EPSTEIN

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BY BERNARD VAN DIEREN ILLUSTRATED WITH FIFTY REPRODUCTIONS IN COLLOTYPE OF THE SCULPTOR'S WORK

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PREFACE

THIS book is not intended to be more than introductory in nature. It must remain an introduction in more than

ERRATA

Page vi. The closing paragraph of the Preface (quotation) has been placed here by mistake. It should be read as an Introduction to the First Chapter on page 1.

„ 25, 2nd par., 4th line, "should not have failed" should read "*should have failed*"

„ 32 „ „ 1st „ ", also" „ "*also,*"

„ 35, 2nd line "in any form" „ "*in any other form*"

„ 52, 1st par., 7th „ "Then there" „ "*There*"

„ 53 last „ 1st „ "is needed;" „ "*is needed:*"

„ 53 „ „ 3rd „ "make it" „ "*to make it*"

„ 66, quotation § 1, 3rd line "fadés" „ "*fades*"

„ 71, last par., 2nd line "three" „ "*two*"

„ 79, 1st „ 9th „ "conversions" „ "*conventions*"

„ 79, 2nd „ 5th „ "convention" „ "*conventions*"

„ 91, last „ 4th „ "prevented" „ "*presented*"

„ 103, 3rd par., 4th line, "out" should read "*cut*"

„ 103, last „ 2nd „ "are" „ "*is*"

„ 106, 5th line "formula" „ "*formulæ*"

„ 108, 13th line from bottom, "of the most valuable qualities" should read "... *of the most valuable*" (of them, i.e. the traditions)

„ 128, 1st par., last line but two, "Damidnus" should read "*Damianus*"

than a literary medium are concerned their assistance ceases when the spectator thus prepared is in front of the works. These restrictions naturally assert themselves even more positively when one is discussing the work of a living master.

Jacob Epstein is not only that, but he is also a man of extraordinary

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In the first place, where products of plastic art are concerned, one cannot hope to do more with words than indicate the direction from which they should be approached. If then, when the spectator is left alone with the work, it does not speak to him in its own language, if the thought of which it is the embodiment does not communicate itself to him, how can words help him further ?

Dialectics might be able to suggest a conviction in the spectator of having grasped a work's meaning and qualities ; but then nothing has been gained towards the attainment of a real understanding, for it is not the artist's creation but his propagator's power of persuasion that causes the effect.

In this way proselytes are made, but the faith instilled by a successful exercise of authority, and not born from direct conviction, is of no value. The artist is not served by the results of such forcible conversion.

Those new Christians that embraced the faith as the only alternative to the stake and the fire were no great acquisition to the Church.

Written incitements may serve to rouse and assist a well-intentioned but uninformed interest, but where creations in any other than a literary medium are concerned their assistance ceases when the spectator thus prepared is in front of the works. These restrictions naturally assert themselves even more positively when one is discussing the work of a living master.

Jacob Epstein is not only that, but he is also a man of extraordinary

potentialities, the nature of which could not be foretold by speculations based on that of his past achievements.
If the steady increase of mastery and the constant development of new aspects in the manifestation of his creative powers continue one may confidently predict that his future works will reveal his significance and genius even more overwhelmingly than those he has already achieved.
This makes any attempted review of his work at this time unavoidably the more incomplete, though again one has reason to be grateful that the reason should be such an agreeable one.
The foregoing reflections make it almost unnecessary for me to crave my readers' indulgence for the fact that the greater part of my observations will be chiefly devoted to the problems of appreciation and understanding of art in general, and will deal with such abstractions more extensively than with the works of Epstein in particular. The defence and justification of my method are self-evident.

Vae cum benedixerent vobis homines; secundum haec enim faciebant pseudo prophetis patres eorum.

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I

THE world does not forgive talent. Consequently those that possess it have to pass through a struggle which permits only the strongest minds to come through the ordeal with sufficient energy left to achieve their mission of enriching humanity, their most implacable antagonists included. This expense of energy is one of the causes of the rarity of good works. And the antagonism the good artist has to contend with affords protection to the legion of mediocrities who find in the exercise of scientific and artistic professions a respectable means of existence. Philistinism feels familiar in their company and points to their example in censure of the men of genuine gifts for their embarrassing difference from its own appearance.

On the other hand, the world does not forgive success either. Being itself responsible for its bestowal, it is on that account the more vindictive. It is as cruelly disposed towards its unfortunate attainers as any pale princess with regard to the happy wretch whom she has singled out for her favours. None of these terrible queens ever found more bewitchingly ingenious pretext for a holocaust of her favourites as the world finds for the execution of its own elected idols.

One blushingly acknowledges the voluptuous devilry the dilettanti display in the disparagement of their ideal of yesterday, while they, lying at the feet of some contemporary calf (rarely even a golden one) pityingly look down upon their fathers, whom they emulate in spirit, for having in letter differed from themselves. One might feel inclined to take up the case of the despised

preceding generation but for the fact that they committed the identical sins before their hairs became grey and their dresses antiquated. So poetic justice is done to every generation in its turn. Now it is generally assumed that if an observer's mind is trained to interpret the moral of facts, he must stand sufficiently far above the crowds that look to him for guidance to watch their movements, seeing whence they come and whither they go, without being caught up in them. But the danger for him lies in the pernicious homage the crowd will pay him, when it sees him moving with them. It becomes sweet to him to hear that " in spite of his position he is not in the least conceited." It makes him forget that they would yield him this gratification on mere appearances also. From sheer perverted honesty he is so anxious to give his soul in exchange that he voluntarily becomes one of the crowd. When once he is caught in the crush he loses his views of the distances and sees no further than his neighbours' heads. From then on he must inevitably fail, losing as he does the very qualifications from which his authority was derived.

He himself becomes a second-hand idol of the market-place, a sheer reflection of the enthroned one he reveres in company with " his public."

And when succeeding generations have started dealing out retribution he shares in the disgrace of the central subject of his contemporaries' collective adoration.

When the critics and æsthetes of the later generation, in unison with the *vox populi*, reverse the judgments of their predecessors they include their confrères of the lapsed period in the condemnation of the abandoned idols ; but they do not learn the lesson of history, and are themselves ready to join in the chorus of adulation with which their contemporaries acclaim the successful mediocrities of their own time.

Jacob Epstein, to-day, is as much the victim of this treatment as was Rembrandt three centuries ago, and just as was the latter then, the former now is being penalized during his lifetime for the superiority of his talents, only to obscure afterwards by his renown the reputations of contemporary objects of idolatry. These, moreover, will then pay the penalty of their ephemeral

successes by being cast into oblivion as deep as the pedestal on which their own generation placed them was high.

It may be objected that I seem to exaggerate the neglect Epstein's work is meeting with and to ignore the fact that several leading " connoisseurs " and a considerable " public " have not withheld their recognition from it. A personality such as Epstein's could not well be overlooked ; but although it has occasionally been the fashion to take note of his activities, the very air of superiority with which even his favourably disposed judges have condescended to give their attention and their conditionally tolerant praise to his greatest works is sufficient to brand their tepid kind of interest as too insultingly diminutive to need acknowledgment.

II

IT is not by accident that I coupled Epstein's name with Rembrandt's. How much connection there is between these two figures the most superficial examination will reveal. In the work of both we meet with a force of individuality that only a few others, like Dürer or Michel Angelo have manifested. The work of both is characterized by a humanity as simple as it is profound, and by an intense interest in the plastic and pictural aspect of surrounding life. Both of them harboured an insistent inclination for the fantastic and at the same time an intense naturalism in the execution of their conception. The great number of portraits by both the artists are distinguished by a directness and sincerity that have often puzzled their admirers, who could not reconcile this with the more fantastic execution of their purely imaginative works. And in those portraits both of them over and again returned to the same models, and by preference to such as lacked those picturesque features which popular notions expect to find in painters' models.

Both achieved in these simplest of artistic motives and concepts a profundity of expression that consisted in the revelation of eternal elements and universal significance out of subjects that seemed unremarkable to others.

In either case there is a force of vitality that seems brutal to sentimental natures, and a certain aloofness from contemporary ideals and fashions that cannot but create and preserve widespread prejudice and aversion.

Finally, we find in Epstein again as in Rembrandt a constant preoccupation with the elemental motives of life that finds expression in the most dramatic presentation of the simplest moments and happenings which for both of them, from identical view-points, assume an Old-Testamentarian universality of meaning.

When we compare Rembrandt's portraits of his mother and wife and of himself with the quaintly fantastic subjects of his engravings like that of Dr. Faustus, or such bewildering compositions as the *Appearance to the Shepherds*, we cannot fail to recognize the same so-called dualism that has perplexed so many well-disposed students of Epstein's various works. In reality there is no more question of this dualism or diversity of purpose in Epstein's case than there is in Rembrandt's. The whole mistaken notion finds its origin in a misconception of the creative artist's intentions and aims. Before I can demonstrate the thesis in reference to the works themselves I must attempt to make my meaning clearer by discussing the problem that is touched upon in connection with the functioning of creative intelligence and power.

One of the commonest errors of reasoning is that which confounds the creative artist's use of his instinctive powers with his deliberately applied will to construct works from the material he has gathered by the use of them.

From vaguely apprehending that the quasi-unconscious method of producing is a more impressive manifestation of divine gifts, the hasty observer is led to the conclusion that the most inspired artist must be the one who creates almost automatically. But here we are confronted with an inspiration that is active not during the moment that is most important for the ultimate production, i.e. that of the conception, but during the execution.

What in this respect is described as inspiration is the artist's exultation at seeing the work assuming shape under his hands, and his ecstasy is chiefly caused by his gratification on perceiving how during this process of giving shape to his thought suggestions come to him that engender ever new ones, bringing ideas out of the shadow and clearing his own mind as his work proceeds. The initial inspiration, on the other hand, was solely dependent on the power of his creative impulse, his power of instinctive perception. These powers which we call genius enable him to grasp with axiomatical directness the complexities that are the essential nature of things. It is in this respect that the mind of genius distinguishes itself from the less gifted that must reduce everything to the few simple propositions that it can recognize

" a priori." It cannot be a cause of surprise to anyone who has studied the foundations of human vanity that the mind which instead of assimilating the truth of facts in the form in which they present themselves must find its whole satisfaction in the facts' tested liability to yield to a system of reason adopted from others, should pride itself on what it takes to be evidence of its own superior mental structure.

The opposed method is that which indicates the functioning of the mind of genius. It is the capacity for conviction by instinctively perceived truth. The most powerful mind has the widest range of this perception, and every new fact apprehended enables it to grasp directly a more complex truth as a single entity.

This capacity is one of the chief attributes of creative intelligence which can only attain to an appreciation of its own principles by taking the creations of nature as its example.

The other order of minds, to obtain these results, would have to translate the complex truth into its own simple language, and retranslate this again into the complexities of the work of human making, a task which is beyond their powers.

Human creative intelligence is only a reflection of that greater power which formed the universe, and its products are even as those of the latter infinitely complex, though in either case they appear to the observer infinitely simple because of the perfection of their organization.

