we look towards them at a certain distance; and yet, somehow, anyhow, that blending often produces sunny colour without the spaciousness of air. In other words, light and colour very often are antagonistic to each other in painting. When you attain both at the same time, it is an inspiration, like music.

This point the French Impressionists often forgot. When we learn from their principles that atmosphere is the real subject of a picture, since everything represented upon it exists only through its medium; when we hear from Manet that colour is light, and light the principal "person" in a painting, we remember pictures of theirs in which there is considerably less light than







THE BRASS SHOP.

*Reproduced from the large Oil-Painting.*



THE BRASS SHOP

*Reproduced from the large Oil on Canvas*



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## *Light and Colour*

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we find in a clear sky by Cuyp, in the palest landscape by Corot, or in a tinted water-colour by Cozens. For it is genius acting impulsively, not reason working scientifically, that permeates paint with wind-blown air or with sunned atmosphere. Art pours air with sunshine into many a monochrome, then she declines to receive it when you offer her, orchestrated, the seven tints of the spectrum. You rub in a sky or a background, taking no trouble at all, and it is full of light, of air; next day you try to paint it, and your work looks as hard as lead or as uninviting as cotton-wool. These matters are beyond explanation; but we may take it as an axiom that intense light in painting is apt to look airless. Do you not feel that in Norwegian pictures, when your eyes ache for some relief from the unmysterious gleaming of far-off waters and hills? And then, as to the action of brilliant sunshine, as on red and white in the middle distance, it brings objects forward out of their plane, so that they appear much nearer to us; and the closer those objects are to our eyes, the more their radiance dominates all attention. That is why art lowers their key and gets fresh air in subtle ways that no painter of genius can ever explain. Monet's work looks rather like a recipe, while a first-rate Brangwyn has the unsought charm of an improvisation.

Further, the idea that painters borrow from nature their finer harmonies of colour is frequently quite wrong. Colour very often comes to them from that higher consciousness that surprises the ordinary brain-consciousness with intuitions, premonitions, and sudden day-dreams. Sir Oliver Lodge now regards it as definitely proved

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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that our consciousness is much larger than the consciousness that manifests itself through the brain; that outside and beyond what we know normally as consciousness there exists a great field to which no name except the name of consciousness can be given; because we get from it certain emotions—certain impulses, luminous ideas, and quick warnings—that rule us despite all the logic of ordinary and normal experience. Genius when at work brings in flashes from that other consciousness many things that vanish from memory unless they find immediate interpretation into some form of art; and we may be sure that harmonies of colour, like other poetic elements, enter into inspired workmanship of genius. Milton says nobly that when a poet, at the command of God, takes a trumpet to blow a dolorous or thrilling blast, it rests not with his will what he shall say, or what he shall conceal. And this being so, there are evident limits to realism in all creative arts.

I see in a good many criticisms that Brangwyn is a realist in colour, yet he could not give you any account of his work as a colourist, other than this—that such and such effects came of their own accord, without any conscious reasoning on his part. So, too, with all genuine painters. Turner was marvellous in his inspirations of what one may call chromo-spiritualism, though Ruskin fancied that his friend had nature always before his mind's eye. Turner, of course, being a wonderful poet in his art, transcended nature with his otherworldliness. His finest effects were unpremeditated.

There is, though, in Brangwyn's case, as in Turner's, one point that belongs more or less to the research of

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## *Light and Colour*

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art—namely, his studies from the first have united oil-painting and water-colour, and the translucent brilliance of the latter medium has influenced his use of oil-pigments. Consider this point for a moment. If you put water-colour drawings against the light, in some dim corner of your room, you will find that they are still full of brilliance, the cream-white of the paper shining through each wash of colour. An oil-picture in the same position would look heavy, dull, and lifeless. Now, many of our English painters—from Gainsborough and Wilson to Turner, Bonington, Constable, De Wint, Cox, and J. S. Cotman—have profited by this difference between oils and water-colours. Not only did they work in both mediums, but to some extent they tried, consciously or unconsciously, to get in oils something of the translucent and beautiful light that water-colours gave on cream-tinted paper. Turner was particularly scornful of the heaviness peculiar to oiled pigments. During his first period, when his colour was as dark as Daniell's or De Louthembourg's, he sprinkled sand over a prepared canvas, then let it dry hard; and upon this gritty ground he painted his shadows in transparent tints, so that the particles of sand might shine through like little lamps, giving a sparkle akin to that of textured paper under washes of watered pigment. From this trick he passed into polychrome effects ever higher and higher in key, substituting for the subdued chiaroscuro of all early landscape a balanced diminution of opposition throughout the scale, and trying to take the lowest portion of the scale truly, and merging the upper part in high light. It was Turner water-colour in oil-paint.



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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I shall speak in a later chapter of Brangwyn's water-colours, but here is the place to mention the effect which they have had on the quality of his paint in oils. It is a fact that no artist can experiment in water-colour without acquiring a delicacy of perception for the finer niceties of tint and tone, that prevents him from being heavy and dull in the more virile medium of oil pigments. This alone is enough to explain why British landscapes at their best are better than any similar work by foreign artists. Contrast a first-rate De Wint in oil with a Théodore Rousseau, choosing by each a picture of dark trees sketched on a cloudy day, and you will find that De Wint is the purer colourist. Like Brangwyn, he puts an airy, inward life into masses of the darkest greens, and his handling has a featherweight strong touch, surprisingly light and easy and spontaneous. De Wint has outlived all the landscape men of his time who scorned water-colour. Holland, too, like Müller, was a worker in both mediums; and so was J. F. Lewis.

To water-colour Brangwyn owes a part of his equipment as a painter, and, curiously enough, the qualities that water-colour encourages are very akin to those that the great Venetians loved and obtained. Reynolds, after years of close research into the harmonies of Venetian painting, gave it as a general principle that the masses of light in a picture must be of a warm mellow tint, yellow, red, or cream-white, and that all cold colours—blues, greys, and greens—must be kept out of these warm masses, and be used only to support them and to set them off. For this purpose, he said, a small proportion of cold colours will be sufficient. "Let this conduct be reversed;



Mars and Venus

MARS AND VENUS.  
*Reproduced from the large  
Oil-Painting in the Municipal  
Art Gallery, Dublin.*



MARS AND VENUS  
*Reproduced from the large Oil-Painting in the Municipal Art Gallery, Dublin*



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## *Light and Colour*

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let the light be cold and the surrounding colours warm, as we often see in the works of Roman and Florentine painters, and it will be outside the power of art, even in the hands of Rubens and Titian, to make a picture splendid and harmonious." There is some exaggeration here, for Reynolds speaks to young students; he wants to underline the danger of trying to prove that his rule is not without exceptions. It may be called a rule, I think, because it is illustrated in the work of all colourists. Let us then see how it appears in a picture by Brangwyn.

We will choose from his colour exercises, rapid sketches brushed off usually in a day, sometimes in two or three sittings, each subject a complete orchestration, and often with a crowd of figures in action, like "The Return of the Sacred Flag from Mecca." This brilliant and joyous sketch being too animated for description, we will take the Rabelaisian fantasy called "Mars and Venus," of which a colour-print is given here in little. It is a *jeu d'esprit* on a classic fable, and note the composition and its colour—this last, by the way, being richer in the original sketch, of course. The contrasts between cold tints and warm are exceedingly good: they *sing*, they have voices that foil each other in interchanging effects. That blue in the centre, set against yellow drapery in one place, and elsewhere against orange and yellow fruit in an old brass dish, is the coldest tint in the whole picture. Orange and yellow, this time enlivened by deep ruby red, are repeated in the figure behind Mars, a figure holding a dark vase against the white shirt worn by that warrior, who jokes as he trifles with an orange. I wish the



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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colour-print could give the full variety of flesh tints, with their warm health set off by chill reflected lights; but no discord appears in this mechanical reproduction, that takes some life from every part. Note particularly the fundamental opposition between yellow and black—a thing loved by painters so different in all respects as Turner and Rubens; and if you add cold grey to any warm tint in this sketch—to the yellow or the orange hues, or to the notes of red—you will understand what Reynolds meant.

Again, it was worth while to paint this fantasy if for no other purpose than to show with ease the pulsation of reflected light in the jeering face of Mars. Brangwyn's treatment of reflected light is always vital, and we know that modern painting differs from elder schools in its more conscious liking for luminous reflections in shadows, their tremulous gradations and their contrasts between cold and warm hues. Ruskin never liked this innovation, declaring that students—and many advanced masters also—filled a shadow with so much reflection that it looked as if some one had been walking around the object with a candle. For all that, reflected light is enchanted light; it makes ugliness beautiful, it sends colour to play in a fairyland of shades. Who does not know its bewitching playfulness when it darts through deep shadows like sudden hope flashing through minds darkened by grief? Yet Ruskin went so far as to believe that the Mediterranean coast lacked beauty because the radiance of reflected sunshine permeated everywhere and made each effect "too pale." As for quite modern art, that studies fire at noon, and is dazzled by the flashes

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## *Light and Colour*

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of day, it did not exist for Ruskin, as Mrs. Meynell points out in her thoughtful and admirable study.<sup>1</sup>

Brangwyn, in another sketch, illustrated here, studies reflected light under unusual difficulties. The subject represents a by-street shop of household metal-work in France. The principal figure is a consumptive-looking down-at-heel in a brilliant green coat which is much too large for him. Negligently, his back towards us, he holds a big copper jug in his right hand, and with a sort of cowering half-heartedness, his head bent, he listens to directions from his master and mistress. In a moment or two he will start off on his journey to some customer, and then stop for a glass at the nearest cabaret. There is a fragment of human wreckage inside that green coat. And the master of the shop is equally typical in another way. Light plays around his keen face; with a tenderness peculiar to humble foreign craftsmen—it is rarely seen in England—he holds in both hands a small coffee-pot recently finished; and one cannot imagine him in any other clothes except his old white apron, his blue trousers, the bickering sabots, and that well-worn cap, which has pressed down his ears into a fixed position of listening expectation. This fellow is a working craftsman all the year round, all day long; and perhaps he sleeps in his cap through fear of draughts from a window that is never opened. His good wife, neat in white and rose, stands almost in shadow, behind the copper and brass vessels; and other persons are seen beyond her, against a wall dappled with sunshine. It is a large picture, and see the skill with which that

<sup>1</sup> "John Ruskin," pp. 204-206. By Mrs. Meynell.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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bright green coat is worked into a difficult colour scheme. As to the still-life, the metal pots and pans, their handling could not well be bettered, but a colour-print cannot give their sparkle and reflected lights.

In other recent sketch-pictures character and intricate illumination are studied together. There is one of "Card Players" in a room. The setting is novel and good. Under a sort of counter draped with cloth a woman and a man sit in huddled attitudes absorbed in a game of cards; above them, lying at full length on the counter, is a boy, who glances humorously at the man's cards, while a lad below, finger on lip, whispers advice to the female gambler, though she looks quite sharp enough to protect her interests by unfair means. Near the boy is another onlooker, a veteran gamester with round eyes and a queer oval face having the alertness of a jack-daw. The chiaroscuro is difficult, deep shadows giving their own varying degrees of light to recesses of different depths. The highest brilliance shines from a white waistcoat worn by the male card-player, a part of whose naked back is seen against it. Every part is brushed in with joyous verve, and the shadows will not deepen with age into a dark airlessness, as may happen to a good many modern Dutch pictures.

By way of contrast I will mention now a large and elaborate picture recently bought for the Johannesburg Art Gallery. It was exhibited at the Academy in 1908; it has for its subject "The Return from the Promised Land." On a cloudy day of intense heat the spies with their trophies of fruit pass over the crest of a gentle slope and begin to go down hill. Great bunches of grapes, some



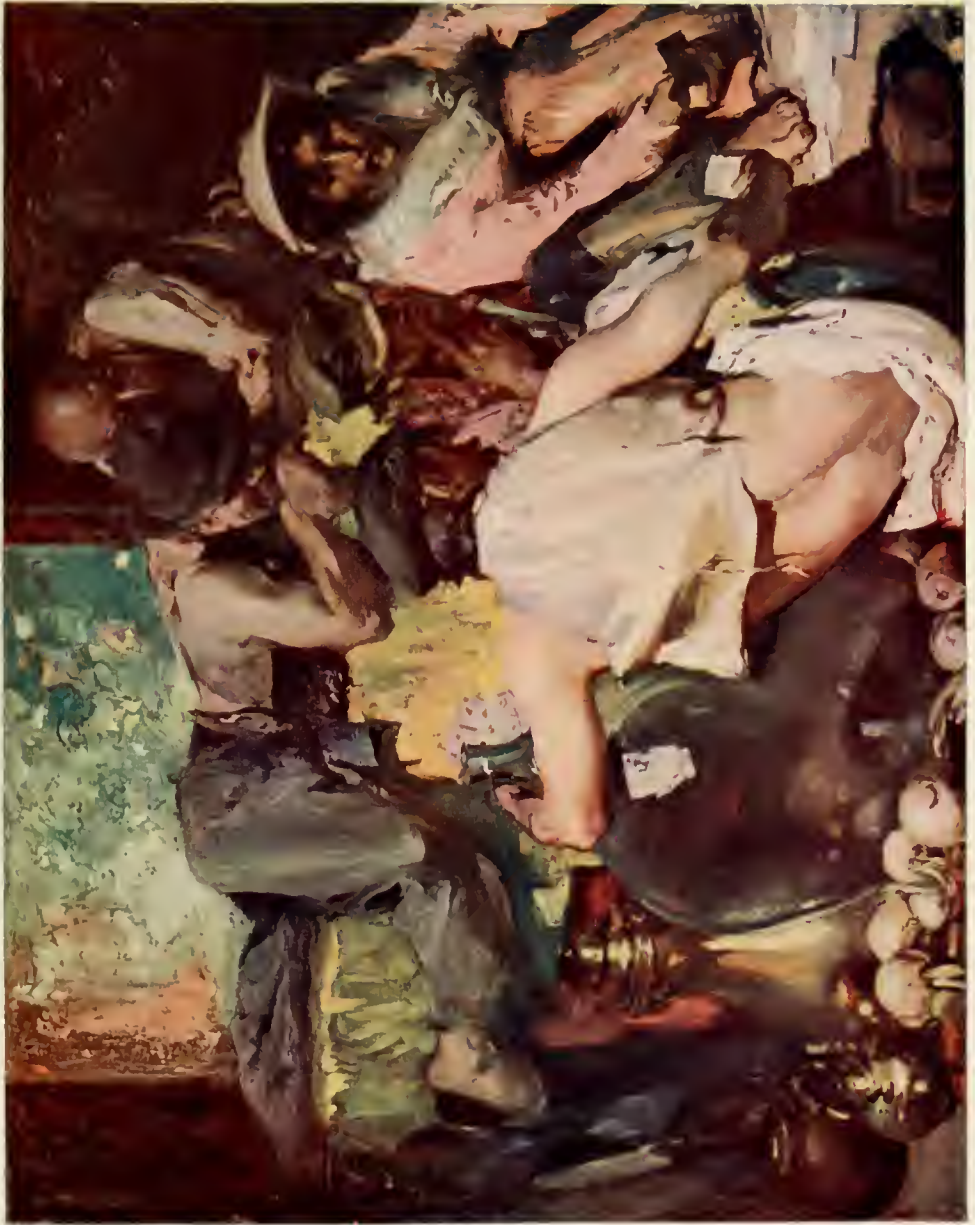
# THE CARD PLAYERS

The card players were seen in the hall of the hotel, the  
light of the gas lamps glancing off the polished  
floors and the dark shadows of the doorways.  
The men were dressed in the latest fashion of the  
day, their coats and trousers of the finest materials,  
and their faces were set in the stern, unyielding  
expression of men who had seen many a hard  
day's work. They were gathered around a table,  
the cards flying through the air, the dice rattling  
on the table, and the sound of the cards and  
dice filling the room. The women were dressed  
in the latest fashion of the day, their dresses  
of the finest materials, and their faces were  
set in the stern, unyielding expression of men  
who had seen many a hard day's work. They  
were gathered around a table, the cards flying  
through the air, the dice rattling on the table,  
and the sound of the cards and dice filling the  
room.

## THE CARD PLAYERS.

*Reproduced from the large Oil-Painting.*





THE CARD PLAYERS  
*Ref. in the text at p. 100*





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## *Light and Colour*

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yellow and others purple, swing from a pole carried by several of the men, each one of whom bears the weight in a different manner, and shows in his attitude what sort of workman he is. Every movement is excellent; the chill reflected lights, bluey and sudden, are managed with a brave judgment; and there is a certain large air of romance in the swing and verve of these turbaned bearers of good news. The colour-print gives all that a mechanical reproduction can give, and it is more than the best line-engravings ever gave. Note the hands, how vital they are, as in that unhappy man behind the throng who fears that the pot balanced on his head will be upset by some jostled movement among the grape-bearers. That plot of trees on the left, forming a background interest with a note of dark colour, is happy in design; and away on our right, under the hot grey sky, far beyond the main subject, is a glimpse of the Promised Land. There are pleasant, rhythmic contrasts between quietness and movement. A small boy leads the way thoughtfully, with a stout grumbler to keep him company; this pretty idea sets off the strained effort of each weight-bearer.

The treatment of values in this difficult picture is in accordance with Brangwyn's method of giving only those relations that are essential, merging the others into masses; and the effect of this, excellent to-day, will be better still ten years hence, for a binding tone will be given by the daily alembic of air acting on good, unfidgeted paint.

Values in paint do not always bear the test of years. They don't in the Caillebotte collection of French Impressionists. Here, from most of the pictures, you may learn that a great deal of attention may be given to

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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subtleties of value that disappear when pigments darken a little and get hard as stones. It is easy to be deceived by the luscious and translucent sparkle of wet pigment out of doors. The Caillebotte pictures are dead in their values when compared with a water-colour by any English master, and I venture to argue from this fact that the French Impressionists tried to do overmuch in their minute relations of colour, forgetting that light and air and heat act and react on finished oil-painting day after day through the year, toning their pale values and deepening the half-tones and shades. This tells with the greatest disadvantage on those pictures which are strung up into high keys—light upon light, in values subtly orchestrated into intricate harmonies. Let time add a minute but uneven toning to this delicate colour-craft, and the first charm may disappear altogether. I cannot believe, for instance, that Manet was so blind to the effect of bad, airless greens that his painting of "The Balcony" when newly finished had shutters and iron-railings as jarringly out of tone as they are now. Certain values have been wiped out by the years, and to-day those green railings and shutters are vulgar discords. Painters need a prophetic vision: they must see into the future and fore-know the action of daylight on pigments.

Yet very few persons notice these things. Talkers on art often speak of values as if values were as easy to prove or disprove as definite sums in arithmetic. "These values are true," "these values are false," they say; but when we press for common sense, asking whether the epithets "false" and "true" are dictated by nature or by each painter's attitude toward his subjects and its treatment,

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## *Light and Colour*

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we find that the criticism is just a matter of verbal fanaticism. There is ever a type of critic who is tempted to believe that a remark must be true if its look be acute and specific. To vow that a picture is false in values, or that the values are incoherent, is very simple to write, and its aim is to kill like a revolver shot fired at point-blank range. Brangwyn, like every other painter of note, has been shot at by such phrases, for in recent years the word "values" has been overworked, often with many perversities of judgment. Let us then see what the public is to understand by values or relations in painting. Mauclair gives the Impressionist ideas on this troubled question. After explaining that we see only colours, and that we arrive at forms—namely, the outlines of colour—by our perception of the different tinted surfaces appealing to our eyes, he says:—

"The idea of distance, of perspective, of volume is given us by darker or lighter colours: this idea is what is called in painting the sense of values. A value is the degree of dark or of light intensity that permits our eyes to comprehend that one object is further or nearer than another. And as painting is not and cannot be an *imitation* of nature"—despite Monet's hay-ricks, with their efforts to show the time of day like clocks—"cannot be an *imitation* of nature, but merely her artificial interpretation, since it has at its disposal only two out of three dimensions, the values are the only means that remain for expressing depth on a flat surface."

So far, so good. But this explanation skips the main point of all: namely, the fact that values in nature are infinite even in single objects like trees; and besides this,

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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they belong to the scale of nature, and nature within her scale is marvellously abundant, working with multitudinous details on each plane of her compositions. Art, on the other hand, has canvases of different sizes; upon these, whether large or small, an illusion of air and light and space and scale must be achieved; and this cannot be done without falsifying all the minor values observed in nature. No good painter tries to represent even one quarter of what he sees distinctly.<sup>1</sup> His aim always is to get away from profuse details, forming simple planes and masses, and omitting all values that are not essential to his work as a beautiful thing of its own kind. Our pre-Raphaelites wished to represent the organic *all* of natural fact, striving to give in paint infinities of detail, as if portraits of inimitable things, all crowded into one picture, could never be too abundant or too wearisome. We should not see a beard if our eyes enabled us to count the hairs in it. Nor do we see a brick wall when we begin to count the courses.

The same principle is true of values. A picture with too many values is chaotic: and as for truth and falsehood in this matter of relations, they depend on results. A

<sup>1</sup> Théodore Rousseau said: "What 'finishes' a picture is not the quantity of details; it is the truth of the whole. If your picture contains exquisite detail, equal from one end of the canvas to the other, the spectator will look at it with indifference. Everything interesting him alike, nothing will interest him very much. There will be no limit. Your picture may prolong itself indefinitely; you will never reach the end of it. You will never have finished. The whole is the only thing that is finished in a picture. *Strictly speaking, you might do without colour, but you can do nothing without harmony.*" Millet shared these views, which have much in common with the dicta of Poussin. "The singular application bestowed on the study of colour," said Poussin, "is an obstacle that prevents people from attaining the real aim of painting; and the man who attaches himself to the main thing—style—will acquire by practice a fine enough manner of painting." But views on art are justified by one thing only—great achievement.

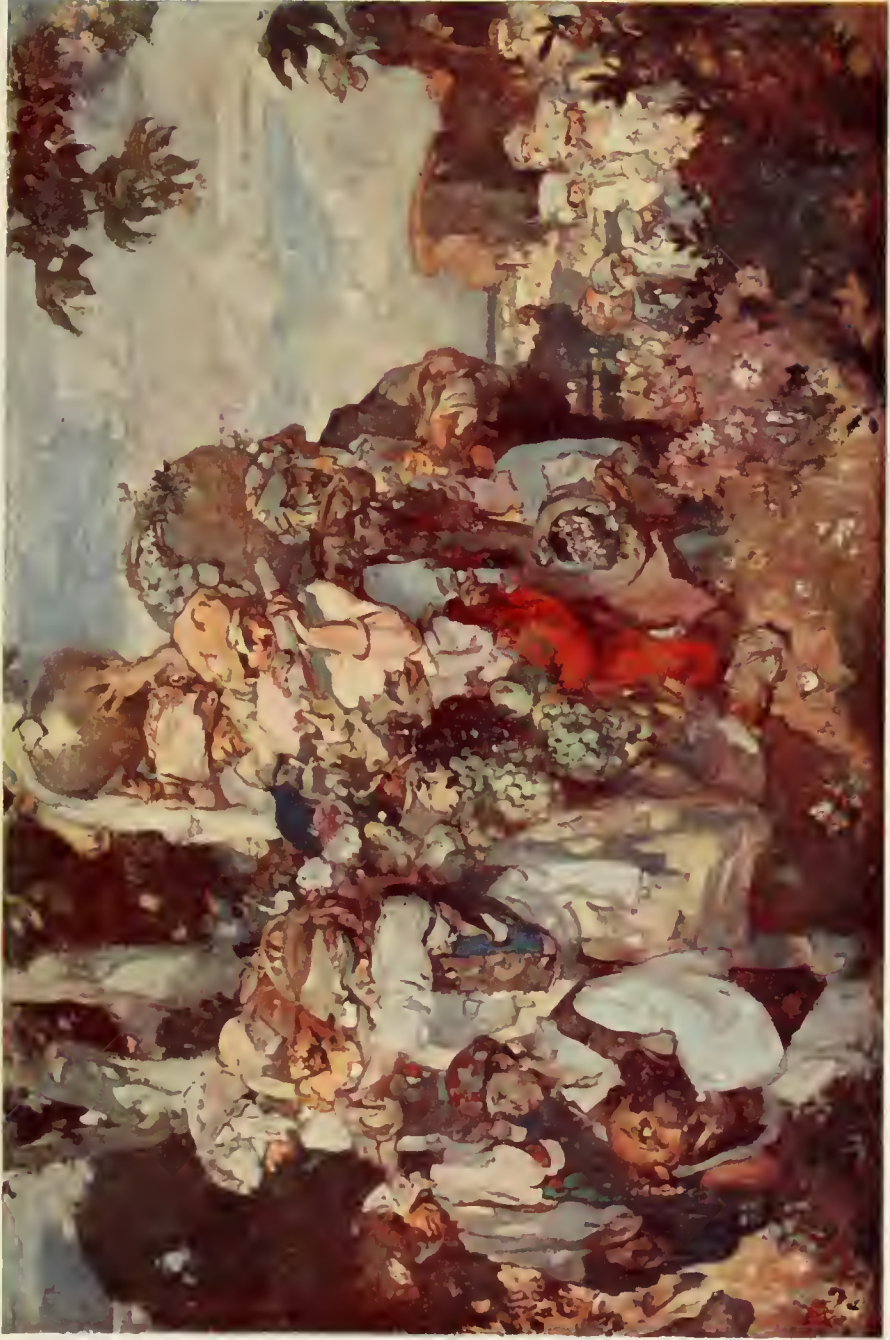




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THE RETURN FROM  
THE PROMISED LAND.  
*Reproduced by permission of the  
Art Gallery at Johannesburg.*



THE RETURN FROM THE PROMISED LAND  
*Reproduced by permission of the Art Galleries at Channing House*



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## *Light and Colour*

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painter chooses a key, and works in accordance with it ; if his effects give pleasure the values are right in art, and represent the painter in a given mood. This applies very particularly to Frank Brangwyn, who paints at a white heat and passes from dark pictures to sunny effects as his feelings change from day to day. Many other men, as the Paris Salon has proved during the last thirty years, look to fashion for their values and their colour-schemes, and then try to attract unusual attention by starting a vogue at variance with the accepted one. Cottet did this when his first Breton dramas, sombre and gloomy, were sent to exhibitions filled with sunlit pictures. Changing fashions cannot help modern art to find its proper evolution ; and we should keep our greatest admiration for those men who are painters not of modes but of moods, like Sargent and Legros and Brangwyn.

There is one thing more that belongs to this chapter ; it affects painters in their relation to all critics, whether lay or professional : it is a fact that no two persons in this world get from the same things the same impressions of colour. That is to say, the colour-sense in man is as various as the expression in human eyes or the shape of human foreheads and noses and mouths. Even in a life-class, under the most rigorous of school conventions, there is always something peculiar in each student's preferences of tint. It follows, then, that the colours which a painter sees while at work are not those which we see when we pass our several opinions on his work ; and if there is any defect in the colour-sense of an onlooker it prompts some injustice or other to the picture. How rarely complete that sense has been in the history of art is proved by the small number

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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of great colourists to be found in the winnowed harvest of masterpieces; and this being so among painters, consider how very fallible the colour-sense must be in ordinary persons. Yet the very thing in art that ordinary persons feel that they have a right to speak about is colour. On that one thing they have never the least self-distrust. But this, after all, is not the main point. The main point is that we criticise, not a painter's colour, but the varying impressions that each of us receives from his colour; and it is only by noticing whether these impressions in a great number of cases are favourable or unfavourable that we can decide whether the painter is likely to be ranked permanently among the rare ones who are called fine colourists.

This being so, Brangwyn awaits the final verdict that the revisions of time pass on all born painters. Is he a fine colourist? There are a great many judges in Europe and America who say "Yes"; and among his most ardent devotees we find painters and men who went through a long and practical training before they wrote a word of criticism. On the other side we have two facts: Brangwyn is a painter of unusual force, and powerful art does not attract the gentler sex as a rule; and the opinions of women, like those from effeminate minds in men, count for much in a final verdict. Reynolds, with his buoyant virility, put Rubens among the greatest masters of colour, while Ruskin omitted his name; and women support Ruskin because Rubens has little to offer them in the way of domestic sentiment. It is odd that women, who in life keep their greatest admiration for courage and stalwart manhood, choose the feminine graciousness of a Luini rather than the

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## *Light and Colour*

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conquering majesty of style in a Michael Angelo. Remembering these points, we cannot predict what England will think of Brangwyn fifty years hence. She has turned from William Etty, who had some of the finest qualities that a painter needs; and she returned to Romney long before she rediscovered the less variable charms of Raeburn, a manlier and often a finer painter. Still, happily, there is no need for us to look so far ahead: present art is present enjoyment, and that is all we need. Brangwyn attracts me in all his moods; and I will venture to say of his technique, his colour and handling, what has been said of Reynolds: "He rejoices in showing you his skill; and those of you who succeed in learning what painter's work really is, will one day rejoice also, even to laughter—that highest laughter which springs of pure delight, in watching the fortitude and fire of a hand which strikes forth its will upon the canvas as easily as the wind strikes it on the sea."



## CHAPTER VII

### SOME OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

**A**S I have read with care the notices on Brangwyn that have appeared during the last eighteen years, I know very well what characteristics have been mentioned most frequently, both in England and in foreign countries. There are two concerning which the very same things have been said hundreds of times, and always—yes, I think I may venture to say always—without reference to the painter's intention. Brangwyn's effects have been likened to those in tapestries or in stained-glass windows, or to those in Eastern carpets; and complaint has been made that his perspective is often too decorative, giving an insufficient depth of space filled with air.

In examining these frequent criticisms we must bear in mind that they are written from the standpoint of men who have lost touch with fresco-painting and who give their whole attention to the study of easel-pictures. It is equally certain that Brangwyn, after passing away from his work as a marine painter, began, consciously or unconsciously, to prepare himself for the great mural decorations that now occupy the principal part of his time and thought. Even in "The Buccaneers" he is not a maker of easel-pictures, the style being larger and more synthetic; and this reminds us that William Morris made no mistake when he discerned, even in the boy's first studies, that he had come upon a



THE DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS.

*From a Decorative Panel belonging to the Proprietor of "Collier's Weekly," New York, U.S.A.*





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## *Some other Characteristics*

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genius for design and handicraft. Brangwyn's ideas as a painter are not bounded by a gold frame; they belong to the ampler and more difficult conventions of applied art—that is to say, of art applied to the ornamentation of some surface that will bear enrichment without harm to its value as a structural feature. For instance, if walls are to be decorated in a proper manner, there must be unity between them and the paintings that form a part of their surface, otherwise the walls will lose their look of flat strength and become unlike a support in architecture. Some of the base decorators of the eighteenth century went to great pains to give a pictorial perspective to their mural work, with the result that people seemed to be looking *through* the walls at some distant landscape. They forgot that when a picture is framed and hung up, it is accepted as a thing detached from the wall behind it, so we are willing to take pleasure in its far-going perspective, its illusion of disappearing distances. True art in any kind of fresco work is within the domain of architecture; and for this reason perspective is suggested in such a way that it does not make holes in the wall. We look *into* and *through* an easel-picture; we look *at* and *on* a mural decoration, and expect it to be apt for its purpose.

At a time when painting has degenerated into a mere ornament to be put in gilt frames against walls, it is inevitable that onlookers should be at first worried by any painter whose feelings for art are decorative, not pictorial; and Brangwyn's native delight in the larger aspects of design, when considered as a servant of architecture, has been developed by his liking for the most varied kinds of applied ornamentation. He has collected fine examples of the best



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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handicraft, ranging from Persian rugs to Old English furniture, and from Japanese metal-work and screens to photographs of the most beautiful frescoes. It is possible that, unconsciously, he has taken hints of colour from Eastern work, his method being one of contrast, plots of colour being happily placed in juxtaposition; but, however that may be, I look upon his easel-pictures as a preparation for the very difficult problems that he has solved in mural paintings.

I have already hinted at another characteristic—namely, his treatment of the volume and the weight of things that he represents. It is not my contention, of course, that his touch is invariably responsive to subtle variations of lightness and solidity; but if you compare any of his finest work with representative paintings or etchings by other leading artists of to-day, I believe you will find that he is often more sensitive than they are to values of bulk and mass. To take examples from among living men would be invidious in a book of this kind, but everybody must have noticed how in many pictures by Millet the surface quality of the paint is too much the same in all parts, as if solid ground and worn clothes were equally heavy, as if tremulous leaves and moving clouds had no differences of weight. Millet himself became conscious of this, for in some of his last pictures he tried with great pains literally to construct a variety of textures. With Brangwyn it is instantaneous feeling that leads him to the best results. His handicraft is never too light in all parts, as happens pretty often in the airy technique of Corot: nor too uniform in volume and strength, as Constable is too frequently. There are skies by Constable that we

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## *Some other Characteristics*

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accept just because they are painted in sky tints, though they are as heavy in substance as the ground bearing great trees. This would be seen at once if the sky tints were altered into earthen hues, every cloud being represented in paler or in darker tones.

Where painters go wrong most often is in their treatment of architecture. Many do not feel either the upward flight of Gothic or the great downward pressure of Classic buildings. It is no uncommon thing to notice that their attention is concentrated on the upper parts of a house or a church, and that their touch grows feebler as it gets nearer to the solid earth, upon which the whole structure rests. Now Brangwyn, as a rule, like Turner, has a keen liking and care for the spirit and the weight of architecture. He can build with his brush, revealing the horizontal mass of Classic and the hopeful, alert spring of Gothic. He does not construct his buildings from the roof downwards, like many a painter whom I could name; he rises up from the ground with a mason's delight in a secure foundation. Méryon had the same happy gift, and so had Piranesi. You will find the same thing in Girtin, and also in the exquisite pencil drawings by William Twopeny, who could suggest in a few rapid touches the crumbled weight of any object ravaged by the hand of time, from a fragment of old wood-carving to a cathedral church.

