

degrees it lost its old character, its funds were misused in lavish profusion and worthless bounties, the patrimony of the poor became the plunder of the rich, and only the memory of the good name of the company remained. But, sixteen years after the death of Cosmo, in 1480, an incident occurred which revived the half-extinguished flame of charity, and gave new existence to the brotherhood. It appears that a very poor man died, and no one came to bury him. Then one who lived in the same house, took the body upon his shoulders, and carried it to the Palace of the signoria.* The gonfalonier,† at the sight of this spectacle, said, struck with wonder, "What is this?" "Behold," replied the man, "the result of the neglect of the laws, and of good customs." And, leaving the corpse at the feet of the magistrate, he went away. This circumstance caused a great commotion among the people. They recalled the good old times when, if the poor man had no friends to bury him decently, the Misericordia took charge of his funeral, and bore him to the grave with prayers and all the offices of religion. They remembered and repeated the good deeds of the brotherhood in tending the sick and providing for the needy—and they lamented that it no longer existed. Not long after this, it was determined to re-constitute the society, and in 1489 new statutes were established, and the Misericordia once more began its unending work. The number of the brothers was fixed at seventy-two, thirty priests and forty-two laymen; and this number was chosen, "Inasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ, beside his apostles, instituted and ordained seventy-two disciples, who were to go through the world with charity, preaching and scattering the seed of his doctrine, so we wish that the aforesaid number of our fraternity and company, seventy-two, should go through our land of Florence, exercising the works of mercy and charity, and especially in regard to the burying the poor and wretched dead,‡ without any pay or reward, but only for the love of Jesus Christ, who, through love of us, underwent His death and passion."

The company was not reorganized too soon. In 1495 the plague once more appeared in Florence, again in 1498, and still again in 1509. In all these years, the Misericordia discharged its part with its ancient fidelity and courage, and added to its other cares that of a hospital, in which the brothers took charge of the sick. During the last dark years that Florence retained even the name of a republic, from 1520 to 1530, pestilential diseases seem to have broken out from year to year, and to have kept pace with civil discord and political calamities. But the bitterness of party rage found no place under the dark gowns of the Misericordia, and political enmities never interfered with the discharge of the offices of charity. The company survived the fall of the city, and from that time for the last 300 years, has pursued its unintermitting course of benevolence, sometimes call-

ed on for special exertion, never without duties, ready for all seasons of trial, never failing, never disappointing the confidence reposed in it.

The present organization of the Misericordia is as follows: There are seventy-two chiefs of the watch, of whom twenty are dignitaries of the church, fourteen noble laymen, called freemen, twenty priests, not dignitaries, and twenty-eight laymen, not noble, called wearers of aprons, or tradesmen, and these preside, four every day, over the arrangement and good order of the expeditions to be made through the city. In addition to these, who form the body of the company, there are numerous novices and volunteers enrolled under different titles, so that the whole number of the members now amounts to 1440, a number sufficient to meet all the usual demands upon the society. The members take their turns of service in a regular succession of days; and whenever they are needed, they are called to assemble at the house of the society by a bell, whose tolling may be heard over all the city. A day scarcely ever passes without its solemn summons being sounded. The members on duty collect at their place of meeting, and putting on their black gowns and masks, depart together, generally bearing upon their shoulders a bier hung also with black. As they pass along the streets, every one who meets them lifts his hat, and the soldiers on guard present arms in token of honor. Having accomplished their duty they return to their chapel, and in entering it, each says to the one at his side, "May God give you your reward." Then, after saying the Lord's Prayer, they take off their disguise, and return to their usual occupations.