Genius expresses this infinite complexity with the same ease with which it grasped it, while the mind that must work by reducing to elementals cannot but be staggered at some stage by the bewildering intricacies it has to contend with. As I already said, it will nearly always become the victim of an eternal human infirmity and make a virtue of necessity. Its natural inertia will resume its sway, and drive it to take refuge in proclaiming the necessity of simplification of notions and forms in artistic expression.

Thus end the attempts at conscious and so-called cerebral production by those who are not by the force of genius brought to them. Genius, on the other hand, while perceiving and understanding by what I called inspiration, thus gathers unlimited

knowledge which enables it to construct works by reflection and deliberation from the constituent elements which it handles by the exercise of its creative faculties after the manner of Him that invested it with these powers. The recognition of this principle demonstrates the absurdity of the notion which pictures the artist creating in a fury of hysterical exaltation. Would anybody think of God creating in a frantic fever? Yet most people are disinclined to admit that great work might be the result of sober deliberation and prefer to imagine that the depth and vitality and emotional quality of a work are dependent on, let us say, the *temperature* of the inspiration that gave the initial conception.

I said that creative genius could be only understood as a reflection of the divine creative will, and must point out in this connection that the great works of art are as impressively convincing a revelation as those of the holy books or the inspired words of the prophets.

The smaller talent which, instead of using its faculties of instinctive perception for conscious production, produces instinctively, can hardly claim the name of *creative* since in reality it *reproduces*. It acts as a tool, and is, so to say, itself the medium which nature employs to create indirectly. Its work is on a level with that of the actor or executive musician. However perfect in execution, however capable of inducing emotion, it is never genuinely creative, as its power to stir is ultimately derived from an impulse not its own. The talented mind has been rightly compared to a sensitive plate reacting on emanations from outside, while in as far as the same could be said of the mind of genius this would remain only one of its diverse aspects. The mind of genius embraces the universe and its contents to build from whatever material it may select, while the mind of talent only expresses the emotions it receives or imitates those it has observed in others. Creative genius is not bound by this opportunity for observation because it has only to direct its mind upon a thing to penetrate its entire nature. One would not find it in search of local colour or studying psychology; a Rembrandt has no need to go to the East to be able to paint it more convincingly than many artists of smaller calibre whose travels yield comparatively

negligible results. Shakespeare did not, as the authors who pride themselves on their psychological understanding, seek the company of alienists and visit the asylums, and yet while experts are slow to admit any worth in the observations of the very authors who exalt their own activities, they must acknowledge that they find guidance in characterizations (to them "typical cases") of Shakespeare, who was not afraid to scoff at them occasionally, but who in his study learnt more of the soul's pathology than the expert in ward and padded room.

The significant fact has not escaped observation that the lives of many of the greatest artists have been most uneventful ones, and that their versatile knowledge and apparent familiarity with the most diverse phases of life and aspects of the world was not as it is for the ordinary mind the fruit of adventure, travel and local investigation. One may safely distrust the gifts of the artist who seeks to know life by chasing after it, preferably in its wilder forms: experience shows that he very seldom finds what he is professedly in search of.

While the average talent remains an instrument for transmitting impressions from which it received emotions strong enough to become a driving power, genius instead of thus reflecting and regenerating creates a universe, a law of its own, *generates*. It may be impressionist, emotional, but when the other order of mentality is no more than that, genius is infinitely more, and emotionalism is one of the levers it can deliberately handle when it judges that appropriate.

It is not my intention to belittle the works of those who do not belong to the very exceptional few who are creative in that sense I have tried to define, but rather to show how very far the work of genius still towers above that of even most admirable masters. Almost everyone senses the fundamental difference of point of view, of method in the works of the rare minds of absolute genius when comparing them to works of less exceptionally gifted minds, which, however great, belong to a different order.

There is no question here of a mere matter of degree, as if talent increased would become genius. In fact it is not unthinkable that

a mind of genius should be lacking in a certain natural adaptability, though, its powers of expression being commensurate to those of perception, it can create its own talents if need be. But though its possessor should happen on a form of expression requiring a predisposition not present to a sufficient degree, though painting he may be colour-blind, carving but weak of muscle, may be a deaf musician, yet his work while conceivably inferior on some points to that of lesser minds will not admit of his genius being mistaken. The pictures of Leonardo da Vinci, who is one of the most striking representatives of the order of creative genius, have been incontestably surpassed in some respects by those of painters whose entire output is not of such value to the world as Leonardo's Madonna.

Balzac's prose may sometimes be clumsy, yet no Louvet could, for all his elegance and polish, his superb brilliancy and unique wit, hope to shine in comparison. The music of Beethoven is frequently below a standard that very much smaller men have sustained during the entirety of fairly extensive compositions.

The originality* of the creations Leonardo, Balzac, Beethoven have given the world is one of the characteristics of the works of genius which dwarf those of artists who as craftsmen might show themselves not only their equals but their superiors.

Now to create is the first and last aim of art. When a work actually is an original creation in the sense I have formulated above, it cannot be otherwise than perfect for our human senses. From whence could we derive a criterion of criticism? How should we contain the universe and see it from a detached standpoint or find an object for comparison? We are here faced with another aspect of the identical impossibility that confronted the sage who recognized that he could lift the earth provided he could obtain a lever and a fixed point. To derive from nature's manifestations canons by which to judge them is a foolish undertaking, of which to judge the equivalent works of the elect is in the same way only a repetition.

* In the real sense of the word, I do not mean the originality of *novelty* that may be obscured or meaningless.

I should add, though, that individuality need not mean originality, and that the highest accomplishment does not of itself denote creative power.

The great original creations of the very great whose personal individuality has become one with the organism of the universe over which they have expanded and which they have contained within themselves must be placed in a category apart from other works of the human mind, however admirable they may be.

It is by no means a rare effect of human frailty that one may feel more sympathetically attracted by the work of a lesser mind and love it more while recognizing the genius and unquestionable superiority of another which may as far as concerns one's personal inclination cause the reverse of attraction.

We may in the same way feel ill at ease in the presence of certain manifestations or aspects of nature, though we are aware that every one of these is equally great in character and meaning, and that to distinguish between them is introducing an element of personal equation which constitutes an absurd conceptional incongruity.

But quite apart from the authority exercised by the name of a master whose fame has been established by the recognition of many generations, there are names that have a different sound in the ears of everyone with the instincts and knowledge that enable him to discriminate between the relative significance of the great masters. This refers to those few who are felt to stand apart from everyone else, because they stand as far above the mere " great artist " as any master properly so named stands in his turn above the mere " artist " of popular conception. The latter in the majority of instances is only a neurasthenic subject distinguished from the average human being by his stronger sensuality and self-indulgence whose effects act as a driving power bringing him to the rendering of his impressions in productions which, *for the vocabulary*, are of the same kind as the works of Shakespeare, Cervantes, Beethoven, Rembrandt, Pascal, Goethe, Leonardo, to choose some of the most familiar names.

Those greatest of masters are the men who have made the world, made humanity what it is in its best aspects. Human achieve-

ment is their work, human thought takes its foundation from what they have recognized and revealed, and the sum total of knowledge progresses by cumulative effect from one of such masters to the next one. Without them, the prophets, the leaders, men would for ever remain Yahoos. From the first man who made a tool to Pasteur and Anatole France thought has been determined by their work, and the lesser talents would have remained as sterile as the least of humble minds without their guidance that supplied the axioms on whose bases alone further building could prosper.

III

IT is to this order of original creative minds that Jacob Epstein belongs. This is saying that his is one of the rarest of personalities. In our modern society, so well regulated that it has no place for the genuine artists to whom it owes whatever is permanent and valuable in it, such a personality is more curiously separated from its collective movements than it would have been in periods and places where the people realized that their existence derived its sense and justification from the presence of these men in their midst.

In Epstein, who among the men of creative intelligence is of the great so-called "instinctives," primitive men in the sense that Rembrandt and Beethoven were primitive,* this fact explains why his individuality is frequently bewildering to students of his work, who seek to explain a master's tendencies from his relations to his time and surroundings, misconceiving their nature. For a man of his mentality it is possible to mix intimately with contemporary life in its varied phases and yet remain a spectator whose thoughts are never in any essential influenced by the culture of the period. He preserves one single purpose and has the lucidity, the directness of outlook which one may meet anywhere in a man of genius, but in any other case only when society as a whole is as primitive and unsophisticated as the individual mind.

The Old Testamentarian character which some of Epstein's works exhibit is frequently misunderstood by a race that has lost the

* As distinguished from men of the versatility and erudition of Leonardo or Goethe, who in reality were equally instinctive as regards their power of conception, but whose scholarly knowledge of concrete facts was assumed to be responsible for the profundity of their works by those who had not recognized that these things exist alongside of, but not on account of, each other ; hence the designation which I employ to express my idea of Epstein's social existence without accepting its reputed meaning.

qualities necessary for its appreciation. Searching for those same qualities in other works they can, naturally, perceive them only in works that, though artistically indifferent, bespeak at least the primitive character of their makers. That this primitivity may be only the outcome of the state of life, and that therefore the similarity discoverable is one of externals, escapes them again. It is as idle to presume that a man without teeth was born yesterday as that anyone with curly hair is a Papuan, or than that all ice must necessarily come from the North Pole.

But by the aid of these superficial observations and unwarrantable conclusions Epstein's work has been, to the satisfaction of a great many who are ready to have their thinking done for them like their laundry, proved to be aboriginal, Polynesian, or at least, as an unsound favourite of technical parlance has it, " archaic." There may be similarity of origin in all these manifestations, but to speak of imitation in this respect is absurd. It is equally absurd to believe that Epstein, after a study of some of these forms of art, has accepted their canons and mannerisms for his own.

For what analogy there exists here there is a much deeper cause, though for the present purpose equally negligible. Its character is identical with the cause of the observable phenomenon that where light is excluded the most diverse objects become equally invisible, this being a property they have in common, while it does not in the least justify the acceptance of other relations between them. Both in this instance and in the case to which I am alluding the origins of the effect lie in the observer and in the intervention of an independent third agent.

Epstein, with his fine nervous sensitiveness, has assimilated the modes of expression, living, and thinking of his time, but for a mind which is of all times they remain but an acquisition. This, in so far as it adds to his range of perception, may increase the material subject of his conception, but his mind otherwise remains untouched and free of the faults and weaknesses of contemporary life.

However familiar he may be with the neurasthenia of modern impressionistic art, his psychological disposition is such that he is not contaminated by it. There is one of his works that exhibits the characteristics of style I described above, and which his critics

have descried as " South Sea Islands," which at the same time is expressive of a state of mind notorious as one of the products of our time and society. I refer to his much discussed and violently attacked red statuette, exhibiting analogies of style with exotic wood carvings, named " Cursed be the day that I was born." Though the sentiment of despair it translates is an eternal and universal one, as is sufficiently suggested by the reference to two significant Scriptural texts, viz. " Pereat dies in qua natus sum " (Tobit 3. 3), and " Maledicta dies, in qua natus sum " (Jeremiah 20. 14), it has at the same time an aspect particularly applicable to the mental scourge of our days. Now the singleness of thought and purpose in this work, the simplicity of form and delineation may effect the appearance of points of comparison with Polynesian or African wood carvings, but it should not be forgotten that the requirements of the material create the style and that certain forms must appear if wood is logically handled whether by an African or by Epstein. But some who call themselves " idealists " have stood aghast at an element of degeneration and despairing impotence they found in the work. They considered it an ominous symptom to see an artist thus reveal what they took to be a phase of his own mental state.