On the other hand, if you compare the architecture in Impressionist pictures, going from Léon Dufrenoy to Pissarro's "Boulevard Montmartre" and "The Boildieaux Bridge at Rouen," you will see that Dufrenoy is apt to be flimsy, as if he had but very little appreciation for the witchery of design in brick and stone. Modern English

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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pictures also are often very weak from this standpoint, while Brangwyn will delight you with the cross-barred airy look of a scaffolding or with the dead-weight of a derelict ironclad lying heaved-over on the sand. That he should construct ships admirably is not surprising, while his interpretation of architecture *is*, for he served no apprenticeship in that art. This may be a question of heredity, since his father was an architect.

Volume and weight are very difficult to convey in a few sketched lines. Rowlandson, with a few touches of a pencil and a wash or two of water-colour, could put a fat man erect on his feet, and you feel that the fatness really is heavy, and not blown out with air like the false stomach of a stageland Falstaff. Brangwyn has the same gift. His most rapid sketches have life and bulk; there's a body in every suit of clothes and a feeling for growth in his roughly indicated trees. There are times when this enviable quality of his work is carried to excess (at least, so it seems to me), for I remember certain dark masses of trees against the sky that look too ponderous; but no artist has ever been perfect in this most delicate and difficult art of showing by touch varieties of substance and weight, all within the envelope of atmospheric illusion.

It is like violin playing, where bow and fingers and strings answer at once to the changeful spirit of the music, giving infinite variations of expressive volume in sounds. Emotion passes continually from the music to the player, and thence from him to the instrument—emotion having an ordered sequence: and something akin to this happens when the inspiration from external nature influences a painter, whose eyes and whose touch pass (let us say) from

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## *Some other Characteristics*

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an unfathomable sky to a range of distant hills, thence through a valley of trees to a group of figures in the foreground. In every part of this picture the values of weight differ, and the painter's touch is called upon to be in emotional sympathy with each part. Yet few artists have been alert and wide-awake to all that this orchestration of weight-values means in painting. Critics, too, pass over it in silence, as a rule, and the public is content to judge pictures by their general aspects.

It is easy to tell a true expert by the way in which he examines a painting. He studies it at first with his eyes near to the canvas, so as to learn by heart the peculiarities of brush-craft; these are as interesting to him as the facial expression of a great actor when seen through an opera-glass. Then he moves backward till he sees the whole picture in focus, and he gives as much attention to values of weight as to values of tone. The surface look of a Brangwyn picture is indescribable—swift, deft, impetuous, ruthless touches here, gliding touches there, plots of colour contrasted with spaces of free, simple painting, and never a thing that seems costive. Great emotional energy is shown throughout; and you learn that when a passage here and there is not equal in felicity to the others, it arises, not from any carelessness, but because an inspiration spent itself and could not be recalled. For painting of this kind is like the acting of Edmund Kean as described by spectators; we cannot expect that its energy in every work will be equally inspired throughout.

If, now, we turn to one of Brangwyn's recent pictures, choosing "Wine," exhibited this year at the Royal Academy, we shall be able to follow the orchestration of weight-values.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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What is the subject? A rustic Bacchus in the act of drinking from a small bowl the juice of crushed grapes. He is garlanded with grapes; other bunches lie in his lap on a blue drapery; his great torso, wonderfully modelled with very simple variations of tint, is naked; a pale scarf, yellow-green in colour, is tied negligently around his neck; and with his left arm cast about a huge green vase-shaped bottle, he waits while his companions fill another bowl with liquor. There is a glimpse of sky, kept grey and unobtrusive. The weight-values here range from the greens within greens of a transparent bottle to the full fat skins of purple grapes and white; thence to firm muscle and flesh in the sunburnt attendants, and on to the happy Bacchus, whose torso is that of a fattening man who takes his ease, and hates movement. It is not the transparent-looking torso that Jordaens gave to *his* Bacchus; there is substance here, for this voluptuary is not yet ripe, he is on his way to Falstaffhood. A fine picture, alive with a lusty zest; it killed every neighbour in a big room, showing that there is justice in wine.

It is difficult to speak of weight-values in their relation to water, because water is enchanted, having moods so multitudinous that no one can study them all. Turner knew more about this phase of art than any painter, for his sympathy was great enough to embrace the widest extremes, ranging, for instance, from storm-waves at sea to rippling brooks, and from Venetian canals to the little round cups worn in rocks by the eddying of river water through countless ages. Stanfield was another master of seas and rivers. "He was sea-bred, knew what a ship was, and loved it; knew what rocks and waves were, and



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## *Some other Characteristics*

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wrought out their strength and sway with steadfast will. One work of Stanfield's alone presents us with as much concentrated knowledge of sea and sky as, diluted, would have lasted any one of the old masters his life" (Ruskin). It is odd, but British marine painters are few and far between, and therefore not fully representative of our insular position and naval power. Monamy, Brooking, Powell, Serres, Anderson, Scott, lead us on towards George Chambers, E. W. Cooke, O. W. Brierly, James C. Hook, John Brett, Henry Moore, Colin Hunter, W. L. Wyllie, Edwin Hayes, C. Napier Hemy, Walter Shaw, T. B. Hardy, J. R. Reid, Stanhope Forbes, Somerscales, Frank Brangwyn, and others. If we except his treatment of waves in a riot of movement, the waters that Brangwyn loves best are those in the Near East, and those in our heavy grey Thames when smoke soars up into a pageant of the day's commercial work. On certain days there is a wonderful fantasy of design in London's smoke over the great river, and Brangwyn feels the charm of it more than any other painter. It appeals to him as a symbol of power, of human toil and invention, just as the river itself is in a way humanised by the waste products from bankside industries that thicken and sully the tides. There is poetry in all labour, and Brangwyn is in touch with most of its manifestations.

I cannot say with all, because he is not often drawn towards the sinister and tragic aspects of life and toil, like Legros and Meunier. His attitude to industrialism is that of a sportsman towards football and hunting. He accepts as inevitable the hazards that dangers bring; loves action for its own tonic, and sees no reason why



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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his workmen should not play their part with spirit and be free from repining. So they carry their loads alertly, bear the heat from molten metal as if it were nothing more than April sunshine, or make a railway cutting with as much zeal as they would show if they were on their way to El Dorado. It is like the spirit of Rubens—a manly optimism, a generous joy in the glow and health of energetic muscles at work. There is a strong pulse in this art, and a bracing circulation. I love Meunier, Millet, Legros; I respect Degroux and admire Léon Frederic; Cottet appeals to me greatly; but not one of these pioneers of industrial art has the observant cheerfulness that Brangwyn has shown many times in his bold outlook on the world as it is to-day. Since life is war, let us think it better to fight and lose than never to fight at all. Since death will come one day, why wear crape as a habit, and keep in our thoughts an unending supply of black-edged notepaper? Good heavens! If laughter be at all difficult, surely that difficulty should urge us on into laughter; for easy things are the least worth doing. This, so I believe, is the spirit that underlies most of the industrial phases of Brangwyn's work.

Detractors complain and ask for "sentiment," a cheap quality indeed in English pictures; one critic going so far as to declare—in the *Westminster Gazette*, April 22, 1906—that "Mr. Brangwyn has no more sentiment than would lie on a threepenny piece." Libels of this blatant kind ought to be subject to immediate public rebuke. When a writer in the Press forgets that it is impossible to paint without emotion and that every form of emotion is a form of sentiment, protests should be made in the



THE VENETIAN FUNERAL.  
*An Oil-Painting in the Leeds Art Gallery.*



THE VENETIAN FUNERAL  
*An Oil-Painting in the Library, 1845*



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## *Some other Characteristics*

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most public manner. There is as much sentiment in the fiercest jealousy of Othello as in his tender love. Sentiment in art is just a mood of æsthetic feeling, whether tender or vehement, pathetic or joyous, contemplative or heroic. And when Brangwyn is judged by this principle of genuine criticism, he stands out as a master of sentiment as varied as he is manly.

Though he takes no morbid pleasure in suffering, he has touched more than once the heart of the greatest sorrows, bringing us face to face with that dread Visitor who claims every year from mankind 40,000,000 lives—a whole world of friends and neighbours. Death is the subject of "The Venetian Funeral," chosen as a colour-print for this book. It is a noble picture, powerfully rhythmic in design, rugged, masterful, painted with tremendous vigour, and having just that degree of pathos that a great sorrow can make known in a public thoroughfare without loss of dignity, without moving onlookers with a feeling of unpleasant self-consciousness. The figure of the chief mourner is quite monumental; and the spiritual drama expressed by his attitude and face has a kindness of reserve that few painters feel and represent. It is a charity to veil tragic emotions; grief must have its own mysteries.

"The Venetian Funeral" was seen at the Royal Academy in 1906—the Red Academy, so called because the walls were dappled all over with scarlet coats, crimson dresses, vermilion draperies, and so forth. In the reddest room of all we found Brangwyn's picture, and its cool, decorative treatment was so much at odds with its trivial neighbours that no one could appreciate it



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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justly. Who could understand Grieg's "Funeral March" if a score of brass bands played the most recent popular tunes?

Many notices appeared, and I have chosen two giving contrasts of opinion. The first is from the *Daily Telegraph*: "Mr. Frank Brangwyn's canvas, 'A Venetian Funeral' (No. 532), is conceived on a still larger scale than his 'Wine Sellers' at the New Gallery, and handled with the same tremendous breadth and dash. The subject here chosen is, it must be owned, strangely unsuited to the bold and even turbulent form of decorative treatment which Mr. Brangwyn—not without striking results from his own point of view—brings to bear upon it. A boat-load of mourning Venetian folk, pioneered by brawny boatmen, not of the gondolier tribe, is momentarily arrested in a side canal, and faces the spectator at close quarters, revealing many phases of woe, expressed with a tragic, not a sordid, realism. Yet such a subject must be still further generalised and removed from the actual, if it is fitly to serve as the foundation for monumental decoration. A Puvis de Chavannes would have given us 'Mourning' as a pendant to 'Rejoicing'—the sacrament of Death balancing the sacrament of Marriage; a Besnard might possibly have succeeded, as he has, indeed, at the *École de Pharmacie*, in adapting such a subject to decorative uses without loss of its modernity and its poignancy. If Mr. Brangwyn has failed, he has failed most honourably—in setting himself a technical and spiritual problem that admits of no perfect solution. His design is powerfully rhythmic and of a rugged grandeur, some of these figures of mourners, taken by themselves, being among the noblest

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## *Some other Characteristics*

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things in an exhibition, to little in which the epithet 'noble' can properly be applied."

The critic of the *Pall Mall Gazette* was less thoughtful, being occupied with himself, not with the picture. He said: "One need not consider the incident, for the mosaic is too conscious to admit of pathos, and humanity is eliminated. Here one puts one's finger on the difference between Brangwyn and Veronese, and recognises the gap between the less and the greater." But the work is a Brangwyn, not a Veronese, and why is it that editors do not keep watch and ward over their writers on art. To say that humanity is eliminated from "The Venetian Funeral" is a very evident slander on a fine picture. An artist cannot do more than represent manly pathos; it is beyond his power to endow his judges with a capacity to feel the difference between good pathos and bad. True pathos in art has the dignity of self-respect; it does not blab out all its secrets to heedless chance-comers. "The Venetian Funeral" is not without blemishes, but as a picture of sunshine and shadow, of joy and sorrow, of mirth and death, it is a remarkable work, and would hold its own anywhere. It now hangs in the Leeds Art Gallery, and people find that something new is to be discovered in it every day.

We pass on now to another characteristic—namely, to Brangwyn's liking for crowds. The figures in his pictures seem to crave for companionship. This may be too evident at times; I feel now and again that the composition is too full; but it is the privilege of strong men to give over much, as if nature compelled them to vie with her prodigality. Millet never ventured to compose with many

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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figures, for his energy was of the kind that concentrates on a few objects. Whistler, too, achieved much with little, for he had not enough emotional endurance to do more with much. It is only the men who have some affinity of temperament with Rubens that long for many characters in the dramatic design of their art.

Invention is another trait in the work of Frank Brangwyn. You will find it everywhere, and always with a distinctive character. This fact being particularly evident, I will note only one phase of it, asking you to study with care his treatment of clothes and draperies. There is much variety here, but you will see very often that folds and creases have a special air of their own, modelled with a square brush, and having little attractive nodules. I am sure you must know the frieze-like picture entitled "Charity," which, when seen at the New Gallery in 1900, was very much liked because of its four qualities: quaint and graceful costumes, a felicitous grouping of figures under a low horizontal pole, contrasts between crippled age and youth, and a subtle blend of colour having a rare beauty—strange modulated blues, pale russets and pearly greys, faint carnations, and crimsons. A Lady Bountiful in a blue robe, with ailing children gathered around her, gives alms to a couple of old men, one halt, the other blind, while a mother awaits her turn, carrying tenderly in her arms a little nude baby. The draperies are all made in the factory of Brangwyn's mind, and all are good. The old fellow with a crutch under his arm is naked nearly to the waist; there a heavy garment gathers itself into a girdle of folds and falls down about the legs in uncertain lines of light and shade very suggestive of physical weak-

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## *Some other Characteristics*

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ness. The children are all charming: with bare necks, their light dresses gathered in about the hips by a belt, and full sleeves of a rustling softness. The note of optimism is found in every part, for this charity is given and accepted in the same spirit—with joy and without parade. Gratitude does not come to those who expect it and wait for it.

This decoration was not understood by a good many critics, who looked for an easel-picture and found a work to ornament the surface of a wall. The *Athenæum* regretted the painter's "abandonment of that original and masculine style of art which he adopted in his delineation of the tragedies of maritime events—burials at sea, storm-smitten ships, and the ocean's wars"—things which had to cross the Channel before they were justly appreciated between 1889 and 1894. It is distance of time that lends enchantment to good things in a painter's art.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DECORATIVE PAINTING

**I**T is beyond doubt that Frank Brangwyn at his best is a master of design, who delights to be in close alliance with applied art, its practical needs and its ideals of ornamentation. His work, considered separately and as a whole, comes within the great province of decoration where painting is obedient to an ordered scheme of colour and line required by some architectural setting ; obedient in a big and aspiring way, as music bears obedience to counterpoint and harmony, or as buildings answer to the control of their sites and rational plans. Brangwyn has never looked upon painting as a maker of toys and trifles for an incalculable market where whims and fashions vary from year to year. Temperament, training, inborn gifts, helped by opportunities, have given to his style as a modern of the moderns one thing that allies it to the Old Masters, for all painters of high rank used to be connoisseurs of design in all ways.

That is a fact to be underlined. It is true of times much later than those of Dürer and Holbein. Even among Italians of the decadence, among the Rossos and Primatices, whose taste was often doubtful, you will find an imagination full of life that creates decoratively, and so it is different from the tamer imagination that finds a home in most easel-pictures of the present day. François



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## *Decorative Painting*

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Millet stayed for hours before the Primatices and Rossos, and called them his "kind giants." He admired their debonair brave skill, the ease with which they built up their big inventions; and because he came upon similar qualities of creative decoration in certain French painters of the seventeenth century, he gave his heart to Le Brun and Jouvenet, whom he thought very strong; to Lesueur, "one of the great souls of the French school," and to the noble Poussin, "who is the prophet, the wise man and philosopher of it, and also the most eloquent arranger of a scene."<sup>1</sup>

I mention Millet here not only because he was a forerunner of Brangwyn in democratic art, but because his genius was sometimes decorative rather than pictorial; he designed, giving a large air of ornamental authority to some of his most successful work. Millet, too, like Brangwyn, is not much concerned with what may be called the portraiture of natural facts; he likes to express the type very strongly, the type being, to his mind, the most powerful truth, because it represents many facts and much observation welded into a generic symbol. *The* French peasant was far more attractive to Millet than *a* French peasant, just as *the* Flemish collier or puddler held the imagination of Constantin Meunier. And this transformation of individuals into types counts for a very great deal in all art work that can be called monumental, or architectural, or mural and decorative.

The eye, when once it has learnt to look for ornament, rather than for isolated natural truth, finds the type everywhere: in the distinctive foliage of each species of tree, in the

<sup>1</sup> See "Romain Ronald," pp. 149-150. Duckworth & Co.



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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surging movement of water under the pressure of tempest winds, in the peculiar character of face that belongs to some profession or study or handicraft, and so forth. The type dominates life and nature. Yet in easel-pictures, as a rule, we find portraiture of things seen rather than the decorative vision that resolves the concrete and individual into the typical, fleshed with action and power. Easel-painting—that is, the making of pictures for no definite purpose, to be put somewhere, anywhere, by any person—is a second-rate form of art that enfeebles the mind and gives us infinitely too much every year. If it were stopped for a whole decade there would still remain in the markets far too many of its modern productions.

That a strong man should pass his life as a maker of painted toys, never knowing what chance-buyers will like them, never connecting his work with a given position in a room—all this, to my mind, is pathetic in its want of dignity. The rooms of England vary in every possible way, yet easel-painters plod on and on as if their pictures would suit any light in any home. Not one of them has gone even to the pains of asking what is the average size of the long walls in houses of a different type. This could be learnt if we tabulated the facts collected from the varying experience of a hundred architects; and it would be useful to know which pictures in an exhibition were intended for villas of a given size and rent, which for country houses having walls of a given area, and so on. As it is, easel-painters go their own way in a freedom of inconsequent trifling; and very often they try to show contempt for those whose gifts and aims are decorative and architectural.

We see, then, that there are two categories of painters,



SANTA MARIA DELLA  
SALUTE, VENICE.

*From an Oil-Painting in the  
Wellington Gallery, New Zealand.*





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## *Decorative Painting*

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and that the greater of the two does not work at haphazard, preferring to fit his schemes for some known purpose in a home or in a public building. A painter of this kind is never seen to proper advantage until his pictures are exhibited in the places and positions and lights for which they are destined; and it is always easy to know whether his aims are ornamental in a right way, not merely pictorial. We have only to ask ourselves a few questions. Does the design fit its place and suit its material? Is it in scale with its surroundings, or too big or too small? Is it in harmony with itself? Does it enrich the surface of that wall, or does it look like a hole or window? Some easel-painters can bear the test of these questions; they are at ease in mural decoration, like Mr. Sargent and Mr. Abbey; but now that picture-shows are markets for heterogeneous aims jumbled all up together, few men think it worth while to pay attention to design or to think with care of any point outside their canvases and gilt frames.

Brangwyn from the first has been a very marked exception; and we have seen that a good many writers continue to find fault with him because his bold work is not merely pictorial, but decorative, and therefore in keeping with art as applied to walls and their ornamentation. A good many of his pictures are very well fitted for public galleries, while others ought to be framed within the panelling of walls. Indeed, though a good Brangwyn has a great effect and charm when it is hung up as a picture, it would look still better were it framed structurally as a mural decoration. Even his paintings of still-life are beautiful in a decorative way, and should be set in the woodwork of wainscoted



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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halls and billiard-rooms. As to the museum pieces, their merit has been recognised by museums in many towns. "The Return from the Promised Land" has gone to Johannesburg, and the "Mars and Venus" to Dublin; Glasgow has "The Funeral at Sea," and Southport "The Slave Market"; "St. Simeon Stylites" hangs in Venice, and "The Baptism of Christ" at Stuttgart; the National Gallery of New South Wales, at Sydney, owns "The Scoffers" (a scattered rabble of Moors jibing at a captive Spanish general before they kill him); at Prague you will find a picture of Turkish fishermen, at Munich a noble view of Assisi; Barcelona owns "The Wine Shop," the Luxembourg has "Trade on the Beach" and a delightful water-colour, "A Moorish Well," and many other galleries have one apiece, like Chicago and Pittsburg. In Leeds we find a series of Brangwyns—the "Venetian Funeral" and five labour panels, representing weavers, potters, blacksmiths, workers in steel, and navvies, all characteristic.

A few critics in England have long recognised and admired the real bent of Brangwyn's genius. There is Mr. Charles Holme, founder and editor of *The Studio*—a magazine of world-wide reputation, which has kept in touch with Brangwyn's work from the first number, published in 1893, and containing the first part of a letter by Brangwyn on Spain as a sketching ground. Next, there are Mr. George Moore, Mr. M. H. Spielmann, Mr. Little, Mr. Haldane Macfall, Mr. P. G. Konody, the late Gleeson White, the late R. A. M. Stevenson, Mr. F. Rinder, Mr. Laurence Binyon, Mr. Claude Phillips, Mr. Baldry, Mr. F. Rutter, and Mr. Selwyn Image, Slade Professor at Oxford.

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## *Decorative Painting*

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Mr. Image has known Brangwyn for twenty-seven years, watching his progress from the first efforts. He says :—

“That this virile and original artist should have attained his admirable position is a matter for congratulation, but assuredly it is no matter for surprise to those of us who knew him as a boy. I remember, in those early days, with what astonishment I used to watch him covering large canvases with bold and deftly-painted designs, drawn mostly from his intimate acquaintance with seafaring and river life. His natural facility with the brush, his natural instinct for handling pigment, seemed to me in those days for a student the most remarkable I knew of. Do not let me be misunderstood. I am speaking of Mr. Brangwyn’s natural instinct for laying on pigment with a brush, and I would set emphasis on the epithet ‘natural.’ If his studies and pictures in this boyish stage had many remarkable qualities to commend them, it would be preposterous to deny that they also had many faults. . . . But to be able to lay on oil-colours as he, a mere boy, laid them on, was to show a power many full-grown artists would have envied ; and the point is that in Mr. Brangwyn this ability was by way of nature, for of direct teaching and assiduous training he had then practically nothing at all. At any rate, it was this abnormal gift in him that first attracted me personally to his work. It seemed to me at the time so unique that I could not doubt it would carry him through to great things by-and-by. He would settle down gradually to severer study. He would not let this facility of the brush content him and run away with him. His strong accompanying sense of designing in broad masses would more and more assert itself, and demand

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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from him an austerer insistence upon form. As the design and the form grew, the colour too would grow purer and more brilliant. And so, beyond all question, it has come to pass. . . .”

Mr. Selwyn Image finds decoration in all phases of Brangwyn's art:—

“I have just spoken of Mr. Brangwyn's sense and power of designing in broad masses—it was as characteristic of him when he was a beginner as it is characteristic of him to-day. And undoubtedly it is this massive designing which gives its immediate distinction to his . . . pictures of fruit, vegetables, and the like. These, in their way, are as impressive as his pictures of more important subjects. Apart from the subject and its suggestiveness, one would as lief have this artist's presentation of a heap of melons or a bundle of onions as his painting of a group of figures, even in some heroic or moving human incident. Nor in this fine treatment of these comparatively unimportant objects does he attain his impressiveness by any forced or undue means. Under proper artistic conditions he is as true to the obvious appearances of nature as a man can be. Any simple spectator, that is to say, would be as readily receptive of his onions and melons as of the onions and melons of William Hunt himself. To use a natural expression, they are as like the things as like can be. Towards the attainment of this desirable end (for desirable it is that an artist's appeal should reach as far as possible), two qualities in Mr. Brangwyn's still-life pieces especially contribute—his clear definition of forms, and his rich, luscious colour.”





OLD HOUSES, GHENT.  
*From an Original Etching.*









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## Decorative Painting

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Again:—

“That the emphasis laid by the English pre-Raphaelites on detail and the intensity of local colour was in some ways healthy and valuable, is not to be denied. Equally, that the emphasis laid by the later Impressionists on atmospheric effects of colour, pure and vivid, was in some ways healthy and valuable, is not to be denied. But in the art of landscape-painting the doctrines of the pre-Raphaelites and of the Impressionists did not make for largeness, impressiveness, and dignity—did not make for what one means by Design; and in landscape, as in every other form of art, it is Design that counts permanently for more than anything else. Now, whatever other qualities Mr. Brangwyn’s landscapes, large or small, elaborated or slight, may possess or lack, this quality of Design they have pre-eminently. . . . One notes also that it is in such masses as are characterised by a certain rotundity of contour, expressive at once of weight and motion, that he seems to take peculiar delight—the contour, for example, of a cumulus cloud, or of a full-branched tree bending under the wind, or of an undulating hill, which, though actually immovable, yet suggests to us the sense of movement. And these large contours, once caught and imaginatively disposed in their decorative relation to one another, constitute the structure, the anatomy, the main motive or subject, of Mr. Brangwyn’s pictures.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. P. G. Konody (*The Magazine of Art*, February 1903) has noticed other points, and let us examine them one by one.

<sup>1</sup> *The Studio*, February 1903.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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1. The days of the Olympian gods and of mythological symbolism, to which so many of our decorative artists cling with exasperating obstinacy, are over, and modern artists have to search for new motives or for adaptations of old ideas to the spirit of our time. "Nude, classic figures, goddesses and nymphs of academic pose and proportion, are out of place in the mural decoration of a modern building; and historical representations, though no doubt appropriate in many instances, generally fail completely as regards decorative effect, owing to the predominance of the literary interest, to the attention paid to the correct rendering of many archæological details which may be necessary in a historical picture, but only disturb the effect of a wall decoration."

It is certainly true that the decline of mural decoration and the rise of archæology have been contemporaneous. The Old Masters were not pupils to the social facts of bygone times. Either they used the costumes and customs of their own periods in their historical subjects, or else they wrapped their art in conventional draperies having the reputation of being ancient; and their work certainly did not improve when knowledge of classical antiquity became more researchful and exact. Mr. Konody mentions with disapproval a predominance of literary interest in decoration, but he does not forget that the most august frescoes in the world, inspired by the Bible, were sanctioned and encouraged by the Church because of their literary appeal to those who either could not read or who turned away from spoken sermons. Note, too, that as soon as a

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## *Decorative Painting*

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picture of any kind makes a great effect on any person, it enters the domain of literary feeling, for that person tries to find words in which to describe the picture and the peculiar delight it has given him. Let us not think that a story betrays the art of painting, since every incident in the Bible is a tale known to all the world. The fatal thing is a picture having no other merit than a literary interest—a picture without design, without invention, and with poor, weak qualities of handling. Even if you paint a face nobly, as Rembrandt painted his old women and old men, you cannot help filling it with a history of Time's own writing. And in mural decoration, more than in any other painting, it is needful that the public should know at once what the subject tries to make real; and that is why the most fitting themes are to be chosen from three sources: contemporary life, the most familiar episodes in past history, and the Bible, especially the New Testament. Instinct seems to have guided Brangwyn in this matter, for his decorative art has passed to and fro between to-day's life and scriptural episodes, like "The Baptism of Christ" and "The Adoration of the Magi." To say that these works have not a tale to relate, are without a literary appeal, would be very incorrect. They enter into literature by trying to penetrate to the inner essence and the life of their subjects; and those painters who have missed the ever-new poetry of the Gospel story, like Murillo and Velasquez, show that a painter must clear his mind of the fear of being literary, else he may fail to be religious and moving in a scriptural work.

2. Mr. P. G. Konody goes on to say that too many

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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painters seem to think that a certain flatness of tints and a key somewhat lighter than that of the average easel-picture are all that is required to make a painting suitable for mural decoration. "No notion could be more erroneous. If the decoration is to be effective as such, the artist must never for a moment forget the conditions under which it will be seen, and in his scrupulous consideration of this fundamental rule must be found the primary cause of Mr. Brangwyn's success."

No doubt. But I should like to pause for a moment on two phrases because they have a very practical bearing on decorative art as applied to walls and public buildings. Mr. Konody mentions "a certain flatness of tints," meaning, I believe, a certain greyness of tints, for this was the mode introduced by Puvis de Chavannes. There was a real fear about ten years ago that Puvis had turned his merited vogue into a tradition, but French critics of to-day realise that his method in decoration is not final; they mention Brangwyn now with enthusiasm, and wish that he had his home in Paris. Several have said so in plain words, like Maurice Guillemot (*Art et Decoration*, October 1909), who cries: "*On peut regretter que Frank Brangwyn ne soit pas de chez nous.*" Puvis de Chavannes did noble works, but they appear to be slipping away into the past, faint in colour and rather spectral in design. They are not fecund in their greatness; they do not triumph through this life into those living traditions that give permanent inspiration; and the future will belong to a more virile manner, richer and more vital. What that manner will be at its maturity we cannot guess, but Brangwyn's art marks a period in its evolution.





A STUDY OF LEEKS.

*Reproduced by permission of  
R. H. Kitson, Esq., Leeds.*



A STUDY OF TEKS

*Reproduced by permission of R. H. Kitson, F.R.S.*



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## *Decorative Painting*

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Flatness of colour—namely, pigments that dry without a gloss and lighter than when they are put on—is a distinguishing quality of fresco work, whether you paint while the ground is wet, or employ tempera-pigments ground in water and used with size, or with egg—the yoke or the white. Both these methods need swift, direct workmanship, and therefore the practice and skill that enable you to finish as the work proceeds. The painting dries without lustre, and possesses a kind of inner light, a peculiar luminous quality, that allies it with water-colour pictures. Brangwyn is very fond of tempera, believes that it might be varnished for easel-pictures, and suggests that if students were taught to work in it from the life model they would gain in quick perception and in painter-like technique. A colour plate in this book—a symbolic decoration of Labour and Commerce—shows one of his tempera panels; and Londoners can see another work in this medium—it is less mature—at the office of the Grand Trunk Railway in Cockspur Street, where a bold frieze above panelled walls gives decoratively incidents from the colonisation of Canada, its traffic with Red Indians, its march through forests, its bridge-building, and glimpses of that victorious sea that ebbs and flows at present as an emblem of union between Great Britain and her scattered dominions. This frieze was carried out for Sir Aston Webb, R.A., architect of the building.

The second phrase by Mr. Konody is “a key of colour somewhat lighter than that of the average easel-picture.” In our London climate, that deposits dirt and ravages Portland stone, a dark fresco would soon become *too* dark, while a pale fresco in course of time would lose whatever

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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freshness and beauty its harmony of colour possessed ; and Brangwyn is certainly right in being neither dark nor pale, but joyous in broad rich colour, as witness the great panels in Skinners' Hall.<sup>1</sup>

Tempera is safe enough when it is put under glass and kept in a dry room ; but when its surface all day long is free for the air of London to play upon, there is real danger, for even although it may not crumble away through the action of damp, you cannot clean it without risk. Water is harmful, and bread crumbs not only drive the dirt into the granulated surface, but, perhaps, may do some harm to a very delicate material. For these reasons tempera is better fitted for easel-pictures than for mural decoration, in any climate moister and dirtier than Italy's.

These technical points considered, we pass on to Mr. Konody's description of Brangwyn's leading traits:—

“ He is not a modern decorator of the type which is represented in its highest form by M. A. Besnard, the deep thinker who has opened up a new field of decorative art by creating a new pictorial symbolism from the elements furnished by the enormous modern advance in all branches of science and human knowledge, but in his broad generalisation, in the use he is making of impressions from everyday life, in his complete rejection of stereotyped symbols, and in his technical methods, Mr. Brangwyn is a modern of the moderns. Perhaps the most striking difference between him and the majority of our decorative artists will be found in his rejection of the theory that the female nude represents the highest type of beauty. His is a mind

<sup>1</sup> This work, too, has the advantage of being painted in oils, so that dirt will be easy to wash off if the panels should become too dirty.

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## *Decorative Painting*

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that seeks for beauty in strength and vigour. . . . In the rare cases where he has introduced women into his decorative canvases they are nearly always clothed, and they absolutely defy the generally accepted canons of female beauty—of academic beauty. Such beauty as they possess is the beauty of health and irrepressible *joie-de-vivre*—the beauty of the untamed animal in the full enjoyment of its physical strength.”

This was written in 1903, and it gives Mr. Konody's impressions to that date. He remembered, no doubt, the presentation of maternal love in “Rest” and “The Adoration of the Magi”; and let us bear in mind that the evolution of style in a virile artist goes very often through the zest of life and strength to patience and tender emotion. This evolution is found in the work of Alphonse Legros, above all in his noble etchings; and there is evidence already that Brangwyn also is travelling through the splendid verve of youth towards the harbour of a gentler method. There is a feeling for childhood in some of his more recent work, as in “Charity,” that could not have been foreseen when his “Buccaneers” won for itself a permanent renown in fickle Paris. But I do not rejoice over that. There are scores of artists in England who can paint the tenderer aspects and phases of human life; while it is only once in a long span of time that a Brangwyn is given to us; and I, for one, hope that his journey away from the lusty manhood of strength may be very slow. If people wish to complain because oak trees are not weeping willows; if they think that a Brangwyn should be some one else, they put themselves out of court and do no permanent harm.



## CHAPTER IX

### DECORATIVE PAINTING—*continued*

THERE is ever an urgent old sort of criticism that prattles about art in its relation to women, their beauty, clothed and unclothed; and no sooner is that topic started than the old Greek ideal shines forth, because it is accepted by all cultivated people, whereas nature's ideas of female beauty are not. Nature is said to create hideous women in a good many parts of the world, yet the women there are as happy as elsewhere, and their men-folk are of Dr. Johnson's opinion—feeling miserable when single and doubtful when married. After all, beauty is a custom of the eyes, and it is infinitely various.

Here, for example, is the photograph of a decorative panel that Brangwyn painted for L'Art Nouveau in Paris, now about sixteen years ago. In it I see two young girls from some land of the sun; they are in the act of dancing along a glade of tall, slender trees, a river shimmering behind them, while a dusky little imp of a lad—he is naked to the waist like the dancers—blows into a pipe with desperate good will, as if tipping had reached that country without making it a sadder place. One girl is a brunette, the other is darkly fair; they laugh marvellously and dance away from fatigue, scornful of everything except their present mirth and



QUEEN ELIZABETH GOING  
ABOARD THE GOLDEN HIND.

*From the Panel at Lloyd's Register. The  
Blocks supplied by Messrs. Gibbings & Co.*



QUEEN ELIZABETH GOING ABOARD THE GOLDEN HIND  
*From the Panel at Lloyd's Register. The Blocks supplied by Messrs. Gilling's, & Co.*



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## *Decorative Painting*

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enjoyment. Nothing in this wide world would turn them into suffragettes. Yet the House of Commons would not receive them in the Ladies' Gallery. There would be complaints about their beauty; and the beauty, I admit, is not British. Still, by dint of looking at this photograph I have become a native of their sunny land, and I find them pretty, and gracious, and winsome. I would vote for them in a beauty show of modern decorative painting.