In the year that is just going out, Florence has been exposed to great trial, and the Misericordia has given fresh proof of its devotion, and of the value of its pious services. The cholera broke out early in the summer. At the commencement of the epidemic, the company called together its members with the accustomed sound of its bell. But the tolling became so frequent that it increased the alarm which the disease created. Then the members assembled in numbers at their chapel, and stood waiting in readiness for the calls which were not long delayed. On one day, seventy-seven biers were counted, borne by them through the city. The numbers of members at last became too small for the increasing need, and a hundred temporary assistants were added to them. There was no pause in their indefatigable labors. "With the danger their courage increased," says the account from which a great part of the preceding narrative has been taken, "and, during this period, the Company of the Misericordia showed itself not only admirable, but sublime."

It was to render thanks for the ceasing of the epidemic, that the brotherhood went in procession to-day to the Church of the Annunziata. Remembering the long series of years, stretching back from century to century, in which this society has carried on its unbroken course of benevolence, recalling the principles upon which it was founded, seeing in it the visible token of the desire of men to conform themselves to the example of Christ, beholding in its mask the sign of that humility which desires not to have its good deeds known of

men, it was impossible to stand by unmoved, as the procession passed; and one could not but feel a thrill of sympathetic pleasure in the pride with which poor Florence regards these sons of hers, who do so much to keep up the best traditions of her past.

ART NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

LETTER XII.

To the Editors of the Crayon:

London, Feb. 20, 1856.

RUSKIN'S new volume is still the most important public subject which artistic circles have got to talk about. Like all his books, it stirs the waters, and gives occasion for endless discussion, acquiescence, qualification, demur, and dissent; opens the eyes of many to the perception of new truths, or states, in a convincing form, truths which have been floating half-apprehended in the mind, but not grasped as a tangible possession until presented, clear and rife, by his eloquent and far-sighted earnestness. The deliberate perusal which I have now given to the volume, satisfies me that it is one of his fullest, and one most marked by his special individuality of view. The critics, however—those whose business it is to place on record their talk upon the subject for the advancement or retarding of truth—seem, as far as I have observed, to hang fire somewhat. Most of them are already committed to admiring laudation of the writer, and disparagement, or downright detraction, of the thinker and teacher. They will not submit—as any, save the few consummate, practical artists might be thankful to do—to learn; and their tenure of the public attention imposes on them the unfruitful task of combating long-tested and deep-reaching dicta, if they would save the credit of their own, generally so loose and partial. Every new work of Ruskin meets with a larger body of disciples, a more accessible general public, and a more doggedly organized opposition. It is the far history of every independent thinker, the old story of his generation, engaged in the promulgation of truth; and the eventual establishment of that truth is no more doubtful in this case than in another. Meanwhile, the achievement is comparatively covert, the hostility manifest. The forthcoming volume of "Modern Painters," the fourth, is now promised for March.

Your readers may be left to trace for themselves the connection which exists between this matter, and the one to which I have now to advert. Some little while ago, a public effort was made by a body of literary men, chief among whom stood Thomas Carlyle, with the view of obtaining a small provision for two aged ladies, the daughters of a long-deceased painter named Mauritius Lowe; the original ground of appeal being, however, not the deserts of the father, but the interest so legitimately belonging to one of the ladies as a god-daughter of Dr. Johnson, of whom some historic relics continue yet in the sister's possession. The result of the movement is now announced in a letter to the *Times*.—"The sum raised is still but a little over £250; but, on the other hand, the price of such a life-annuity as was proposed proves cheaper than we anticipated; and, in addition to this, there has been

* Now called the Palazzo Vecchio.

† The chief magistrate.

‡ In respect to this particular injunction in regard to the burying of the poor, the importance attached by the Roman Church to the funeral rites, is to be remembered.

a lucky chance come to help us somewhat. Mauritius Lowe, Miss Lowe's father, is now discovered to have been the benevolent painter by whom Turner, at that time a barber's boy, was first recognized, befriended, and saved to Art; in return for which fine action, an ardent and renowned admirer of Turner (whose name we need not indicate further), desires to gratify himself by bestowing henceforth £5 annually on the Misses Lowe, and permits us to publish such his resolution, if that can make it more binding. So that, on the whole, there is now as good as an 'additional annuity of £30,' which was our *minimum* limit, secured for these aged ladies; and thus, by one means and another, our small problem can be considered as done." The good a man does, then, is not *always* "interred with his bones;" and assuredly the daughter of Turner's benefactor in the crisis of his early days, and god-daughter of Samuel Johnson, has some claim on the consideration of Englishmen.