The absurdity of this notion is on a par with that of calling Shakespeare to account for Lady Macbeth's wickedness or the abject vileness of Iago. A work born from a man's imagination, though it proceeds from his mind, need not be expressive of it. I pointed out already that the spectacle of the neurasthenic becoming productive for sheer force of misery is responsible for the impression that this is the way of artistic creation. The genuinely creative mind, however, can make itself the vehicle for the expression of sentiments revealed to it by observation of other subjects, and the artist may remain personally detached while deliberately constructing the work that materializes them.

One may see in this work a terrible indictment of the wild raving about semi-consciously realized impotence that is the black spleen of modern thought. Its effort at production and resultant miscarriage, the vicious circle of a crushing " tedium vitæ " that embitters the nerve-racked sufferer of " artistic temperament "

cannot be presented with more uncanny veracity than it is in this fierily screeching, dripping-red, tetanically convulsed, smarting raw flesh of woe. The work should be approached as the mediæval allegory or the old German woodcuts where death leers over the courtesan's tender shoulder and grasps the brawling lansquenet by his hauberk, to be appreciated as the " morality " it is.

Those forms of art are understood and approved of, but in art people ever fail to recognize old acquaintances in new clothes. The epigon will take form, thought and style as he finds it, but every original mind gives the unchanging idea the new form his individuality suggests. This being always the unexpected, it baffles and provokes the æsthetic snob.

If only people would be content to approach a work of art without preconceived notions, if they would only look at a work patiently and long enough to assimilate its thought, it would enter into them when the impression is complete, and the artist's idea would penetrate their minds and be born from them anew. They should —though their impression need not stimulate similar action— submit to the work's influence as must the executant artist, actor or musician, taking it in so as to be able to reproduce it where their talents permit this proof of understanding. If one is incapable of this or unwilling to exhibit so much modesty (this contingency is not by any means as rare as it is ludicrous) one should remain satisfied, unless one prefers to be classed with the critics of bad faith who are ready to condemn—or praise, which is worse—with their eyes closed. One should not in that case pretend to oneself or to others to have performed or experienced anything that could justify mention of the work as if one knew it. This, however, is the very thing the majority of people do. They believe their task in front of a work is to look at it until some remark occurs to them. This they gratuitously proffer and feel sure they cannot expect anything further from the work, nor the work from them, and that they have given the maker his due.

The evil goes further when spectators, starting from the mistaken notion that the sculptor wishes to represent actualities with stylistic modifications, would assume they have to detect in this work the representation of a human being, and expect from the

artist an explanation of his motives in making the same appear so different from what they would imagine the possible subject or model of the work to be in reality. How should there be a better explanation of the work than the work itself? How shall the artist make his intentions clear in words for the minds who fail to grasp them when they are expressed in the medium that is the artist's own language?

But here enters the æsthete with the dictionary, here is the happy field for the connoisseur and critic to display their vocabulary, and for the revolution-humbug to bring forth his manifesto. Things too simple for words are explained by introducing tenets of cubism, impressionism (post or simple), luminism, futurism, vorticism and vagaries about abstraction and simplification.

But in the work under discussion (as in the flenite carvings) the execution is direct and unsophisticated, and the thought is a simple thought, the common property of conceptive imagination of all times. There is no room for any "ism" anywhere. If Dürer would have expressed it differently the cause would not be his living in the sixteenth century, but his being Dürer who would still be Dürer were he born to-day, even as Epstein would remain himself were he living in the sixteenth century and could not at that time have carved this work otherwise than he has done now.

In it are summed up humanity's attempts at understanding beyond its powers; its futile efforts to penetrate the mystery of creation and the complexities of life and nature. It materializes the racking, torturing cramp of insanity that triumphs over one man in his abortive effort to create, over another in his attempt to grasp the meaning of creative deeds. The resultant state of mind may well find relief in the wail of Job. If, however, a man of genius could himself feel like this—to assume an absurdity for the sake of argument—instead of understanding that feeling in others he would not feel inclined to exhibit his agony in the shape of a work to be derided, to be gaped and spat on by envenomed opponents and ignorant imbeciles. He would not risk the misgivings and head-shakings of well-meaning "admirers" who regret such works from a man who has pleased their senses by portraits of attractive sitters they covet in the flesh, and who are ever shouting

at Epstein : " Why not give us more of your other work we like far better ? " No, instead of exposing himself after an inferno of irreparable grief to the indignity and humiliation of such idiotic impudence, he would act in the only way possible for a man with the sincerity of impulse an artist must possess, and go and hang himself. But by drawing this conclusion we have arrived at the proposed " reductio ad absurdum." To curse one's existence and prolong it is the inconsequential act of a coward and can never be that of a genuine artist with whom saying is meaning a thing. Without logical action he would reveal feebleness of impulse and lack of self-respect, without which his existence as a creative artist would be an impossibility.

IV

THERE exists a reluctance to admit that a contemporary form of art may reach back to one of its so-called primitive forms. Frequently art students appear hypnotized to such an extent by the absurd current doctrine of progress in artistic effort that they believe in good faith that they can explain the characteristics of style in works of masters from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries by assuming them to have been insufficiently trained observers and clumsy draughtsmen. They treat " art " as an entity in the sense that the scientists of one period did nature, ascribing to it personal predilections and aversions (the notorious *horror vacui* for instance), or contemporary medical science does diseases, speaking of cholera or tuberculosis for all the world as if those were evil spirits with a tangible individuality. Art, according to this conception, has made from one period to the next strides in the right direction, or has occasionally stood still, or had its course retarded by the actions of the obscurantists. Undoubtedly, if these critics could be at least logical they would find the canons of some modern " isms " applicable to the stylistic modifications observable in Egyptian friezes or Florentine paintings (the adoption of existing " archaism " is certainly a proceeding of a similar nature).

However, in periods when the dearth of original talent has resulted in the flourishing of an insipid form of artistic expression commonly described as " realism," its exponents are ever men who see eye to eye with their average contemporaries and precisely render the ideals of the time to which their work relates. Thus, as far as such second-rate artists are concerned, they indeed supply an existing need or demand, and it is by no means sheer accident that they are invariably much admired during their lifetime.

The longer such a period of artistic sterility lasts, the more be-

wildering will appear the advent of the next great mind whose work must, to his contemporaries, appear the more startlingly original. Metaphorically speaking, no great artist is born without a father any more than anyone else. He cannot, therefore, but reach back (as regards the basis of tradition which must be at once the foundation and the justifying norm for any individual originality to assert itself otherwise than for its own sake) to ideals associated with a time which the public, under the influence of the last popular artist's achieved reputation, had begun to consider as having lost direct human interest and as being significant only from the historical angle of the " æsthetic " student's viewpoint. In the case of sculpture there has been an exceptionally long period unproductive of original talent, and consequently the general quality of sculpture became, more than it did in any other art at any recent period, expressive of " bourgeois " ideals of an appallingly low standard. The absence of creative originality must inevitably become most painfully apparent in the domain of an art that relies for its productions in the first and the last place on form, while in a time when art tends to fall under the influence of a scientific philosophy that is mainly analytical and characterized by a lack of intuition and faith, it can only produce results as barren as they are seductive to the least comprehending minds. Any sculptor of original talent appearing after the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could only revert to traditions that to his contemporaries had become the almost forgotten ideals of a time with which they had lost every contact and whose manifestations had an artificial existence in museums of interest only to professed students of historic relics. During a period like that of the Renaissance the amazing originality of the master of one generation became already canonized by those of the next where, during a few centuries, every generation was productive of men of genius. But after the long intervening period, lovers of art had lost the sense of reality in these matters and become unmindful of the fact that for a great original artist indulging his individuality is only one of the aspects of his understanding of the traditions of his art as formed by the example of the preceding masters.

As in the case of Rodin, who was one of the first modern sculptors to resume the great traditions of sculpture, so, and to a larger extent, the public was baffled at Epstein's works, both by their originality and by their reference to antique and Renaissance ideals. The two things seemed to be incompatible and mutually exclusive, and they naturally could not view his relation to older art from a sufficiently detached and elevated standpoint to see that it was not in the least self-conscious, " archaizing " or the product of historical preciosity, but, on the contrary, perfectly natural and spontaneously sincere.

Now between opposing temperaments that may love art and its products with equal honesty there exists an interminable feud. On the one side are arranged those that uphold a claim of contemporary art to superiority over that of the past, and opposing them those who believe no work of the present or future can ever again reach the standard set by the master-works of past ages.

As usually happens in such cases the fact that the cause of this feud is a misunderstanding only denotes that it is the more immovably and profoundly rooted, leaving the smallest promise of eventual reconciliation.

The contest resulting from it may be considered as only one aspect of the greater one between two irreconcilable conceptions of the world and human life.

On one side capable thinkers and followers who outdo their leaders in dogmatism as much as they fall short of them in personal capabilities, hold that every next generation profits by the previous one's experience, as the human mind individually does from the knowledge acquired by that of a revered teacher or admired master.

On the opposing side we find an equal number of competent and incompetent men maintaining that, on the contrary, experience is lost with those that acquired it ; that the recognition of the bare facts remains, but their proper appreciation, which is all that matters to those who would make use of them, can be attained to only by the power of a penetration so profound that the understanding and energy required is equal to that needed for the initial discovery of the truths concerned.

From this they claim it follows that humanity so far from profiting by the acquisitions of succeeding generations and thus progressing from an original state of ignorant savagery to one of comparative perfection (enter the supermen !) stumbles on uniformly, repeating the same performances good and bad everlastingly and, without reaching new summits, turns in a circle like the planet it inhabits, ever ignoring the significance of new facts that incessantly present themselves but remain outside their sphere of comprehension.

It is not within the compass of the present study to contemplate the widest aspects of the question ; I must confine myself to considering the problem only in as far as it is reflected in the struggle resulting from the classic controversies concerning art and artists.

As in the greater question undue importance is ascribed to the human race as a collective unit, so in the one at present under view it is not generally appreciated that here as there, whatever progress may be discernible through any great and significant action—invention or discovery—always stands to the credit of individuals, the great and the most talented. In art one cannot pause to reckon with the multitude of mortals who for practical reasons or from enthusiasm spend their time and energies on the occupation with works of art, their discussion or reproduction or valuation. One need only consider and weigh the actions and personality of those that really matter, the original creative minds. For any progress to be possible at all what is required is a congenial mind which alone is capable of understanding the preceding ones that count. Now, as I said, he who actually *understands* the thoughts and works of our earlier worker, who appreciates facts discovered by the latter at their intrinsic value, must be of a disposition and power of mind that would enable him to repeat his predecessor's performance in discovering the facts for himself. In this sense, one man of genius is only " understood " by another, and only in this case is there question of the latter profiting from the former's experience.

Again, as regards the familiar query whether the great masters of the past were the superiors of contemporary ones, the question

is absurdly put, as a past is in a philosophical sense a non-existent thing, and it is in that sense only that the whole matter could be approached. We may be sometimes led to assume that this " past " has produced the greatest of masters, but we must realize that they are only claimed and recognized as such once they belong to it.