Brangwyn did a great deal of work for the fine old turreted house in the Rue de Provence, helping Mr. Bing to transform it into L'Art Nouveau—a sort of palace for modern ideas. Several artists had a part in this work, M. Besnard decorating a room in the turret, and Brangwyn designing the façade (he worked in conjunction with M. Louis Bonnier, architect), painting in fresco on canvas two large panels to flank the entrance (I have described one), and brushing off a frieze more than sixty yards long for the street elevation. A part of the frieze was put up under the eaves; it represented Eastern workmen plying their craft of pottery, seated in characteristic attitudes. Another band of frieze ran below the windows of the top floor, and, like the one above, it was carried round both sides of the building. Its decorative features were a few human figures connected by a design of scroll-work and plant forms. Newspapers spoke well of the general effect, and a great many persons came to see it. L'Art Nouveau was launched, and Frank Brangwyn, after many difficulties of bad weather, had completed his first important commissions in decorative art. Eventually, the frieze was taken down—probably



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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because the weather injured it—and sold to a French collector.

It will be noticed that the two panels for the main entrance were movable, being painted on canvas and then fixed up structurally. Brangwyn is in favour of this method, and so was F. Madox Brown after his long labours in the Manchester Town Hall. For seven of his mural paintings Madox Brown used spirit fresco, or what we in England claim as the Gambier-Parry system, that consists in the use of a few pigments made from metal oxides; these are painted over a ground prepared with the same colour. It is rather a troublesome medium, but certainly it seems to be less perishable in our climate than the water-glass process, a thing at one time very much favoured in Germany, but now in bad repute there. It was in water-glass that Daniel Maclise carried out his great frescoes in the galleries of the Houses of Parliament—"The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher," and "The Death of Nelson"—works far and away better than his easel-pictures. Time will show their stability, but we should remember that Madox Brown and Leighton had greater confidence in the Gambier-Parry process. Then a fresh change came over the fortunes of mural art, and Madox Brown welcomed it. He said:—

"In France, the mural painters have now taken to painting on canvas, which is afterwards cemented—or what the French call *marouflée*—on to the wall. White-lead and oil, with a very small admixture of resin melted in oil, are the ingredients used. It is laid on cold and plentifully on the wall and on the back of the picture, and the painting pressed down with a cloth or handker-

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## *Decorative Painting*

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chief; nothing further being required, saving to guard the edges of the canvas from curling up before the white-lead has had time to harden. The advantage of this process of cementing lies in the fact that with each succeeding year it must become harder and more like stone in its consistency. The canvases may be prepared as if for oil-painting, and painted with common oil-colours flatted (or matted) afterwards by gum-elemi and spike-oil. Or the canvas may be prepared with the Gambier-Parry colour and painted in that very *mat* medium. The canvases should, if possible, be fine in texture, as better adapted for adhering to the wall. Another advantage of this process is that, should at any time, through neglect, damp invade the wall, and the canvas show a tendency to get loose, it would be easy to replace it; or the canvas might be altogether detached from the wall and strained as a picture."

Brangwyn is even stronger in his views, believing that for certain kinds of wall decoration—and notably for overmantels in panelled rooms—it is better that oil-colours should be used as in easel-pictures, without flattening their surface with spike-oil and gum-elemi. That he is right is proved by his two overmantels at Lloyd's Registry, where the rooms are solidly panelled with oak, and have an air of weight and power. It was essential that the two decorations, when framed structurally, should not sink behind nor seem to project beyond the plane of the wainscot panels surrounding them, and Brangwyn chose for his scheme of colour a sumptuous effect, kept broad and vigorously simple. The result could not well be bettered. One decoration—it is smaller than the other

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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—has for its subject “Queen Elizabeth going aboard the *Golden Hind* at Deptford.” Her Majesty’s barge of state has just rowed up to the great tall ship, that looks not unlike a timber-house of that period; behind is a rolling and tumbled sky, and it seems filled with many years of English weather. To paint a sky in a wall decoration is never easy, because it may recede from us too far and be too naturalistic. The very essence of pictorial art is distance, while the very essence of a mural painting is nearness; it must be part and parcel of the wall’s surface, not a breach in a flat and solid structure. Brangwyn obeys this rule with great tact; even his clouds complete a decoration and yet look airy and not too close to us. His ships also are very good, drawn and painted with a hand of expert seamanship. They rise heavily up from the sea, and seem to displace that weight of water that is necessary to their safety as floating hotels. As to the second picture, it holds its own place admirably above a great fireplace where many rich contrasts of colour meet together: lustrous tiles, varied marbles, and a pediment upheld by gilded capitals. The subject is “The Return of Blake after Capturing the Plate Ships.” As a painting—I refer you to the colour-print—it is treated more maturely than the other, its style being freer, more supple; and its movement of industrial life connects it with the large Brangwyn decoration at the Royal Exchange.

These overmantels were presented to Lloyd’s by men who take a keen delight in art as applied to the ornamentation of city places of business. The one of “Blake’s Return” was commissioned by Sir John Davison Milburn,



BLAKE'S RETURN AFTER  
THE CAPTURE OF THE  
PLATE SHIPS.

*Reproduced by permission of Lloyd's  
Register.*





BLAKEN RETURN AFTER THE CAPTURE OF THE PLATE SHIPS

*Reproduced by permission of Lloyd's Register.*





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## *Decorative Painting*

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Bart., in 1907; while the other was a gift to Lloyd's from the committee of the General Shipowners' Society in 1903. That is how England encourages genius—at second-hand, leaving it (as a rule) to volunteer support, while conferring knighthoods by the score on those who pay the many pipers in political life. Why should not a few birthday honours be granted every year to art for public buildings? The State has not given even one mural painting to the Royal Exchange, and we do not find among the list of donors any of the most national names. It is a pity. The ground landlords of London should contribute to the public art of London buildings, and we should gain much if the Crown acted personally in this matter, as did George III. when he not only founded the Royal Academy but paid its debts from his private purse until the Society no longer needed his help. Lord Leighton, remembering his position both as President of the Royal Academy and as trustee of the national work that George III. wished to do, set a fine example when he gave to the Royal Exchange his mural picture of Phœnicians trading with Early Britons on the coast of Cornwall. This was in 1895. Fourteen works have been presented since then by private patrons of art, but nine great spaces have yet to be filled.

It is unfortunate, but the donors are more important than the decorations. *They* have done their work completely, while only three or four of the painters have understood the difference between a picture and a mural decoration. Many judges complain of this fact with bitterness, yet there is no need here for criticism to be ill-tempered, because we cannot reasonably expect to

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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evolve in a few years a school of masterly fresco-workers. Such achievements as the *Apartimenti Borgia*, the *Stanzi* of Raphael, the *Sistine Chapel*, speak to us not only of a popular enthusiasm for ornamental art, but of technical methods ripened by continued practice through many generations. Mural painting on a large scale is far and away more difficult than the art of making framed pictures; and because we have in Frank Brangwyn an artist who cannot help being decorative, we must not generalise from a rare case, and expect all easel-painters to become mural decorators by the mere act of experimenting in a few efforts apiece. But there are several points on which too much emphasis cannot be laid in this matter of the *Royal Exchange*. The first one is the fact that the city has taken these decorations quite seriously, and now looks upon them as a standard for all future efforts in applied art. This wrong notion will take root in the conservatism of city men, and will then act very unfavourably on all right aims in decoration. It is English to make a bad beginning; we do it in all wars, we do it in all new public works; and certainly we cannot afford to allow these tentative efforts at the *Royal Exchange* to misinstruct the public on questions of fundamental principle. The second point is that too many painters have had a hand in this scheme of decoration. Fifteen different eyes for colour and fifteen varying aims do not give us unity—an essential thing in all ornamentation. Not more than two painters were necessary, and these should have worked together in accordance with a definite plan. To turn a great public promenade into a mere picture gallery is ridiculous. Yet

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## *Decorative Painting*

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I am able to state that the Royal Exchange refused a second panel from a decorative artist of the highest standing, because the authorities did not want two works by the same hand. It is only in England that such an absurd refusal could be made. If the artist had volunteered to paint such a gift for any public building on the Continent or in America, there would have been much rejoicing.<sup>1</sup>

At the Royal Exchange, moreover, a good many peculiar difficulties have to be overcome. The diffused light in the ambulatory is dim, so that each painting ought to have such well-defined forms and such a scheme of colours as will suit the lighting; and each artist is called upon to remember that all pale tints will blot the design and be far more prominent than darker masses. Pale tints, again, in the case of skies, will make a hole in the wall unless great care be taken. Nor are these the only points to be considered. The Royal Exchange itself is a great national symbol in the immense life of London, and imagination demands that the mural paintings shall be heroic in scale and worthy of their position. We do not wish to see in any decorative painting a great flight of steps with a forlorn little man lost in the middle of it. Nelson is not impressive in a position of that sort. And there is another flight of waterside steps at the Royal Exchange; this one thronged with frightened women and children, all aglow with reflected light from burning houses. Is this a proper theme for mural decora-

<sup>1</sup> This recalls to memory the fact that other generous offers have been refused by the authorities of public buildings in London. G. F. Watts offered to decorate with frescoes the large hall at Euston Station, but the London and North-Western Railway declined.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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tion? Is it at all possible to represent flames on a wall without making your decoration seem like a big window through which a moving scene of peril is distinctly seen?

In another painting a gateway is open in the very middle of the composition, and looking through it we behold, far off, a royal carriage waiting for Queen Victoria. Could anything be more comical? Our eyes pierce the wall of the Royal Exchange and see something outside. Even Leighton is not decorative in his most fortunate manner. His figures are not heroic; the colour is rather lifeless; and the design shows that Leighton's respect for the solid plane of the wall's surface was too anxious and too timid. A line of male heads runs across the painting horizontally, and it is made more noticeable by means of a beast's hide that a Briton chieftain holds out temptingly to a disdainful Phœnician. Again, wishing to blot out as much of the sea as he could, lest its pale colour and its movements should breach the wall's surface, Leighton carried a wide length of drapery across from the Phœnicians to the British women on our left, and its purple tint is not to my eyes a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. I prefer the two Leighton decorations at South Kensington, and particularly the one representing the arts of war.

Oh, this art of mural painting is full of pitfalls! The composition of an opera for a troupe of jealous singers is not more troublesome. It is what the French call a work of long breath, and what we may describe as a long-distance run in art, a Marathon race in emotion and disciplined design. Most of the endeavours of our Royal Exchange are patched with blunders, arising mainly from





MODERN COMMERCE.  
*From the Fresco in the Royal  
Exchange, London.*





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## *Decorative Painting*

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inexperience. In one an active little page-boy stands right outside the composition, so far removed is he from the general atmosphere that unites all the other characters. But, as a rule, the later decorations show that progress creeps and then jumps forward. The last one of all is the most masterly as a genuine mural-painting.

Yet its subject is not only the most difficult to manage in an appropriate way; it is also least likely to attract chance-comers. To realise this you have but to think for a moment about Modern Commerce—a thing world-wide in its adventures, and trafficking with so many commodities that the mind knows not which to choose as the more important in the national life of Great Britain. For we as a nation have fallen into the perilous position of owing nearly all our food-stuffs to seafaring imports from distant and foreign orchards and farms. There is a coming tragedy in that one fact. No economist can believe that a nation can maintain her greatness by depending on foods grown by strangers far beyond her own shores, because it is a fixed law of nature that hunger and nutrition must be near and friendly neighbours. If, again, we look at other phases of our vast commercial enterprise, and consider those imports of raw stuffs that our craftsmen turn into manufactured articles for export, we find another fact as sinister and threatening as the first, since in this matter also we get life-blood from many countries overseas that may veer from friendliness into enmity at any moment. The heart of Britain throbs in the engine-rooms of her battleships. She herself is defenceless, nourished on a diet of cosmopolitanism in the necessaries of each day's labour and hunger.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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That is Modern Commerce as applied to the British Isles. To represent it in a fresco is a task that very few artists would dare to undertake. It cannot be symbolised by any combination of emblems and figures without seeming cold and tame; and if you take any single incident from its many thousands, you know that a whole must be greater than its isolated parts. Face to face with all these difficulties, Brangwyn looked at his subject from the standpoint of its vague impressiveness as an international agent, and then made up his mind to show, within the scale of his wall space, such types of action as would connect sea-coming produce with the labour and the life of Great Britain. There should be a great bustling dock, but not obviously the docks of London, since British commerce must not be anchored in any port day after day through the year. The atmosphere should be quite modern and also typical of British weather and British energy, but no detail should mark and give prominence to the present hour, its passing inventions and its ever-varying costumes. A spirit of timelessness would give this work the chance of being a symbol of British commerce a hundred years hence as it is to-day.

These points decided, he threw his figures upon canvas in a scale that appears much larger than life, the heroic scale of proportion; and this is why, painted as Brangwyn paints, his decoration has a certain grim majesty of design that kills its pictorial neighbours. The colour, too, is rich and massive; it seems to grip the masonry of the wall, to belong to the structure of its surface. Even the sky behind—a sky with its piled-up clouds rising in a squadron between perpendicular lines of colour that indicate huge

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## *Decorative Painting*

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cranes and other mechanical appliances—is a happy event in decorative treatment and effect. There are workmen resting, and boys at ease near a great tangle of golden bananas, while other figures are in full action, bending under their burdens of fruits and things. It is not perfect as a composition, but who else could have solved so many difficulties?



## CHAPTER X

### POINTS OF VIEW IN DECORATIVE ART: AND THE SKINNERS' HALL

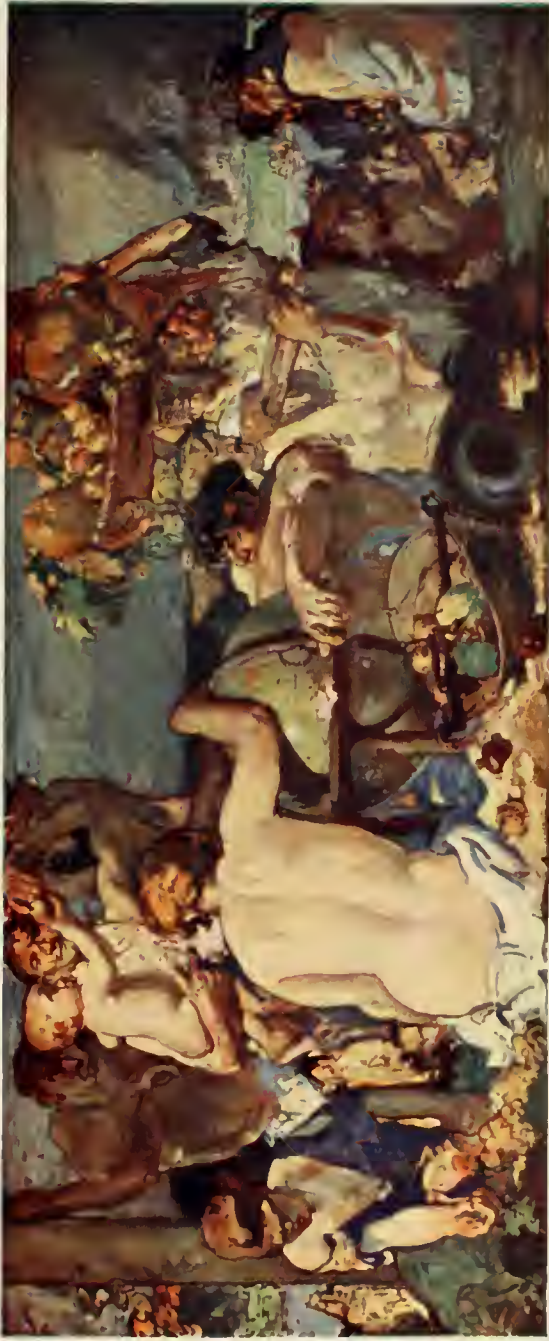
THE movement in decorative painting has fought a stern battle during the last fifteen years. Easel-painters have not often welcomed it because it has asked them to start out on a new education, to learn the principles of applied art; and a good many critics have refused to budge from their long submission to innumerable shows of dainty pictures. Accustomed to this routine, they have looked upon modern decoration as an interloper without "refinement," without "culture," and have sneered at its "technique," writing labyrinthine definitions of "refinement," "technique," and "culture." Verbal fanaticism is always perplexing, and I wish to give an example from the *Spectator*, May 25, 1895, because it tried to discredit modern decorative art by attacking a picture by Frank Brangwyn. The picture was "Rest," and the *Standard* had praised its "modern sensitiveness of technique," and placed it "in the vanguard of the artistic forces of the day." This annoyed the *Spectator*, whose critic happened to be a young pupil to the principles of French Impressionism.

"What is this mysterious affair, technique? It is not exactly simple, it is duplex; but no mystery if we do not mix it with the process of seeing, which results in an



THE FRUITS OF INDUSTRY.

*Reproduced from the large Panel in  
Tempera.*



THE FRUITS OF INDUSTRY  
*Reproduced in the large Panel in Caspary*



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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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image, and the process of designing, which results in a picture, but neither of which is technique.”

Think over that! We are to arrive at technique without help from seeing eyes, though blind men have never been noted for any sort of facility with a brush. Still, let us listen again: “Technique is the last, the physical<sup>1</sup> step which ends each of these processes, each of these two games which make up pictorial imagination, and which the painter must carry on side by side.” There is here a restoration of sight; the blind eyes have been cured, and the critic runs on into new difficulties. For example:—

“This last physical<sup>1</sup> step on the decorative or designing side—the side that allies drawing to music, to dancing, to abstract pleasant lines and patches—is the getting of a pleasant consistency and surface in the paint. The choice of patterns is not technique—that is design. The choice of colours is not technique—that is design. Technique is the laying-on with the hand of a good coat of paint, like a house-painter, though with a variety again dictated by the sense of design. This side of technique is known as *quality*. It is the physical<sup>1</sup> magic that makes paint delightful for itself.”

The critic rambles on into some confused remarks on “handling,” and at last he tells us that “we are now in a position to decide between good and bad technique. . . . The newer fashionable examples give us what looks like vigorous handling, dexterous brush-work, all expressing

<sup>1</sup> Note the use of the word “physical,” as if all the emotions and actions of mankind were not expressed through physical agents—the nerves, the brain, facial expression, the hands, and so forth.



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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nothing, or expressing, by painting across the forms 'dexterously,' the exact opposite of the fact.

"It is because I find more of this than of sensitiveness in Mr. Brangwyn's picture that I cannot agree with the critic of the *Standard*. . . ."

Are you not reminded of the scientist who ripped open a nightingale's throat in order to learn why the bird sang so well? It is certainly injudicious to mystify the reading public with a long and scattered definition of technique, for expression in painting depends so much on incalculable things, that if we could summon a Parliament of Dead Painters to discuss the question of technique, under the speakership of Michael Angelo, the debate could not tell us more than this: that technique is a totality of effect, showing how a painter feels towards a chosen subject; sometimes it is laboured in good pictures and skilful in bad pictures, but it speaks to us always of the painter's gifts—his temperament, his sense of colour, his changing moods, his aims in design, his emotional skill of hand, and his qualities of brain. Yes, and these agents of expression are more or less influenced by school traditions and by the forces of current life. In the work of the greatest painters technique has the quality of fine velvets, and from velvets it descends into the quality of inferior materials, ranging from cheap silks to shagreen leather. But the main factor of all in technique is temperament; for temperament rules each of us, and it can never give out more than Providence has put into it. Temperament in a man of genius may be compared to a cup of enchanted wine; the cup cannot be changed for another, and its wine belongs to a vintage that is always good of its kind. There are times when

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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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it asks us to cultivate an acquired taste, but gourmets do not rail at it. Only gourmands do that. *C'est à prendre ou à laisser.* When a critic forgets these simple matters, he is likely also to forget that men of genius rule over their own realms and invite us to be peaceful citizens there.

As a citizen of Brangwyn's kingdom I am appealing to those outside, among whom I notice several types of mind. There is the ordinary layman who desires a picture to be an incident from a stage play, and there is the practising painter who gets from his own work such a small amount of pleasure that he spends all his leisure time in writing about art. This hobby is bad for any painter when he happens to be displeased with himself. Envy may creep unperceived into his paragraphs, and the very dogmatism that serves an artist as a sort of life-belt is apt to keep him aloof from any temperament and ideals differing much from his own. For example, if you have a great liking for the decorative art of Puvis de Chavannes, are you not sometimes tempted to believe that the style of Puvis ought to be the criterion of modern taste in mural painting? It is well known that personal sympathies are mistaken very often for sound judgments. Lord Morley has noted this in literary appreciations. He says: "A man remembers that a poem in one style has filled him with consciousness of beauty and delight. Why conclude that this style constitutes the one access to the same impression?" Quite so. But likes and dislikes are truants; they hate to go to school. It is their nature to get into mischief. People who are very fond of Puvis condemn the virile modernity of Brangwyn, and those

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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who are devoted to Brangwyn often lose touch with Puvis, who tried to make real for us the naïve spirit of the younger-hearted times. What do we gain when criticism is so little catholic?

There is a very sympathetic type of artistic expert who tries to bring his subject into the daily thought of ordinary persons, but who feels very acutely the influence of changing moods. Mr. C. Lewis Hind is a critic of this type. He writes very well, but his emotions towards Brangwyn change in the most protean manner, carrying along with him his many readers. In the *Evening News*, March 23, 1904, he proved that he could write with objective sympathy from within Brangwyn's own atmosphere:—

“It is rash to prophesy, but I dare assert that in the twenty-first century Mr. Brangwyn will be reckoned one of the chief art forces of our time. He is entirely himself, bold and original, and his work has the decorative quality, the sense of pattern, that has always marked the masters. . . . Leaning on a chair in the midst of the Brangwyns was an engraving . . . of Rembrandt's ‘The Centurion Cornelius,’ one of those profoundly spiritual, haunting Scripture scenes that the Dutchman felt so strongly, and feeling, expressed so poignantly. To turn from this to the Brangwyns was—well, it was to be switched from a quiet age of faith and unquestioning belief to the rushing and outwardly materialistic twentieth century. But Brangwyn is quite right! He lives in his own age; he draws his inspiration from life, not from books. He is strong enough to be himself, and therein lies his power to impress you and me. We may prefer the Rembrandt temperament; but Brangwyn remains—a force.”

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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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That is criticism, objective and candid. It was written before Brangwyn had done not only his best work, but the best decorations ever painted in London, and Mr. Hind was invited to review them for the *Evening News*, in June 1910. Perhaps he has changed his address since 1904, perhaps he now feels the opinions of some new art circle, for he is now as far distant from Brangwyn as Charles Lamb was from Sir Walter Scott. In his article Mr. Hind makes a false start:—

“The other evening a group of artists and others discussed the subject of ‘The Something More in Art.’ It was decided, or, rather, suggested by the reader of the paper that ‘the something more’ which is beyond technique, which gives a work of art vitality, and makes it endure is—personality. One of the group found himself confused between personality and temperament, whereupon a sculptor, who thinks he is also a literary man, said: ‘Personality is spiritual, temperament is physical; personality grows from and expresses the innermost ego—*i.e.* the soul; temperament is of the body, and is awakened by the senses and the sensations of the body.’” This implies that personality is outside the life of man—outside our human senses. Does Mr. Hind suppose that a creature destitute of nerves—unable to taste, to smell, to see, to feel—would be a spiritual creature? “Rightly or wrongly,” he confesses, “I found myself troubled by this æsthetic conflict, personality *versus* temperament, when I visited the Skinners’ Hall in Dowgate Hill last Tuesday to see the eleven frescoes, or panels as they are called, with which Mr. Frank Brangwyn has decorated the banqueting-hall. . . . Mr. Brangwyn has an interesting—

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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now, am I to say personality or temperament? Abroad, he is treated with a respect that almost amounts to veneration. At home he has his admirers, who will not hear a word in disfavour of his great gifts. . . .”

Not from a man who writes in a wrong strain, certainly. To pick holes in excellent work is an easy pastime, for beauty and blemish go hand in hand; and to talk in the air about temperament and personality, copying down in all seriousness that sculptor's comical metaphysics, is an odd way indeed to begin a newspaper article on an artist who, whatever his natural limitations may be, is welcomed in all countries as a man of genius. Moreover, Mr. Hind passed through the City to the Skinners' Hall—the City of London, the greatest battlefield in the universal war of modern trade; he knew, also, that the Skinners' Company had contributed since its foundation to the making of London; and he ought also to have known that decorative art should represent the spirit of its time and stand out as a fitting emblem of just civic pride and national power. Yet he stood in the banqueting-hall and thought out a very jejune article, in which he would appeal to half a million readers. I will not copy out the whole of his remarks; two brief quotations will be enough for the present:—

“It is perhaps safer to suggest that on the walls of the Skinners' Hall Mr. Brangwyn gives us his unclothed, clamorous temperament, not his clothed and cloistral personality.”

“Think what has been done in the wall-painting way: think of Botticelli's two Tornabuoni frescoes, now on the staircase at the Louvre, and the undying message of grace



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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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and loveliness that the personality of Botticelli, delicate as a bed of wet violets in the springtime, conveys to us."

How pathetic! Would Mr. Hind sigh for the "Pilgrim's Progress" while glancing here and there into "The Ring and the Book"? Perhaps Thomas à Kempis might be his ideal while he read "Othello" or "King Lear," marvelling why Shakespeare could have been so foolish as to show his unclothed, clamorous temperament, instead of a cloistral personality as delicate as a bed of wet violets in the springtime. Myself, I delight in the "strong men," as François Millet always described the lusty, virile painters, because the greater part of life is battle, not undying messages of grace and loveliness from beds of violets; and as to the other thing in art, that Mr. Hind seeks in sweetness or in dreamful pathos, it is a painter's moods, and the moods are bad in decorative art if they do not accord with their purpose and position. In his mind's eye Mr. Hind sees work by Botticelli on the walls of a banqueting-hall in our modern London. He seems even to believe that Brangwyn by some means should exchange his own temperament for Botticelli's. Yet Mr. Hind writes for the Press, influencing half a million readers in a day.

To earn bread by writing about the work of other men is a privilege, and the least one can do is to try to understand each painter's intention and never to expect from him the peculiar gifts of some other man.

This being so, let us see what the Skinners' Company wished to do, and how their chosen artist has fulfilled his duty. In 1902, when the project was discussed by their Court, strongly advocated by Mr. T. L. Devitt, five ideas probably occurred to every member of the Company. The



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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decorations might represent eleven outstanding events from the great past of England, or eleven such events from the history of London; they might show the adventures of skins from the hunter's success onward to the sale of manufactured articles; and then, of course, there were two other sets of themes—one from the Company's long career, the other from those trades and manufactures that now keep Britain in the fighting line of the world's industrial warfare. To an artist who feels with intense energy the life of his own time, the last choice of subjects was clearly the best; and because the mainspring of art is eye-knowledge gained from things seen, not mind-knowledge acquired from things read in books, it was also the best set of subjects considered from the standpoint of living art. But the Company was a private one, and its own history appealed to its members. That was very natural. For the history was a good long chapter in the life of London since 1327. City Companies in the past were as helpful to England as Universities; indeed, they were public schools for handicrafts; and although, as time went by, inevitable conflicts arose between the craftsman who worked for hire and the capitalist who invested money in that work, the London Companies outlived all changes of fortune, passing from trade guilds into social clubs, famous for their good-fellowship and for their charities. I am not aware that they were ever patrons of decorative art until the Skinners' Company invited Frank Brangwyn to paint from its history ten or eleven subjects which had been chosen for him.

In their own way the subjects are good, and in keeping with Bacon's definition of history as the pomp of business.



RECEPTION OF GENERAL  
MONK AT THE SKINNERS'  
HALL, 4TH APRIL 1660.

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Skinners' Company. Copyright*



ELECTION OF GENERAL MONK AT THE SKINNERS HALL 1709



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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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The perfume of wet violets does not come from them; it is virile human life that they represent:—

1. Skin-merchants selecting Furs and Pelts at the City Mart in the Days before the Guild of Corpus Christi received their Charter.

2. The granting of their Charter to the Skinners' Company by Edward III., March 1, 1327.

3. A River Procession of the City's and the Companies' Barges to Westminster, A.D. 1453.

4. The Opening of the Strife between the Skinners and the Merchant Taylors, A.D. 1484.

5. The Founding of Tonbridge School by Sir Andrew Judd, 1553.

6. An Incident in the Defence of London Bridge by Sir Andrew Judd, A.D. 1554.

7. A City Pageant in Olden Times.

8. The Departure of Sir James Lancaster for the East Indies, A.D. 1594.

9. Reception of General Monk at the Skinners' Hall, April 4th, 1660.

10. Sir Thomas Pilkington's Banquet to King William the Third and Queen Mary, A.D. 1684.

11. Harmony.

It was a great event when the Skinners' Court decided upon this big scheme of work, and there was much rejoicing in the art world, though painters recognised that tremendous difficulties would have to be encountered and overcome. Themes from the annals of a private company did not belong to that part of England's story which is



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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generally known, so their realisation in decorative art would not stir in chance-comers any associations of known events. They could not possibly have the national and popular interest that enshrines all the greatest hours in the making of England. Then again, the subjects would bring in questions of costume, of archæology, many and various questions, which might clog and weaken mural painting as they have weakened and clogged Shakespearian acting. These and other fears were expressed by artists; but one and all admitted that the Skinners' Company had taken a step that would add permanently to the value of modern art.

Brangwyn entered upon his work with knowledge of the difficulties to be faced, and he had also to consider the building in which his decorations would be put; a banquet-hall of brown oak, with a top or roof light, the woodwork enriched with gilding, and the walls divided by pilasters having a projection of perhaps one-third of their breadth. The decorations were to be placed as a sort of frieze above the deep-brown wainscot, where the pilaster-like projections formed five recessed panels on each side, two uprights, and three large oblongs having a good breadth. At the entrance end was a music gallery with wall-space for another decoration. Across the hall was a window of stained glass.

The dominant notes of colour were the brown oak and the gilding. Mr. Hind thinks that the hue of the panelled walls should have been taken as the *leit-motif* of the colour-scheme, making the paintings above and the woodwork beneath entirely congruous from the first day. But this error is not made in London by decorative artists who

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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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know their business. In our London atmosphere painted colours change so rapidly, growing deeper in tone, that the earliest decoration at the Skinners' Hall has already matured. Indeed, in this one work the painter made scarcely enough allowance for the fact that his work would pass through the alembic of time. He paid a little too much deference to the *leit-motif* of brown oak. Afterwards he worked in higher keys of colour, so that the alchemy of air acting on them year after year might mellow them gradually into a new richness foreseen by him.

But questions of colour in their relation to acquired tone were not the only technical matters needing care and forethought. The decorations would be skied—put in positions high above the line of sight, and this was very important, because the panels, though big, were not large enough to justify the use of a heroic scale in the figures. Thus the carrying power of each composition would depend, not upon figures considerably taller than life, but upon the art displayed in the massed patterning of colour. Further, as the subjects were not of a kind that appealed by their familiar historical interest to every one, it would be well to aim with infinite care at beauty in splendid colour and at magnificence in active life. These qualities were suggested by ten themes, and their presentation would be a fitting symbol of the immense pageantry of events that England has witnessed in her achievements.

The painter has won a noble success, but he is not satisfied himself, because all true work is but the training for a long race that never seems to be run. Sir Joshua Reynolds felt this with a sort of tragic pathos, and he said :  
“ The beauty of which we are in quest is general and in-

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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tellectual ; it is an idea that subsists only in the mind : the sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it : it is an idea residing in the breast of the artist, which he is always labouring to impart, and which he dies at last without imparting, but which he is yet so far able to communicate as to raise the thoughts and extend the views of the spectator." That is all true ; but, unfortunately, spectators do not often respond to it until its originality has grown familiar. And those painters whose ideals of beauty are not sweetness and pathos but health and vigour and action suffer the most, first because great depression follows their spates of emotion, and next because the public is more easily moved by gentle and pathetic beauty than by an art full of manhood and triumphing enterprise. Gentleness and pathos are known as "soul," and they help writers to make pretty copy about wet violets in the springtime and undying messages of grace and loveliness.

Even Mr. Hind admits that there is a triumph of life in Brangwyn's art. He says, "In pomp, splendour, and in the suggestion of pagan and pageant-unfolding episodes in the history of the Worshipful Company of Skinners, they are magnificent." But he yearns for "soul," that is to say, for messages of grace and wet violets, and he finds "soul" in a fresco by Puvis de Chavannes, in the Panthéon, representing St. Genéviève in the moonlight watching and praying over Paris. We are not told what St. Genéviève has to do with the subjects chosen for Brangwyn. But it seems clear enough that Mr. Hind is a primitive in his preferences for art ; the years dead and gone live for him in naïve pictures filled with a cloistral faith ; and in Puvis he finds a kindred temperament, while

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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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in Brangwyn he is oppressed by what he calls a "boisterously beautiful and roysterously crowded vision." Brangwyn belongs to his own time, while Puvis de Chavannes thought more of the long ago, and if we compare the two we put ourselves out of court. Each stands alone, and those who understand art feel the noble qualities within the limitations of each.

For the rest, there is a distinct evolution of style in the panels at the Skinners' Hall. In the first one painted—"Departure of Sir James Lancaster for the East Indies, A.D. 1594"—we feel the influence of Venice, and particularly of Veronese. There is an artifice of lighting, as well as an elaboration of studied design, that differs from modern work; and it is certain also that the first step being very difficult, the painter was anxious, so he lingered too long over several minor parts. One of the foreground figures is a seated man with his nude back turned towards the spectator, and the back might be simpler in its modelling; it draws attention from the principal group above, where Lancaster—a darkling figure—is admirably placed in his relation to a background of tall ships and of cumulus clouds, all treated with great skill, for the solid plane of the wall is nowhere breached by the perspective. In quality the paint is good throughout, and no pedantry is shown in the costumes. These mark a definite period without asking us to think more about them than about the painting as a whole.