The earliest in the field among our annual picture-exhibitions, that of the British Institution, opened on the 9th of this month. It is a sorry spectacle. In its earlier days, as Haydon experienced for one, the Institution was a kind of court of appeal from official injustice or superciliousness at the Royal Academy; it offered premiums for works of Fine Art, and could boast of having sometimes smoothed the arduous path of independent merit. Till a comparatively late period, it continued at least our second-best exhibition of oil paintings; recognized by the Royal Academy (which is a distinction in some degree valid), by the substantial sign of frequent contribution from its members, and frequently re-exhibiting, under conditions more favorable to careful examination, leading attractions of the Academy-rooms themselves. Now, its principal points of distinction (apart from the wretched separate exhibition of old masters later in the season), are the total absence of artistic control in its governing body—composed of "noblemen and gentlemen," those heaven-sent leaders of the floundering Britisher, whether he fight at Inkermann or paint for Pall Mall—the prohibition against exhibiting portraits unless as foolish shams under some "fancy-name," and the rapid level of the contributions. I might add the disgraceful suppression, by downright rejection or bad hanging, of the few good things offered to the directors; but this, though a prominent trait, is unfortunately no *distinction*. This year the best picture is by a German settled in London, Mr. Wolf, of whose extraordinary insight into the works and ways of birds, I dare say I have spoken before. He understands every by-way of their character, every detail of their haunts, every turn of their heads, glance of their eye, dint of their beak, and ruffling or variegation of their plumage. He has watched the cozziness of the mother-bird with her brood—the savage onslaught of the hawk, the free denizen of the mountain-fastness, and the piteous victim of the sportsman. He renders all with a delightful minuteness of realization, which only lacks, as most German Art does, some vigor of handling and some innate qualities of the colorist. His picture of this season is from Highland mountain-land, high up amid cloud-cluster-

ed peaks—"The Ptarmigan's Haunt." An English artist, Mr. Weekes, jun., also has a curious and interesting animal subject, three donkeys scanning the corpse of a foal in something between strange ignorance and strange instinct of death—the peculiar actions evidently well observed from Nature. The most ambitious attempt is "The Martyrdom of Ridley and Latimer," by Sir George Hayter; an artist who, singularly enough, appears to have been accepted at the Paris Exhibition by the French, as one of our foremost men—perhaps because they could not understand how anything short of generally admitted merit of a high order could have earned the *premen* "sir." This work is weak and old-fashioned in artistic qualities, and, on the whole, a failure even in the more vital essentials; yet there is something about it conscientious and individual. Mr. Haghe, the eminent painter of mediæval interiors in water-color, sends one in oil from the Church of Santa Maria Novello at Florence.

In landscape, the principal work is a naval sunset by Mr. Dawson—a pupil, as I hear, of Pyne, holding a middle and honorable rank between Turnerism proper, and the spurious Turnerism of his master. It possesses subtlety, truth, and dignity. Mr. Dearle, a young artist, who early received the encouragement of Ruskin's praise, which he amply deserves for his genuine *notion* of color and natural sweetness, again indicates what he could accomplish with sterner completeness of realization. This, with a pretty Frank Stone, is the sum-total of the paintings which I should be warranted in specifying to an American audience; and, even to an English one, but very few more could be detailed with any satisfaction. Alack! how loth should I be to usher a French artist, with the study and condensation of his school, into this array of sheer empty-headedness and inane blunder-hand. I may add here that the collection of French pictures which was in London last summer is going through the Provinces, and has now reached Liverpool, augmented by many additions. Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair in Paris" continues to excite a sensation; and I can well believe the high praise I see awarded to the engraving which has been commenced from this admirable work, by Mr. Thomas Landseer. If merely as marking the cordial superiority to jealousy with which the extraordinary Frenchwoman has been greeted, one is glad to see the name of Sir Edwin Landseer's brother and engraver-in-chief allied to hers.