The question becomes reduced to an optical problem ; it is the shorter distance from which we see contemporaries and their achievements that prevents us from appreciating their true greatness. An object reveals its dimensions by the mere fact that we must put a distance between it and ourselves to see it as a whole. The optical illusion declares itself when we believe the man only to be great once we see him in the past.

One effect of the illusion is that some are convinced " art " is declining because when looking backward they find invariably the greatest number of men of genius at the furthest distance. In their own surroundings, on the other hand, they appear so thinly sown that not one may be discernible at any given moment within a given circumference.

The sum total of human intelligence, however, must be a constant factor, and its distribution is at all times of much the same inequality. At a time when the average intelligence of the human species would be extraordinarily high, one might be sure a total absence of any man of genius would be remarkable. Happily there never was such a time, though one certainly can, by comparing cultures and civilizations, discover a few slight instances where the phenomenon began to declare itself ; and its complement has not been wholly unknown.

As all cumulative effect is, as I argued, dependent on the efforts of the great minds, it goes without saying it must tend to lead in an ascending direction rather than the reverse, as where it is caused by genius there can be no question of degeneration.

One sometimes meets the contention that formerly the great men were readily hailed and recognized, but when it does not issue from people who do not hesitate deliberately to pervert truth in order to prove a thesis, it points only to a complete ignorance of the facts.

If any great man was even thus recognized it has been by sheer accident or mistake rather. The public's criterion of judgment—a norm necessarily based on what they can appreciate of already existing works (and that is always insufficient)—cannot comprise the manifestations of a new mind, which are always unforeseen. Every next individual of genius gives a new expression to old truths and presents original facts. In so far as he adds to the cumulative effect he augments its growth at a speed unattainable by the united actions of any number of intellects devoid of the spark of genius. Also, he does this in a manner invariably different from what any observer could expect or foretell. Therefore his work is neglected for that of the man who brings what students of already familiar works might expect.

The so-called patrons and supporters of " revolutionary " art are usually the first to declare themselves the opponents of a real innovator and to shout their " non credo " at really original talent and genuinely revolutionary deeds. In the first place, they are mostly people who from temperament feel an aversion to the study of old works, which they underrate because they do not know them, and, further, their carefully cultivated and nurtured enthusiasm for the innovator of yesterday makes them incapable of imagining any other " originality " than that with which they have become familiar. So the new man must either imitate, overstate or " develop " the style and manner of their idol ; anything else is for them nonsense or conservatism, return, contra-revolution. They sustain, support and become part of the notorious cliques of artistic revolutionaries who give us the poor spectacle of rebelling against the very forms of art that they themselves contemptuously declare to be dead, exposed, insipid—and, one would think, on that account harmless—but they are at the same time the most vehement opponents of any real revolutionary who rebels against the tyranny of contemporary shibboleths. The uninformed public, naturally unwilling to pay serious attention to the work of an original artist, see the work of one who to them is a modern and a revolutionary, chiefly disclaimed and attacked by these critics, æsthetics and connoisseurs, whom they imagine to be his kindred and his partisans who ought to be eager to recognize and

propagate his work. As these people are supposed to possess a criterion for judging that mysterious product " modern " art—and by writing and speaking in a specialized technical jargon they usually support the pretence—their expert judgment on a contemporary is generally accepted as final in as far as it is irreplaceable.

If the man who has " discovered " and introduced Rodin to a doubting public condemns Epstein, his public will readily murmur : " If *he* says so . . ." " if *he* does not know . . ." And the Rodin apostle will most likely believe he owes it to his august idol's reputation as well as his own to do so, as any later master is expected to emulate the last in every respect save in initiative and the courage of his individuality.

Again, the identical mental limitations will bring the Epstein apostle to dismissing Rodin's work as a superseded clumsiness, and very likely to expect Epstein himself to share their opinion. Needless to say, Epstein would be the last to do that, as naturally the French master could hardly hope to find anyone better capable of understanding his intentions and appreciating his achievements. And no eminent master could allow his most fervent admirers (however tolerant their homage might make him to their regard) to belittle another great man within his hearing, as the detestable flattery of it is unacceptable, and the implied assumption that he would consider their avowed admiration of his own work in itself a qualifying factor that could justify them is nothing else than an impertinent insult.

(I do not even refer here to the unspeakable habit of attempting to please a living artist by treating all his contemporaries in one collective sweep as boobies and humbugs, and in so far as his reputation is the reverse of academic decry the old masters as bungling imbeciles and childish primitives when they are not mere mummies and historic relics.)

I pointed out already that widespread appreciation of a master's works is only to be expected from later-born generations, and how when it is asked by what reversion of feeling this is at all possible one must answer that the opinion of a few penetrating minds comes to be accepted as time proceeds. Original talent is

only appreciated as it deserves by appreciative intelligence which is relatively as great as the creative intelligence concerned. The opinions of the world in general being slowly shaped by that of the men who have proved themselves superior in all respects, it will finally accept as a classic master that one whom those acknowledged leaders of some generations following have over and again acclaimed.

Thus a reputation becomes established, and it must be admitted that when some pseudo-leader through impudence or naïve conviction of his own excellence discovers as overwhelming signs of genius in the performances of some mediocrity, a pseudo-master's reputation can become established and last long enough to pervert the taste of many a generation. Fortunately though, as I argued above, for the reputation to be lasting the authority of a single man does not suffice. No Ruskin could make a Prout, no Riemann could assure a Reger an enduring reputation; the effort is but a ludicrous caricature of Brunelleschi's fame being spread by Donatello's recognition or of the latter's own name becoming glorified through the homage paid to him in work or word by Michel Angelo or Raphael, or of Diderot or Benvenuto being revealed to Germany by Goethe.

I also argued that the number of minds capable of exercising such authority hardly varies through the generations. Therefore any master of genius who might feel unhappy on account of the absence of widespread appreciation should not have failed to recognize the fact that only the elect can form his audience. But this would from the very nature of the matter be a very rare occurrence. Any general direct appreciation he cannot hope for after his lifetime any more than during it. The fact remains incontrovertible that thousands are always prepared to call Shakespeare the greatest poet, Rembrandt or Beethoven the greatest of painters and musicians, to say " Michel Angelo " as soon as there is question of the sublime in sculpture, but this does not in any way denote a genuine love and understanding of those masters' minds and works.

Of the latter they have more often than not never heard or seen anything, or very little and imperfectly in the most favourable

instances. They call them great by hearsay as they would believe in the qualities of any much-advertised article. It is the means by which the suggestion is exercised on their minds that impresses on them the conviction of these masters' excellence.
This supplies the explanation for the familiar contention that while the " classics " are popular and their works universally appreciated it is almost impossible for anyone, even the relatively initiated, to grasp the aims of the " moderns." Those aims, however (whether in art or science), are ever the same, even as the aims of the exponents of human creative action are always identical, however much the modes of expression may vary.
An eternal and foremost aim is to understand and reveal truth, and in the terms of truth give expression to the individual thoughts in forms which original creative power must construct in accordance with the requirements of the laws form and content present for the growth of a perfect organism.

In the sculptor's work the fact becomes manifest that these " laws " are not, as theorists would make us believe, immutable in themselves, but that they vary with the material medium. In sculpture more easily than in other arts it is apparent that it is never the artist's aim to become proficient in the handling of a conventional form—and thus acquire a readily discernible style or manner—but facing the notorious reproach that he is groping and experimenting, he must renounce the fame of facile acquisition that rests on the confusing of mannerism and personality, and must master as many divergent kinds of style as he works materials. A survey of some of Epstein's different works is from this point of view highly instructive and elucidating. It also casts light on the reasons that have brought so many of his critics to point out, and every one of them with some semblance of justification, the similarity between some of his works and the cultural styles of different races and periods.
While some of his bronze heads or busts have been likened to early Greek sculpture or to the finely chiselled bronze mouldings of the Quattrocento masters whose treatment of this material presented the same perfection of logic that Epstein's work in this

kind does, his carvings in hard stone (the granite *Mother and Child*, for instance) have with equal right been compared to the work of the Egyptians, who were of the few that tackled this intractable material. Again his carving in soft stone presents similarity with the soft-stone sculptures of the Assyrians and Persians or the older Greek (the *Maternity*, the *Sun God*, and the marble *Oscar Wilde Tomb*). The *Venus* whose " Michel Angesque " qualities only further prove the point as the Renaissance master's relation to the antique examples of marble carving were similar in nature to those of Epstein. How and why the suggestion of carved wood in the *Cursed be the Day* should recall the wood-carvings of the African or Polynesians I have already referred to. Those exotic works in wood are true to the demands of the material's natural form and structure, a thing that could not be said of the early French and German Renaissance statues in wood, to which consequently Epstein's work does not bear any resemblance. Moreover, in the flenite gargoyle-like figures, as in the *Venus*, we meet with significant demonstrations of how the sculptor's vision of the work and the manner of its execution may be to a great extent suggested by the shape of the block of material to be employed and the nature of its structure. Frequently the sculptor's genius declares itself through his power to derive his conception from, to give life and form to, a fantastically shaped piece of stone that has baffled and exasperated his less-gifted brethren. The few classic examples of this in Donatello's and Michel Angelo's work are too familiar to need quotation.

I do not wish to deny that the ideals and aims of the so-called " moderns " are rarely understood (a fact which is used as evidence against their honesty or lucidity of intention), but, as I emphasized above, those of the older masters are understood just as little, and the causes are in both instances the same. None of the " classic " masters has a very much greater public than he had during his lifetime, and again every living master, now as formerly, meets but a few minds capable of appreciating his.
The difference lies in this, that a master's potential " public " is spread over the entire earth and through the ages, and that

during the years of his life his work can only reach a very few of that small number, while slowly the propagation of his work by these few attracts the attention of others equally capable of valuing his work as it deserves.

Jesus Christ never could have found more fervent disciples than the apostles were. Though in their time the number of genuine Christians was but small, yet everyone knows that no twelve would be found at any time as firmly convinced, as deeply penetrated by their Master's divine mission as they were, and Christianity has spread over the six continents.

V

I ALLUDED to the fact that " progress " in art is only the accumulation of master works and that the most " primitive " or " troglodyte " works may be the equally sincere expression of an artist's vision 5000 B.C. or at the present day, while the most minute realism, the most sophisticated draughtsmanship, as well as the unmistakably " abstract decorative " work is no more a property of the Victorians or a development of the twentieth century than of the Middle Ages, though examples of those styles abound in these periods.

I further pointed out how in the various works of such a versatile artist and exceptionally capable craftsman as Epstein one can discern, so to say, an historic survey, a summing up of what is good and great in sculpture of every race and country at any time.

I propose to give a few examples to enable the reader who is acquainted with them to perceive how his different works declare their relationship to the art of the people and the period from which the best examples in the same material have been preserved for our observation, and at the same time he will see how some of the most generally attacked of Epstein's works are justified by great traditions whose truth no one questions or denies and how his originality of treatment is akin to that we have learnt, through familiarity, to appreciate.