When this panel was hung at the Royal Academy in 1904, it made as much disturbance as a whale would make in a river full of trout and perch. I have by my side several newspapers that decline to believe that art is justified of

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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her children. With facile largeness of censure, they sneer at the big intruder, though the hanging committee had put it up high on the centre wall of the third room. Some other notices, while admitting with enthusiasm the great and rare merits displayed, fell into the error of supposing that decorative art must be flat, tame, and conventional, not ornamental in a living way. This mistake arises from a supposition that because decorations must never make holes in a wall, therefore the structural conception of the whole work must be artificial in all its planes. As well might we argue that because a stage drama is subject to the restraints of a stage setting which can never be real, therefore the drama among its characters must be formal and artificial, never showing how variously human nature wrestles with circumstance, that outward destiny, or is swayed by temperament, that inward ruler oscillating between peace and war. To keep life from mural painting is to produce a dead art, demanding infinite faith from spectators. From among the notices I choose one from the *Speaker*; it has not the excess of praise of some admirers, and it illustrates temperately the point now under consideration:—

“Of Mr. Brangwyn as a colourist there might be many things said. But the principal fact about his colour power appears to me to be that he has gauged exactly the enormous value of blue as a factor in building up a rich and colourful composition; that he has, in a word, taken up the parable of the great Venetian painters at the point where they left it. Not, indeed, that the blue in the “Departure of Lancaster for the East Indies” is an all-assertive influence, for it is confined in the main to a patch of wine-



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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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dark sea in the centre, and in that part of the sky which is not obscured by rolling cumuli. Yet what an amount of power does it not give to the glowing golden reds, the luminous browns, the luscious chocolate, in this work, by virtue of its adequate use and exquisite management? The whole panel is alive with colour from the scarlet robe of the dominant figure on the right to the dusky Oriental in shadow on the left, from the sun-tinged sails of the barque beyond to the bunch of carrots and turnips in the immediate foreground; alive, too, with strong light and shade and the sense of crowded humanity and the vigour of individual form. In the last respect the artist goes beyond the strictest limits of decoration; his figures, disposed as they are in masses of colour, are sculptural, not flat; there is a solidity about them that leaves no doubt as to their actuality, and suggests the potent influence of the modern realistic spirit on this most modern of English decorators. Whether this influence would be healthy in the majority of cases one may doubt. One can well imagine an imitator of Mr. Brangwyn aiming at similar ends, and, whilst striving to combine decorative symmetry with pronounced colour and form of this nature, succeeding only in giving one a distressing lumpishness. With the average artist the chances would be mostly in favour of his losing the decorative idea in the realistic, or producing a mixture of both that would be merely chaotic. Mr. Brangwyn, however, is not the average artist, and his work cannot be judged by elementary canons of decoration, however long established. The undoubted success, from the decorative standpoint, of his 'Departure of Lancaster' proves this, if nothing else."



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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We naturally wish to know whence the writer got his elementary canons of decoration. From faded frescoes by the Primitive Italians, or from Rubens? From Mantegna and Michael Angelo, or from the Panthéon at Paris? Thank goodness, art in all its just forms has infinite variety, for it is "*la nature vue à travers un tempérament.*"

The first panel finished, Brangwyn felt at ease in his work, so he passed from Venetian influences, and painted with greater freedom, giving a more even circulation of light and a more fluent rhythm to his handling. The most sumptuous panel of all is, I believe, a "City Pageant in Olden Days," an enchanted vision, splendidly tumultuous, yet ordered in a masterful way. It contrasts admirably with the fourth panel, that represents the strife between the Skinners and Merchant Taylors. The sentiment here is akin to that of Shakespearian crowds, ample, rude, and full-blooded. One thinks of the opening scene in "Romeo and Juliet," with the rival factions of Montague and Capulet; only, the mediæval Londoners pass less rapidly from words to blows. But these paintings must be seen to be enjoyed. It is quite impossible to describe their distinguishing characteristics, because words cannot do justice to qualities of design or to harmonies of colour.<sup>1</sup> In large photographs the decorations are very attractive, showing that every one was designed not only with infinite skill and vigour, but with something of the true classic spirit. And each composition has, above all, the authoritative quality of style.

How grateful we should be to the man who in these

<sup>1</sup> The illustrations give two of the panels, but although the greatest care has been given to both, the results are not what we should like them to be, for large paintings lose life and charm in little reproductions.

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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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days has power to conceive and bring to completion a fine series of decorative pictures, revealing such a breadth of vision, such a lyrical swing in design, such a superb virility in handling, as will ever be remarkable in the history of British art. I am aware that here, as in all work, beauties are neighboured by blemishes; but I know, too, that Brangwyn is still evolving, and that no man of genius has ever yet been helped by the pin-pricks of a nagging criticism, that jabs and probes into inevitable imperfections. It has been my duty to read many thousands of notices on Brangwyn's art, and I can say without exaggeration that I have come upon very few having the value of those hints that one friendly painter gives to another.<sup>1</sup> What Goethe said of criticism is quite true: it has not even a negative value, for if a man of genius throughout life were to follow the differing opinions of any fifty persons, he might waste fifty years and more on one large picture, blotting it out a thousand times in defiance of his judgment. Criticism, then, is useless, except in matters which can be verified as facts; and that is why a writer should review only those forms of art that attract him greatly. His enthusiasm may then do good, for he will not try to be anything more than

<sup>1</sup> Mr. George Moore has written well on this subject. "Every twenty years tells the tale of a new victim, of an artist whose originality affronts public taste; and so unvarying are the expressions used by the critics who voice public displeasure in the newspapers, that it would almost seem to be possible to divine the new genius in their writings, if personal knowledge of his works were inaccessible. For these critics invariably find his pictures ugly—ugly is their favourite adjective—or they declare them to be crude, and lacking in refinement; his figures do not look as if you could walk round them, nor do his landscapes suggest places where they would like to be. . . . It is difficult to say whether works of genius are disliked more by critics or the general public, nor have we any means of knowing how far picture-buyers are led by what is printed in the papers. Probably not very much, for only on the rarest occasions have I been able to persuade my intimate friends to purchase pictures which they disliked."

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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a loyal interpreter between men of genius and the people. Above all, he will never forget that artists should pursue their own reasoned course without being affected by outside praise and censure.

Brangwyn has been baited, as Meunier and Millet were baited, but, happily, he has been as steadfast as they were, and his contributions to the democratic art that they loved are glorious in colour and romantic in splendid vision and power. Little by little he has passed away from dangers that beset all men who paint with a great natural facility. The late Jean Portaels once said to me: "Born painters and colourists should always draw in monochrome paint, dwelling insistently on the sculptural side of form, because a natural fluency with the brush is an enemy to a planned method in draughtsmanship. It is a sort of eloquence that says too much; it needs a self-denying economy." Not only is this true, but Brangwyn has shown in his recent advance that he holds the same views. His first etchings date from about the same year as his commission from the Skinners' Company, and there is no sterner discipline than that of the etcher's needle. We find, too, not only in the work at the Skinners' Hall, but in recent easel-pictures, that he is gaining a much firmer hold on his impetuous vitality. If, for example, you compare the picture "Wine" with an earlier work of the same type—"The Blood of the Grape," painted in 1896—you will be surprised by the growth of self-control in a style that pulsates with nervous animation. Equally remarkable and admirable was the "Wine Shop" of 1906, a Brangwyn of Brangwyns, a real masterpiece, painted at the age of

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## *Points of View in Decorative Art*

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thirty-nine. Mr. Claude Phillips has written the best analysis of its qualities:—

“Mr. Frank Brangwyn has never yet produced anything which so truly deserves to be described as masterly as this superb ‘Wine Shop.’ We must, of course, take him as he is, and abstain from exacting precisely what he cannot and will not give. His vision, his execution, are absolutely his own. Though a naturalist, he is not in the narrower sense a realist; or, at the most, he is a decorative and romantic realist. In these powerful heads of wine-sellers, painted with magnificent breadth of brush, so as to dominate even the tremendously forceful representation of the pumpkins and other gigantic vegetables which make so picturesque a foreground, there is no doubt something of Velazquez, and something, too, of Manet. Yet the picture as a whole is essentially Mr. Brangwyn’s own, and such as—precisely in this way—no other artist among his contemporaries, whether British or foreign, could have painted.”—*Daily Telegraph*, April 21, 1906.

I do not myself see the influence of Manet, but art-criticism is a record of differing impressions received from the same work. French writers find that Brangwyn is a kinsman of certain French painters, while Italian writers associate his name with various Italian masters, like Domenichino and Veronese. The aim in each case, no doubt, is to suggest some quality in Brangwyn that cannot be described in words.

## CHAPTER XI

### SKETCHES AND STUDIES

**T**O know an artist we must understand his studies and sketches, for in these we see and feel the first rush of inspiration as well as the after-thoughts of self-criticism. There is ever a conflict between an artist and his materials, between the emotions that create and the limits set to creation by tools and pigments and practical considerations ; and it is only in the preliminaries of a painter's art, in studies, in sketches, that we are able to watch the battle, following its fortunes from the first impulsive hints of a new subject given in a few rapid lines, onward to drawings from the life for separate figures. Then there are *pochardes*—impressions in colour of things seen, the snapshots of art, invaluable as documentary evidence of a painter's temperament, his instantaneous feeling and his ways of work. All these things belong to the psychology of invention, to the workshop of that spiritual power known as talent or as genius. Some painters of note have been unable to sketch well, like Puvis de Chavannes ; they look trivial in their experimental efforts, reminding us of that type of general who needs a full-dress uniform before he carries with him an air of authority. Other painters—and even a famous writer here and there, like Victor Hugo—command attention with half-a-dozen lines hur-





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MUSIC.

*From an Original Lithograph.*





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## *Sketches and Studies*

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riedly drawn with pen or pencil. They are artists through and through, and cannot touch paper without displaying their natural greatness of spirit. The merest fragment by a Turner or a Cotman is a joy to any person who feels at home in the æsthetic factory of emotion.

There was a time when many used to say of Brangwyn that he could not draw, that he painted large pictures without sufficient preparation, but they took care not to tell us what merits they expected to find in good drawing, nor did they confess that they were unacquainted with his ways of work. They were right in one respect only; in certain of his pictures Brangwyn did not draw well, but you judge an artist by his good flights, not by his falls, I hope. Of course, if you like that kind of impeccable draughtsmanship that seems to have the mechanism of a musical-box, being quite accurate, but without temperament and passion, then typical studies and sketches by Frank Brangwyn will leave you cold, for every line that he draws—draws, that is to say, in a fortunate mood—vibrates with life. Mr. Arthur Layard, writing in 1900, said with truth that the distinguishing characteristic of Brangwyn's drawing—the key of his art—is to be found in a robust liberty of design tempered by an austere self-restraint. His impetuous ardour is usually obedient to discipline, like that of a Highland soldier in the heat and stress of an advance against the enemy. The notion, still common in England, that good draughtsmanship laboriously copies the outlines of things observed and then adds delicate and pretty shading, is, of course, ridiculous, because photography along those lines can do a great deal more than the human hand. It is life with

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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personality that counts in studies and sketches, and each line must have a quality of touch that no other man could give. A born draughtsman writes his signature in every line. Fine sketching should owe no help to borrowed tricks, to a knack acquired by trying to draw like the Old Masters. Several painters in London at the present time are developing mannerisms of this affected kind, as if they had studied all the chalk drawings in the print-rooms of Europe; but they stop always at the same place, with the sleight-of-hand peculiar to receptive students.

Foreigners remark this fact more keenly than we do, because they live outside our little artistic sets, each one of which is apt to become a society for mutual admiration. They see our exhibitions and say: "Yes, you have a good many young painters who are clever students, but that counts for nothing in these days. Schools on the Continent produce scores of brilliant students who never do anything great as practising artists. London expects to surprise us into admiration by displaying much art work that has no breadth of inspiration. We still prefer Brangwyn, because he has created a type in art, because he seldom draws a line without showing that he is a strong man of original distinction."

This does not mean that Brangwyn is without fault. No man ever is in all his varying moods, and Brangwyn may be placed in the same category of imperative craftsmen as Carlyle and Browning. It is the easiest thing in the world to pick holes in Browning and Carlyle; to resist that commonplace temptation in order to concentrate on their merits may be a little difficult at times, but it is always worth while, for these virile artists have infinite



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## *Sketches and Studies*

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strength to impart, and why should we not accept them as we do imperfect hills that we cannot climb with ease? If there are bursts of metrical chaos in Browning and many verbal perversities, so in Brangwyn you will find here and there perversities of another kind, occasional errors of judgment in his choice of models, for example; but let us never point out a shortcoming in one person of genius without thinking of those in his equals. One characteristic—I do not call it a fault—becomes plain to any one who examines with sympathy Brangwyn's sketches and studies; it is his growing sense of drama in the colossal engines and factories built to-day by little men. He sees man dwarfed by man-constructed things; sees human nature overawed by inventions of a mechanical sort, created by a few rare minds and carried out by millions of commonplace hands, almost automatically; and although his attitude to toil is like that of a sportsman to games involving danger, there is yet at times a tendency to make factories and machines the main subjects of interest.

Let us consider this point still further. The most remarkable thing of the present time is the fact that we all use a great many wonderful inventions without knowing anything about their mechanism. These inventions are supposed to be the business slaves of to-day, and we have not enough pride of mind to learn how and why they are helpful to us. We use them as if we also were machines, and in a feeble way we boast about the fact that they are here for us to employ. Not one person in five thousand has any real knowledge about the telephone, or the fitment of electric light in a house, or the principles of aviation,



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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or the engines that carry us by train or by steamer. Very few of us know how the simplest household thing is made; and as workmanship to-day is very subdivided, most of us are craftsmen of odds and ends, doing each of us some small part of a big undertaking upon which many are engaged. If we look at ourselves collectively, as a nation, we are great, but if we consider ourselves one by one in relation to what we know about our surroundings, we are weaker and more isolated than civilised men have ever been before. It is this that Brangwyn feels with an intense dramatic energy which at times appears very tragic and fatalistic. He has not lost hope in man, far from that; but he sees that man is using his skill, his invention, his toil, not to ennoble his daily life with beautiful things, but to make himself the sport of mechanisms and hazards that he himself creates. It is a drama new in kind, since the huge masses of metal and of brick-buildings that we animate with pulsating machines seem of greater import to the imagination than is any little busy human creature that helps to work them. For instance, I feel a tremendous tragedy in Brangwyn's sketch—a sketch translated into a famous etching—of the gigantic battleship ashore, and the wee pigmies who are going to break her up. Here, indeed, is a new Gulliver in the land of the Lilliputians.

These traits in Brangwyn's work have been noted also by a French critic, M. Henri Marcel, Director of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, who wrote one of the introductions to "The Etched Work of Frank Brangwyn," a very beautiful book published by the Fine Art Society, London, in 1908. M. Marcel says:—



UNLOADING ORANGES  
AT LONDON BRIDGE.

*From an Original Lithograph.*





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## *Sketches and Studies*

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“It is London, the city that possesses the most impressive scenery of this kind in the world, that without doubt has taught Brangwyn the amazing Titanic beauty of modern machinery and of all its great engines. Their enormous dimensions, their bizarre outlines, the kind of irresistible decision with which they move and work, the absence of all visible effort in their labour, are qualities not less stimulating to the imagination than the rhythmic and measured beauty of human effort. They give us also the moving spectacle of imprisoned forces that we know to be deadly—forces of which the sudden revolt and terrible cruelty are always possibilities that we must beware of. The absence, too, of a common scale between man and these colossal and unshapely monsters carries the mind back, by analogy, to prehistoric ages, to the obscure beginnings of the world; at the same time the sentiment of the social needs of which they are the provisional expression, must plunge human thought into an abyss of dreaming of what may be possible in ages to come. This particular kind of beauty becomes exaggerated and dramatic in London because . . . of the capricious and struggling character of the light, the rays there shifting with the sunshine, and the wind that is continually blotting it out with factory smoke and dust. . . . It is, perhaps, to this fact that we must attribute two of the principal characteristics of Brangwyn's [etched] work. A great inequality is noticeable when we contrast the plates that represent natural forces and the engines that are their instruments with other plates that depict the individual labours of mankind. No matter how great is the emphasis that he gives to the stature, the gesture or the strain of



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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effort in his workmen, sawyers, bricklayers, dyers, tanners, rowers, or sailors hauling boats, by the artful dimensions of his grouping, he is scarcely successful, and hardly seems to trouble about making them very interesting; hence his composition often lacks what is necessary to express the power of their effort—intensity of accent, expressive synthesis. Lifeless things, on the other hand, like machines, receive from his needle the most striking colour and character. The infinite power that is for the moment imprisoned in them seems to interest him intensely. Such, indeed, is the impression that the wharf, like the factory, produces upon us; there the man, whose intelligence enslaves and controls these inorganic forces, seems in such places the inferior, the slave almost, of the monsters that he has in reality tamed.”

In fact, the average man does not at present enslave the machine that he controls, but is himself often enslaved by the machine, like stokers on board ship, for example, or the drivers of railway engines, who rush into horrible accidents if they neglect their engines. Mechanical inventions are new forms of organism outside man, yet belonging to him almost as intimately as his stomach or as his lungs. That Brangwyn should feel all this in a way different from Constantin Meunier is a point of peculiar interest, and I believe it appears most remarkably in his monochrome work—his crayon sketches and his etchings. But it is only a phase in the evolution of his art, and we need not fear that its mood will become a habit. He understands the deeper meaning in art that underlies one of the most important criticisms made by Lessing on the relation between man

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## *Sketches and Studies*

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and human handicraft. "I grant," said Lessing, "that there is also a beauty in drapery, but can it be compared with that of the human form? And shall he who can attain to the greater, rest content with the less? I much fear that the most perfect master in drapery shows by that very talent wherein his weakness lies." As with drapery, so with all other accessories of human life: and surely the most threatening sign of our time is the circumstance that a great many thousands of workmen are conscious of their inferiority to machines. Let that consciousness spread, and the dignity of manhood must suffer much. Life is triumph over difficulties and dangers, not a tame submission to a mindless routine of subdivided labour; and so, is not the highest aim of modern art to represent the heroic aspects of man in the battlefields of industrialism?

For the rest, Brangwyn's sketches and studies ought to be well known, because they have been illustrated in many magazines. At first the artist used lead-pencil, following an English tradition that goes back to the youth of English water-colour; but soon he took greater pleasure in charcoal, in pastel, in natural red chalk, in conté crayon, and in lithography. His studies in charcoal are nearly all industrial subjects, and most of them are in foreign collections. I remember very well "A Shipbuilding Yard on the Tyne," with a great vessel in skeleton cobwebbed by its scaffolding, and a number of men—how tiny they look in comparison with the ribbed frame of the ship!—busy at their jobs. I remember, too, very distinctly, "The Railway Cutting," with navvies, and a fine design of smoke floating across

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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the background. Other charcoal studies represent sea life, Turkish sailors, and the like, but I prefer the British workmen, with views of industrial towns, like Newcastle.

In this typical phase of his work Brangwyn has used pastel on a good many occasions, as in studies for the room decorations that he carried out in the Venice International Exhibition of 1905. He then designed the whole scheme in the British section, its woodwork and its furniture. There were four large oblong panels and two smaller ones, representing forms of present-day labour—potters, for instance, navvies, smiths, and workers in steel, this one being a study in pastel. It was hoped in Venice that these decorations would remain permanently there, in the Municipal Gallery, but thanks to an English patron of art, Mr. S. Wilson, they were purchased for the City Art Gallery of Leeds, and a fifth panel—"Weavers"—was commissioned to bear them company in the Brangwyn room. Many sketches were made for these works, some in pastel, and others in *conté*; two of the most important passed into the private collection of M. A. G. Migeon of the Louvre.

It may be taken as an axiom in art that those who make the largest number of preparatory studies are either careful and elaborate artists like Leighton and Ingres, or impetuous and very virile painters, like Delacroix and Brangwyn. Extremes meet. People often forget this fact and stumble into mistakes. It was long believed that Brangwyn made no sketches at all, and criticisms were written from that standpoint. This happened particularly in the case of such pictures as



# THE LOOM.

The loom is a machine used for weaving fabric. It consists of a frame with threads stretched across it. The threads are woven together to form a fabric. The loom is used in the textile industry to produce a wide variety of fabrics, including cotton, wool, and silk. The loom is a complex machine with many parts, and it is operated by a person called a weaver. The weaver threads the loom with threads of different colors and patterns, and then weaves the fabric. The loom is an important part of the textile industry, and it has been used for centuries. The loom is a symbol of the textile industry, and it is a reminder of the hard work and skill involved in weaving fabric.

THE LOOM.  
*From an Original Lithograph.*









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## *Sketches and Studies*

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"The Scoffers," though beautiful studies of expression had been made in crayon for each figure. It was Mr. Konody, I believe, who first published a series of drawings for the Moorish figures in "The Scoffers," and called attention also to the life-studies that Brangwyn made in 1895 when working for M. Bing in Paris. I dwell upon this matter because I am constantly being told that Brangwyn is one of those lucky fellows who paint rapidly without rehearsing their intentions and effects.

For the purpose in hand, let me here make another general remark, not, I think, irrelevant: it is the fact that Brangwyn gives examples of the two methods of drawing that appeal to us from pictures. The first method sets us thinking about nature's delight in circular or in rotund forms, while the other avoids as many round shapes as it can by the use of suggestive angular touches. I happen to be very sensitive on this point, because my masters at the Brussels Academy told me always that my work had a tendency to be "too round"; and there can be no doubt that there *is* more life and character in a square method of sketching. Nature herself creates angles when her moods are violent. This she shows in forked lightning and in the ragged forms of rocks shattered by an earthquake; while in all her manifestations of abundance her shapes are rounded, as witness the forms of fruits, flowers, birds' eggs, tree trunks, the sun, and the physical beauty of women. A round method of drawing is excellent in decorative design, for it suggests repose and poise; and that is why flowing curves have ever been chosen for patterns. Angles have a much stronger accent and suggest an

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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active vigour; this will be seen at once if you draw a man's leg, indicating the muscles first with a curved touch and then with an angular feeling. I am sure you will be greatly interested when you note the contrastive use that Brangwyn makes of both methods, responding to different moods of sentiment.

Here, for example, is a lithograph showing a cooper at work; he wears a loose shirt that takes angular pleats, while his baggy trousers roll into rotund lines; he leans forward with his hands grasping a huge barrel, and the muscles of a bare arm, put in with a touch free from roundness, tell me that the man is ready to push the heavy thing forward. The technique in this lithograph is good sketching, easy and strong and distinctive. Among other lithographs I may mention "The Harvesters," "Platelayers," "Music," "The Loom," "Unloading Oranges at London Bridge," "Men Carrying Fruit," "The Pool of Bethesda" (a very large print), "A Winepress in Spain," "The Drunkards," and "The Buccaneers," in which ten rascals and their absurd accoutrements are studied with humorous pleasure. M. Marcel describes this print as fantastically comic, but he prefers the "Winepress in Spain," calling it a masterpiece of exact observation. Mr. Claude Phillips has a great admiration for "The Men Carrying Fruit," superb as a work of art; "a design treated with something of the Greek freedom and the Greek spirit, although it is anything but Greek in aspect."

## CHAPTER XII

### WATER-COLOUR

**W**E have seen already that Brangwyn has found it helpful to his aims as a colourist to paint from time to time in water-colour. He has used this medium occasionally since boyhood, for one of his water-colours was hung at the Royal Academy in 1887. There are people who say that his technique is apart from the tradition of the English masters, and Brangwyn himself agrees that he never served an apprenticeship in those methods that developed from stained or tinted drawings into the multitudinous delicacy of Turner, into the breadth of Girtin and Cotman, of David Cox, and Müller and De Wint; or again, into the admirable assurance of such lesser men as Ibbetson, Francia, Varley, Havell, Joseph Nash, Prout, Harding, and Leitch. But methods are not devised by men and superimposed on any medium for artistic expression; they arise from the medium itself, and their essential qualities are respected when new aims in technique displace the old. The chief and distinguishing beauty of water-colour is the gleam of paper through transparent tints having a luminous surface without gloss, a surface that never stands in need of varnish; and there is always a distinct loss when that limpid brilliance is deadened either by paper which is too dark, or by turning pigment into body-colour by mixing it

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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with white. Body-colour is virtually tempera, though it has not the solidity and power of real tempera. For this reason I prefer Brangwyn water-colours to Brangwyn body-colours, while feeling the charm that the latter have at their best. In the spring of this year he made several fine ones in the ruins of Messina, showing the architectural wreckage in that vast graveyard, and noting how certain men, under the shadow of broken walls, gathered together odds and ends of furniture and went on with their futile devilries as gamblers and cheats. The Messina sketches have great interest, and those which are in pure water-colour belong to the tradition of Müller's rapid manipulation with a full brush.

When body-colour is used it is best to take a hint from old William Hunt, whose technique in the water-medium was always learned and suggestive. When he wished to get a degree of brilliance that his paper would not give, as in ripe fruits, he made a good ground with Chinese white and let it dry hard; then, in swift and fluent touches with transparent colour, he painted over it, taking care never to disturb the white. Brangwyn has not yet employed this method, but he has used tinted papers, as did Müller and George Cattermole. The danger here is that in seeking for depth of tone by this means some other loveliness peculiar to the medium may be lost. De Wint was faithful all his life to cream-faced Whatman paper with a biting grain, and Girtin was loyal to a peculiar kind of strong, wire-laid cartridge paper that he bought in folded quires from a stationer at Charing Cross. Its colour is not white, and the effects it produces under the free and bold washes are seldom equal to the luminous strength of a De Wint.





LIFE AMONG THE RUINS,  
MESSINA, 1910.

*Reproduced from a Water-Colour.*



THE AMONG THE RUINS, MESSINA, 1910  
*by J. G. Thompson*



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## *Water-Colour*

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I mention here with particular interest these fine painters, De Wint and Girtin, not only because Brangwyn loves their work, but because he and they have a certain kinship in sentiment of handling. This fact may not be apparent to you at a first glance, because Brangwyn appeals to us very often as an orientalist, like Müller, while Girtin never travelled farther than Paris, and De Wint was so devoted to flat country scenes in England that he refused to try foreign landscape. But if these men had gone to the East their swift, full brushes would have recorded the intense sunlight in ways having much in common with Brangwyn's nervous washes, accented with a crisp touch here and there. Brangwyn, too, like De Wint, is at his best in water-colour when he does not go beyond the sketch, leaving his work for some fool to finish. He is very well represented at the Luxembourg by a glowing aquarelle—*Un Puits au Maroc*, intense with light and shade, a group of figures behind, silhouetted against green shrubs seen through a trellised wall; and in the foreground is a ruddy-faced boy in a golden yellow gown, carrying a water-gourd.

The method is quite different from Melville's, though we are told from time to time that Brangwyn owes much in his water-colours to the happy skill with which Melville got his delightful effects, interspersing his dots and dashes and blobs with empty spaces. Both are colourists of the first order, both are virile and impetuous, and each shows in his own way a buoyant delight in grasping the essential points of an Eastern scene crowded with figures, or a phase of life elsewhere. Stipplers tell us that they have another thing in common—defective drawing; but their powers of

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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suggestion in the difficult art of water-colour is consummate draughtsmanship, as stipplers would find if they tried to analyse synthetically, instead of in detail, copying line by line. To draw in that manner is within the reach of any academic patience, while the massed synthesis of Brangwyn or the blotted unity of Melville is the expression of original observation and feeling, and those who try to imitate it do not succeed. Art of this kind has to be judged by imaginative eyes, and I take pleasure in applying to it what Ruskin says in his comparison between Reynolds and Hobbema:—

“A few strokes of the pencil, or dashes of colour, will be enough to enable the imagination to conceive a tree; and in those dashes of colour Sir Joshua Reynolds would have rested, and would have suffered the imagination to paint what more it liked for itself, and grow oaks, or olives, or apples out of the dashes of colour at its leisure. On the other hand, Hobbema . . . smites the imagination on the mouth, and bids it be silent, while he sets to work to paint his oak of the right green.”

Melville and Brangwyn, in their fortunate moods, suggest the impression that actual facts have made on their minds, and no higher compliment can be paid to *us*—the onlookers of art, who have to collaborate with artists when we wish to enjoy their skill. Where Brangwyn and Melville differ essentially is in nervous temperament, for while Brangwyn feels the need of a sweeping touch, that gathers details rapidly into battalion masses, Melville's brush blobs, and dabs, and flicks, not irritably, like a hungry bird pecking at fruit, but with pleasure and great technical knowledge. Further, Brangwyn is decorative

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## *Water-Colour*

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in many of his water-colours, while Melville is pictorial, seeking always to suggest the full glory of light and air, with their effects on contours, distances, colours, and movements. We can never have too much variety in art, and these two painters—each within limits set by temperament and by æsthetic outlook—have enriched the beautiful art of English water-colour.



## CHAPTER XIII

### ILLUSTRATIONS FOR MAGAZINES AND BOOKS— DESIGNS FOR POSTERS

**W**HEN a painter from time to time turns from his own work to illustrations, either he wants to earn money while struggling with a big picture, or else he feels that "parerga" (as the Greeks called the by-play efforts of more leisured hours), will take him away from the main stress of his usual professional life. Brangwyn speaks of his illustrations as bread-and-butter things, but this applies more often to his books than to his drawings for magazines, and the reason is practical. The book market has been so glutted during the last twenty years that the fortunes of its stock have been like those of little children lost in a turbulent crowd. To foresee what would happen to them, to divine which would be saved and which killed, has been impossible; and therefore it has needed courage to pay large fees for illustrations. Even two guineas for each of a dozen drawings, when added to the cost of blocks, and paper, and printing, may be too much. Many a good venture has, indeed, been turned by that price into a failure. It is hard upon the rank and file of illustrators, unless they are popular with those magazines and weeklies that actually do what they can afford to do—paying well and promptly. American magazines lead the way in this



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THE DUOMO, MESSINA, 1910.

*Reproduced from a Water Colour*



THE DUOMO, MESSINA 1900  
*Illustration by H. H. H. H.*



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## *Illustrations for Magazines and Books*

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respect, and Brangwyn has worked—always with much pleasure—for *Scribner's*, *Maclure's*, the *Century*, *Collier's Weekly*, and the Cambridge Press, U.S.A.

The *Graphic* has supported him from the days of his first adventures as a sea-painter, and always in a way that he has liked to remember. The plates were very popular. Several were in colours, like the "Sail Ho!" in the Christmas number of 1902; and in the Christmas numbers of 1895 and 1896, Brangwyn illustrated two stories by Mr. Rudyard Kipling—"The Devil and the Deep Sea," and "Bread upon the Waters." The two colour-prints are typical and good. The better one belongs to "Bread upon the Waters." It recalls to memory the fact that some foreign critics have noted a kinship between Rudyard Kipling and Frank Brangwyn. M. Gabriel Mourey says, for instance: "Brangwyn ne possède-t-il pas la même façon de grandir, de 'lyriciser,' si l'on peut dire, la réalité, de glorifier les aspects momentanés des choses pour nous en faire sentir plus profondément les beautés secrètes, aussi pour nous donner de l'homme qui les possède et les comprend une idée plus haute, plus dominatrice." Anyway, one thing is certain: Kipling and Brangwyn are friendly shipmates in a fine sea-story.

1894. "The Wreck of the *Golden Fleece*," the story of a North Sea fisher-boy, by Robert Leighton. Messrs. Blackie.

1895. "Don Quixote." Translated by Thomas Shelton in 1612, from the second edition of the story published at Madrid in 1605. 4 vols. London: Gibbings & Co. The pictures—four in photogravure and the rest in half-tone—are conceived in the right spirit. The subjects



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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chosen are varied, and I note a few: Don Quixote ready to receive on the point of his lance the merchants of Toledo; he discourses with the goatherds; he sees some twelve men in a company on foot, fastened together by a chain of iron, that is tied about their necks; the procession of ecclesiastics in white, who call upon God to bestow some rain upon the land; the Puppet Play; Sancho and the Don on board the enchanted bark; they appear as shepherds, and Quixote's return home—a lively street scene.

1896. "The Arabian Nights." Translated by Edward William Lane. 6 vols. Gibbings & Co. Pleasantly illustrated in monochromes. Brangwyn is not here attracted by fantastic episodes, nor does he keep the book from the hands of little children by drawing voluptuous scenes of harem life; he is a realist in most of the plates, giving scenes in Damascus or in Bagdad, or showing carriers unloading a vessel, or galley-slaves at their chained oars and a taskmaster wielding his long whip. There is a charming woman in one plate; she reclines on a carpeted daïs, with her head resting against her lord, and listens while a story is being told.

1899. "A Spliced Yarn." A volume of good sea-stories by George Cupples, author of "The Green Hand." Gibbings & Co.

1900. Cervantes: "Exemplary Tales—A Story of Two Damosels, The Lady Cornelia, The Jealous Husband, The Liberal Lover, The Force of Blood, and The Spanish Lady." Translated by James Mabbe in 1640. 2 vols. Two photogravures and ten half-tone blocks. There are several sea-pictures, like "The Boarding of Ali's Galley,"

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## *Illustrations for Magazines and Books*

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an original composition; and I like the Rembrandtesque supper-party in "The Force of Blood," and the redeeming of Christian captives in "The Spanish Lady." This would enlarge into a fine fresco.

1905. "Tom Cringle's Log." By Michael Scott. Gibbings & Co. The pictures are small photogravures, all interesting, but they do not represent the text, giving the main incidents and characters.

1905. "The Spirit of the Age." Text by Léonce Bénédite and W. Shaw-Sparrow. Four lithographs, four plates in colour, and twelve Rembrandt photogravures. 1905. Hodder & Stoughton.

1908. "The Last Fight of the *Revenge*." By Sir Walter Raleigh. Six colour-plates and many line-blocks in the text as headpieces and tailpieces. Subjects of the colour-plates: "Queen Elizabeth going on board the *Golden Hind*," from the overmantel at Lloyd's; "A Captured Galleon," from a picture belonging to Colonel Goff; "The Last Fight," "Galleons in Harbour," "Loading the Galleons," and "The Galleon Fair." Gibbings & Co.

1908. "The Etched Work of Frank Brangwyn." With a Catalogue of 133 Etchings compiled by Frank Newbolt, A.R.E., and Appreciations by Henri Marcel, Director of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and Prof. Dr. Hans W. Singer, Keeper of the Royal Print-Room, Dresden. The Fine Art Society, 148 New Bond Street, London. A beautiful work.