There are elections to be recorded in three of our art-bodies. Mr. Holland and Mr. George Andrews have become Associates of the Old Water-Color Society. The first artist, originally a water-color painter, but lately better known in oils, has a true picturesque fancy and feeling for Venetian subjects especially, and generally for any old streets and buildings with costumed figures to match. Mr. Andrews' name I do not remember to have heard before. At the Crystal Palace, Mr. Ferguson, architect, military engineer, author, and superintendent of the Palace's Assyrian Court, has been made general manager; and arrangements have been made with him as well as others of the officers "by which their remuneration will in some degree depend for the future on the commercial success of the enterprise." The election to the secretary-

ship of the Photographic Society, and editorship of its journal, has fallen, out of the 44 competitors, upon the Revd. Mr. Major, a photographer more than respectable; and, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Anthony, our fine landscape-painter, an unsurpassed photographer, is by this time on the council of the Society.

William Holman Hunt, after two years' absence, returned before the end of last month to England; having visited Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Constantinople, and the Crimea. His return is a boon to art, and a jubilee to his personal friends. Two pictures are the result of his travels, one scriptural, one Egyptian—together with a variety of sketches. I have made acquaintance as yet with the latter only, the former being out of London. Some of the sketches represent vividly, with elaborate drawing in every detail, the ruddy soil of the country about Jerusalem, broken continually by protrusion of white under-surface of rock: one is from the desert—more desert-like in its impression on me—and yet far fuller of varied material, than any representation of this nature with which I was acquainted previously. The artist, with his Pre-Raphaelite conscience, has not given his own or any other man's preconception of what a desert ought to be—a flat monotony of tawny sand—but presents the fact direct from Nature, and Nature is found to be not limited and monotonous, but infinite, even in her deserts. It remains to be seen under what forms and condition this thoughtful and original artist, whose every production proclaims its inalienable faithfulness for itself, will apply his oriental experiences now he is back amid the hats, coats, and trowsers, and the grave social phenomena of civilized nineteenth-century England.

Our National Gallery has within the month become the richer by four Italian pictures. Three are the bequest of Samuel Rogers: a Guido's Head of Christ Crowned with Thorns; Titian's "Noli Me Tangere;" and a Knight in Armor by Giorgione. I will clear the Guido out of my way first, by saying that it is wholly mean, flabby, and offensive; in color and handling, the acme of dead, unmeaning coarseness. This, however, is heresy: the picture being a favorite with connoisseurs, and, through engravings, even with the public at large. The Titian is a work of reason; beautiful, and perfectly easy and spontaneous. The painter had not—as what painter has had?—sufficient elevation of mind or devoutness of heart to conceive Christ, whose figure, spite of a graciousness in the visage, is a semi-idealized affection, neither grandly manlike nor abstractly spiritual. The Magdalen, on the contrary, is a sweet, fair being—emphatically a woman; calmly tender even in the shock of her awe-struck amazement, and exquisitely simple and impulsive in action. Next to the "Bacchus and Ariadne," we possess no Titian which we should treasure more jealously. The Giorgione—a very small one—is a glorious bit of color, *presence*, and armor-painting; in the last respect, the most complete achievement I call to mind. The fourth picture, being the only purchase, tests for the first time, the prospect we have of a sound administration of the Gallery under its new laws. It is an Adoration of the Magi, by Veronese, purchased in Italy by Sir Charles