To limit the examples to more generally known and readily accessible works: there is the extremely realistic, perfectly proportioned, double-portrait statue of the Fifth Egyptian Dynasty at the Berlin Museum, representing the priest Teuti and his wife, or the statue portraying a scribe in the Louvre. Compare this to the highly decorative, " abstracted " fresco from a tomb in Thebe, picturing a lake with birds and fishes, surrounded by trees,

which is in the British Museum. And to suggest at least one concrete comparison with a particular work of Epstein, which bears out my thesis very strongly, let a reader who may have seen his granite *Mother and Child* (a work which has baffled many of the professed friends of his work and provoked accusations of barbarism and wild " vorticist " eccentricity from several critics) think of that stone fantasy of incomparable grandeur, bewitching beauty and lovable tenderness : the Egyptian statue of the master-builder Senmut and the Princess Ranofin which is to be seen at the Berlin Museum.

Also, in Assyrian sculpture whose fantastic imaginings and quaint forms of dream-beings (that provide a parallel for Epstein's *flenite figures*) are sufficiently well known, we meet with such highly accomplished naturalistic representations as those of which the famous dying lioness is characteristic.

How the different extremes of conception and manner of execution are to be found in Greek sculpture is a too familiar fact to need illustration, only here again it may be noticed that, contrary to popular assumption, they do not by any means always belong to different periods ; the contrast between the highly developed stylization (or outspoken primitiveness as some would have it, though that makes no difference from our present purpose) of the mutilated female statue from Samos (the Cheramyes fragment) in the Louvre and the statues from the Western temple front at Ægina that are preserved at the Munich " Glyptothek " is a significant instance, as these most realistically executed figures belong equally to the so-called " archaic " period.

The wonderful close-fitting garments revealing the form of the body under them, of which Epstein's *Christ* is such a striking example, do no more exclusively belong to the Greek period mentioned than the flowing draperies that obtrude so objectionably on the figures they hide belong to the Middle Ages. This notorious sign of degeneration of the sculptural vision appears in the productions of the less-gifted ancients side by side with the perfect works of the masters of genius in which, especially in the " Gothic " period, it is as conspicuously absent as it is in evidence in that of the convention-serving academics

who have parasitized in the region of artistic creation from the days of Adam.

One can further notice such contrasted products of one period and culture as, for instance, the very realistic portrait statue of the mounted Emperor Charles in the Carnavalet at Paris and the apocalyptically-fantastic, strongly "abstracted"—as modern manifesto-theory would call it—miniature of Christ in Glory appearing to the beatified community in the Carolingian Bible at San Paolo fuori le mura near Rome.

How the artists of the Middle Ages understood that style springs from the requirements of the medium they select for execution the stained-glass windows prove abundantly, as do the caryatides on their cathedrals, where the shape which architectural purpose prescribes to the material has been so wonderfully merged into the form of the carving that lent the life of their sculptural vision to it.

That Epstein knows how to reconcile the requirements of his block of material and his sculptural conception into a perfect harmony is proved by his *Venus*, a work which, in that respect, is representative of one of the most vital of traditions of sculpture of which such convincing examples are naturally as rare as the master minds who alone can give us them.

A remarkable diversity of sculptural intention is presented by two works of the fifteenth century, both Italian, one of which shows a negation of the structural demands of marble (the *Eva* of Antonio Rizzo at the Porta della Carta of the Doge's palace in Venice), whereas the other, the bust of a Neapolitan Princess by Francesco Laurana (at the Berlin Museum) is in the best tradition of carving in marble, and presents the tender velvety smoothness of surface, the crystalline clarity of softly curving contours, the subtle modulation between the reclining planes, the transparent fulness of rhythmically flowing masses of Epstein's marble *Birds*, *Mother and Child* or *Venus*. A remarkable and suggestive instance of a subtle difference in style of execution, while yet the master's individuality speaks as strongly out of both, is presented by two paintings of Pollajuoli: the poetically-inclined composition, *Tobiah and the Angel* (Pinakothek—Turino), with its

flowing rhythms and its atmosphere of mildness and dewy tripping lightness, and the somewhat hard, severe, unbending, stabbingly sharp of line and lighting, *David with the Head of Goliath* which is in the erstwhile " Royal " Museum of Berlin.

Finally, a most informing series of three works of the same period by German artists who were under the influence of the guilds of the thirteenth century, each in a different medium, yet exhibiting a remarkable uniformity of manner and intention, supplies a striking commentary on the vast differences of style, each developing logically from the conditions carried by the medium chosen. Schreiber's *Manuel de la gravure sur bois et sur metal au XVme siecle* (Part VI) contains the reproduction of a woodcut printed on parchment dating from about 1450 entitled *Pieta*. The work exhibits all the characteristics æsthetic analysis is used to describe as primitive ; the strictly parallel lines of fingers and toes, the mathematically schematized anatomy in general, the elongated, unsupported, rigorously suspended limbs, and the decoratively treated garments that obey the demands of the composition sooner than those of the body's support in conjunction with the effect of gravity as realistic rendering would demand. The head of the Christ lying on the Mother's knees, though in a horizontal position, is drawn as if it were vertically held ; the long hairs fall straight down on to the shoulders and breast.

Such characteristics occur on Egyptian friezes, also where the aspect of certain parts of the human body is invariably rendered in the same way independent of the angle at which they are seen and the position of the other parts of the body. The effect for the composition is, in both instances, far more satisfying than the conscientious copying of nature's example could be. Curiously contrasted with this is the careful drawing and the fine precise line betraying the goldsmith's hand, of Martin Schongauer's well-known copper-plate engraving *Baptism of Christ*. The different depths of plane of which the copper-plate allows have enabled the master to give a great variety of tone and mellowness of light and shade, a richness of folding garments yet coupled with a sharply defined contour and, generally, a compromise between naturalistic treatment and decorative composition that is ever

characteristic of engraving in metal. If one compares with these two works the painting of Konrad Witz in the Bâle Museum, *Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate*, which looks deceivingly like a direct colour-photograph, one cannot help recognizing the finally determining influences of subject and medium that far outweigh the vaunted cultural and chronological influences in importance.

Could one besides find a more striking demonstration in support of my thesis than the work of Albert Dürer, whose portraits in oil and other paintings, whose copper and steel-plate engravings and woodcuts show the same variety of style as Epstein's work does. The analogy between Epstein and Rembrandt, who is for the same reasons equally related to Dürer, I have already noticed in the first chapter.

The most superficial survey of Epstein's work will reveal the fact that it does not include any anecdotal representations (or so-called " genre " compositions).

From this single fact one could conclude—(if for the close observer other indications did not abound)—that literary " poetical " conceptions are foreign to his works which are materializations of exclusively sculptural ideas. This is by no means such a frequent occurrence as one might, from the nature of the matter, expect it to be. Most of the European sculpture of the last few centuries has been as much an illustration of events in themselves unconnected with sculpture as most of the post-Beethovenian symphonic music is chiefly illustrative of thought and events that had in their origin no connection with phenomena of sound. In both cases this was not, as is pretty commonly assumed, the consequence of romantic culture or modern psycho-analytical propensities, but simply of the absence of great original creative talent.

In minor talent one cannot expect to meet the particularly directed profundity of thought that is capable of being universal in terms of the plastic medium ; it must therefore endeavour to substitute breadth and diversity for depth and singleness. One single primitive thought can only be grasped in its infinite complexity of aspects and associations, unaccompanied by points of support

lying outside its own sphere to serve as foils and guide-posts, by an absolute and undivided talent.

Thus in Epstein's work we observe that its basic motives are always the great primitive human affections and forces, but expressed in their entirety and fullest compass. In the chief of his great imaginative works one such primary idea becomes materialized with such completeness and embracing profundity that it assumes a form which is the universe understood from one point of view. A similar materialization of one idea can be likened to the revelation of that pervading element of a whole structure which could become visible to the eye or be projected on an active medium through the action of one particular quality of luminous rays or some radio-active emanation which exercises no effect on the other elements present in the same structure. Or to give a less precise analogy which has, however, the merit of being easily visualized, it could be compared to a structure of unoxidizable metal filled to one solid whole with a substance that yields to the action of a solvent which leaves the former intact while eliminating the latter: or an organic structure as a coral or sponge from which the contained substance is washed out.

Such elemental motives as grief, exultation, love, maternity, toil, fecundity, are the subjects for his greatest works. The *Sun God*, the *Maternity*, the *Mother and Child*, the *Rock Drill*, all are most convincing examples of it.

There are certainly sections of artists and public who labour under the apprehension that art has outgrown such elemental notions, not seeing that these eternal motives must remain for ever the great inspiring forces of art. The same who make this mistake are committed, logically enough, to another erroneous view, namely, that the " form " is eternal while the contents vary. In reality, of course, the contents are eternal and invariable, love or maternity, hate or ambition are to-day what they were two thousand years ago, but the form is ever varying and changing with the individuality of great creative artists and the lead they give to the minor talents. The material of any substance found in nature is admittedly in itself of no significance ; it is the forms under which it appears that give it its value. An exact and striking

parallel can be found in the case of precious stones ; the constituent materials are in any form considered worthless ; they are chemically considered, silicates or fluorites, or other salts of no more precious things than magnesia or potash, but it is their physical form of crystals that endow them with qualities that make them sought after. A diamond consists of nothing but carbon, for which in its amorphous state no one would stretch out his hand, while its ideal value in the crystalline structure is unequalled. But even then it is the further form given to it by skilful cutting and grinding which gives it its fabulous ultimate value.

And as the thoughts, affections and emotions that in all times are the seed of human expression are immovable principles, so is the creative intelligence, while the forms which, from the artistic viewpoint, give them the value of individual creation are constantly changing. Only where creative power has imagined forms that present the idea with unsurpassable perfection can they themselves become as lasting as all visible creation of divine making.

The form-giving thought itself is eternal and infinite. The truth of these matters could not be more finally stated than in the psalmist's words : " *In initio tui Domine terram fundasti ; et opera manuum tuorum sunt caeli. Ipsi peribunt, tu autem permanes ; et omnes sicut veterascent. Et sicut opertorium mutabis eos, et mutabuntur ; tu autem idem ipse es, et anni tui non deficient.*"

What I understood by profundity, which, I said, made any elemental thought universal in its expression, I attempted to make clear by analogies. But I should not fail to protest energetically that under no condition would I wish to use the word in the sense in which it is so frequently applied with regard to modern art. This profundity is nothing but its curse of attempted philosophical meaning. A familiar manifestation of it is Wagner's painful insistence in speech and writing that his music was " *much more than music* " [*sic*]. This marvellous idea has, of course, been eagerly caught up by authors, painters, sculptors and musicians. They all are most anxious to impress on their public that they are giving " much more " than they apparently do. What men like Böcklin, Watts, Richard Strauss achieve is to create a mist

and confusion that makes confused minds sit up, feeling they have been understood, catching the " vibrations " of a sympathetically tuned mind.