1909. "Rubáiyát of Omar Kháyyám." Translated by Edward Fitzgerald. Introduction by Joseph Jacobs. Four good plates in colour, well printed, and ornamental borderings to each page. Gibbings & Co.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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1909. "Historical Paintings in the Great Hall in London of the Worshipful Company of Skinners." By Frank Brangwyn, A.R.A., R.E., Membre de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris; Société Royale Belge, Royal Academy of Milan, and Royal Academy of Stockholm. With an Introductory Essay by Warwick H. Draper, M.A. The Caradoc Press. A book for collectors.

In addition to these, Brangwyn has illustrated Southey's "Life of Nelson," and another edition of "Omar Kháyyám." Then again, there are a few excellent posters, the best of all being one for the Orient Pacific Line; it represents a huge steamer and some little craft manned by Orientals. It is good in every way. The advertisement of words is not overdone; the eye takes it in at a glance, and the mind can remember it without effort. These points are essential in all advertising, yet they are usually forgotten by tradesmen. Every artist who designs a poster has a battle to fight as soon as his work comes in touch with the vain-glory of advertisers, who believe that they must be effective if they say far too much about themselves and their work. If a few words are necessary in this form of design, so, too, are a few well-chosen colours, carefully massed and kept flat and pure. Brangwyn uses primary colours—red, yellow, and blue—and brings them into contrast with the long dark hull of the ocean steamer that stretches across the poster, forming a mass of neutral tints. How gay and beautiful our hoardings would be if all posters had to be approved by a small committee of competent experts at the Board of Trade. "The poor man's art-gallery"—and the general look of our towns and cities—need some national protection.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ETCHINGS: AND SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS

THE first important etchings by Frank Brangwyn date from the year 1902. Long before then, in boyhood, he had made some experimental plates; at a later period he tried his luck in "The Mill, Manningtree," one proof of which now belongs to Mr. H. F. W. Ganz; but these first attempts had no real value, while those of 1902 proved that Brangwyn had found for himself an original line. A man of his temperament could not follow at the heel of modern etchers, striving always after dainty suggestion, after subtle allusiveness. He would need large metal plates, choosing soft zinc more often than hard copper; and he would bite his work with very strong nitrous acid until the lines became deep and fat and silky. In his craftsmanship there would be impatient emotion, nervous and rugged life; and because etching gave harmonies in black and white, he would not be afraid to use those two colours in bold masses, all well orchestrated, and printed with great care. Questions of ink would interest him greatly, for blacks without transparence, without inner light, would annoy him, just as they annoyed Turner. The best French black, thick and stiff, and difficult to use, would be chosen, probably, but he would add to it a little burnt sienna with a trifle of

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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raw sienna also, just to give translucency. He would see that his ink had the quality of good paint. It would not be possible for a Brangwyn temperament to find adequate self-interpretation by any other aims and technical methods, yet his etchings still continue to provoke surprise and controversy, as if onlookers do not mind when they fail to penetrate into the inner essence and the life of those arts that they wish to understand.

Since 1902, for example, there has been much lamentation in England—but never on the Continent—over the size of Brangwyn's etchings. They are said to be much too large. One critic writes as follows on this point:—

“These big etchings tell tremendously in an exhibition, but they are more suitable for the large portfolios and, in many cases, ample wall-space of a public collection than for the more limited accommodation of a private house. . . . In England, at least, we are not contented with one picture on a wall; most of us like our walls rather crowded, and we cannot all afford to crowd them with Brangwyns. Nor do the conditions of light and space with which the majority of us have to be contented in our dwelling-rooms permit us to enjoy these robust and imposing compositions at the proper distance from the eye. It is impossible to mix Brangwyns with Whistlers, Hadens, Bones, or any of the humbler English etchings likely to be found in a house where painter-etchers' work is appreciated at all; the difference of scale is too great, the adjustment of focus too exhausting to the eye.”

It is difficult to find one's way about that criticism. There is no starting-point within the art of Brangwyn,



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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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and if householders like their walls to be crowded with small prints, all out of scale with the mural surface, we have reason to wish for a better taste in British homes. Small etchings should be put in cabinets or in portfolios, while large prints by Piranesi, by Legros, by Brangwyn, have a scale and a style that fit them for mural decoration. If we like, we can keep them also in cabinets, for their ornamental value does not interfere with their varied charm when we study them closely and near at hand. A little etching never looks in place on a wall, unless we forget that the first principles of applied art are fitness for a given purpose and a just proportion between a decoration and the object decorated. Even in little rooms the walls are too big to be in scale with small etchings. And other useful things can be said about large etchings, considered in their relation to household taste. They are less costly than good paintings of equal size, and they look quite well in the dim winter light of big towns; their colour is neither fugitive nor changeful, and they bear their part with credit in almost any scheme of room decoration, except one with panelled walls.

Whistler, as we know, held other views on this subject, and expressed them in his "Gentle Art of Making Enemies." The Hoboken Etching Club had invited him to enter a competition, and to do a big plate measuring not less than 2 feet by 3 feet. If the committee of that Club had been well acquainted with Whistler's etched work, they would have remembered that even in little prints of the Thames his effect was often scattered, wanting the grasp of hand that produces firm structure and good design. It is said that he did try to etch



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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in large, but a ten-mile race in black-and-white art was too much for his emotional stamina; he broke down, making a complete failure. In small plates, on the other hand, he achieved the new and original romance of his Venetian period, when every line had a sympathetic charm, wonderfully alive with a sort of airy magic. Small etchings were right for Whistler, but, artist-like, he wished to pass from himself and his limitations into a general rule. If large etchings were wrong in his own case, why should they be right at any time? To forget Piranesi and Legros was not difficult, since a theory had to be bolstered up by arguments, and Whistler delighted to be subtle in effervescent reasonings. With great care he wrote to the Hoboken Etching Club, copied his letter, and kept the copy for future reference; nor did he forget to show method and pride in the tabulation of his dicta:—

“ 1. That in art it is criminal to go beyond the means used in its exercise.

“ 2. That the space to be covered should always be in proper relation to the means used for covering it.

“ 3. That in etching the means used, or instrument employed, being the finest possible point, the space to be covered should be small in proportion.

“ 4. That all attempts to overstep the limits, insisted upon by such proportion, are inartistic thoroughly, and tend to reveal the paucity of the means used, instead of concealing the same, as required by Art in its refinement.

“ 5. That the huge plate, therefore, is an offence.”



THE BLACK MILL, WINCHELSEA.



THE BLACK MILL,  
WINCHELSEA.

*From an Original Etching.*





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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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To all this we must add two dicta omitted by Whistler. The first is that a complete success in any art is in its own justification. At a time when metal plates for etching were beaten out by hand, a small expanse of copper may have seemed, perhaps, to be an essential limitation to a difficult art ; but as soon as metal could be rolled out with a perfect flatness by machine-power, a big sheet of copper was not more difficult to get than a small one, so that experiments could be made on an ampler scale. Then success would be determined, not by dicta as to size, but by the genius of a man who worked more freely in large than in little. True, his instrument was the finest possible point, that made the finest possible line, but this was not the whole of his handicraft, since his metal plate had yet to be bitten by acid. The acid could be either weak or strong, and the finest lines, bitten deeply, would grow into scale with the large surface, becoming rich and strong. So then, to argue from the fine point of one instrument was incorrect ; it was necessary to remember two other factors—the acid bath and a natural aptitude of some artists to do their best work on a spacious scale.

Perhaps Whistler's dicta may be true if we apply them to dry-points, but to give them a general authority over etching is unreasonable. Brangwyn found that they were far and away too Procrustean ; they did not suit his temperament at all, but cramped his natural style, so he thrust them aside, etching "London Bridge," that measured 22 by 16 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches, and "A Turkish Cemetery," where he designed with freedom over a surface measuring 18 inches by 19 inches.

Professor Legros saw these early efforts in 1903, and



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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admired their bold aspect. "A Turkish Cemetery" has, indeed, an oriental feeling, a sensation of vivid light and of rich colour, while the "London Bridge" is massive and cloudy and industrial. The general effect is not perfect, I admit. The steamer is too even in her blackness; and again, the distant houses are drawn with a mathematical neatness, cold and correct, not nervous and suggestive, like those touches of architectural shorthand that count for so much in line draughtsmanship. There is more maturity in another etching of the first period, "A Road in Picardy," reminiscent of the fine Hobbema in our National Gallery, but with a still more romantic charm in the aspiring avenue. The trees feel the wind unevenly, and their elastic strength is made real with high-spirited joy. By way of contrast, in order to show the scope of these early etchings, I now choose the busy "Tan-Yard," with its men at work, strong fellows, all well drawn; but I notice a peculiarity in their grouping. They are placed two by two—a defect in composition that appears here and there in Brangwyn pictures. Perhaps it arises from his practice since boyhood in pattern decoration, where all details are repeated exactly.

Again, the etchings are very valuable to all who would appreciate his genius.<sup>1</sup> The eye is not influenced by many colours all in harmony, and we pass from print to print as travellers do through drawings that recall to their recollection their journeys in various lands. One might say,

<sup>1</sup> It is never difficult to see Brangwyn etchings here in London, for the Fine Art Society, New Bond Street, has always a large number, as well as a catalogue to June 1908, with 133 brief descriptions. In Paris the etchings are to be seen *chez* M. Bramson, Galerie d'Art Décoratif, 7 Rue Laffitte.

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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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in figurative language, that Brangwyn etchings are the maps and charts of Brangwyn's realm, a realm with many provinces. Let us study their characteristics one by one, keeping always in mind the fact that they belong also to his work as a painter.

1. *Masculinity*.—To this word we must give a much wider meaning than that which is attached to it in daily talk. Coleridge said—and his opinion in this matter was supported by Goethe and by other great thinkers and observers—that creative minds were always androgynous; in other words, that the qualities of genius were partly masculine and partly feminine. Not only is this true, but we find in it a sure basis for useful criticism. When we come in contact with the work of a genuine artist, the first question to be asked and answered is as follows: Does this man develop the female side of his genius, or does he allow the male attributes to dominate the female? Does his appeal strike a feminine note, or is it militant and masculine? To answer this question is to get a mental foothold within the psychological significance of that man's work; and no criticism is worth a moment's attention unless it understands the personal equation revealed in the emotions of an artist. Here is an example. If you compare George Mason's colliery girls—"The Evening Hymn"—with any industrial picture by Constantin Meunier, you will find that while the Englishman tries to attract us with a feminine graciousness and sympathy, the great Fleming is a Michael Angelo of the people, modelling his figures with a male energy, and feeling always as a strong man feels when he has learnt to see in human life the inevitableness of incessant battle and suffering. The

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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very title of Mason's picture<sup>1</sup> would have been offensive to Meunier. It appeals to the groundlings, it has no relation whatever to the dramatic toil of a colliery district; and again, it marks a very weak tendency in British art. Turn to the catalogues of picture exhibitions, and you will find that many of our artists like sweet titles and pretty quotations from familiar poetry. This feminine weakness astonished Ary Renan seventeen years ago,<sup>2</sup> because foreigners expect that the most athletic nation in the world, the home of all dangerous sports, and the nursery for adventurous colonisers, will show in her arts the heroic qualities that stand to her credit historically; and when they find that gentleness and prettiness are ideals in British pictures they begin to think that British painters have no stamina, but turn out playthings in order to earn money.

It is felt abroad that Brangwyn alone in his work symbolises the daring manliness of the British temperament; that he alone represents his time and race, showing courage, indomitable energy, and blending knowledge of the East

<sup>1</sup> I am not finding fault with Mason, whose work has many gracious and winning qualities. My aim is to point out the fact that he, an Anglo-Saxon, was attracted by the female attributes of style.

<sup>2</sup> Ary Renan's "Impressions of English Art" were published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He said: "I think that *Punch* will long make merry over the sensational titles of certain pictures. Who would suppose, for example, that 'The Interval' was a simple family scene; that 'Dead Heat' represents little dogs; that 'Two is Company' represents sea birds; and 'The News of Trafalgar' a woman at the spinning wheel? . . . I blackened my catalogue with pencil marks against the pictures imitated from those of Alma Tadema. The Pompeian houses, the white marble, the rose leaves, the leopard skins! It is really comic. Pompeii, as you know, was a town of pleasure and of bad taste. In the houses that have so much interest for archæologists, there were allowed all sorts of things—hardly to be recommended; and here is the English imagination taking pagan Pompeii as the frame for a perpetual sentimental idyl, a chaste masquerade!"



*Steel, Cast-iron, and Tin Plate*

The first part of the book deals with the properties of steel, cast-iron, and tin plate. It covers the various grades of these materials and their uses in different industries. The author discusses the manufacturing processes and the factors that affect the quality of the materials. The book is written in a clear and concise style, making it easy to read and understand. It is a valuable reference for anyone interested in the properties and uses of these materials.

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**THE TOW-ROPE.**  
*From an Original Etching.*









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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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with an intense sympathy for the grim stress and strain of Western industrialism. Good foreign critics see, no doubt, that his ample style is not yet fully matured, its virile strength being somewhat of a rebel; but they see also that there is little hope for any artist who in youth turns away from the development of power to nurse the feminine attributes of his genius. The creation of a style is like the building of an obelisk: there must be no softening workmanship until the thing itself stands complete, erect and commanding.

But the manliness of Frank Brangwyn is a singular thing—more impulsive, more vehement, than that of any other artist in the whole range of our British schools. Compare him with Reynolds, with Raeburn, with Constable, with James Ward, whose manliness cannot be denied, and you will find that they have not the instantaneous nerve-force that vibrates through the best Brangwyn pictures and etchings. If you are sensitive to the throbbing tide of energy in creative work, you will find it a fatigue to follow with dramatic pleasure the constructural workmanship of two or three Brangwyns in a single sitting. I have felt the same fatigue when watching a strong athlete run in a great race, and there is, in fact, a certain resemblance between the nervous energy of the trained athlete and the constructive energy shown by Brangwyn. The danger in both is that they will exhaust themselves too early in their race and give way, spent, before the crisis. When a ten-miler tumbles forward suddenly, or a rower falls over his oar, no onlooker complains; he has failed nobly in a big effort. So, too, when we feel now<sup>and</sup> then in Brangwyn's work that his nervous vigour suddenly

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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paused, hesitated, broke off, we must not dwell upon the fact as a mistake to be criticised, for any temperament similar to his cannot but be subject to moments of exhaustion.

The marvellous thing is that such moments have been infrequent with this great artist. Consider his work during the last eight years. It includes nearly two hundred etchings, most of them large and scarcely one that is not good; the eleven panels at the Skinners' Hall; decorative work for two exhibitions in Venice; holiday sketches in various places, from Winchelsea to Montreuil-sur-Mer, and from Messina to Cahors; and more than half-a-dozen fine pictures, "The Rajah's Birthday," "The Return from the Promised Land," "Wine," "The Cider Press," "The Card-Players," "The Wine Shop," "The Venetian Funeral," "Modern Commerce," and so forth. It would be a life's work to many a painter, while to Brangwyn's it has been an exhilarating exercise, troubled from time to time—but infrequently—by fatigue.

So much vitality in the nervous system is rare indeed, and we may be sure that it owes much to the stamina that Brangwyn gained at sea from a hard, invigorating life. And from the same influence he got a very delightful thing in this masculine style of his. Sailors are simple-hearted; the instincts of childhood are not killed but kept alive by the immense realities of nature; and the survival of the child in those who take what fortune sends them on the sea is beautiful. Now, if you study with care the art of Brangwyn, you will find many sailor-like good points. It is fresh and breezy, full of robust health, free from pedantry, without vice, very brave, generous, and simple-hearted.

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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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There is also a feeling of wonder, particularly in the artist's attitude to storms. In one etched plate he represents a tempest passing over some heroic dark trees and piling up the clouds into squadrons and battalions. The emotion here is wonder, awe, such as no mere landsman feels to-day. It is a primitive emotion, that does not long co-exist with the sheltering artificialities of life in ordered communities.

But I am told that Brangwyn is too masculine, that he is not concerned enough with the graciousness of women. This depends on the spectator. The useful and necessary thing is to accept from each artist the best that he has to give; and at a time when the great majority of British painters and etchers develop the feminine side of art, we are lucky to have one in whom the male attributes of power are always dominant and simple-hearted. These qualities run through all the Brangwyn etchings, and you will find, too, that they have the inner grace of manhood—sympathy for those who are fallen, pity for distress. Not sentimental pity, but a pity that comes near to tragedy, so deep and true is the feeling shown in its presentation.

As an example of this I will instance the "Old Women of Bruges," and "The Tow-Rope." This last represents five men straining mechanically at a rope on the edge of a canal at Bruges. They have been fit for no other work since they were first able to pull a barge through the water; they look less intelligent than pit-ponies, for there is no danger to set their thoughts astir. Each mind is dazed or deadened by the slow, plodding routine of automatic labour. The very creases in their clothes show the dogged repetition of the same heavy

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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movements day after day. The realism here is strongly grim, pathetic, and monumental. The subject would have attracted Meunier, but its realisation is a rapid masterpiece by Brangwyn, etched on the spot in 1906.

Nor must we forget the penetrating sympathy that this great observer shows in his etched work for down-at-heels and beggars. He has never forgotten his early struggles, the days when he was often so hungry that he was glad to help in the unloading of a vessel. Those who have felt real poverty, who remember how the rats of hunger gnaw in the stomach, understand all outcasts, and recognise that beggars are their kinsmen. The mendicants in Brangwyn's etchings are of many types, some sketched with irony because they are shamming to be lame or blind, while others belong to the undoubted shreds and patches of humanity who find warmth and solace in dirt, and whose clothes are as eloquent as their faces and hands.

Nomads, too, have a peculiar interest to Brangwyn; the nomads that visit fairs and earn their bread as wrestlers or jugglers or musicians; and in one magnificent plate, "The Cathedral Church of Eu," he groups these wayfarers with their booths in the historic shadow of a vast old building. The sun illumines the mediæval architecture, and below, sketched with an art as typical as Daumier's, is a little Kermesse busy with human puppets, whose little amusements go on from age to age, and grow not a bit older than that grand history in chiselled stone.

2. *Modern Life and Work*.—There are many artists in England who do not even try to interpret the great human





*[The text in this section is extremely faint and illegible.]*

THE SAWYERS.  
*From an Original Etching.*





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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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realities that they see around them. Their art is not even city-bred ; it stays at home, it occupies itself with problems of indoor light, and mistakes virtuosity for life and its time-spirit. This school has many friends among the writers on art, but it has no staying power. Virtuosity is not at all likely to hold the field against the great actions of mankind interpreted by such masters as Millet, Meunier, Degroux, Brangwyn, Laermans, La Thangue, Clausen, Legros, and other members of the democracy of art. But there is one point that we must keep in mind when we are told that the interpretation of contemporary life is sure to triumph over virtuosity. The time-spirit acts in two ways on those who represent it in the fine arts. In some it produces a conscious striving, while in others it finds temperaments so well prepared for it that the time-spirit seems to be the artist, doing its work through human agents or mediums. Millet was deeply conscious of what he wished to do, and could talk about his aims with the enthusiasm of a literary man, while Meunier worked out his destiny in silence, unconscious of the revolution in æsthetics that his paintings and bronzes denoted. Millet used the time-spirit, Meunier was its agent. And we may regard these two noble men as marking two distinct types of art in what we call the presentation of contemporary life.

One type is much nearer than the other to the primitive expression of emotion in art ; nearer, for instance, to the birth of sculpture and painting among the realists of the Mammoth Time, who, on days when the weather was too bad for sport, painted the walls of their caves with figures of animals, or carved mammoth teeth into female figures.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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That lover of the old Stone Age who chipped out the Venus of Brassempuoy was a Meunier, and, relatively, he was greater than Meunier, for he began his work in ignorance, and won his own methods from the dark of inexperience. Emotion, observation, patience, these were his only guides ; and to this day they remain the basis of all great art. But, as we know, civilisation not only produces styles and traditions, it treasures their work from age to age, so that each to-day becomes a museum for each yesterday. Art is a figure with two profiles, one gazing towards the past, the other towards the future ; and because it is always easier to copy than to pass through fresh experiments into new discoveries, we find that the repetitions of virtuosity are always more common and more popular than the works of a Meunier, whose intercourse with life is not only direct and intimate but primitively ingenuous. Meunier was a collier of colliers, and his mind being as naïve as a child's, he delighted to be loyal to his feelings.

Brangwyn belongs to the same rare type of natural artist. Though critics have tried to harry him into habits of self-fear, he is still what he was in his early marine pictures—a simple-hearted observer, with an inborn sympathy for the drama in things seen, and a native command over the implements of art. His work is hot emotion. It is not possible for him to be anything but modern. The historical panels at the Skinners' Hall are as modern in spirit as his etchings, and for the same reason ; he belongs to his own time, he is an agent of its genius.

To one characteristic of his modernity I have referred in another chapter (p. 169), giving a quotation from



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## *Etchings: and Summary of Characteristics*

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M. Henri Marcel; it is the intensely dramatic significance that Brangwyn sees in the contrast between little men and huge machines. But we must notice also in the etchings that his sympathies are drawn towards everything that has an outstanding symbolism in the drama of human life; to bridges, for example, because the mind can look across them into the familiar past and forward into the unknown; to old churches whose bells still chime with the youth of faith; and to windmills that bicker slowly as they grind corn into flour. Over these things he throws a quite wonderful glamour of austere romance. A strange imagination—it is often quite uncanny—dwells in the august patterning of the light and shade. Subjects that seem quite trivial when they are mentioned by their titles assume under the magic of his art a visionary greatness. You know “The Butcher’s Shop,” of course? It represents a low shed flanked by two immense tree-trunks upon which the sunlight plays, so that their age and decrepitude look spectral. One tree is leafless, while the other still keeps a mass of foliage that hangs over the timber shed. From trunk to trunk stretches a pole with two pigs’ heads fastened to it as a trade sign. Under them, dressed in a smock, the butcher stands, in sunlight, looking towards his right with expectation; and behind him, dimly, from a chaos of transparent dark shadows flecked with sunny patches, several things emerge—a sheep’s carcass hanging from the pole, and some human figures. What does he expect, that butcher? For whom does he wait? Is he to be met with on Wormwood Scrubbs, as a prosaic catalogue invites us to believe? If Edgar Poe had seen this etching, he could not have failed to write a story about its peculiar



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

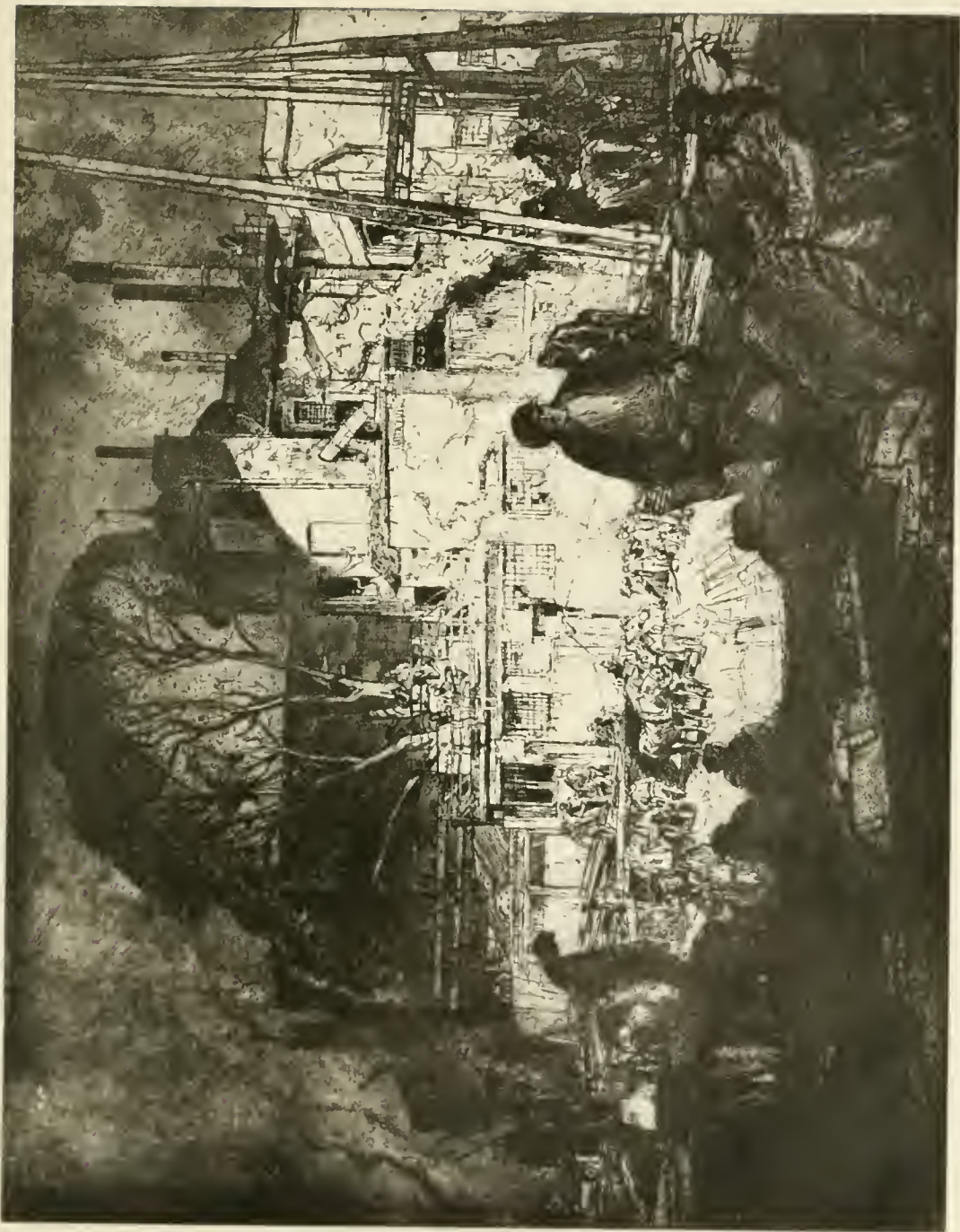
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loneliness. As one looks, the sunlight turns into moonlight, and those huge trees—contrasted with the trivial little foolish shed, and suggesting a life many hundreds of years old—become almost supernatural. One never knows precisely why a great artist chose a given subject; he was moved by something in its aspect, and his emotion did not awaken the brain-centre of speech, it found expression for itself in the pattern-work of light and shade and form. This we know; but I have an idea in my mind that this etching, "The Butcher's Shop," belongs to the superstition that Welshmen have nursed in their rugged hills and valleys from time immemorial.

For the rest, there is an opulent variety in Brangwyn's etched work. Several plates, and notably the "Market Square, Montreuil," and "The Brewery, Bruges," show that his hand can be as light as Whistler's, while keeping its own sign manual. Elsewhere, as in the romantic etching of "Old Hammersmith," with its shadowed foreground where bargemen rest and talk, with its middle distance of sunlit carts, horses, and figures, there is a profusion of detail treated with a Méryon-like precision, and the factories against the sky are as attractive in their sunny magic as ancient churches. But it is not fair to pick out examples when all is good in its own way. A descriptive list has been published of one hundred and thirty-three, including such noble proofs as "The Santa Maria della Salute, Venice," "The Ghent Gate, Bruges," "The Gate of Montreuil-sur-Mer," and "The Mill Bridge, Montreuil," "The Black Mill, Winchelsea," "The Castello della Ziza, Palermo," "The Bridge, Barnard Castle," "The Coal-Pit," with its procession of workmen carrying the wounded,



OLD HAMMERSMITH.  
*From an Original Etching.*





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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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“Old Kew Bridge,” “The Paper Mill,” with its exquisite diffused light, “The Rialto, Venice,” and “The Boat-Builders, Venice,” “Windmills, Bruges,” “The Sawyers,” “Old Houses, Ghent,” “The Church of Sainte-Saulve, Montreuil,” and “The Church of Sainte-Austreberthe, Montreuil,” “Santa Sophia, Constantinople,” “Building the New Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington,” “The Tan-Pit,” “The Breaking up of the *Hannibal*,” and “Breaking up the *Caledonia*.” These etchings, and many others, have been exhibited many times; and as to the more recent work—at Dixmude, at Furnes, at Eu, at Messina—it will soon be as well known. “The Apse of the Cathedral at Messina” is a masterpiece; it should hang as a pendant with “The Cathedral of Eu.”

Among the foreign devotees of Brangwyn there are critics who say that his etchings are even more noteworthy than his pictures and mural decorations. M. T. Destève has expressed this opinion, speaking of the “*somptueuses gravures où Brangwyn se révèle à mes yeux plus grand artiste encore que dans ses peintures, pages gravées éblouissantes et profondes, mystérieuses et émouvantes où son étrange génie de visionnaire se manifeste victorieusement.*” From the very first foreign connoisseurs have been fascinated by the etchings, and in a list of public galleries having proofs we can place already the names of Barcelona, Berlin, Bremen, Brussels, Budapest, Buenos Ayres, Christiania, Dresden, Elberfeld, Frankfurt, Gothenburg, Hamburg, Lugano, Malmö, Milan, Mühlhausen, Munich, Naples, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, South Kensington, Stuttgart, Vienna, and Zürich.

So the etchings, like the first sea-pictures and the later



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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paintings soon won for themselves a reputation far outside Great Britain. They are among the emissaries of peace that soothe international jealousies. They belong to a universal language that finds concord in rivalry and goodwill in success. There was no protest this year from Austrian artists when their Emperor granted his Great Gold Medal of Honour to a Brangwyn etching, "The Bridge of Sighs." It is only among our own writers on art that we find, here and there, a stereotyped hostility to Frank Brangwyn. But foes do not matter when friends remain loyal, and the most wide-minded critic, Mr. Claude Phillips, is on the right side. From the *Daily Telegraph*, March 26, 1908, I take the following paragraph:—

"Mr. Brangwyn takes rank now among the most original artists of modern Europe; he is certainly better understood and more highly appreciated in France and Italy<sup>1</sup> than at home. He has invented for himself an art of decoration, which is, at the same time, one of a lofty and tragic realism; he has so generalised, broadened, and emphasised in their great outlines the elements of everyday humanity and its bustling surroundings, that in his hands they acquire naturally a monumental and symbolical character. And this he has been able to do without muting the audacity, without dimming the brilliancy of his decorative effects, which, in their tawny splendour, are often those of stained glass rather than true painting. To annex modern man and his modern surroundings instead of shunning and despising him, to show the greatness and

<sup>1</sup> This applies also to Germany, to Belgium, to Austria, and—in a lesser degree—to Spain.

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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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the passion, even the beauty and the rhythm that are latent in that which faces us every day—this has been Mr. Brangwyn's lofty aim in his later and more ambitious works of the decorative order. This turbulence, this passion to re-create, to present in a new light and with a new significance, shows itself in a wholly different fashion in the etchings on a large scale which play a prominent part in the present exhibition.<sup>1</sup> Here it is himself above all, his own artistic emotion, his own temperament, that he strives through these sombre etched poems of the outer world to bring to the surface. From every point of view Mr. Brangwyn's art calls for serious consideration and that sympathy without which there can be disintegrating criticism, but no true comprehension. At this stage of his career Mr. Brangwyn has victoriously asserted the right, which should be accorded to all really original artists, to use his own technical methods for complete self-interpretation."

Among the many studies which have been written about the Brangwyn etchings, it is very pleasant to remember the vivid impressionism of Mr. Haldane Macfall, who has followed with keen enthusiasm the progress of Brangwyn's work from the days of the later sea-pictures. Mr. Macfall says: "Here is a hand that moves to the ordering of a majestic vision; the musical sense that is in line and mass is seen ranging through a wide gamut, and the result is not only as of an instrument played by a master-hand, but of a full orchestra, rich in deep, sonorous harmonies. Whistler had led us almost to believe that etching could be only a dainty thing—he set up the axiom to conceal

<sup>1</sup> At the Fine Art Society.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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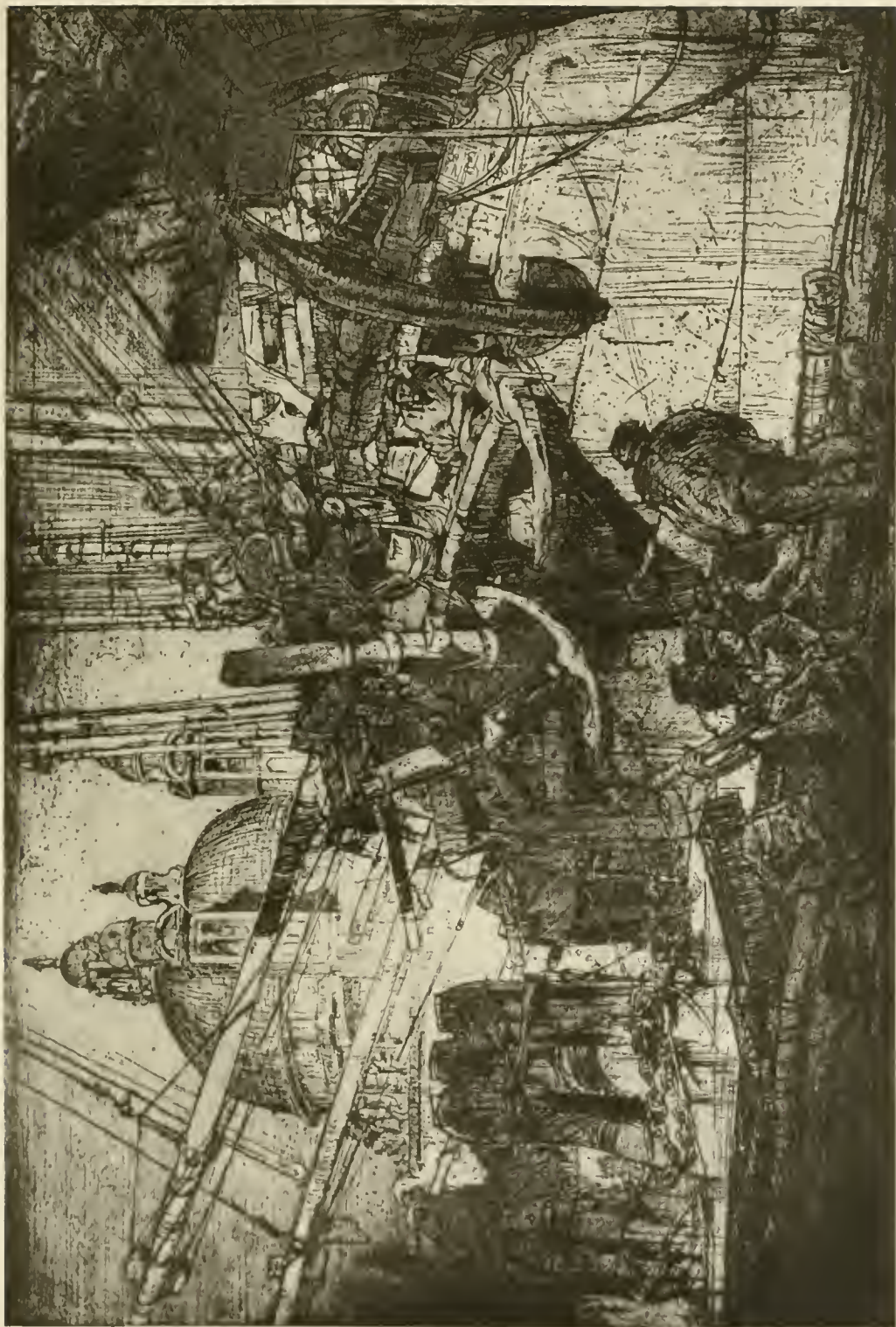
his own limitations. Mr. Brangwyn flings Whistler's laws to the winds, and using large or small plates just as they suit his mood and are fit to express his intentions, he makes etching yield up majestic qualities which were utterly beyond Whistler's range.