Eastlake. The scene—for it is a "scene"—passes in a shed knocked up amid the ruins of a splendid temple. The shepherds clamor to gaze down upon the Divine Infant and his mother, and the three kings, sumptuously attended, make no secret of their devotion in the foreground. One does not complain of Veronese for knowing nothing about religious sentiment, nor for representing events as they did not, and could not, happen; because we know that his excellences are of a totally different order, and are glorious excellences, too. If we find grand color, vigorous and dignified life, spacious daylight, we say nothing of the rest; if Melchior's turban is rich, we ask nothing of Balthazar's expression or Gaspar's attitude. This Adoration, however, though it belongs to the great painter's prime, according to its recorded date, and though I have no difficulty in believing it to be really his, does not reach so high in technics as to atone for the want of essentials. It is a second or third-rate Veronese; quite worth having, and even paying for, unless better things were in the market, but not "a joy forever."

A question affecting the National Gallery with other institutions, often mooted, and even more important than the purchase of any single picture, is again up. It is, whether the Gallery, the British Museum, and perhaps some other places of the same order—the Crystal Palace not forgotten, doubtless—shall be open to the public on Sundays. Parliament is shortly to be moved on the subject, and the country is in agitation already; meetings assemble, and deputations state their case. Will the point be carried? I suppose not this time, nor yet awhile. Ought it to be? My opinion, or impression that it ought, is not to the point, and I can urge nothing in the way of argument save begging of the question and truisms, which have been on hand, proffered by one party and rejected by the other, any time since my birth, and long before, too. I suppose besides that America is as over-familiar as England with the Sabbath question. The question is one of enormous importance to social culture; and, with the despairing wish that it might be treated on its real merits and to a practical end, I leave it till it shall be advanced some stage farther.

Some progress in our provision for Art-education continues to be reported. There now exists thirty-three schools of Art in the United Kingdom, in connection with the Government Department of Science and Art; among which eight have been established or re-established within the past year. Fourteen elementary schools for drawing, started in Manchester, and numbering forty students each, are self-supporting. And the Museum of Decorative Art at Marlborough House—a precocious compendium, if as yet only a compendium in brief, of all classes and styles of decoration and ornamental objects—is said to be greatly advanced both in arrangement and selection.

A German artist now resident in London, Herr Götzenberg, furnishes a telling-enough example of the influence of locality on style. A pupil of Cornelius, he addicted himself in Germany to heroic compositions, muscular heroes, painted in castigated buffs and greys, on muscular horses, and vast abstract frescoes, at Bonn and

Baden, of saints and religious leaders, artists and poets, philosophers and discoverers, &c. He comes to London, and finds out that there are such things about as light and shade, and color; he takes small canvases, cabinet subjects, visible matter-of-fact, and paints with fine skill, like any Englishman, interiors, medieval, and antiquated, from Oxford or elsewhere. His interiors prove so pleasant and unforced, that it seems he was born after all to do them, and not to run up estoteric frescoes, which mean everything and nothing, which are, as the album-writers have it, "eloquent of soul," and above color. German "Philistines," and most Englishmen, who are neither connoisseurs nor newspaper-critics, will say that he is a man lost to high Art and saved to Art.

Picture sales are beginning to be announced for the season. That of Rogers's collection looms temptingly in the background, and two of some importance will come off within a week or so. One will include Turner's "Approach to Venice," an Etty, and the Maclise of the Baron's Hall, which surprised, but did not fascinate, the French at the Paris Exhibition; and, in water-color, Turner's "Calais and the Nile" (if that is the right title), some capital William Hunt's, and "many examples of the best period" of David Cox. The second sale boasts a prominent Constable, with several other names dearer to present fame than to me.