In such surroundings the appearance of such work as that of Epstein is all the more welcome. What he does is simple and direct, his sculpture is sculpture and not " much more." But its truth and completeness make it profound in the real sense. Much harm, however, has been caused by the fact that the works of those artists who claim a much wider sphere for their work than it apparently needs are the most gratifying subjects for the writer on art who finds in their own declarations sufficient material for literary fantasies which have nothing to do with the art through which the work under notice has materialized, but philander round the work with such agreeable and earnest mien that they cannot help appealing to those who, in their enjoyment of the writer's production, are content to forget the rights of the subject. And unfortunately discussion of artistic subjects and descriptions of artists' creations come, in the overwhelming majority of cases, from men who themselves are no artists. A creative artist who has translated his thoughts into the medium, the use of which his talent and adaptability have indicated, would never be capable of making them equally clear in any other medium. If he were, this latter would become the work most unmistakably expressive of his intention, and it would again require commentary of a different order to satisfy those who are in need of one.

If, however, it should happen, in rare cases, that a sculptor or painter were, at the same time, a master of literary expression, it would be undesirable that he should interrupt his vastly more important work of producing painting or sculpture to discuss either his own or other people's works, and attempt to express in words his philosophical and theorizing reflections concerning them. On the other hand, when, as mostly happens, this is being done by minds that are themselves lacking creative instincts the outcome will, with rare exceptions, remain a commentary approaching the work from a standpoint entirely different from the artist's. This becomes fatal from the moment when aspects of the work are considered which cannot be seen from

any other point of view but their makers'. The critic's point of view, whether ethical or philosophical, is usually a literary one. When he starts reasoning from a point fixed by similar reflections, he is bound to fail the moment he arrives at the essentials of any work owing its conception to relations that can only exist between the material employed by the artist as a medium and his terms of thinking in it.

The meaning of the words the critic employs then becomes one that does not apply to the requirements of the subject he treats. The abuse of the high-sounding terms " profound " and " profundity," in the sense in which most art critics employ them, is one of the notorious examples of " æsthetic " irrelevancy. Nothing is more natural than that they should praise work that to them appears profound of meaning, the expression of a profound thought. Quite as natural to assign a less important place to those that seem to them lacking in the respect of profundity. But—in the current dialect of philosophizing critical literature on art, " profound " has come to mean first of all as much as " serious," " grave." This ignores the fact that profundity denotes the grade of penetration into the intrinsic being of the thing under consideration, consequently one may be profound in dealing with a most frivolous subject. Further, those employing the word think of profundity only in its literary sense, when it conveys the presence of comprehensiveness in the inclusion of relevant detail, and, in the description of a thought concerned with any particular subject, the implied knowledge of all its aspects and associations with other subjects and of its relations to human life, thought and observation : all these in so far as they can be elucidated in words indicating the right proportions and grouping in the complex of ideas. Now when they arrive at the application of a similar test to an embodiment of human thought in a different medium, they first transpose this into the medium which determines the development of their own reasoning. The differing requirements of those two become responsible for a grade of irrelevancy conforming to the extent of the former.

The absurdity of judging Sanskrit poetry from an English translation by applying to the latter the rules of English grammar is

obvious. How far more obvious then ought to be the surpassing absurdity of applying canons extracted from literary ideas and their transcription into words to a thought translated into them from conceptions conveyed by means of painting, music or sculpture. And yet that is what self-styled scientific art criticism is constantly doing. The literary analyst will discover greater profundity and meaning in painting or sculpture in relation to the amount of " translatable " matter in it. This naturally increases in inverse ratio as the intrinsic pictural or sculptural meaning of the work decreases. It becomes less and nought as the absolute " profundity " of meaning is reached, which is of a quality only possible in the conception of a painter's or sculptor's mind. Contrasting with these, the favourite subjects for discussion of the art-critic, are the works in which an abundance of literary detail of meaning has been suggested by an artist who himself proceeds from a conception that is in its essentials a literary and not a sculptural or pictural (though all the more frequently a " picturesque ") one.

It is for the average essayist on art a task at once congenial and easy to write volumes about the products of a Puvis de Chavannes or Felicien Rops, paintings that are painfully superficial as regards the amount of thought they contain in terms of painting proper and pure. If, on the other hand, he chooses for discussion works of Rembrandt or Leonardo (think of the *David and Saul* of the former, or the latter's *Madonna of the Rocks*), he notoriously produces journalistic causeries of an appalling emptiness and verbosity. Yet such are the very works that in terms of painting, that is of line, colour, light, proportions, composition, rhythm, attain to a profundity which, if it has been equalled, surely has never been surpassed in any work of human brain and hands in any department of art or science.

The penetration, the completeness, the grasp of essentials, the comprehension of associations and relations that constitute profundity, are in the work of a painter or sculptor the depth and fulness of things he can see. These may have their correlative in thought subject to utterance in words, but they themselves cannot be conveyed by their means. Now even as a mind capable of con-

ceiving the whole meaning of words can become penetrated with the significance, the revealing precision and intensity of a word, so the mind capable of containing thought that can only be transmitted through the medium of any other art can be struck by precisely identical qualities contained in a curve, a rhythm, a shade, a tone-value, a relation of planes or masses. In those conceptions, contrary to popular notions, there is no question of vagueness: the impressions, though outside the province of word's power, are unmistakable, precise and definite. This very fact, however, the average commentator or scribe can so little understand that he must simply deny a possibility he cannot conceive. By their attempts to describe the qualities and meaning of works in terms of a medium into which they must first mentally transpose it, they cause the loss of quite as much, or more than any work of literature can lose by translation from its original language into one that is founded on the most differing requirements and derives from totally different conditions. In this particular domain of transcription the loss is admittedly incalculable. In the most favourable instances the translated work is comparable —to borrow the image Cervantes puts into the mouth of Don Quixote—to a carpet reversed. On its back it exhibits some kind of reproduction of its design and pattern, while surface, colours, texture, contours of drawing and all intention of subtlety is lost. I may hope, having made my meaning sufficiently clear, to evade the chances of being misunderstood when I say that Epstein is a profound thinker. I mean by that (as distinct from the popular conception of the term, which would imply his thinking after the manner of the philosopher, making the conclusions he thus arrives at the basis for conceptions of works of art that embody them) that his penetration of nature and the human mind and life, and the interplay of their connections is relatively as great. Also that it reveals to him the essentials of its mysteries with equal clarity, making the significance of his works equally far-reaching. Therefore his works belong to those manifestations which reveal the human mind to itself, enriching the world after the desire of its highest ambition.

It is the form given to the thought which, as I said, lends the value

to it, and naturally in sculpture, where it is essential in a double sense, it is the last achievement of a master. Gifted sculptors are the rarest of artists for that reason, and consequently no art has so degenerated and sunk to such an exceedingly low level in times when form has become nothing else but the prescription of tradition, a convention to be obeyed regardless of the meaning to be or not to be discovered in it; while, as I argued, it must constitute the personal factor in the expression of perfectly objective sentiments. It is the artist's handling of them that makes them " artistic material." One of the fundamental errors of æstheticism, is its attempt to fix form before anything else, proceeding from comparison between master works and abstract theoretical considerations founded on them. But for this reason æsthetic theory always is an afterthought, and in the position of the person who regularly remembers and knows all facts when someone else acts as a prompter but becomes helpless the moment he is left to himself. The artist's sense of form being his artistic personality it is impossible for anyone to foretell either. How could anyone be expected, not even in advance, to know his mind when to that purpose the artist himself has to direct his entire energy, concentrate the power of his genius and talents? Could anyone be expected to do this task for him, that for himself is the great task of his life?

The more rare is the sculptor in particular because his handiwork is so exceptionally difficult and because, apart from manual skill and versatility it demands a bodily predisposition, a physical adaptability, qualities of body and mind that are themselves rare and therefore the more seldom met in combination with genius that finds sculpture the indicated medium for the conveyance of its ideas.

Now Epstein is a sculptor in the complete sense of the word, as the great sculptors of antiquity and the Renaissance were. He knows how to tackle metal; he can carve marble, hew granite; he is a skilful workman handling divers materials with knowledge and nimbleness. And he possesses the inexhaustible energy and the almost titanic vigour the work demands.

The shape his thought is to take is ultimately determined by the

material the particular work requires, and it is his logical treatment of it that co-operates to give to the sculpture its close unity and the appearance of an organic structure of the substance employed. If this be metal the shapes are " metallic," if the word may pass, and reproduce the edges of the tools the working in it needs. The same shapes could not justifiably exist in marble or wood. When he carves marble it is the " spirit " of the marble which decides the conception and the ultimate appearance, and again the work is unthinkable in bronze or granite. It is not generally realized that most of the work which is supposed to come from the artist's studio is in the case of the average sculptor not even the product of his own hands, but of skilled artisans who work in obscurity and anonymity. The latter are often solely responsible for the beauty of a piece of sculpture of which the nominal maker has only executed a model in clay or wax, which is not mechanically reproduced as a bronze moulding is, but entirely chiselled by a humble stonemason who becomes the artist's talent and conscience. The Italian workmen employed to carve marble for sculptors are usually wonderful craftsmen who will correct and purify many a model from an incompetent sculptor who receives the credit for the impression created by the excellence of the carving.

But one cannot expect the sculptor of our time to produce his own bronze mouldings. Some of the Renaissance artists were in a position to do this because, unlike their present confrères, they received the requisite financial assistance from patrons and the technical assistance of students, themselves capable artists and potential masters who were grateful and eager to work in their studios. In that period a sculptor of considerable merit did not feel humiliated to be employed in the capacity of a stonemason by the architect of a cathedral, while in our time anyone who can model sufferably is so penetrated by the importance of his individuality that he expects the world to pause when he raises his hand and naturally would not dream of entering a master's studio as a pupil and assistant, as he would feel he were robbing the world of the fruit of the time and energy he could employ in independent creation.

And for a sculptor to become his own bronze moulder when, even if he could do so without financial aid, he would have to engage workmen and run the whole establishment for his own works only, would, in view of the apparatus and outfit needed, become an absurdly disproportionate proposition. Moreover, the successful reproduction in bronze asks of the artist that he shall see the ultimate cast in his imagination ere he sets out to model, and that though his hands work in wax or clay, he shall continuously think in metal, as otherwise not only shapes that could be reproduced would become nonsensical, but some might actually have a totally different appearance and others finally might not be fit for reproduction at all. Many a sculptor's mechanically reproduced metal casts were not only modelled but conceived and thought in clay or wax, and look monstrosities because the metal demands its due and refuses to be denied.

Or the sculptor presses the stonemason to execute in stone a model which taxes the latter's executive virtuosity to the utmost and to a wholly perverted purpose. But the carving in stone is like a violin melody played on a trombone, even as similarly produced work in bronze often makes the effect of a trumpet playing flute music. Because, apart from not himself working the material in which the work has to appear, the sculptor does not even understand its nature and indicated treatment. He asks his moulder to copy wax fantasies in metal which may often be quite easily done, but certainly never with impunity. Exactly as he expects analogous prodigies of his stonemason, who, obeying, may thus wastefully apply noteworthy skill while the stone cries out against the mishandling.

VI

DURING the last few centuries, as I previously pointed out, sculpture has sunk into a cesspool from which it has been drawn out by the work of a few men with an incontestable genius for it of which Epstein is the most important. I must reckon with results and not potentialities, and the actual output of a few men, of whom Brancusi is one, is put into the shade by that of Epstein. The originality and craftsmanship of Gaudier were unquestionable, but he unfortunately was killed at such an early age that next to the fairest of promises he left few works in which he had sufficiently overcome technical problems and successfully emerged from his experimental struggles to make them complete revelations of his artistic personality.