"In delicacy and subtlety, Whistler was without a rival in his day. Yet even in these qualities and in tenderness, Mr. Brangwyn gives us so exquisite an example—the beautiful plate entitled 'The Brewery, Bruges, No. 2'—that he seems to have wrought it in order to warn us that he is a wizard, when he wills, in *delicatesse*. The softness of the smoke, the steely glitter of the water, the subtle beauty of the whole thing are very perfect. But he is here more generally concerned with moods of grandeur and power. . . . There is a largeness, an inimitable sense of grandeur, in all that this artist does; and it is a vast quality that has been pitifully lacking in our native art. Mr. Brangwyn is the first British painter, save only Turner, who has been granted this splendid gift. And how inherent this sense of the grand manner is in him, we may see in his etchings and in his many moods. Nothing could be more profoundly solemn than his etching of a 'Windmill at Bruges'—the high building with its sails . . . springs upwards with a majestic dignity, as though it realised in some strange fashion its great importance, standing there against the immensity of the firmament, inviting with giant arrogance the stormy blasts that threaten out of the sombre miles of hollowness. This is no mere picture-making. It is the very intensity of nature, and of man's work in nature, wrought into poetic expression."



SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE.  
*From an Original Etching. Gold Medal,  
Venice International Exhibition, 1907; Grand  
Prix, Internationau Exhibition, Milan, 1906.*









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## *Etchings : and Summary of Characteristics*

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One might quote from many other writers, British and foreign, but the gist of the whole matter is simply this—that Brangwyn appeals to everybody who enjoys the spirit of strife that man must share with nature. This note of virile endeavour, this militancy in brave action, is seldom found among British artists, because art with us is rarely a dweller in the thronged highways of life; it fears invigorating gusts of rude air from the outside welter of human realities. Millet's criticism on the delicate peasant-girls painted by Jules Breton—"They are too pretty to stay in the village!"—is one that many British artists ought always to remember, because their styles are too dainty to be in touch with the living forces of society.

## CHAPTER XV

### DESIGNS FOR HOUSE FURNISHING

**I**S there any real danger in the natural versatility of Frank Brangwyn? Till now it has been successful, but the vigour of youth has helped it greatly, and youth slips away unperceived. There are also two other facts that we are called upon to remember here since we are trying to understand the aims and works of a man of genius. The first one is this—that versatility, at the present time, is mistrusted; it never fails to encounter a dogged opposition from the public. Next, work has become subdivided, not because any man is satisfied with a narrow specialism, but because to-day's life is so hurried and so agitated that a mind loses grip when its energies try year after year to concentrate in prolonged efforts on many branches of one study. Artists of the Middle Ages were not troubled by telegrams and telephones, by a postal service all day long, by a newspaper press and its sharpshooters, by facilities of travel to lands far off, by rushed journeys to and fro in vast cities, and by a host of other hindrances to concentrated thought and purpose. There comes a time when even the most virile and versatile genius must limit the scope of its efforts or else pay the lasting penalty of overstrain; and so I am happy to know that Brangwyn, having passed through a rich period of

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## *Designs for House Furnishing*

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multiform successes, will decline henceforth to be tempted away from his main work.

After his association with William Morris it was natural that his aptitude for constructive designing should be used while he painted large pictures that not only made great calls on a slender purse, they did not always pay their expenses even when they found buyers. Laymen do not realise an artist's cost of production, not in materials only, but in frames, in agents' fees, in packing-cases and their travelling expenses, and in the commissions charged on sales at all picture galleries. When a young man can do nothing else except paint, when he has not that mechanical faculty of mind that grips the technical and constructional problems of design and handicraft, he needs a private income to help him through his first struggles. It was lucky that Brangwyn found it quite an easy task to master the art of wooden furniture, to experiment in the technique of glass windows, and to apply the principles of design to other materials. I have studied these matters for twenty-three years, writing about them often, and Brangwyn appeals to me strongly in most of his original experiments. I do not say that his wooden furniture—his tables, chairs, and cabinets—are equal to Mr. Gimson's, nor is it right to contrast their work, for Mr. Gimson has his own workshops, like Chippendale, like Heppelwhite, while Brangwyn has been handicapped by designing for artisans in the employ of manufacturers.

Even so, he has obtained very good results, and among them is a fine billiard-table and cue-cabinet, which may be seen at Messrs Thurston's. It is not a billiard-table with several bulbous calves on each of its eight legs, you

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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may be sure, nor is it made of bay wood—an inferior kind of mahogany grown in Honduras, that cabinetmakers generally use to-day, the real Cuban mahogany being rare and costly. Billiard-tables of bay wood are as common as London 'buses, and very often as ungainly. Messrs. Thurston are aware of this, and wish to bring in a better taste, but I fear they will have a long and hard fight, owing to the iron conservatism of billiard players. Brangwyn designed a whole billiard-room, with panelled walls and a painted frieze, unstained English oak to be used for all the woodwork. The room has not yet been done, but the table and cabinets are finished, and their workmanship throughout could not well be bettered. Two problems of design have to be solved in designing a billiard-table: how to scheme plenty of visible support for the heavy slate bed, without inconveniencing the players, and yet give elegance to a cumbersome piece of furniture. Brangwyn has cracked these hard nuts, and his method is modern and attractive. There is no waste of wood; the legs are square in section; and struts run from leg to leg, and each strut from its centre is connected to the woodwork above by three uprights placed about two inches apart. This arrangement is quite new; it satisfies the eye, and as the two central legs on each side are placed inwards a little, and therefore on a different plane from the corner legs, no person can knock his knee against the additional woodwork. A professional player expressed doubt on this point, but he had no fault to find when he tried the table.

Equally difficult was the bedroom designed for Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Davis at their house in Lansdowne Road, Bayswater. This piece of work is very well

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## *Designs for House Furnishing*

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known; indeed, so much has been written about it, both by myself and by many others, that nothing new and true remains to be said—except this, that few householders have accepted its lesson of simple strength, of good citizen's furnishing. The chairs are neither too heavy nor too light, and their construction is plain as well as handsome, so that their manufacture is not a luxurious job for workmen having uncommon skill. Brangwyn does not like the reversed curves that Chipendale in his first period borrowed from the French, and that gave a sort of restlessness to furniture. He prefers the repose of upright lines, relieved by quiet inlay and by curved arms to the chairs. The treatment of inlay is always very important. It must keep its plane, and not start out from the surface of the wood surrounding it, as happens frequently in Dutch cabinet-work and usually in British commercial furniture. Brangwyn inlays show much fancy, and their setting is well in accord with the proper principles of the art of applied ornament. Sometimes he contrasts ebony with other woods, as in his billiard-table, and the dark colour is a pleasant foil to natural oak—that is, to oak not fumed, but deepened in tone by the action of daylight. A little beeswax and turpentine, with rubbing, are all that fine woods need in the way of polish. Brangwyn would never spoil his furniture with naphtha and shellac mixed together, nor with that horrible treacle-like polish, so beloved by most shopkeepers, that seems intended as a trap for insects or as a mirror in which the female flies can admire their beauty. Nor would he darken good oak by subjecting it to the



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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fumes of liquid ammonia, or by treating it with a solution of chromate of potash, by which light-tinted woods are now "converted" into mahogany!

In his work for Mr. Davis the use of wood entered into every part of Brangwyn's scheme. The first question to be considered was practical in a general way: What are the qualities of a good bedroom? Freshness and airiness; the scheme of colour should be pale and yet rich, then it will please the eye without seeming to lessen the size of your bedroom. Oak would look rather stubborn, walnut and mahogany would be too heavy in tone; satinwood might appear too glossy in its delicate charm, too superfine; so Brangwyn decided that cherrywood—beautiful in texture, pale and warm in tint—would be most appropriate.

This point decided, others began to bid for attention. What was the main fault in a modern bed? Did it not leave too much space between the mattress and the floor, making a sort of extra cupboard for odds and ends of luggage? Dust accumulates there, for even the best modern servant cannot be expected to clear away unseen hindrances to her work of dusting and sweeping. On the other hand, there must be space enough under the bed to give freedom to a broom, whether pneumatic or not.

Again, parquet flooring would be easier to dust than a carpet, and a rug could be placed wherever it was needed. But the principal thing of all was the background—the walls, which, in most houses, are treated as a much-bepatterned foreground, in the midst of which a pretty woman in evening dress looks almost unimportant. The outstanding rule in the treatment of

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## *Designs for House Furnishing*

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domestic walls is to be afraid of reticulated pattern. I have said this in a good many books, but it can never be repeated too often, for modern shopkeepers believe in pattern, pattern everywhere, all realistic and obtrusive. There is not a patterned paper in Brangwyn's own house; all the walls are silent in nondescript tints of a pleasant hue—cool, but not cold. He likes the grey warmth of ripe English corn, and he has a great liking for painted friezes, like those which he has carried out at Venice in the dining-room of the Palazzo Rezzonico, or like the silvery-toned one in Mr. Davis's bedroom. The Venetian frieze has been very well summed up by Mr. Gerald C. Horsley, F.R.I.B.A., who says: "Here is a treatment of panelling and woodwork that is all the artist's own; and it depends for its fulfilment upon a splendid frieze of painted subjects. This scheme, individual though it is, recalls, by its arrangement of paneling below and paintings above, the beautiful rooms at Venice of San Giorgio dei Schiavoni by Carpaccio, and the exquisite cabinet built to receive the pictures by Mantegna." The work, then, is not outside the tradition of Venetian decoration; and we find in the bedroom also a proper adaptation of design to the needs of a given environment.

Besides the frieze there are paintings of the Twelve Months, not hung up in gilt frames, but enriched in bands of wood that run from the skirting to the frieze-rail and divide the walls into compartments. In each decorative picture the colour is a happy arrangement of silver-greys with other delicate hues, that harmonise richly with a dove-tinted paper, forming plain spaces of light greyish-brown

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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between the panelled bands. The same care and taste are shown in the chased-metal fittings, all of oxidised silver; and the fireplace, that faces the bed, has a simple over-mantel of cherrywood, enriched with a little inlay, and divided into useful cupboards.

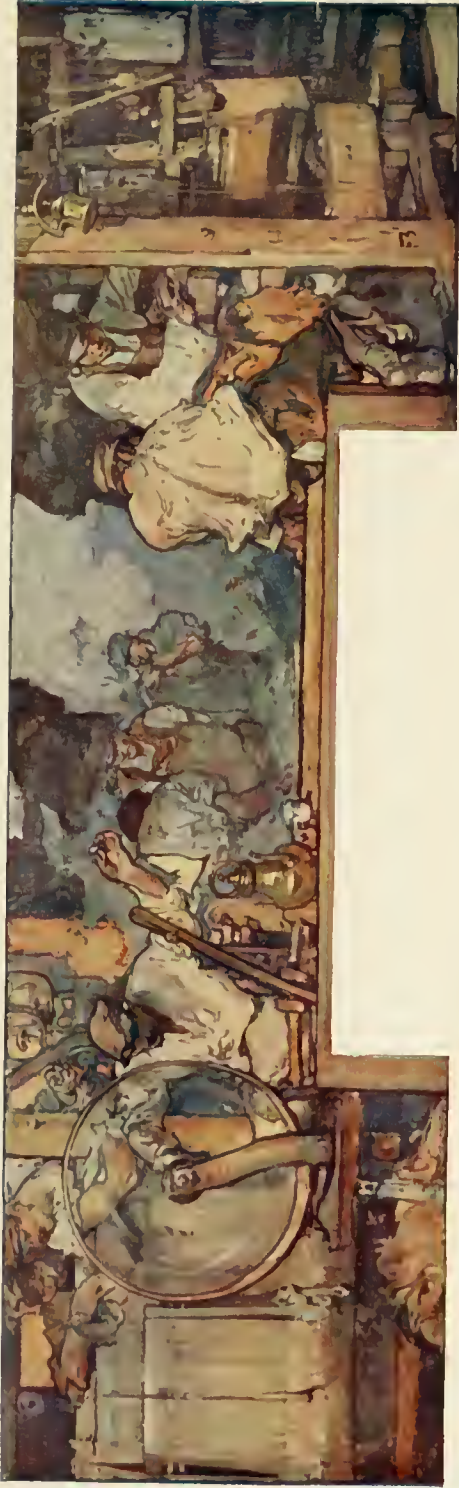
I have now to speak of the work done in Paris for the late M. Bing, a man of many gifts, and always a firm believer in Brangwyn. Their friendship began in 1895, when the old house in the Rue de Provence was transformed into L'Art Nouveau. Of one portion of this work I have spoken (p. 133), and we have now to consider the textile fabrics, tapestries, carpets, rugs, and the designs for stained-glass windows. I cannot describe either the carpets or the rugs, but you would like to own them. They would look well in any light, would not clash with any good scheme of colour in the walls, and more important still, would help you to respect the guiding principle of floor decoration—namely, that carpets and rugs must be in harmonious contrast with your walls. Ladies are very apt to forget this principle. They very often like “tints that match,” and carry shades of the same colour throughout their rooms. The harmony of friendly opposition does not appeal to them as a rule—I mean in decoration. A distinguished Belgian expert, M. H. Fiérens-Gevaërt, has said of Brangwyn's carpets that since the great Persian period, no one seems to have done better in this line; and certainly the colours and designs mark, as it were, a new and charming orientalism.

One excellent piece of work is neither a carpet nor a tapestry, but a beautiful wall-hanging based on the vine—its grapes, leaves, tendrils and stems, all treated with a



THE WEAVERS: A  
DECORATIVE PANEL  
IN THE LEEDS ART  
GALLERY.

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THE WEAVERS: A DECORATIVE PANEL IN THE LEEDS ART GALLERY

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## *Designs for House Furnishing*

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very happy appreciation for the conventionalism of applied design. It is quite astonishingly able—what the French call a *coup de maître*, a master-stroke. At Paris it was known as a carpet, as if any person of taste in the decorative arts would ever wish to tread underfoot a patterning of grapes and vine-leaves. Brangwyn, of course, intended his work as an ornament for walls, keeping his formal arrangements of colour for his rugs and carpets.

It is astonishing how reluctant many people are to accept the logical principle that a pattern must be fit for its purpose. Even Ruskin was Early Victorian in this matter, for he liked to walk on flower-bedecked carpets, as if roses were meant to be trodden upon. When once you accept such an unfortunate covering for a floor, you should go a step or two farther, and order a carpet covered with vegetables. Why, a sheet of blue water dappled with battleships would be a still greater novelty, and not worse in principle.

As to tapestries, they are mosaics of colour made up of dyed threads, and the warp being quite hidden, the colours are as solid as paint is on canvas. In Gothic tapestries the style is rarely *too* pictorial, while an excess of realism is usually found in post-Gothic examples. Brangwyn wished to avoid this error when he designed his “*Roi au Chantier*”—the arrival of an Eastern king in port, and his reception there. The boat has armorial shields, and rowers hold up their oars, making useful perpendicular lines. Foreign critics have spoken frequently of this design, and most of them praise its rich and ringing contrasts of beautiful frank colour. Two or three seem to think that a new tapestry should have the faded beauty of the old,

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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and even Morris never dared to give splendidly brilliant hues, preferring an equalised tone that time will bleach into faintness. I have never seen the "Roi au Chantier," but photographs show that the design is a genuine tapestry, crisp in all details, quite strong enough in the silhouette of each figure, and well framed with a graceful border. It is a Brangwyn, and therefore new in conception and style; but the Oriental costumes seem to ally it with the mediæval spirit.

While working for M. Bing, from the year 1895, Brangwyn made interesting experiments in cartoons for stained glass, and these brought him into technical relations with Mr. Louis Tiffany, inventor of "favrile glass," and son of the celebrated New York goldsmith and jeweller. In May 1899, M. Bing held an exhibition at the Grafton Gallery, and fine examples of Tiffany's art in stained windows and in glass-blowing formed part of a very rich and varied show, which included Meunier bronzes and pictures, jewellery by Colonna, works by the Impressionists, a great collection of antique Japanese prints, and some Indo-Persian miniatures by the best masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There were two large windows by Brangwyn: one secular—"Music," the other religious—the "Baptism of Christ." Both offered useful suggestions to householders. A Catholic himself, Brangwyn remembered that a good many families in Great Britain, as on the Continent, have chapels in their homes, and his noble design for the "Baptism of Christ" belongs to such houses as well as to church decoration.

The points to be remembered in this phase of ornamental design are as follows: that coloured windows are

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## *Designs for House Furnishing*

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not easel-pictures, isolated from objects surrounding them, and asking us to give our whole attention to their beauty. Their office is that of a single instrument in an orchestra, always subordinated to the total effect produced by many minds and many varieties of skill, all acting together for the sake of a complete result. But skilled artisans have ever been proud and vain, each has wished to play the first fiddle, and their conductor—he was always an architect in the Middle Ages—has been like the chief of an opera house, who tries very hard to soothe into submission his spoiled tenors and sopranos. To-day we are educating a type of man who is something much more than a skilled artisan; he is an artist-craftsman, and therefore glad not only to accept the special limitations of his material, but to work in accord with decorative schemes. “If you feel yourself hampered by the material in which you are working, instead of being helped by it,” said Morris, “you have so far not learned your business, any more than a would-be poet has who complains of the hardship of writing in measure and rhyme.” No doubt; but all kinds of new difficulties and problems are enforced to-day upon artist-craftsmen. Here is an example in Brangwyn’s cartoons for stained glass.

If he had been living in the great period of window decoration, the fourteenth or the fifteenth century, his pot-metal—glass tinted when in a state of fusion by a mixture of metallic oxides—would be all in small pieces, and each piece would have been separated from, yet joined to, its neighbour by a leaded “cane”—a grooved slip of thin lead—holding the two. No large piece of glass would have been used; each fragment would have been uneven in

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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thickness, varied in transparent colour, and dotted with little air-bubbles, little prisons through which light would escape in a waywardness of effect. With those leaden canes uniting fragments of bright colour a cartoon was thought out in those days, and the designer had always to keep in mind the horizontal iron bars that would hold in place his mosaic of glass. Even if he tried to make a realistic picture, instead of a decoration through which daylight would pass, he could not possibly succeed, because his methods and materials declined to be naturalistic. So it came to pass that even crude draughtsmanship was not objected to, the mosaic of colour being looked upon as more important; and this judgment was accepted in the last century by Pugin, as if good drawing and glorious colour were impossible to unite in a window decoration. Then larger pieces of glass were made, and cartoonists had to face the difficulty of keeping away from pictorial realism while composing with human figures and with fewer leaded canes. And that was not all. As soon as the lead strips became less numerous, their effect became less and less like a mosaic, and craftsmen and the public became conscious that occasional strips of lead were ugly; and this gave a great impetus to a vogue in *painted* windows, where the lead was concealed with the utmost care, and in which artists used plates of translucent glass and applied the designs and colours with enamels, vitrifiable pigments, metallic oxides combined with vitreous compounds known as fluxes. In such windows we are expected to forget that glass is the material, and usually they are not decorations at all, but third- and fourth-rate pictures stuck up in a window opening.





# Form, Function, and the Mind

The relationship between form and function is a central theme in design. It is not merely a matter of aesthetics, but of how the physical form of an object influences the user's experience and behavior. A well-designed object is one where the form follows the function, and the function informs the form. This is not a simple matter of copying nature, but of understanding the underlying principles that govern both the natural and the man-made world.

In the realm of architecture, for example, the form of a building is a direct result of its intended function. A school building is designed to facilitate learning, so its form includes classrooms, a library, and a playground. A hospital is designed to provide medical care, so its form includes operating rooms, examination rooms, and a waiting area. The form of a building is a reflection of the social and cultural values of the society it serves.

Similarly, in the realm of product design, the form of an object is a reflection of its intended function. A chair is designed to provide a place to sit, so its form includes a seat, a backrest, and four legs. A table is designed to provide a surface for work or dining, so its form includes a flat top and four legs. The form of a product is a reflection of the needs and desires of the user.

However, the relationship between form and function is not always straightforward. Sometimes, a form can be so compelling that it overrides the function. A chair that is so beautiful that people want to sit on it, even if it is uncomfortable, is a failure of design. A table that is so aesthetically pleasing that it is difficult to use, is also a failure of design. The best design is one where the form and the function are in perfect harmony.

The mind plays a crucial role in this process. It is the mind that perceives the form of an object and interprets its function. It is the mind that decides whether a form is beautiful, useful, or both. The mind is the bridge between the physical world and the human experience. It is the mind that makes design a meaningful and creative activity.

DESIGN FOR A FAN.



DESIGN FOR A FAN



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## *Designs for House Furnishing*

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We see, then, that experiments for a long time have run counter to the old conception of a coloured window—as a many-tinted mosaic made up with small pieces of glass, these being patterned into a translucent ornament by means of many leaded canes. Brangwyn had to accept the existing conditions, and to find in his cartoons a true method of fenestral decoration without much help from the lead and the iron which used to be essential to coloured windows, their construction and safety. The difficulties were very great, and if some of the results do not seem to be worthy of the inventive skill and care bestowed on them, others are quite charming. Foremost among the secular subjects I may put the “Flute Players”—a design of true and gracious decoration; its lines are all beautiful and carefully thought out in their relation to a speculative treatment of material. A purist might object to the sitting nude figure of the girl, because her whole body is cut out of a single piece of glass, but all experiments are useful because they enable us to reconsider the old routine of craft methods.

In his own home Brangwyn keeps away from himself; that is, he does not use his own designs, preferring to be in touch with the work of other hands, just as authors put their own books aside and browse in a library. His likings are as versatile as his attainments, and with fine things from many countries—English furniture of the eighteenth century, Spanish cabinets, Eastern rugs, Oriental pottery, and so forth—he has made a home, not a museum, for excellent things harmonise when they are well-chosen and grouped together with judgment. Amid these surroundings he will talk to you about many subjects, and

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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you will find that his views on art defend men having no aim in common with his own; pointing out, for instance, the merits of Frith's best pictures, their accurate history, their minute observation, and the skill of hand that never hesitates and rarely blunders within the methods of a school discipline. It is the mark of a modest greatness to find good in all unaffected styles. This was a trait in Robert Browning, in Sir Walter Scott, in Alexandre Dumas père; and it will continue to help Brangwyn in his own achievements.

This book has tried to pass in review twenty-five years of professional industry, each chapter struggling to express in words the indescribable—qualities of form, beauties of colour, characteristics of design, subtle questions of temperament; but life at forty-three is a Marathon race half-run, and we wait for much more from Frank Brangwyn.

## APPENDIX I

### PICTURES AND SKETCHES

#### A SELECTED LIST

1885-1910

1885. Royal Academy. "A Bit on the Esk, near Whitby." A small oil-painting done at the age of seventeen, after a trip in a coasting vessel.
- 1885-86. British Artists, Winter Exhibition. "Putney Bridge." Catalogue price, £10, 10s. The painter all his life has been very much attracted by the romance of bridges.
1886. Royal Academy. "Waterlogged." A large oil-picture of a wrecked vessel lying on a sandbank in rough weather.
- 1886 (*about*). "Near Eltham." Collection of Dr. Tom Robinson, London.
1886. British Artists. "Cold November," and "O'er the Sands of Dee." A long strip of a picture representing the gold sands of the riverside at low water. "A Bit of Shore, Par, Cornwall." A water-colour, with boats and trees, and a stretch of beach.
1887. Royal Academy. "Sunday." Water-colour. The stern of a boat with men leaning over the side, idly smoking their pipes.
1887. British Artists. "A Western Port." Coasters in harbour, drying their sails.
1887. British Artists. "An Idle Hour," and "A Cornish Yard."
- 1887 (*about*). "Off to the Fishing Ponds," and "A Cornish Port," showing a row of old men in the sun, seated near houses; a glimpse of the sea.
1887. "A Bankside with Gorse." Collection of Dr. Tom Robinson, London.
1887. "A Sketch on the Coast." Collection of Dr. Tom Robinson, London.



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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1888. Royal Academy. "Bark-Stripping." Several men on a hillside stripping trees. Painted in Cornwall.
1888. British Artists. "October," and "Rye Ferry." A study of twilight, painted simply, rich and low in tone.
1889. Royal Academy. "Home." A marine version of the blind man and his dog; it represents a small, fussy tug towing a great vessel over a bar on a wet and gusty day.
1889. Royal Academy. "When we were Boys together." A couple of old farm-labourers in the twilight seated outside a cottage. Painted at Stratford-on-Avon.
1889. Royal Academy. "Minutes are like Hours." A group of fishermen in anxiety because a vessel makes the harbour with difficulty.
1889. British Artists. "Wraik Gatherers." A storm-beaten sea, and a beach swept by waves; in the foreground three men gather wraik in the surf. Sea, beach, and sky are in tones of silvery grey, and from this background the figures stand out in dark relief.
1889. New English Art Club. "The Last Load." A harmony in cool greys and greens.
1889. Institute of Oil-Painters. "Ashore." Cold early morning light, with stress of wind and a stormy sea; figures about the mast of a stranded vessel, and a man being hauled to land by a life-saving apparatus. Through mist and spray the coast is seen dimly.
1889. Grosvenor Gallery. "Homeward." Harvesters return home from work in the evening. A large picture, cool and pleasant in tone.
- 1889 (*about*). "Spinning a Yarn."
- 1889 (*about*). "The Rope Walk." Figures in the sunlight making rope.
- To this period belong several good pictures; their titles are forgotten. Information invited from their present owners.
1890. Royal Academy. "Outward Bound." A tug has just cast off from a vessel.
1890. Royal Academy. "All Hands Shorten Sail!" Exhibited also at the Paris Salon.
1890. Royal Academy. "Stand By!" Some men in a small boat going to board a vessel.
1890. Royal Academy. "A Stranger." A large water-colour. It

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## *Appendix I.: Pictures and Sketches*

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- represents a group of men on a pier-head watching the approach of a foreign vessel.
1890. British Artists. "Conjecture." A small painting. Critics were very pleased with this bold and simple study of a drenched pier-head, where a group of salts in sou'-westers discuss some point or other concerning a vessel that drives her way into harbour through mist and a grey sea.
1890. British Artists. "January." A large winter-scene, having much merit as a design, particularly in the distance of town and shipping, with lights coming out in the winter twilight. Writers at this period often bracketed Frank Brangwyn with Mr. Stanhope Forbes, though he was never a Newlynite *pur sang*.
1890. British Artists. "Poppies." A little Cornish sketch of a back-yard filled with flowers.
1890. British Artists, Winter Exhibition. "Off Ostend," and "Off the Berlings." Two outdoor sketches.
1890. British Artists. "Loading Grain on the Danube." This was the first hint of a coming change in outlook and in colour.
1890. British Artists, Winter Exhibition. "The Funeral at Sea: 'We therefore commit his body to the deep.'" We are on the deck of a merchantman; the crew stand bareheaded, while the captain, prayer-book in hand, reads the last words of the Burial Service. They have just taken off the Union Jack before giving the corpse to the sea. This picture, which now belongs to the Corporation of Glasgow, attracted little attention in the Suffolk Street Galleries; while in Paris, soon afterwards, it was put in a place of honour at the Salon, a medal of the third class was granted, and the Government wished to buy it. The *Saturday Review* was among the few London papers that noticed "The Funeral at Sea." "It is all painted in dim colours, under a grey sky, the angle of dark rolling sea to the right being the only positive bit of colour. The scene is treated without dramatic emphasis; the mourners are in their working dress; the labour of the ship has evidently been put aside for a moment. Yet the general effect of the composition is one of great sincerity and truth, while the individual figures are well grouped and carefully distinguished." R. A. M. Stevenson said: "This picture is less unpleasant in colour than much of this talented painter's work

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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is wont to be, and the rough, hardy-looking seamen and their skipper are drawn with much character, the men being probably portraits. . . . Taken altogether, it is an excellently designed picture, and the ship's rigging and boats are drawn with the knowledge of a practical seaman."

1890. Grosvenor Gallery. "The Weekly Despatch." A very large water-colour, representing a group of fishermen in the yard of a seaside inn, one reading a newspaper to the rest. The *Daily News* said: "The grouping of the men is so natural and their expressions are so varied, that any one will recognise the fact that the artist has a will and a way of his own. His gossips clearly enjoy a story, whether it be a chapter in real life from their weekly budget of news or a yarn that might be told only to the marines. Perhaps Mr. Brangwyn's real danger is a tendency to monotony of colour, and when he paints the sea he sometimes wants more strength and decidedly more suggestion of form in his breakers."
1890. Grosvenor Gallery. "Sail Ho!" In the foreground is a water-logged vessel, with her wet deck aslant; the crew, seeing a ship on the horizon, look out across the waves, through the pale light of a chill dawn.
1890. Tooth's Gallery. "Yeo, Heave Ho!" A lot of men heaving in a vessel on a capstan.
1891. Royal Academy. "Salvage." Badly skied. A tug bringing home a wreck.
1891. Royal Academy. "Assistance." Badly skied. A large picture of much merit, representing a storm on board ship and sailors in the act of lowering a boat to save life off a vessel in distress.
1891. British Artists. "Four Ale." A small picture of some old salts in an English ale-garden.
1891. A collection of studies and sketches—"From the Scheldt to the Danube"—were exhibited at the Royal Arcade Gallery, Bond Street, London. The most important were sketches of Oriental ports, rich in colour, and studies of the open sea. Two subjects were reproduced in colour by the *Graphic*. One represented some wild-looking fishermen in their rafts on the Danube, while the other—a better picture by far—was a scene on the quay at Constantinople, with a Turkish angler waiting peacefully for a bite. As for the other sketches, here is a notice from the *Sunday Times*, March 29, 1891:—

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## Appendix I.: Pictures and Sketches

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"Mr. Brangwyn has simply revelled in the ever varied aspect of the sea under different conditions of light and weather, and latitude. He has a fine sense of colour, and a graphic grasp of a scene, whether it be a waste of waters with a single ship tossing on the waves, or a group of Orientals at Stamboul, all brilliant in colour. He is always essentially pictorial, and he has a keen eye for character. These pictures have distinct charm, and, as a whole, they reveal the artist in a much more versatile light than that with which he has hitherto shone. Among the many pictures in this truly interesting show which we have specially enjoyed are 'Tenedos Island' and 'The Sea of Marmora,' with their fine contrasts of deep blue sea and pale sky; 'Michaelmas Day,' 'Going into Sulina,' an impressive night effect; 'Evening on the Black Sea,' 'The Ægean Sea,' 'On Deck,' 'Unloading at Stamboul,' 'The Steward,' 'Outside a Store, Galata,' 'Entrance to the Dardanelles,' 'Danube Village,' 'Entrance to the Bosphorus,' and 'Entrance to the Black Sea.' This is an unpretentious exhibition, but it is full of pictorial interest."

1892. British Artists. "A Sketch." A sailor's funeral leaving a vessel, watched by curious folk from a quay-side. It was noticed very favourably.
1892. British Artists. "Pilots, Puerta de Passages, Spain." Painted during the trip in Spain with Melville. Now at the Chicago Art Institute. A medal was awarded to it at the Chicago Exhibition, 1894.
1892. British Artists. "Puerta de Passage." A bold, splashing water-colour.
1892. British Artists. "Tarifa, Spain."
- 1892 (*about*). "Spanish Houses." A brilliant water-colour. Collection of Dr. Tom Robinson.
1892. Royal Academy. "The Convict Ship." With its freight of unhappy men, just freed in the Thames from the pilot's boat. In the centre stands a young fellow in chains, his hands bound behind him; along the vessel's side there are other unfortunates, well studied and painted with breadth. The charm of this early work is its human nature, its grasp of character. The convicts are all plainly landsmen, and their new surroundings increase their forlorn despair. R. A. M. Stevenson liked this grey picture, and the jury gave it a medal at the Chicago Exhibition, 1894.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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1892. Exhibition in the spring of South African sketches, painted for Mr. Larkin.

"Outside a Store, Diep River: Saturday Evening." Twilight, with figures in the street outside the store, and a lamp shining through an open doorway.

Two Views of Simonsburgh. A melancholy looking place, with strange white houses, all walls and no windows seemingly; built, in fact, by the earliest Dutch settlers as a protection from attack.

"Outside a Wine Store," with ruddy brown trees; "A Police Station," an innocent-looking cottage standing in the midst of pretty shrubberies; "Native Women Washing Clothes, Brede River"; "Drankenstein Mountains," capped with snow, a foreground of yellow flowers; "Ploughing Vines," "A Street, Ceres"; "Loop Street, Cape Town"; "Outside a Wine Store"; "A Windmill, Salt River"; "Courtyard of a Dutch Farm, Libertas"; "Malay Fishmonger, Cape Town"; "Stoep of Hotel, Paarl"; "A Peach Orchard"; "A Farm, Fransehe Hoek"; "A Native Hut"; "A Creek, Idas Vallei"; "Main Street, Paarl"; "Buttengracht Street, Cape Town: Malay Quarter"; "A Native Brandy Still," "A Stoep," "A Farm near Villiersdorp."