The invention of a new phase of lithography is announced in a book named "Lithozography, or Aqua-Tinta Stippled Gradations, produced upon drawings, washed or painted on stone: by Joseph Aresté." I have not seen any examples of the process: the Athenæum pronounces against those that have been achieved as yet. Perhaps some of your readers, to whom the subject is new, will like to hear the author's description of his method: "The stone should be grained perfectly fine and even; it is then to be immersed in soapy water, and, when dry, to be washed with spirits of turpentine. The ink is to be dissolved in rain or distilled water, and it should be combined with a greater proportion of soap than usually enters into its composition. The drawing may be traced in the usual manner upon the stone, either with the red paper or lead pencil; and it is then to be worked up to the effect required with a hair pencil dipped in the ink, similar in all respects to an Indian-ink drawing upon paper. When finished and perfectly dry, the surface of the work should be gently rubbed with a piece of flannel, so that only the summits of the grain are acted upon. The action of the flannel should be uniform, and not applied forcibly or very quick, as, in that case, it would, by impressing the ink upon the apices of the granular surface, destroy that transparency it was intended to effect, it being obvious that the interstices of the grain impart the color upon the application of pressure, and not the projections, as in chalk drawings. It is from this difference, and the necessity of printing these works with an ink of less than the usual density, which produces that light and soft tone in the impressions from the process of 'Lavis,' and hence the necessity of removing that effect by a second impression executed with another tint. Should the deep tints

and shadows require more strength and spirit after the operation of the flannel, they may be re-touched with the hair pencil as before." Another Art-reform in a very subordinate point is suggested by Mr. Sydney Smirke, in a printed letter addressed to Sir Charles Eastlake; the proposition being that every catalogue of a picture-show ought to contain one page colored bright red, and one of a neutral tinge, for the purpose of relieving the eye in its passage from the varying keys of color in successive pictures. A third reform is gravely propounded by the Art-dabbling Earl of Stanhope, in a lecture to a Birmingham audience. "What," asks his lordship, "is the secret of our inferiority to other nations in Art-workmanship? The non-existence of an English academy at Rome, similar to the French one (!). Let us remedy this crying want, and then we shall see what we shall see." A notable discovery, worthy of the days of Sir George Beaumont or Mr. Hope. Barring Lord Stanhope, it is only, I think, very old women indeed, who fancy that anything better than artistic death is to be got out of implicitly committing ourselves to the Roman or other foreign-cramming system.

Both Oxford and Cambridge have something to say to art-matters, just now: at Oxford, the collection presented by Mr. Chambers Hall has been arranged, comprising something of Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Da Vinci, some Pompeian and other antiquities, and a portrait and two sketches for pictures by Hogarth. Cambridge seems minded to kick against the decrees of its eminent but despotic son, Dr. Whewell, who has *otroyé* an arrangement of the pictures and other works of art in the Fitzwilliam Museum, gratifying neither to the eyes of visitors nor to the feelings of the responsible committee. So purports a letter in the "Times" of the 18th instant.

The most valuable sculptured item within my knowledge is that Mr. Thomas Woolner is down with Alfred Tennyson in the Isle of Wight, planning or actually performing a bust of the poet. He is a man capable of understanding his great sister, personally familiar with him, and already exercised in his task, by the execution of two medallion heads. Whether the other bust of Tennyson said to be contemplated or in progress promises anything of worth I cannot say, having no knowledge of the artist, Mr. Brodie; but I can confidently count upon a happy issue of Woolner's. A colossal statue by Mr. Behnes, of a late public man, Edward Baines, and the purchase by Prince Albert of a duplicate from Mr. Lawlor's idealists but highly popular statue, "the Bather"—so popular as possibly, I fancy, to be known in America—are also announced.

Some months ago, I referred to the chaotic state of our law of artistic copyright. Englishmen proclaim it to be a crying evil; and even they, long-suffering as they are of vested rights in wrong, seems roused at last to apply a remedy. Some influential artists, anticipating any official action, or any prolongation of supineness, on the part of the Royal Academy, are at last reported to be "interesting" themselves in obtaining an alteration of the laws. That is the not very advanced or decisive stage at which we stand now in this question.

WM. M. ROSSERTI.