There is hardly a work of Epstein that is not for its masterful utterance of an original conception a valuable addition to, and in which do not at the same time reappear, the great and glorious traditions of the work of the best of antique or Renaissance masters from Polykleitos to Donatello or Michel Angelo.

We must go to a work like Donatello's *David* to meet the squareness of cut and force of precise delineation wedded to a softness of contour, shining mellowness of surface and tender play of light and shade in the subtly moving planes that bronze works of Epstein like the *Romilly* or the *Old Woman's Head* exhibit. Never did a Phidias, a Michel Angelo, make the marble seem at once more immaterial and monumental, more softly undulating between clear-cut lines and angles, or in a similar microcosmos of detail better preserve a perfect balance in the rhythm of great masses. The sensitiveness, the transparence, the wonderfully moving melody of profile and the original purity of surface in the marble *Mother and Child*, are equal to what the craft's greatest tradition has suggested.

The best and greatest examples of Assyrian and Egyptian carvings in granite or soft stone possess no more lapidary force and massive weight or compactness, next to elegance without frivolity, simplicity and completeness, no more elementary directness than Epstein's granite *Mother and Child* or the (Hopton Wood stone) *Maternity* or the *Sun God.*

The mystic rhythm and subdued play of shadows on the dully effaced polish, the shining softness and exquisitely intersecting lines on the plane's edges of his *flenite figures* or the dark metal of his *Rock Drill* are equal to the finest of African carved wooden masks or Indian bronze work.

The entire gamut of sentiment and emotion is for the sculptor born the soul of a language he can speak in stone with his chisel. In it he can dream in vague thought of fantastic fable-life and chant loud psalms of definite conviction and thunder; as a woman can he smile and weep; he can roar as battle arms roar in the shock of warriors, cast forth full-lunged hymns of joy and sing in whispers of soft modulations. Tenderly he can murmur or shrilly screech in angular shrieks and sublimate the tapering recesses of his thought into fine icicles of unbodily lacework or pile earthquake boulders, and again tremblingly quiver as dragonflies' wings or flowers' petals opening out of the bud under the first morning rays. But no dithyrambic utterance can be other than wholly inadequate to translate the exalted enthusiasm and ecstatic devotion that makes inspired tools of the hands that under genius' guidance solve for him the problems as they present themselves. The perfect workman, quietly certain of his sovereign mastery over the material, can watch his skilful hands which, not betraying his confidence as independent and reliable helpers, mould for him while his mind can concentrate entirely on the direction of what he sees being executed before his eyes.

He can see his vision take shape as those dexterous hands proceed, trusting in their power to realize to the last precise detail the model in front of his spiritual eye. He knows his hands will not disappoint him in giving the reproduction of his vision. To watch this unstumbling materialization of his mind's content is as the joy of participating at a ritual of which every phase leads

to the next with a naturalness and exactness expressive of the unwavering sureness of significance of that which created it.

No human frailty, however harnessed by will and ambition, discipline and conscientiousness can, of itself, attain to this creative sureness, and to witness it is for the artist to recognize the grace of divine reflection that constitutes his own power.

I should not omit while I point out the traditional element in Epstein's work to insert a few explanatory words in order that my meaning may not be mistaken. Tradition, as Elijah's cloak, falls from the older masters' shoulders on those of their successors, who, however, may be their contemporaries or may be living centuries after them. The unbroken chain of tradition is formed by the identity of essential aims after which the creative mind is striving and of the means he employs to realize them. One should be careful not to confound traditional and conventional. The mistake is as frequently committed as that virtuosity—which is the shining case of the intentions' realization—is mistaken for the frivolous flippancy that pleases itself in showing off dexterity without the meaning that should direct it being preserved. Artistic tradition is not as convention is, concerned with outward mannerisms, but with inward ideals and just recognition of the highest summits reached by human effort. It cannot be ignored by the most powerful and original talent any more than the truth of which it is the revelation. Convention, on the other hand, enslaves the less independently active imagination. The free play of instincts that in the case of the lesser talents should be assiduously nurtured is stunted in its development by the man-made law of convention which is by the petrified pontifical souls of its upholders dispensed in pharisaical block-headedness of formal stiffness and ceremonial sluggishness as sinister and insane as its effect is fatal.

In several instances, however, critics of Epstein's work, while admitting that it means a glorious resurrection of sculpture's great traditions, have thought it necessary to take exception to much of it on moral grounds, and in this connection have pointed to a significant difference they believed they could observe between his imaginative works and his portraits, and even to a reflection of

the same antithesis in the contrast between the portraits themselves conforming to the character and obvious moral and social status of the sitters. In how far this art criticism on moral grounds is justifiable and what is much more important even in how far it holds good, or is at all applicable in Epstein's case, I will refer to in the next chapter. First, I must deal with the alleged " dualism " that seems to puzzle a great many benevolently intentioned commentators on his art. It has been thought necessary by them to make a distinction between a " realistic " and an " abstract " mode of rendering to which his sculptures alternatingly should conform. The *bona fides* of some of those who have forwarded these contentions justifies at least their discussion, however erroneous they seem.

I do not propose to assert that Epstein's portraits and his works of an obviously imaginative character have come into existence in an exactly identical manner. No work of any independent value is ever conceived or executed precisely as any other was. Every subject, moreover, defines its own treatment as much as the ultimate form of a grown organism is predetermined in its seed. A work of art, as a living organism or a structure of crystals or any natural formation, varies in the ways of its growth and final appearance with the conditions attendant on its originating, gestation and development exactly as do two subjects of the same species.

Nature's aims, whether she produces apparently complex or simple forms, are constant and identical, indifferent of whether they take the shape of the simplest crystals or the most highly organized animal organism.

Now the only way to understand artistic creation is, as I have repeatedly emphasized, to recognize it as only another manifestation of the principal creative power which, instead of acting directly, immediately, establishes an independent agency to act as intermediary, viz. the artist's intelligence.

That there is in Epstein's case no need to search for an enlightening designation that will serve as a bridge between his contrasting works, I endeavoured to make clear when I compared the diverse modes of expression of which he makes use, to those of cultural

periods of closely co-operating castes of artists, and chiefly when in this connection I pointed to the totally different viewpoint and technique between the various works (portraits in oil, imaginative composition in dry point, etc.) of Dürer, Rembrandt and others. To a considerable extent the responsibility for the desired distinction is borne by the commercially inclined artists who, unconcernedly arresting their own development, once they happen to find they have turned out a successful article, go on repeating it and continue in this way as long as the demand persists. They can then at the same time flatter themselves with the public homage to their position as masters of their art, won for them by the reputation of their personal style or manner.

The public's exigencies in this respect are the cause of many a talent wasting its powers in the chase after this chimera of " the master's inimitable manner."

Whatever contrast we observe in the different works of a master whose intentions are not influenced by similar considerations originates in the diversity of the subjects and the form their logical treatment requires, and not in the inconstancy of aims and variability of artistic sensitiveness in the creative spirit. The fact that every new conception demands a new manner of execution, as every formation grows after its particular nature and requirements, does not lead to the conclusion that the artist's general outlook on the universe as it relates to his own production varies incessantly. Therefore the contemplator labours under a misapprehension when he thinks he must readjust his focus and be continually shifting his point of observation as he is confronted by the various manifestations of one master's conceptive capacity. If I did not know that the difficulty assumes a concrete shape for many a student of Epstein's work, I would not dwell on the point, because without the evidence my own experience of such instances has supplied it would appear inconceivable to me that it could be expected that his *Venus* or *Rock Drill* and the *Portrait of Lord Fisher* should be executed in the same manner, or that one should need to classify him on the strength of the latter work a realist and of the former an ideological fantastic visionary.

The Fisher bust as a sculpture is as much pure invention as the

Venus ; while the latter work again is as " realistic " in execution as the portrait mentioned, because though in that case there exists an indubitable stimulus in the personality and physiognomy of the sitter, it determines the sculptural conception but does not replace it, and therefore both works are equally conscientiously modelled after the sculptor's vision of the mentally completed work that precedes the starting of the execution.

An artist possessed of such burning intensity of imagination and so supremely sure of the nature of the message he has to deliver does not work at hazard, trusting to good fortune, but even when commencing in an improvising way or on a commissioned or an occasional work will arrive at a fixed conception in the very act of briefly preludizing, and thus the least reflected of his works after living models may differ in degree but do not differ in kind from his more important gradually-generating great constructions that realize his individual imaginings.

But naturally, as I said, the sculptural conception of a portrait is (with the exception of the rare cases where the sculptor meets the ideal model for a finally planned work) not arrived at independently of the sitter. According to the amount of interest his person and figure may rouse in the mind of the sculptor, this latter will be relatively restricted and bound in the range of his conceptive potentialities. Therefore though even his few comparatively indifferent products in portraiture are as sculptures generally unique in some respect through his sublime workmanship, the great significance of his entire output derives chiefly from the qualities of those works in which his imagination has been unhampered by the necessity to find a compromise between his artistic intentions and the limits prescribed by what possibilities a model can suggest.

Unfortunately, the task of a sculptor, who must, as any other artist, carry on an uninterrupted fight against prejudice and ignorance, snobbism and hypocrisy, is more exceptionally difficult in that he must, in addition, expend an amount of physical energy which, besides requiring an extraordinary constitution, needs the greatest possible mental concentration for its proper application. It is, however, too much to expect that he should, in addition,

make the immense material sacrifices his work necessitates, when he does not receive the protection of wealth's patronage to assist and encourage him. In order not only to live but to be able to defray the vast expenses the acquisition of his costly materials necessitates, he is forced to devote the greater part of his hours of work to the execution of commissioned work which is, where disinterestedness of his patrons is conspicuously non-existent, usually their own portraits. The art patron of our present day appears little aware of his moral obligations towards contemporary creative artists. He generally imagines that he renders the greatest service to one and through him to art, when he orders a portrait from him or buys any other work which he personally happens to like or approve of. But, in this way, he does not do much more than co-operate to prevent the artist from starving. It is apparently inconceivable to the potential patron that to be valuable his assistance should take the form of unconditional financing, which would make the creative artist the master of his own time and free from care, and enable him to execute any conception without having to reckon with the expenses he incurs, guided exclusively by artistic considerations. He should know he can be ever sure of the trust and confidence of his patron and that the latter does not expect him to remain informed of possible desires and cognizant of his taste, but is satisfied to be of help to a master while understanding that he may be quite unable to follow the flight of his mind and therefore modest enough to renounce a right to be disappointed if some of his works do not appeal to him.

So far from acknowledging the rationality of this standpoint, the average wealthy man who pretends to any culture assumes he is creating a general indebtedness of artists towards himself if he invests his money in marketable works of art and that he deserves the particular gratitude of any living master if he buys some of his productions. If, on the other hand, he acquired, in either case admittedly for his own gratification and not from philanthropic motives, articles of equal monetary value from a commercial concern, whether individual undertaking or the impersonal emporium, the absurd notion that in so doing he would

create a debt of gratitude or obligation would not even enter his head.