"Cape Town from Salt River." Showing the city in the distance on a strip of land; deep blue sea, and sand-dunes covered with bluish-coloured grasses.

"An Ostrich Farm, South Africa." In a blaze of sunlight, and a black woman on guard.

"River Scene." A clear evening after rain, and dark mountains seen in blue against a luminous sky.

"Evening among the Lilies." A charming fantasy, showing a native girl in a field of beautiful arum lilies.

"A Waterside Street, Cape Town," "Cape Town from the Sea," with a cloud above the flat top of Table Mountain; "Kimberley," a familiar scene at a pit's mouth, with rough miners; "Main Street, Paarl," a long road moist with rain, bordered by trees, and animated with busy women and men; "A Street, Stellenbosch," with white old houses, and water running along one side; "The Valley of Drankenstein"; "A Doorway," an old shed overgrown with vines and surrounded by trees; "An Idyll," representing a young native mother with her baby on her back and followed by another child,



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## Appendix I.: Pictures and Sketches

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strolling on the seashore in the twilight ; the moon sails in a clear sky, and the infant's head relieved against it seems to be encircled by a nimbus.

"Berg River," "Wild Roses," "In the Dock," "Jonkers Hoek," "Houts Bay," "Kimberley Market," "Castle Square, Cape Town," "Table Mountain from the Sea," "A Back Yard," "Front of a Dutch House, Stellenbosch," "A Native Nurse," "Landing at Cape Town," and "Outward Bound—the *Dunottar Castle* leaving London." This last was a large painting, grey and sombre, with a crowd saying farewell. It was not successful.

1892. "A Street in Funchal, Madeira," "A Native of Madeira," and other sketches in that island.

1892 (*about*). "The Dance." A large picture of negroes dancing by the light of a lamp, that throws great shadows on a whitewashed wall.

1892. Institute of Oil-Painters. "Slave Traders." "Fine in the colour of rich Eastern costumes and of the stretch of deep blue sea and sky, a strip of sand between" (*Star*). This picture—an original deck-scene in burning sunlight—had many enemies. It was said to be as lifeless as a display of *bric-à-brac*, yet critics were drawn towards it, in anger or in pleasure. The *Magazine of Art* said: "Here a group of darkest Africans, clad in flaming scarlet, tawny, and dark-blue garments, are seen crouching on the white deck of a steamer, with a background of deepest indigo sea, and appropriately blue sky. The problem of conveying a true visual impression under such self-created difficulties as here indicated is boldly and powerfully attacked, but it is not adequately solved; some of the figures are mere silhouettes, and atmosphere is conspicuously lacking."

1893. Became Corresponding Member of the Secession, Munich.

1893. Glasgow Institute. "Blake at Santa Cruz." A small picture.

1893. Society of Scottish Artists. "Shade." The *Glasgow Herald* said: "It is an artist's picture rather than a direct reading from nature. Mr. Brangwyn shows us a courtyard, and men sitting under the cool greens of a spreading tree. The lights and shadows are artistically managed, and the effect of broken sunshine is realised with great dexterity. The visitor, however, need not analyse the canvas too narrowly, else he may find patches of sunlight and slashes of red in unexpected places. What of that? The artist is here concerned



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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- not with literal truth but with resolving a problem of much difficulty, and the result is such as to justify his daring." "Shade" was exhibited at the R.A. in 1894.
1893. Royal Academy. "A Slave Market." See Chapter III. This picture now belongs to the Corporation of Southport.
1893. Royal Academy. "Turkish Fishermen's Huts."
1893. Grafton Gallery, Spring Exhibition. "The Buccaneers." See Chapter III. Now in the Collection of M. Pacquement, Paris. Illustrated in this book. Max Nordau gave a thoughtful explanation of the method of work employed by Brangwyn in the period of "The Buccaneers." He said: "Brangwyn shows his figures either flushed by the blazing heat of the glaring sun-fire or enveloped in the veil of semi-transparent obscurity. Both kinds of illumination have the peculiarity of suppressing all accessories and allowing the essential only to remain. A human face, a human body, dipped into glowing sunlight, will become almost transparent. Behind the skin and integument, which appear only like a veil, muscles and bones will come forward. Strong light prepares a body almost like the anatomist's dissecting knife. Obscurity acts in a similar way. It effaces the connections and transitions, and accentuates nothing but the strong lines of construction. Only diffused light lends equal value to all parts of the surface; it shows everything, and explains nothing. Direct light, on the other hand, like obscurity, hierarchises the appearance, and enables us to separate at the first glance mere superficial ornamentation from girders and beams."
1893. "Eve." A study of the nude in a forest of tropical foliage and fruit. Grafton Gallery.
1893. Institute of Oil-Painters. "Dolce Far Niente." Half-clad Southern women in orange draperies lie around a blue-tiled fountain; a rich background of magnolia trees. R. A. M. Stevenson admired this picture for its delicacy and truthfulness, while the *Athenaum* was annoyed by it, insisting that the odalisques were like the dummies in the windows of hairdressers. It is the privilege of experts to contradict each other. Collection of J. H. Freeman, Esq., K.C.
1893. "A Sketch in Spain." An arrangement of brown sands, blue streams and sky, and brilliant red mule-trappings. "You must not look for delicate harmony or a subtle study of tones, but the flaunt-

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## Appendix I.: Pictures and Sketches

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ing colours catch the eye pleasantly and resolve themselves into a fine stirring piece of decoration on walls otherwise all too dull and colourless"—*Star*.

1893 (*about*). "Spoil." A large picture of robbers in the act of playing at dice near their captives; a town on fire in the background.

1893. New Gallery. "Adoration of the Magi." See Chapter IV. Collection of E. Seegar, Berlin.

1894. Royal Academy. "Oranges." A large picture of an orange booth at Jaffa. Woodiwiss Collection.

In March, 1894, Brangwyn was at Tangier and Morocco with Mr. Ganz and Mr. Dudley Hardy. He painted several oils and water-colours, and his study for "Trade on the Beach."

1894. Institute of Oil-Painters. "Trade on the Beach." Exhibited afterwards at the Salon, and bought there by the French Government for the Luxembourg, 1895. It represents a scene on the coast of Morocco, with great boats hauled up on the golden sands; negroes and Moors are engaged in barter. In colour it possesses a certain quiet splendour; and at the same time it shows a fine sense of atmosphere, and an effect of strong sunshine. Once again the *Athenæum* was indignant, while the *Saturday Review* described the work as wonderful in pictorial force. Mr. Haldane Macfall said: "The decorative quality and arrangement of this work are beyond criticism. The general buff and grey tone of the picture is set aglow with rich colours that fall upon it in well-placed patches balanced with rare art. The curves of the arches in the white buildings at the back, their purple and lilac shadows, the almost silhouetted effects of the negroes who sit together bargaining in the left foreground, the horizontal sweep of the great picturesque boats from left to right across the middle of the picture, and the dignified effect of the standing negro to the right, are very fine art. The work is perfectly executed; the detail all subordinated to the decorative scheme—every little form and patch of colour as splendidly placed as in the best Japanese art. And the colour scheme is a glorious harmony. Above all, the artist has caught the spirit of the people as only genius can catch it."

1894. New Gallery. "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes." See Chapter IV.

1895. New Gallery. "St. Simeon Stylites." See Chapter IV. Municipal

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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- Art Gallery at Venice. Mr. H. F. W. Ganz made an etching of this picture, and showed it at the R.A. in 1895.
1895. Grafton Gallery. Small picture of St. Simeon Stylites.
1895. Royal Academy. "Rest." See Chapter IV.
1895. Royal Academy. "In the Square." Water-colour. Painted in the market-place of Algeciras.
- 1895 (*about*). "A Captive." Illustrated in *The Studio Magazine*.
1895. Illustrations for "Don Quixote," published by Mr. Gibbings.
1895. "Spanish Goatherds." Life-sized figures playing at dice; an effect of brilliant colour. This picture was sent to the Paris Salon, and many French critics thought it too airless and too arbitrary. Others praised it warmly as a decoration. The picture was really an experiment, a sort of jugglery with strong pigments, and its skill would be appreciated by any one who tried to copy it.
1895. "A Port in Spain." In the background is a grey bridge, above which towers the sails of a vessel; this side the bridge is another boat, with men at work. A wall stands between the river and the promenade, where groups of picturesque idlers lounge. On our right, in the foreground, seated at a rough table, are three men, whose talk interests a tall onlooker. It is a good travel picture, showing sympathy in its keen observation. It takes us to a land of ease, where basking in the sun seems to be hard work, and where past centuries appear to have a sort of ghostly presence in the acts of to-day.
1895. In the late summer Brangwyn was in Paris, and there painted for M. Bing two large decorative panels, as well as the frieze for the street elevation of "L'Art Nouveau." The panels were called "Music" and "Dancing." Now in the Collection of M. Agache.
1896. Royal Academy. "The Blood of the Grape." A large canvas representing a modern celebration of the festival of Bacchus; in it a crowd of villagers in a vineyard press around a nude man riding a grey donkey. Seegar Collection, Berlin.
- To this period—*i.e.* from 1895 to 1896—the following works belong:—
- "Virgin and Child resting at a Well." In the Collection of Sir Alfred East, A.R.A. "One of Brangwyn's less-known works, akin, as far as the background is concerned, to 'St. Simeon Stylites,' in the Venice Gallery."—F. RINDER.

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## Appendix I.: Pictures and Sketches

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"The Saddle Shop," a small picture painted at Assisi.

"The Market." In the Collection of M. Tchoukine, Moscow.

"The Quarry," with an old stonebreaker resting; trees beyond, and a low range of chalky hills against an evening sky.

"Moorish Women seated on a Terrace."

"The Snake Charmer." A large picture.

"The Story-Teller." A big water-colour.

"Turkish Fishermen." National Gallery, Prague.

"A Turkish Pot Market"; and "A Moorish Market."

Design for a tapestry—*Le Roi au Chantier*—now in the Leeds Gallery.

"A Turkish Sweatmeat Seller." There are two pictures of this subject, one in a collection at Pittsburg, the other belonging to E. Fox, Esq.

"Music." Three men and a boy seated under the shade of a tree and playing musical instruments. Rich and low in tone. In the Collection of Sir Alfred East, A.R.A.

1895-96. Small picture of a boy piping. Exhibited at Venice. Collection of C. Schmutzer, Bucharest.

"Venetian Boatmen in their Craft." Shown at Pittsburg. In the Collection of Peter A. Schemm, Philadelphia.

"The Beach, Funchal." Water-colour.

"Bathers." Boys enjoying themselves in a pond; trees on the right. In the Collection of Sir Alfred East, A.R.A.

1897. "The Market at Bushire." Figures on the beach, some sitting, others standing. Silver medal at the great Exhibition of Paris. It is probably the best coast scene, alert, humorous, well drawn, admirably composed, and harmonious in flashing colour. Mr. Spielmann gives a good illustration of this work in *Scribner's Magazine*, January 1904. Fry Collection.

1897. "The Scoffers." Paris Salon. The subject is taken from an old Spanish ballad about a Castilian general who was taken prisoner by the Moors. Once a week he was removed from his prison, tied to a stake, and insulted by the population of the town. This picture won a great success in Paris, and at Munich it gained a gold medal. It was bought by the National Gallery of New South Wales at Sydney. Mr. Rinder considers this work to be one of the most masterly things that Brangwyn has yet done.

1897. Royal Academy. "Venice." Skied. Boatmen in the fore-

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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- ground, the Dogana beyond, seen against a cloudy sky. Fry Collection.
1897. "Assisi." A noble landscape bought by the Bavarian Government for the Pinakothek at Munich.
1897. Clifford Gallery. "Waiting for the Fishermen."
1898. Royal Academy. "The Golden Horn." Skied.
- The *Spectator* protested against this ill-treatment. "This painter is gifted with a highly original way of seeing things, together with a fine sense of colour and a great knowledge of decorative effect, qualities which the average pictures hung on the line seldom possess. There are dozens of sleek mediocrities one would willingly banish to the sky-line to make room for such a breezy piece of shipping and great clouds as Mr. Brangwyn's picture seems to be." The Fromentin Collection, Paris.
1898. Royal Academy. "The Story." Skied. An Eastern garden with Arabs seated under the trees. "It shows the spirit in which Brangwyn works. Here is no niggling detail, no attempt at shallow prettiness. It is big in feeling, big in touch."—FRANK RINDER. The Olivier Senn Collection, Havre.
1898. Maclean's Gallery. "A Passing Storm in Venice." A picture of Venice at work, with sailors and fishermen; cloudy weather. R. A. M. Stevenson spoke of this work as a gorgeous decorative scheme, most agreeable in colour and handling, and passably like something that might exist.
1898. "Custom-House Quay, Venice," equally vigorous and direct.
1899. Maclean's Gallery. "Limehouse." One of the best among the landscapes, free and natural in design, rich in subdued colour, and spacious.
1899. Grafton Galleries. "Music," and "The Baptism of Christ": two stained windows in Tiffany glass.
1899. "Corner of a Market in Spain." Brilliant and attractive.
1900. New Gallery. "Charity." MacCulloch Collection.
1900. New Gallery. "The Needle." Pastel.
- A silver medal was won at Paris by the "Market at Bushire," now in the Fry Collection.
1900. Pastel Society. "The Meal." A study in the Black Country.
1900. Frieze for a Music Room, painted for E. Davis, Esq.; also Decorative Panels of the Months for a bedroom.



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## *Appendix I.: Pictures and Sketches*

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1900. A painting of old houses at Limehouse, and a picture of half-nude girls in a landscape listening to music.
- 1900 (*about*). "Hammersmith," seen across the river from the south side, a clump of dark trees on the left balanced by a cumulus cloud beyond the distant buildings. Kitson Collection, Leeds.
1901. "Old Kew Bridge," painted just before its destruction. S. Wilson Collection, Leeds.
1901. "Approach to Old Kew Bridge." A small picture.
1901. "A Road in Norfolk." A fine effect of dark trees against a sky. Collection of Kenneth S. Anderson, Esq.
1902. "The Cider Press." New Gallery. Now in the Collection of Sir Alfred East, A.R.A.

This picture brought to an end the second period in the development of a decorative style. The first period extended from the later sea-pictures to the "Spanish Goatherds," passing through a series of religious subjects. Then, little by little, the handling became more supple and the design more mature, without any loss of virility. Next, in 1902, the painter began his great work for the Skinners' Company, and all the most difficult problems of mural painting entered his daily practice. His "Cider Press" marked the point of transition. Though a noble picture in many ways, it was much opposed in 1902. Some critics wrote of it as if they were pedagogues entrusted with the guardianship of a brilliant but unruly pupil. Here is an example from the *Athenæum* :—

"Mr. Brangwyn approaches the problem of finding a sumptuous decorative treatment on different lines. In his 'Cider Press' (58) he endeavours, with the least possible disregard of verisimilitude, to construct a lyrical fantasy from the conditions of modern life. The problem is so difficult and the aim so praiseworthy that we must welcome any approach towards achievement. Mr. Brangwyn feels rightly the necessity of changing the key from that of nature, but he does so not by ennobling the types, or by giving to his figures a larger, freer movement—his boys, for instance, remain undisguised urchins, with even an insistence on what wants distinction in their build and bearing—but by a peculiar conventional way of representing things, by reducing his expression to rude blocks and clots of sharply opposed tones and colours. It is undeniable that by this convention he obtains the possibility of a vigorous and strongly



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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planned decorative disposition, but he does so not only at the cost of the finer qualities of beauty—it is difficult to enjoy, in and for itself, a picture made up of brushmarks each of about the size and shape of a potato-peeling—but also at the cost of expressiveness. In fact, Mr. Brangwyn's method is the result of a determined and heroic effort to do by inverted means what has always been done in the straightforward manner. The argument must be of this kind. We want to paint at once decoratively and in a modern manner. What is the distinctive discovery of modern art? The neglect of the object as a separate entity and the abandonment of the contour: representation by means of recording patches of tone and colour apart from their significance as forming distinct objects to the eye. But decorative design implies the simplification of masses and the wilful assertion of definite contours. How are these qualities to be united? By exaggerating the contrasts, by sharpening the edges and neglecting the transitions of light and shade wherever they occur within the outline of a figure, and obliterating the contrasts where they coincide with the edges of a figure or object. So in 'The Cider Press' the contours that tell in the pattern of the design are the contrasts of cast shadow upon the flesh, where in nature we should be conscious of tender gradations, where, moreover, the imagination demands that the passage should be gradual rather than abrupt. That this is a novelty we may admit in the sense that it is carried out upon principles the exact opposite of those invariably employed by the greatest masters of decorative design from Giotto to Puvis de Chavannes. But is it either a reasonable or beautiful convention as well as a novel one? In spite of Mr. Brangwyn's ingenuity and his evident thoughtfulness and deliberation we are not yet convinced that it is."

- 1902. Poster for the Orient Pacific Line.
- 1902. "The Bridge, Barnard Castle."
- 1902. "The Spanish Galleons." Colonel Goff's Collection.
- 1902. "Hammersmith." The Kitson Collection.
- 1902. "Melons." Municipal Gallery at Venice.
- 1902. "Leeks." The Kitson Collection, Leeds. Illustrated in this book.
- 1902. "Mushrooms." Collection of G. Burnett, Esq.
- 1902. "Crab in a Green Bowl."

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## Appendix I.: Pictures and Sketches

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1902. "Wine Bottle and Turnips." Collection of E. Fox, Esq.
1902. "A French Farmyard, Montreuil." Chase Collection, U.S.A.
1903. "London Bridge," low tone painting of the river bank, showing ships and the bridge.
1903. "Queen Elizabeth going aboard the *Golden Hind* at Deptford." Presented by the Committee of the General Shipowners' Society to Lloyd's Register. Illustrated in this book.
- 1903 (*about*). "The Storm." In the Collection of Kenneth S. Anderson, Esq.
1903. A series of Pastels for Charles Holme, Esq., representing "The Tower Bridge" and other Thames subjects.
1904. "Departure of Sir James Lancaster to the East Indies." Royal Academy. One of eleven panels for the Skinners' Company. Their subjects are given in Chapter X.
1904. Royal Academy. "The Moorish Well." Water-colour. Luxembourg, Paris.
1904. Düsseldorf Exhibition. "The Turkish Cemetery." Exhibited previously in the Rowland Club, Clifford's Inn, 1903.
1904. "The Orange Market." Collection of T. L. Devitt, Esq. Elected A.R.A.
- About this time the painter carried out a long decorative panel for the proprietor of *Collier's Weekly*, New York, showing "The Departure of Columbus." A collotype is given in this book.
1905. Four Panels painted for the English Room at the Venice Exhibition: "Navvies at Work," "Workers in Steel," "Blacksmiths," and "Potters." These decorations were bought by Mr. S. Wilson, of Leeds, in 1906, and presented to the Art Gallery of Leeds. A fifth panel was added, entitled "Weavers." It is illustrated in this book. A gold medal was won at Venice.
- 1905 (*about*). "Factories at Hammersmith"; "The Lord Mayor's River Procession," now at the Guildhall; "The Tower Bridge," now at the Guildhall.
1905. Work for the Skinners' Hall.
- 1905 (*about*). "Unloading Coal, Bruges." The Kitson Collection, Leeds.
- 1905 (*about*). Study of a Nude Figure. Collection of R. Douglas Wells.
1906. Royal Academy. "The Venetian Funeral," now in the Leeds Gallery. Illustrated in this book.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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1906. New Gallery. "The Wine Shop." Gallery of Barcelona. See the criticism of Mr. Claude Phillips in Chapter X., page 163.
1906. "Road near Etaples." Barcelona Chamber of Deputies.
1906. "The Santa Maria della Salute." Gold medal at the International Exhibition in Amsterdam. Now in the Wellington Art Gallery, New Zealand. Reproduced in this book.
1906. Work for the Skinners' Company.
1906. "Canal, Bruges."
1906. "The Rialto," spacious and noble; one of the finest among the architectural subjects.
1906. "Modern Commerce." Fresco at the Royal Exchange, London. Illustrated in this book, and described in Chapter IX. Reproduced in this book.
1906. "The Return from Mecca," a brilliant sketch of camels and many figures.
1906. Grand Prix, Milan, for the etching of "Santa Maria della Salute"; elected corresponding member of the Society of Illustrators, U.S.A., and member of the Asociación de Artistas Españoles.
1906. "A Bridge near Venice." Ecclesiastical procession over a bridge, fishermen and beggars watching.
1907. "The Tinker." Goupil Gallery. Exhibited also at Ghent. "A tremendously vehement sketch; certainly not a thing of beauty, but a picture that sets us wondering by what magic the artist can make sure that these dabs and splashes of paint on the canvas will, at a few yards' distance, give so unerringly the impression of reality and life."  
—*Times*.
1907. Goupil Gallery. "Ramparts of Montreuil."
1907. "The Turkish Well"; "Boatbuilder's Yard, Venice," a painting in body-colour on blue paper; "On the Walls."
1907. "The Brass Shop," with a down-at-heel in a green coat. Illustrated in this book.
1907. Four Panels for the English Room at the Venice Exhibition.
1907. "Blake's Return after Capturing the Plate Ships." A decorative panel presented to Lloyd's Register by Sir John Davison Milburn, Bart. Reproduced in this book.
1908. Royal Academy. "The Return of the Spies from the Promised Land." Now in the Art Gallery at Johannesburg. Illustrated in this book.

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## Appendix I.: Pictures and Sketches

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1908. "The Rajah's Birthday." New Gallery. The Kitson Collection, Leeds. Illustrated in this book.
1908. An exhibition of Brangwyn pictures at the Fine Art Society. "Ghent," "The Market, Bruges," "A Gleam of Gold," "Twilight," "The Sun," "Evening," "The Festa, Venice," "The Pergola," "A Canal, Bruges," "A Fisherman," and "The Bottle-Washer."
1908. "Harvesters." Illustrated in this book.
1908. "Mars and Venus." Dublin. Illustrated in this book.
1908. "Susanna and the Elders."
1909. Frieze at the Grand Trunk Railway Offices, Cockspur Street, London; carried out for Sir Aston Webb, R.A.
1909. "Wine." Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1910. Collection of Captain John Audley Harvey.
1909. "An Oriental Drug-Shop."
1909. "The Doge going to the Ledo." Collection of T. L. Devitt, Esq.
1909. "An Oriental Market." Collection of A. Clarence, Esq.
1909. "The Fruits of Industry." A large decoration in *tempera*. It is illustrated in this book. "In this noble piece, under the blue heaven which not even men's factories can wholly obscure, across the river where the bathers lose the grime of their toil and refresh their strength, sit the human family, the men bearing the fruits of their labour, the mother serene possessor of the beauty and honour of her womanhood, and the infant sublimely unconscious of a great inheritance. . . . These are they who ever give to human life its stir and colour, the winners of the fruits of industry. It is the simple and yet grand drama that lies behind history at every turn. It is the drama that the poet and the painter see for us, that we may see it." —WARWICK H. DRAPER. Reproduced in this book.
1909. The last panel for the Skinners' Company was finished.
1910. "The Card Players." Reproduced in this book.
1910. "The Fish Woman."
1910. "New Wine." Figures playing music while others tread out the grapes.
1910. "A Grey Day."
1910. Messina sketches in water-colour. About fifty in all. See the Messina subjects in this book.
1910. "The Bridge, Alcantara." Reproduced in this book. Water-colour.

## APPENDIX II

### ETCHINGS—CLASSIFIED

*The numbers refer to the Catalogue compiled by Mr. Frank Newbolt, and published in 1908 by The Fine Art Society, 148 New Bond Street, London. The unnumbered etchings have been put into circulation since June 1908. It will be noted that some plates belong to several categories.*

#### FRENCH SUBJECTS

- "A Road in Picardy." No. 8.  
"The Mill Wheel, Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 35.  
"The Mill Bridge, Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 36.  
"The Mills, Montreuil." No. 37.  
"The Road, Montreuil." No. 38.  
"Sawyers in a Shipyard at Boulogne." No. 45.  
"Men repairing a Boiler: in a Shipyard at Boulogne." No. 46.  
"Sketch of a Man, Montreuil." No. 58.  
"Entrance to Montreuil." No. 72.  
"A Cornfield, Montreuil." No. 73.  
"Two Men in a Bakehouse at Montreuil." No. 87.  
"Church of Sainte-Austreberthe, Montreuil." No. 89.  
"A Paper-Mill, Montreuil, 1907." No. 90.  
"Church of Sainte-Saulve, Montreuil." No. 93.  
"The Gate of a Farm, Montreuil, 1907." No. 95.  
"The Market Square at Montreuil." No. 96.  
"An Estaminet, Montreuil." No. 98.  
"A Fulling-Mill, Montreuil." No. 99.  
"Bootmakers, Montreuil." No. 100.  
"The River: Boys bathing at Longpré." No. 107.  
"Cathedral Church of Eu, Normandy."  
"Canal at Hesdin, Pas-de-Calais." No. 43.  
"Hesdin, Pas-de-Calais." No. 121.

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## *Appendix II.: Etchings—Classified*

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### BELGIAN SUBJECTS

- "Entrance to a Canal, Bruges." No. 56.  
"Old Women at Bruges." No. 61.  
"Windmills at Bruges." No. 62.  
"A Brewery at Bruges." Nos. 63 and 64.  
"Ghent Gate, Bruges." No. 65.  
"Bottle-Washers at Bruges, 1906." No. 66.  
"Barges, Bruges." No. 67.  
"Old Houses at Ghent; formerly the Official Residence of the Corn Measurers." No. 68.  
"The Tow-Rope—Bruges, 1906." No. 79.  
"Ghent, 1906." No. 104.  
"Porte St. Croix, Bruges." No. 112.  
"Meat Market at Bruges." No. 117.  
"A Café." No. 120.  
"Mill at Dixmude."  
"Windmill at Dixmude."  
"The Apse of Saint-Nicolas at Furnes."  
"Church of Saint-Nicolas at Furnes."  
"Timber Pile, Furnes."  
"Mill at Furnes."  
"Inn of the Parrot, Dixmude."  
"Church of Saint-Valbert, Furnes."  
"Church of Saint-Nicolas at Dixmude."  
"Canal at Nieuport."

### ITALIAN SUBJECTS

- "A Beggar, Assisi." No. 5.  
"Assisi." No. 7.  
"The Rialto, Venice." No. 60.  
"Santa Maria della Salute, Venice." Gold Medal, Venice International Exhibition, 1907; Grand Prix, International Exhibition, Milan, 1906. No. 88.  
"Boat-Builders, Venice." No. 91.  
"Boatyard, Venice." No. 92.  
"Unloading Wine from a Merchantman at Night, Venice." No. 109.



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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- "Santa Maria della Salute, Venice." No. 110. *See also* No. 88.  
"A Gate, Assisi." No. 122.  
"Sunshine and Shadow: A Venetian Funeral." No. 123.  
"Santa Maria della Salute, from the Street." No. 124.  
"The Bridge of Sighs." Grand Medal of Honour from the Emperor of Austria, 1910.  
"The Traghetto."

### TURKISH SUBJECTS

- "A Turkish Cemetery." No. 30.  
"Santa Sophia, Constantinople." No. 105.  
"Two Turks walking in a Landscape." No. 128.

### BEGGARS

- "Head of an Old Blind Man with a Patch over one Eye." No. 4.  
"A Beggar, Assisi, under a Dark Archway; other Figures silhouetted against a Light Wall." No. 5.  
"Two Men Begging." No. 113.  
"Four Men with Crutches asking for Alms." No. 115.  
"Three Men Begging—a Sketch." No. 127.  
"The Feast of Lazarus." No. 133. In the foreground a group of mendicants; a feast in the background.

### HEADS, SINGLE FIGURES, AND SMALL GROUPS

- "Head of a Jew." No. 2.  
"An Old Man seated in a Chair." No. 3.  
"Head of an Old Blind Man with a Patch over one Eye." No. 4.  
"Head of a Fisherman." An old man with a white beard and a fur cap. No. 19.  
"Head of an Old Man." No. 20.  
"An Organ-Grinder, London." No. 55.  
"Sketch of a Man putting on his Coat." No. 58.  
"Man carrying a Load of Books." Buildings and figures in the background. No. 71.  
"Sketch of an Old Man's Head." No. 81.

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## *Appendix II.: Etchings—Classified*

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- "Man resting on a Scythe on the Brow of a Hill." No. 83.  
"Sketch of a Man with his Hands in his Pockets." No. 114.  
"Sketch of a Boy with a Pot." No. 116.  
"Two Turks walking in a Landscape." No. 128.  
"The Preacher." No. 126.  
"Two Blacksmiths working at an Anvil." No. 125.  
"Lawyers in Court." No. 103.  
"Bootmakers, Montreuil." No. 100.  
Two soldiers in the doorway of a beershop; "Estaminet, Montreuil."  
No. 98.  
"Two Men rowing on a Thames Lighter." No. 85.  
"Man rowing on a Thames Lighter." No. 86.  
"Two Men in a Bakehouse at Montreuil." No. 87.  
"Men scraping Skins at Brentford." No. 75.  
"A Man scraping Skins at Brentford." No. 76.  
"Bottle-Washers at Bruges." No. 66.  
"The Tan-Pit." No. 52.  
"Two Boatmen hauling on a Rope." No. 53.  
"A Dye Vat, Leeds." No. 57.  
"Old Women, Bruges." No. 61.  
"Men repairing a Boiler in a Shipyard at Boulogne." No. 46.  
"Sawyers in a Shipyard at Boulogne." No. 45.  
"Three Brickmakers loading Barrows at Wormwood Scrubbs." No. 44.  
"The Butcher's Shop, Wormwood Scrubbs." No. 41.  
"Boys playing Music—a Christmas Card." No. 40.  
"The Tanyard, Brentford." No. 11.

### INDUSTRIAL SUBJECTS

- "London Bridge." No. 6.  
"London Bridge." No. 9.  
"Bark-Strippers." No. 10.  
"The Tanyard, Brentford." No. 11.  
"Trees and Factory, Hammersmith." No. 12.  
"Hammersmith Reach." No. 13.  
"The Tree, Hammersmith." No. 17.  
"Barge-Builders, Brentford." No. 18.  
"On London Bridge." No. 21.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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- "Shipbuilding Yard, London." No. 22.  
"The Tree, Hammersmith." No. 26. *See also* No. 17.  
"London Bridge" (3). No. 28.  
"Brentford Bridge, with Barges and Figures." No. 29.  
"Building the New Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington."  
No. 42.  
"Three Brickmakers loading Barrows at Wormwood Scrubbs." No. 44.  
"Sawyers in a Shipyard at Boulogne." No. 45.  
"Men repairing a Boiler in a Shipyard at Boulogne." No. 46.  
"Shipbuilders, Greenwich, 1905." No. 47.  
"Breaking up the *Hannibal*, Woolwich, 1905." No. 48.  
"Hammersmith" (3). No. 49.  
"Scaffolding, South Kensington." No. 50.  
"Fishmongers' Hall." No. 51.  
"The Tan-Pit." No. 52.  
"Two Boatmen hauling on a Rope." No. 53.  
"A Dye Vat, Leeds." No. 57.  
"A Brewery at Bruges." No. 63.  
"A Brewery at Bruges" (2). No. 64.  
"Bottle-Washers, Bruges, 1906." No. 66.  
"Men scraping Skins at Brentford." No. 75.  
"Man scraping Skins at Brentford." No. 76.  
"Barge-Builders, Hammersmith." No. 77.  
"Breaking up the *Caledonia* at Charlton." No. 78.  
"The Tow-Rope, Bruges, 1906." No. 79.  
"The End of the Day." No. 80.  
"Men leaving Work in a Shipyard." No. 82.  
"Blacksmiths. Three Men working at an Anvil." No. 84.  
"Men rowing on a Thames Lighter." Nos. 85 and 86.  
"Two Men in a Bakehouse at Montreuil." No. 87.  
"A Paper-Mill, Montreuil." No. 90.  
"Boat-Builders, Venice." Nos. 91 and 92.  
"The Farmyard." Nos. 94 and 97.  
"A Fulling-Mill, Montreuil." No. 99.  
"Bootmakers, Montreuil." No. 100.  
"The Hay Cart." No. 101.  
"A Coal-Mine after an Explosion." No. 106.  
"Unloading Wine, Venice." No. 109.

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## *Appendix II.: Etchings—Classified*

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- “Miners pushing Trucks of Coal.” No. 111.  
“The Meat-Market at Bruges.” No. 117.  
“A Sand-Shoot on the Thames.” No. 119.  
“Two Blacksmiths working at an Anvil.” No. 125.  
“Evening, Hammersmith.” No. 129.  
“Old Hammersmith.” No. 132.

### MESSINA AND PALERMO

- “The Campo San Spirito, Messina.” A noble ruin in sunlight, storm-clouds behind; building a settlement.  
“Old Houses, Messina.”  
“Shrine of the Immaculate Virgin, Messina, with People praying around its Base.” This monument was left untouched by the earthquake.  
“Corner of the Via del Trombe, Messina.”  
“Apse of the Cathedral at Messina.”  
“The Garden Wall, Messina.”  
“Castello della Ziza, Palermo.” No. 27.

### BRITISH SUBJECTS

- “Old Wooden Houses at Walberswick, near Southwold.” No. 1.  
“London Bridge.” Nos. 6, 9, 21, 28.  
“Bark-Strippers.” No. 10.  
Subjects at Brentford. Nos. 11, 14, 15, 18, 29, 75, 76.  
Views at Hammersmith. Nos. 12, 13, 16, 17, 49, 77, 129, 132.  
“Strand on the Green, Kew Bridge in the Distance.” Nos. 23 and 39.  
“A Storm, near Craven Cottage, Fulham.” No. 24.  
“Trees with Snow.” No. 25.  
“Brentford Bridge.” No. 29.  
“Fairlight.” No. 31.  
“Barnard Castle.” No. 32.  
“The Bridge, Barnard Castle.” Nos. 33 and 74.  
“The Maple-Tree, Barnard Castle.” No. 34.  
“A Butcher’s Shop, Wormwood Scrubbs.” No. 41.  
“Building the New Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.” No. 42.

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## Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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- "Three Brickmakers loading Barrows at Wormwood Scrubbs." No. 44.  
"Ship-Builders, Greenwich, 1905." No. 47.  
"Breaking up the *Hannibal*, Woolwich, 1905." No. 48.  
"Scaffolding, South Kensington." No. 50.  
"Fishmongers' Hall." No. 51.  
"The Tan-Pit." No. 52.  
"A Pigsty, Wormwood Scrubbs." No. 54.  
"An Organ-Grinder, London." No. 55.  
"A Dye Vat, Leeds." No. 57.  
"Old Kew Bridge." No. 59.  
"Men scraping Skins at Brentford." Nos. 75 and 76.  
"Barge-Builders, Hammersmith." No. 77.  
"Breaking up the *Caledonia* at Charlton." No. 78.  
"The End of the Day." No. 80.  
"Men leaving Work in a Shipyard." No. 82.  
"Men rowing on a Thames Lighter." Nos. 85 and 86.  
"A Coal-mine after an Explosion." No. 106.  
"Miners pushing Trucks of Coal." No. 111.  
"A Sand-Shoot on the Thames." No. 119.  
"Evening, Hammersmith." No. 129.  
"The Black Mill at Winchelsea." No. 131.  
"Old Hammersmith." No. 132.  
"The Mill, Manningtree." This etching was done before 1902. Two or three proofs exist; one belongs to Mr. H. F. W. Ganz.

### CERTIFICATES AND BOOKPLATES

- Bookplate for Mr. F. Newbolt. No. 130.  
Certificate for the Master Shipwrights' Company. No. 108.  
Bookplate. No. 102.  
Certificate for the Shipping Federation of the Port of London. No. 69.  
Bookplate for Professor Dr. H. W. Singer. No. 70.

### ARCHITECTURAL SUBJECTS

- "Church of Sainte-Austreberthe at Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 89.  
"Church of Sainte-Saulve at Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 93.  
"The Market Square at Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 96.

---

## Appendix II.: Etchings—Classified

---

- "The Cathedral Church of Eu, Normandy."  
"A Brewery at Bruges." Nos. 63 and 64.  
"Old Houses at Ghent." No. 68.  
"Assisi." With the Monastery and Church of St. Francis. No. 7.  
"Castello della Ziza, Palermo." No. 27.  
"The Rialto, Venice." No. 60.  
"The Bridge of Sighs, Venice."  
"Ghent Gate, Bruges." No. 65.  
"Santa Maria della Salute." Nos. 88, 110, 124.  
"Ghent, 1906." No. 104.  
"Santa Sophia, Constantinople." No. 105.  
"Meat-Market at Bruges." No. 117.  
"Old Hammersmith." No. 132.  
"Apse of Saint-Nicolas at Furnes."  
"Church of Saint-Nicolas at Furnes."  
"Inn of the Parrot, Dixmude."  
"Church of Saint-Valbert, Furnes."  
"Church of Saint-Nicolas at Dixmude."  
"Apse of the Cathedral at Messina."  
"The Campo San Spirito, Messina."

### BOATS, BARGES, SHIPS

- "London Bridge" (1). No. 6.  
"London Bridge" (2). No. 9.  
"The Tree, Hammersmith." No. 17.  
"Barge-Builders at Brentford." No. 18.  
"A Shipbuilding Yard, London." No. 22.  
"London Bridge" (3). No. 28.  
"Shipbuilders, Venice, 1905." No. 47.  
"Breaking up the *Hannibal*, Woolwich, 1905." No. 48.  
"Entrance to a Canal at Bruges." No. 56.  
"Barges, Bruges." No. 67.  
"Certificate for the Shipping Corporation of the Port of London."  
No. 69.  
"Barge-Builders, Hammersmith." No. 77.  
"Breaking up the *Caledonia* at Charlton." No. 78.  
"The Tow-Rope, Bruges, 1906." No. 79.



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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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- "Santa Maria della Salute, Venice." Nos. 88 and 110.  
"Boat-Builders, Venice." No. 91.  
"Boatyard, Venice." No. 92.  
"Certificate for the Master Shipwrights' Company." No. 108.  
"Unloading Wine from a Merchantman at Night, Venice." No. 109.  
"Sunshine and Shadow: A Venetian Funeral." No. 123.

### MILLS, WINDMILLS, BRIDGES

- "London Bridge" (2). No. 9.  
"The Water-Mill, Brentford." No. 15.  
"The Bridge, Barnard Castle." Nos. 33 and 74.  
"Mill Wheel at Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 35.  
"Mill Bridge at Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 36.  
"The Mills, Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 37.  
"Old Kew Bridge." No. 59.  
"The Rialto, Venice." No. 60.  
"The Bridge of Sighs, Venice."  
"Windmills at Bruges." No. 62.  
"A Paper-Mill at Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1907." No. 90.  
"Fulling-Mill at Montreuil." No. 99.  
"The Black Mill at Winchelsea." No. 131.  
"Mill at Dixmude."  
"Windmill at Dixmude."  
"Mill at Furnes."  
"Brentford Bridge." No. 29.

### SIMPLE LANDSCAPE

- "A Road in Picardy." No. 8.  
"Strand on the Green." Nos. 23 and 39.  
"Trees with Snow." No. 25.  
"Fairlight." No. 31.  
"The Maple-Tree, Barnard Castle." No. 34.  
"A Road at Montreuil-sur-Mer." No. 38.  
"Hesdin." No. 121.  
"A Storm, near Craven Cottage, Fulham." No. 24.

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## Appendix II.: Etchings—Classified

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There have been six exhibitions on the Continent of Brangwyn etchings and lithographs, all arranged by his foreign agent, M. Bramson, Galerie d'Art Décoratif, 7 Rue Laffitte, Paris.

1906, at Paris; 1907, at Stockholm; 1909, at Paris; 1909, at Brussels; 1910, at Florence; 1910, at Rome.

### ETCHINGS IN PUBLIC GALLERIES

#### *Barcelona, Museum of Modern Art.*

"A Butcher's Shop"; "Building the New Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington"; "Breaking up the *Hannibal*"; "The Tan-Pit"; "The Rialto, Venice"; "Old Women, Bruges"; "Windmills, Bruges"; "Ghent Gate, Bruges"; "Bottle-Washers, Bruges"; "Barges, Bruges"; "Old Houses, Ghent"; "Breaking up the *Caledonia*"; "The Tow-Rope"; "The Return from Work"; and "Santa Maria della Salute," No. 88.

#### *Berlin, Royal Print Room.*

"The Shipbuilding Yard, London"; and "The Turkish Cemetery."

#### *Bradford, Corporation Museum.*

"A Storm, near Craven Cottage, Fulham."

#### *Bremen, Künsthalle.*

"London Bridge" (2); and "The Mill-Wheel, Montreuil-sur-Mer."

#### *Brussels, Royal Library.*

"A Road in Picardy"; "A Butcher's Shop"; "Old Women, Bruges"; "Brewery, Bruges" (2); "Ghent Gate, Bruges"; "Bottle-Washers, Bruges"; "Barges, Bruges"; "Old Houses, Ghent"; "The Tow-Rope"; "Santa Maria della Salute, Venice," No. 88; and "Man on a Barrel," lithograph.

#### *Budapest, National Museum.*

"Breaking up the *Caledonia*."

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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*Buenos Ayres, the Museum.*

"Santa Maria della Salute, Venice," No. 88.

*Christiania, Museum of Art.*

"Road at Montreuil-sur-Mer"; "Laveurs de Laine," lithograph.

*Dresden, Royal Print Room.*

"Assisi"; "A Turkish Cemetery"; "Building the New Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington"; "Shipbuilders, Greenwich," No. 47.

*Florence, Les Offices.*

"A Butcher's Shop"; "Shipbuilders, Greenwich," No. 47; "The Tan-Pit"; "Church of St. Austreberthe at Montreuil-sur-Mer"; and "Breaking up the *Caledonia*." A lithograph—"Harvesters."

*Gothenburg, Göteborgs Museum.*

"The Tan-Pit"; "Barges, Bruges."

*Lugano, Civic Museum.*

"The Tow-Rope."

*Malmö, the Museum.*

"Assisi."

*Milan, Gallery of Modern Art.*

"Santa Maria della Salute, Venice," No. 88.

*Mühlhausen, the Museum.*

"Mill-Wheel at Montreuil-sur-Mer."

*Naples, Museum of San Martino.*

"Castello della Ziza, Palermo."

*Paris, National Library.*

"Shipbuilding Yard, London"; "The Storm"; "Mill-Wheel at Montreuil"; "Brickmakers"; "Breaking up the *Hannibal*"; "Old

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## *Appendix II.: Etchings—Classified*

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Kew Bridge"; "Certificate for the Shipping Federation of the Port of London"; "The Bridge, Barnard Castle" (2); "Santa Maria della Salute, Venice"; "The Bark-Strippers."

*Rome, National Print Room.*

"A Butcher's Shop"; "Building the New Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington"; "Brewery, Bruges"; "The Storm"; "Church of St. Nicolas, Furnes."

This museum owns two Brangwyn drawings: "Loading Barrels, London"; and "Two Old Women."

*Rome, Gallery of Modern Art.*

"The Bridge, Barnard Castle" (2); "Hammersmith" (3), No. 49; "Old Houses, Ghent"; "Santa Maria della Salute," No. 88; "Church of Sainte-Austreberthe, Montreuil-sur-Mer"; "Boatbuilders, Venice"; "A Coal Mine after an explosion"; "Building the New Museum, South Kensington."

*South Kensington, Victoria and Albert Museum.*

"Assisi"; "Road in Picardy"; "London Bridge" (2); "London Bridge" (3); "Building the New Victoria and Albert Museum"; "Breaking up the *Hannibal*"; and "Certificate for the Shipping Federation of the Port of London."

*Stockholm, Museum.*

"The Tree, Hammersmith"; "Old Houses, Ghent"; "Breaking up the *Caledonia*"; "The Tow-Rope"; and "Building the New Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington."

*Stuttgart, Royal Print Room.*

"London Bridge" (2).

*Vienna, Royal Print Room.*

"London Bridge" (2); "Castello della Ziza, Palermo"; "A Butcher's Shop."

*Venice, Gallery of Modern Art.*

"Santa Maria della Salute, Venice," No. 88.

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## *Frank Brangwyn and his Work*

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*Zürich, Polytechnic.*

"A Road in Picardy"; "The Rialto, Venice."

There are prints also at Elberfeld, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Munich.

### OTHER HONOURS

Frank Brangwyn has been elected into five important Academies of Art. They comprise La Société Nationale des Beaux Arts, Paris; La Société Royale Belge; the Royal Academy of Milan; the Royal Academy, Stockholm; and A.R.A., England.

# APPENDIX III

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# Frank Brangwyn and his Work

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## INDEX

- ABBEY, E. A., 8, 121  
*Academy*, the, 41  
 Æsthetic period in England, 10  
 Alexander, William, 53  
 Allan, Sir William, 55  
 Alma Tadema, Sir Lawrence, 10  
 Anderson, Kenneth S., 72, 111  
 Angelo, Michael, 65, 102, 146, 160, 191  
 Angles and vigour, 173  
 Anglo-Celts and Anglo-Welsh, 2  
 Antagonism of light and colour in painting, 88  
 "Arabian Nights," the, 182  
 Arnold, Ernst, vii  
 Arnold, Matthew, 2  
 Art and conservatism, 47  
   — and criticism, 36-37  
   — and industrialism, 4  
   — and modern education, 71  
   — antiquity in English, 63  
 Art, decorative, 119-21  
   — emotion in, 112-13  
   — in its relation to modern life, 196-205  
   — inspiration in, 108-9  
   — literary appeal in, 126  
   — masculine *versus* feminine, 191-96  
   — mural, 73, 104, 121, 140, 158  
   — Nouveau, L', 132, 133, 212  
   — orientation in, 53  
   — preference of English for feminine qualities in, 10  
   — prettiness in, 38, 56, 192  
   — religious, 56, 67-70  
   — versatility in, 206  
 Artist, facilities in creating desired effect enjoyed by, 69-70  
 Artists, British, their liking for feminine qualities of style, 192  
 Assisi, 122  
*Athenæum*, the, 44, 51, 59, 70-71, 117  
 Atmosphere, the difficulty of obtaining, 89  
  
 BACON, Francis, 152  
 Baldry, A. Lys, 122  
  
 "Baptism of Christ," 122  
 Barcelona, 122, 201  
 Bassano, Cesare, 60  
 Bastien-Lepage, Jules, 10, 29, 62  
 Baudelaire, Charles Pierre, 68  
 Beauty, definition of, 69  
 Bénédite, Léonce, 34, 40, 47, 55, 60, 183  
 Béraud, Jean, 56  
 Besnard, Albert, 46, 130, 133  
 Bibliothèque Nationale, 168  
 Bing, M., 212, 214  
 Binyon, Laurence, 122  
 Blackie, Messrs., 181  
 Boldini, 79  
 Bonington, Richard P., 55, 91  
 Bonnier, Louis, 133  
 Borsa, Mario, 250  
 Botticelli, Sandro, 150, 151  
 Bouguereau, 56  
 Brabazon, H. B., affinity of style between artist and, 22  
 Bramson, M., foreign agent for Brangwyn's etchings, vii, 190  
 Brangwin, Noah, 3, 4  
 Brangwyn, Curtis, the painter's father, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8  
 Brangwyn, Frank, parentage, 1; birth of, 5; enters his father's office, 7; comes to England, 7; artistic forerunners of, 10, 54, 55; becomes an art student, 10; William Morris, 12-15; second picture exhibited and purchased, 19; voyage to Asia Minor, 19, 20; influence of Eastern colour and sunlight on, 20, 106; sketches at Royal Arcade Gallery, 21; journey to Spain, 22-25; journey to South Africa, 25-26; joins Institute of British Artists, 28; pictures exhibited 1889-1902, 31-32; Cornish period, 31-32, 34; and R. L. Stevenson, 33; affinity to Smollett, 33; parallel between Victor Hugo and, 33; end of student period, 34-35; "Funeral at Sea," 38-42; and foreign critics, 38, 60, 72; "Buccaneers," 43-48; success in Paris, 46; "Slave Traders," 49; "Slave

# Index

- Market," 49-52; and religious art, 56, 67-70; "Eve," 57; "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh," 57-60; "Rest," 60-62; "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," 62-65; "St. Simeon Stylites," 62-67; pictures from African and Eastern life, 71; in his relation to the French Impressionists, 77, 79; colour and light in art of, 80-81; impressionism of, 85; "Rajah's Birthday," 83; "Mars and Venus," 93-94; treatment of reflected light, 94; "Card Players," 96; "Return from the Promised Land," 96-97; as a colourist, 102; decorative work of, 104-105, 118; treatment of values, 106-107; sense of drama in, 107; "Wine," 109-110; sentiment of, 112-13; "Venetian Funeral," 113-15; liking for crowds, 115-16; "Charity," 116-17; friendly critics of, 122; strength and vigour of, 131; decorative work in the Royal Exchange, 137-43; decorative work in the Skinners' Hall, 149-61; Sketches and Studies, 164-74; water-colour work of, 176-79; illustrations and designs, 181-84; method of etching, 185; masculinity in the art of, 193-96; art of, in relation to modern life, 196-205; Austrian Great Gold Medal awarded to, 202; designs for house furnishing by, 207; home of, 217-18; a selected list of pictures and sketches by, 219-235; etchings by, classified, 236-248; bibliography, 249-252
- Brangwyn, Mrs., the painter's mother, 4, 5  
Bremen, 201  
Breton, Jules, 205  
Brett, John, 111  
Brierley, O. W., 111  
Brooking, 111  
Brown, F. Madox, 134-5  
Browning, Robert, 69, 166, 167, 218  
Bruges, the artist's life at, 5, 6  
Brussels, 201  
Brussels Academy, 173  
"Buccaneers," the, 43-48, 57, 60, 131, 226, 251  
Budapest, 201  
Burne-Jones, Sir E., 9, 68  
"Butcher's Shop," the, 199-200
- CAILLEBOTTE collection, the, 97-98  
Cambridge Press, U.S.A., the, 181  
Caradoc Press, the, 184  
"Card Players," 96  
Carlyle, Thomas, 73, 166
- Cattermole, George, 176  
Century, the, 181  
Cervantes, 182  
Chambers, George, 111  
"Charity," 116-17, 131  
Chavannes, Puvis de, 114, 128, 147, 148, 156, 157, 164  
Chicago, 122  
Chippendale, 207, 209  
Christiania, 201  
Chromo-spiritualism, 90  
"Cider Press," the, 231  
Claus, Emile, 79  
Clausen, 197  
Cole, William O., 66  
*Collier's Weekly*, 181, 233  
Colour and the emotions, 82  
Colour in relation to nature and art, 80  
Colour-sense, individual, 101-102  
Constable, John, 76, 106, 193  
Cook, Captain, 53  
Cooke, E. W., 111  
Cornwall, pictures exhibited as a result of sojourn in, 31-32  
— stay in, 31  
Corot, Jean Baptiste, 89, 106  
Correggio, Antonio A., 76  
Cotman, John S., 75, 91, 165, 175  
Cottet, Charles, 22, 79, 101, 112  
Covey, Arthur S., 249  
Cox, David, 16, 54, 91, 175  
Cozens, A., 16  
Criticism, art, 36-7  
— envy in, 147  
— genius and, 161  
Critics and conservatism, 75, 76  
— and modern decoration, 144  
— and modernism, 75  
— and values, 98, 99, 100  
Cunningham, Allan, 82  
Cupples, George, 182  
Cuyp, Albert, 89
- Daily News*, the, 222  
*Daily Telegraph*, the, 27, 41, 44, 114, 163, 202  
Daniell, W., 91  
Daumier, 196  
Davis, E. J., 208, 209  
Decamps, A. G., 55  
Decoration, mural, 186-87  
Degas, Edgar H. G., 77  
Degroux, Charles, 6, 10, 35, 112, 197  
Dehodencq, Alfred, 55  
Delacroix, F. V. E., 46, 55, 172

# Index

- "Departure of Lancaster," 157-59  
Destève, M. T., 201  
Devitt, T. L., vii, 72, 151  
Domenichino, 163  
"Don Quixote," 181  
Donatello, 10  
Drama in modern mechanical inventions, 167  
Draper, Warwick H., vii, 184, 235  
Dresden, 201  
Dublin, 122  
Dufrenoy, Léon, 107  
Dumas père, Alexandre, 218  
Dürer, Albrecht, 118
- EAST, Sir Alfred, 229, 231  
Edward VII., artist's drawing commemorating funeral of, 7  
Elberfeld, 201  
Emotion in art, 112-13  
England, æsthetic period in, 10  
English artists and sun-colour, 55  
English artists and their liking for feminine qualities of style, 10  
English critics discourage Brangwyn, 38, 48  
English idea of good draughtsmanship, the, 165  
"Etched work of Frank Brangwyn," the, 183  
Etchings, classified list of, 236  
Etty, William, 103  
Evans, Edmund, vii  
"Eve," 57  
*Evening News*, 148-49
- FANTIN-LATOURE, Henri, 10  
Feminine art, 191-92  
Fergusson, J. D., on business methods and architecture, 4  
Fiérens-Gevaert, M. H., 212  
Fine Art Society, 168, 183, 190  
FitzGerald, Edward, 183  
Flandrin, J. H., 67, 68, 69  
Flatness of tints, 128-29  
Floor decoration, guiding principle of, 212  
Forbes, Stanhope, 111, 221  
Foreign critics in relation to painter's work, 38, 72  
*Fortnightly Review*, the, 48  
Frankfurt, 201  
Frederic, Léon, 112  
French Impressionists, 61, 77, 78, 79, 85, 88, 97, 107, 125, 214  
Frieze at Grand Trunk Railway Office, 129  
— for L'Art Nouveau, 132-3
- Frieze in the Palazzo Rezzonico, 211  
Frith, W. P., 9, 54, 218  
"Funeral at Sea," the, 38-42, 122, 221  
Furniture, how to polish good, 209  
Furse, C. W., 84
- GAINSBOROUGH, Thomas, 8, 82, 91  
Gambier-Parry system, the, 134-35  
Ganz, H. F. W., vii, 185, 227  
Geffroy, Gustave, 46, 71  
Genius and criticism, 161  
— and realism, 90  
— and sex, 191  
— and the sub-conscious, 90  
"Gentle Art," Whistler's, 187  
George III. of England, 137  
Georges, Lafenestre, 33, 40  
Gibbings & Co., Messrs., vii, 181, 182, 183  
Gimson, Mr., 207  
Girtin, Thomas, 16, 107, 175, 177  
Glasgow, 122  
— Corporation, 43  
*Glasgow Herald*, 225  
Goethe, Wolfgang von, 74, 77  
"Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh," 57-60, 131  
Gothenburg, 201  
Grafton Galleries, 43, 57, 214  
Grand Trunk Railway, Office of, 129  
*Graphic*, the, 181, 222  
Greig, Edward, 114  
Guillemot, Maurice, 34, 47, 250  
Guthrie, 79
- HAMBURG, 201  
Hardy, Dudley, 227  
— T. B., 111  
Harrison, T. E., 79  
Hayes, Edwin, 42, 43, 111  
Heine, Heinrich, 58  
Henry, C. Napier, 111  
Heppelwhite, 207  
Herkomer, Hubert von, 10  
Heymans, Johannes, 79  
Hind, Lewis, 148-51, 154  
History, Landscape and, 81  
Hobbema, Meindert, 178, 190  
Hoboken Etching Club, the, 187, 188  
Hodder & Stoughton, Messrs., 183  
Holbein, Hans, 118  
Holl, Frank, 10  
Holland, 55, 92  
Holme, Charles, 122  
Hook, James C., 42, 43, 111



# Index

- Horsley, G. C., 211  
Hugo, Victor, 33, 34, 73, 164  
Hunt, William, 6, 25, 124, 176  
— William Holman, 10  
Hunter, Colin, 15, 111
- IMAGE, Selwyn, 122-25  
Inconsistency of English art critics, 87  
Infinite, the, 19  
Ingres, J. A. D., 172  
Inspiration in art, 108-109  
Institute of British Artists, artist becomes a member of, 28  
Institute of Oil Painters, artist becomes a member of, 29  
Israëls, J., 6
- JACOBS, Joseph, 183  
Japanese Gallery, exhibition of sketches at, 26-27  
Joan of Arc, 62  
Johannesburg Art Gallery, the, 96, 122  
Jones, Sir Horace, 4  
Jordaens, Jakob, 110  
Jourdain, 67  
Jouvenet, 119
- KELK, Sir John, 43  
Kempis, Thomas à, 151  
Kersant, 46  
Khnopff, Fernand, 5  
Kipling, Rudyard, 72, 181  
Kitson, R. H., vii, 72  
Konody, P. G., 122, 125-131, 173, 249  
Kroyer, 79  
Kuehl, 79
- LAFENESTRE, Georges, 67, 68, 70  
Lamb, Charles, 149  
Landscape and human history, 81  
Lane, E. W., 182  
Larkin, Mr., commission from, 25  
La Thangue, 197  
Lavery, John, 79  
Lawson, Cecil, 10  
Layard, Arthur, 165  
Le Brun, 119  
Leeds, 122  
Legros, Alphonse, 8, 10, 101, 111, 112, 131, 187, 188, 189, 197  
Leighton, Frederick (Lord), 9, 36  
256
- Leighton, Robert, 181  
Lessing, 170  
Lesueur, 119  
Lewis, J. F., 43, 53, 92  
Liebermann, Max, 56, 79  
Light and colour, antagonism in painting of, 88  
Literature and art, 126  
Little, J. S., 122, 249  
Lloyd's Register, overmantles at, 135-36  
Lodge, Sir Oliver, 89  
Lombroso, Cesare, 87  
Louthembourg, De, 91  
Lugano, 201  
Luini, Bernadino, 102  
Luxembourg, the, 122, 177
- M.A.P.*, article on the artist appearing in, 5, 17  
Mabbe, James, 182  
Macartney, Lord, 53  
MacCulloch, James, 72  
Macfall, Haldane, 122, 203, 227  
Mackmurdo, A. H., artist influenced by, 11, 12  
Maclise, Daniel, 134  
*Maclure's Magazine*, 181  
Maeterlinck, Maurice, 5  
*Magazine of Art*, the, 125, 225, 249  
Malmö, 201  
*Manchester Examiner*, the, 41  
*Manchester Guardian*, the, 44, 50  
Manet, Edouard, 9, 46, 77, 88, 98, 163  
Mansergh, Cornwall Lewis, 72  
Mantegna, Andrea, 11, 12, 160, 211  
Marcel, Henri, 33, 47, 168, 183, 199  
Marine painting, 43  
"Mars and Venus," 93-94, 122  
Martin, Henri, 65  
Marx, Roger, 40, 48  
Mary Queen of Scots, 62  
Mason, George, 10, 191, 192  
Mauclair, Camille, 77, 85, 99  
Melville, Arthur, 22, 44, 177, 178, 179  
Méryon, 81  
Messina sketches, the, 176  
Meunier, Constantin, 10, 111, 112, 119, 162, 170, 191, 192, 196, 197, 198, 214  
Meynell, Mrs. Alice, 95  
Michetti, 79  
Middle Ages, window decoration in the, 215-16  
Migeon, Gaston, 48, 172  
Milan, 201

# Index

- Milburn, Sir John Davison, 136  
Millais, Sir John E., 9  
Millet, Jean François, 10, 12, 29, 30, 56, 106,  
112, 115, 119, 162, 205  
Milton, John, 90  
"Miraculous Draught of Fishes," 62-65  
Modern decoration, critics and, 144  
Monet, Claude, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 85, 89,  
99  
Monomy, 111  
Moods in decorative art, the danger of, 151  
Moore, Albert, 10  
— George, 61, 77, 122, 161  
— Moore, Henry, 42, 43, 111  
"Moorish Well," 3, 122  
Morgan, William de, 14  
Morland, George, affinity of artist's work to,  
29  
Morley, Lord, 69, 147  
*Morning Post*, the, 32, 44, 45, 72  
Morris, William, 12, 13, 14, 15, 34, 207, 214,  
215  
Mourey, Gabriel, 181  
Mühlhausen, 201  
Müller, William, 53, 54, 92, 176, 177  
Munich, 122, 201  
Mural decoration, the decline of, 126  
Murillo, 127
- NAPLES, 201  
National Gallery, the, 190  
*National Review*, the, 57  
Nelson, Horatio, 139  
Newbolt, Frank, 183  
New Gallery, 57, 63, 65, 116  
Newman, Cardinal, 73  
Nordau, Max, 33, 60, 67
- OJETTI, Raffaele, 85  
Old Masters and their colour, 75-76  
Old Masters, the cult of the, 76  
"Open-air" movement, 16  
Oppenheim, Stany, vii, 47  
Orchardson, W. Q., 9, 14, 15  
Orientation of art, 53  
Oules, W. W., 10  
Overmantles at Lloyd's Register, 135-36
- PACQUEMENT M., vii, 47  
*Pall Mall Budget*, the, 44  
*Pall Mall Gazette*, the, 41, 63, 115, 192  
Panels in Skinners' Hall, 198, 130
- Panthéon, the, 160  
"Parerga," 180  
Paris, 201  
Pattern, modern craze for, 211  
Petit, Georges, 47  
Pettie, John, 10  
Phillip, John, 6, 54, 55, 56  
Phillips, Claude, 122, 202  
Pigments, action of time on, 98  
— flatness of, 129  
Piranesi, Giambattista, 81, 107, 187, 188  
Pissarro, 107  
Pittsburg, 122  
*Pochardes*, 164  
Portaels, Jean, 162  
Posters, difficulties in designing, 184  
Poussin, Nicolas, 119  
Prague, 122  
Pre-Raphaelites, 10, 100, 125  
Psychology, religious art and, 68-69  
Puerta de Passages, visit to, 24  
Pugin, Augustus Charles, 4, 216  
*Punch*, 192
- RAEBURN, Sir Henry, 55, 103, 193  
"Rajah's Birthday," 83 *seq.*  
Raleigh, Sir Walter, 183  
Rapid work and its pitfalls, 87  
Rathbone, Harold, criticism and instruction  
from, 10, 11  
Realism, genius and, 90  
Realists, compromise of Paris Salon with  
the, 9  
Regnault, A. D., 50  
Regòyos, Dario de, 79  
Reid, J. R., 111  
Rembrandt, 129, 148  
Renan, Ary, 33, 48, 63, 67, 71  
*Republique Française*, 41  
"Rest," 60-62, 65, 131, 144  
"Return from the Promised Land," 96-97,  
122  
*Revue des Deux Mondes*, 67  
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 8, 28, 82, 92, 93, 94,  
102, 103, 178, 193  
Rinder, F., 122, 208, 229  
Robinson, Dr. Tom, vii, 62, 72, 219, 223  
Rome, 201  
Romney, 103  
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 9, 10  
Rousseau, Théodore, 92, 100  
Rowlandson, 108  
Royal Academy, the, 18, 49, 59, 65, 109,  
113, 137, 157, 175, Appendix I., *passim*

# Index

- Royal Arcade Gallery, 21  
Royal Exchange, 136, 137-143  
"Rubáiyát of Omar Kháyyám," 183  
Rubens, Peter Paul, 5, 57, 76, 102, 116, 160  
Rusiñol, S., 79  
Ruskin, John, 6, 8, 87, 90, 94, 95, 102, 111, 178, 213  
Rutter, F., 122  
Rysselberghe, Théo van, 79
- "ST. SIMEON STYLITES," 65-67, 122  
Salon, the, 46, 63, 65, 101  
Sargent, J. S., 8, 22, 79, 121  
*Saturday Review*, 57, 221, 227  
"Scoffers," the, 122, 229  
Scott, Michael, 183  
— Sir Walter, 149, 218  
*Scribner's Magazine*, 181  
Seegar, E., 67  
Segantini, Giovanni, 79  
Serres, 111  
Sertat, Raoul, 48  
Sex, genius and, 191  
Shakespeare, William, 151  
Shannon, J. J., 8, 27  
Shaw, Walter, 111  
Shelton, Thomas, 181  
Simon, Lucien, affinity of style between artist and, 22  
Singer, Dr. Hans W., 183  
Sisley, Alfred, 77, 80, 82  
Skinners' Hall, 130  
— panels in the, 149-161  
"Slave Market," a, 49-52, 59, 122  
"Slave Traders," 49, 225  
Smollett, painter's affinity to, 33  
Somerscales, T., 43, 111  
Sorolla, J., 79  
South Africa, exhibition of sketches made in, 26-27  
South Africa, journey to, 25-26  
South Kensington, 201  
Southport, 122  
Spain, painter's journey to, 22-25  
Sparrow, W. Shaw-, 183  
Speaker, 158  
*Spectator*, 44, 58, 144, 230  
Spielmann, M. H., 122, 229, 250  
"Spirit of the Age," the, 183  
*Standard*, 7, 59, 61, 144  
Stanfield, Clarkson, 110-11  
*Star*, 21, 225, 226  
Stevenson, R. A. M., 49-50, 122, 223
- Stevenson, R. L., 33, 45  
Stockholm, 201  
Street, G. E., 4  
*Studio Magazine*, the, 23, 122, 125, 249  
— editor of, 72  
Stuttgart, 122, 201  
Sub-conscious, genius and the, 90  
Suffolk Street Galleries, 25, 40, 41  
Sultan, adventure at treasure-house of, 20  
*Sunday Times*, 222  
Sunshine, the effect of, 89  
Swain, Messrs., vii  
Sydney, 122  
Sylvestre, A., 40  
Symbolism, modern, 126
- TAFT, Lorado, 64, 65, 66  
Technique, definition of, 146  
Thackeray, William Makepeace, and his painter-hero, "J. J.," 3  
Thaulow, Fritz, 79  
Thurston, Messrs., 208  
Tiffany, Louis, 214  
*Times*, the, 31, 49  
Tintorello, 58, 68  
Tissot, James Joseph Jacques, 9  
Titian, 68  
"Tom Cringle's Log," 183  
Tone, artist's study of, 28-29  
"Trade on the Beach," 122, 227  
*Truth*, criticism appearing in, 44  
Turner, J. M. W., 8, 16, 20, 55, 75, 79, 82, 90, 91, 107, 110, 165, 175, 204  
Twopeny, William, 107
- UHDE, Professor von, 56
- VALUES, critics and, 98, 99, 100  
Van Saverdonck, 11  
Vedder, Elihu, 65  
Velasquez, 127, 163  
Venice, 122, 211  
"Venetian Funeral," 113-15, 122  
Veronese, Paul, 58, 68, 76, 115, 163  
Verheyden, Francois P., 79  
Versatility in art, 206-207  
Victoria, Queen, 62  
Vienna, 201
- WAGNER, Richard, 73  
Walker, Fred, 10

---

## *Index*

---

- Ward, James, 193  
Water-colour, the beauty of, 175-76  
Watts, G. F., 9, 64, 66, 139  
Webb, Sir Aston, 129  
Webber, John, 53  
Wedmore, Frederick, 41, 42, 43  
West Africa, expedition to, 26  
Whistler, James MacNeil, 8, 9, 42, 57, 83,  
86, 116, 187, 188, 189, 200, 203, 204  
Whitechapel Art Gallery, 83, 86  
Wilde, Oscar, period of enthusiasm for, 10  
Wilkie, David, 6, 54  
Wilson, S., vii
- Window decoration in the Middle Ages,  
215-216  
"Wine," 109-110, 162  
"Wine Shop," the, 122, 162-63  
Wint, Peter de, 1, 16, 91, 92, 175, 177  
Women, their preference for the effeminate  
in art, 102-103  
Wordsworth, William, 82  
*World*, 26-27  
Wyllie, W. L., 111
- ZULOAGA, Felix de A., 79  
Zürich, 201

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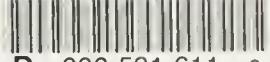
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