A sculptor then is, in our time, in a particularly unfortunate position. With the exception of one American art lover, John Quinn, not even a multi-millionaire, who has acquired almost the entire output of Epstein in the course of the last years, no disinterested patron has presented himself in order to enable the master to give to humanity in the fuller measure the benefit of his creative powers. The consequence of this is that Epstein has had to renounce many a planned execution of works that were to be important materializations of his most individual conceptions, and that even some of his greatest and most original works, after having been exhibited in an initial stage of realization, have had to remain uncompleted. One of the most painfully notable instances of this is his *Rock Drill*, which I hold to be one of his most significant works and one of the supremely characteristic expressions of his creative genius. The entire figure executed in plaster in 1913 was originally exhibited in London in 1916. It considerably puzzled the public and art critics, who, instead of approaching the work whose elemental power was obvious, without preconceived notions, were led, probably also under the influence of its surroundings on that occasion, to consider it as a stylistic experiment to be understood as representing one of the tendentious " isms " rebellious " manifestos " were then familiarizing. The fact is, however, only relevant in so far as it may partly account for the regrettable lack of interest the work was, at that time, able to excite. Anyhow, no one has come forward with an offer of assistance that would have enabled its maker to carry out his plan of having the figure reproduced in metal on a larger scale and place it on a base, the shape and proportions of which were to complete the realization of the sculptural idea. Consequently, up to the present, only the gun-metal reproduction (on the original scale) of the torso exists, which is here reproduced. Unfortunately this instance of how the sculptor has been hampered by material factors is not an isolated one, and the reflection that much may be missed for which, at some future date, when the true value of his work has become indisputable and raised

above question, no sacrifice would be judged too great, is an utterly depressing one.

Some compensation may be found in the circumstance that, confining himself during the most recent phase of his artistic development almost exclusively to portraiture, Epstein has been so deeply absorbed in the study of physiognomy and the penetration of human character that he has here (thus stronger than ever suggesting the analogy with Rembrandt's artistic career) eclipsed the masterly portraiture of his earlier work, producing ever more profoundly studied heads, and busts of incomparable execution. Some of them, indeed, are the highest possible creative manifestations, short of blowing life into the nostrils. Their very build suggests the process of vitalization the material has undergone at his hands, and his way of building up his heads in the round from within is in itself strikingly expressive of the nature of his sculptural conceptions.

A great many portraits modelled in wax or clay give an unmistakable impression of having been produced by either lumping big masses together which the thumbs and fingers rolled into shape as they fixed them in their position, or of the final surface having been arrived at by cutting away from the block of material (which the structural stone demands, but logical handling does not permit in the case of the mouldable amorphous substances)—a process which leaves the inside untouched by life. It is arrested on the outside ; does not glow through it and permeate the whole. In Epstein's portraits the infinite sensitiveness of surface is even as in the living model dependent on the underlying portions.

The loving care with which his portraits are treated in this respect recalls for its artistic conscientiousness and devotion, the moving sincerity and respectful abandonment, the religious labour of those old painters and gravers who adorned with the most beautiful ornamentation they could produce the inside of sarcophagi where no glance of human eyes would, as far as they could foresee, ever reach.

His earlier portraits exhibit also this marvellous vitality, not as so much sculpture irritatingly does, presenting an arrested movement, thus attempting to achieve the suggestion of life. His, on

the contrary, combine the psychological summing up of characteristic momentum, and the rhythm of movement that determines the essence of features and facial expression with the conscientious execution of a plastic conception founded on purely sculptural factors and fixing the eternal type in the envelope that yet preserves its direct human appeal in consequence of the unflagging love with which the living model has been studied. Yet his later portraits become in this last respect ever profounder utterances of psychological observation and divination of the deepest recesses of character without losing as regards their plastic significance. On the contrary, they present an overwhelming wealth of detail welded together into perfect unity and, however widely diverging, all reasserting one single thought and from the remotest points of contact reconducting to the central idea.

Nothing could be more revealing, and command greater admiration than a comparative study of different heads obviously presenting the same type, being various plastic conceptions of closely related complexes of thought to be found amongst Epstein's portraits, and perhaps even more convincing in this connection would be the comparison of portraits produced at different periods from the same sitters. Then there are the several portraits of the sculptor's wife that so finally demonstrate the development I noted to need no comment—the mask, the wonderfully sensitive head of the bust, with the monumental stateliness of the drapery which magnificently frames the head.

Then there are the head and two busts of Mrs. Lindsell Stewart, the last of which is a portrait in which he has, without employing any but legitimate means, achieved an amazing fulness of suggestion of movement, colour, and various consistencies of substance that constitute a verily stupendous technical performance. Those tired, burning eyelids of the last-named head have been suggested by a miraculously acute observation of the infinitely subtle anatomical changes that permit such a condition to be indicated by means of shape alone.

How his eye and hand are capable of recalling such almost microscopic gradations of form is, besides, already apparent in the much earlier head of a newly born baby, which no mother's eye could

have observed with more love and penetration. In this work the quivering eyelids hardly protect the unseeing but trusting little eyes, whose diminutive ball shapes are apparent through those pathetic tiny shields, palpitating with the pulsation of the blood which is unmistakably noticeable at the fontanelles on the frail little shell of a skull begging support for its unwitting helplessness. This tender work is the more impressive, coming, as it does, from the maker of the *Sun God*.

This wonderful contrast of uncompromising force and touchingly tender weakness finds a moving expression in one of his works where the two exist next to each other. The soft embryonal shape of an infant protectingly held between that proud harness of human ribs on the figure of the *Rock Drill* is one of the inspiring features of that sublime creation.

Two works which also suggest the comparison I made are the *Marcelle*, which (as other earlier portraits—the *Mrs. McEvoy*, the *Lady Gregory*) has already established a perfect balance between the two performances of fixing a type by apportioning in the finest differentiation the grade of physiognomical characteristics cumulative of the sitter's spiritual complex, and obeying the dictates of a purely plastic concept in the harmony of curvature, intersecting planes and the masses of material, and the bust of *Lillian Shelley*. This latter work, while lacking none of the qualities that distinguish the *Marcelle* and the others from the same period, exhibits, in addition to them, the features of Epstein's more recent style that became apparent at the time of execution of the masterly series of presentations of human types of which the heads of the poet *W. H. Davies*, *Augustus John* the painter and the *Josef Holbrooke* the musical composer afford examples.

Like the *Marcelle* it possesses all that is needed ; the simple compactness, the repose and the sculptural qualities I enumerated above make it thoroughly and ultimately satisfactory as a plastic creation. The *Marcelle* with the feline agility in the play of muscle, the strong neck firmly planted on the shoulders and proudly supporting the head, admirably conveys the expansion of an elementally feminine force which in the *Lillian Shelley* also comes to expression, but here with a gripping intensity and an

added universality of meaning that lend it an incomparable grandeur and nobility. In both works a strikingly contrasted softness of outline from neck to shoulder onward brings to the ruthless directness of primitive temperament an element of bewitching loveliness, of appealing tenderness, recalling the persisting delicately-limbed child in the flesh of the woman that with a dramatic precision visualizes irresistible fascination, the pernicious charms of that Fata Morgana—the eternal Hetaira.

In the *Marcelle* appears the uncanny contradiction between the classic beauty and dignity of the profile, the soft contours of the cheek and the hardly concealed scorn of the sceptical mouth, the badly contained hate of the perfunctorily smiling eye. She is the horribly lovable creature of man's sinful desire, the seductive scourge, yielding to lust in a terrifying travesty of passionate love, dispensing poetic justice by the monstrous harvest of remorse and detestation for which she sows the seeds. Through the ornamental curtain of her gaily beckoning mask pierces the glow of her intuitive, atavistic hatred of social superiors on whom she can prey while they condescend to her, but from whom she is tragically certain she can expect but contempt and renunciation the moment she would give way to any wish to pretend to human rights, to reveal the sister-being that is in her. She is infinitely pathetic, pitiable to the extent even of offering no reward to vanity and sentiment by the suggestion of her redemption. But these facts are too familiar and too generally, if most instinctively, realized to make the appearance of their expression in a work like the portrait by Epstein particularly notable, as there exists no portrait by him that does not offer an equal or greater fulness of human understanding and penetration. It is in this very aspect that the bust of *Lillian Shelley*, even as practically every single one of his own recent portraits, almost dwarfs his earlier achievements. In it the subtlety of psychological observation is far less tangible and indicative of a highly exceptional power of perception. Though the general character of the observation is similar (as it obviously has to be in the other cases as well as in the present one, the artist's task being more to recognize the representative and not the accidentally abnormal, though he is bound to be as

deeply interested if he happens to come upon it) it is even more sensitively differentiated, and in this respect related to the other work; and it is as sculpture a further development by reason of its even more superb workmanship that handles with unfailing grasp and sureness a genuine microcosmos of detail and yet maintains a harmonious unity of composition that constitutes an absolutely flawless organism.

This, now, is one of those instances of the working of creative genius which as infallible as nature itself builds structures of a complexity never-ending, but telescopically unfolding, into ever further perspectives. This task can only be made possible by unlimited intuition and to obtain the same result by applying the sum of experience to be gained (if the attainment were possible) by complete analysis is indisputably beyond reach of the human intellect.

I will return to a discussion of some of the individual portraits at a later stage. The difficulties, however, of going into particulars concerning these works are obvious. Considered solely as plastic productions they could not, of course, be in any degree adequately described by words. And the illustrations this book contains, while giving but the projection on to one plane with only the added suggestion of depth in the gradation between black and white that conforms to, but does not reproduce, the effect of the light on the curving planes of the surface, are still far more eloquent than words could ever be in approaching the impression which the sculptor's actual work alone can convey. With regard to this I can only attempt to give to anyone who feels the need of it the direction which his thought should take when confronting sculpture with the wish to grasp the artist's intentions and to keep his mind free of the misleading influence of preconceived notions that may have formed without taking account of the personality of the sculptor whose work is being contemplated. The possible revelations that primarily relate to the character of the sitter, and the sculptor's synthetic expression of his preconceptional intuitively exhausting analysis of his model's psyche, are accompanied by the peculiar restrictions proceeding from their own nature. The majority of the sitters are mentioned by name and do not belong

to the historical past, which guarantees an absence of personal motive when dealing with the portraits of a Sforza or Borgia, whose memory is preserved by anecdotal interest. It does so equally in the cases of portraits of a Sappho or Homer, where it is not curiosity that asks for anecdotal information but where light may be thrown on the association of the artist's central idea by taking note of the representative human qualities and emotions connected with such names that tend to become the symbols of them. While, on the other hand, in the case of portraits of living persons by a living artist, it may frequently be as much as one can permit oneself to do if one allots them to either of the two categories mentioned. To try and do justice to the artist's performance one should be free of the restrictions of which I spoke. But to have to make the attempt in those instances where one is certain to be wounding susceptibilities on all sides, if not actually incurring actions for libel, means executing an egg-dance, for which feat I lack the necessary disposition.

VII

I HAVE discovered a tendency, in many a criticism of Epstein's work, that has assumed the character of a war-cry in its use by some maliciously disposed writers, to mobilize against the disconcerting activities of this embarrassing artistic personality the forces of pietism that will react to the watchword without any laborious examination of particular cases, and of hypocrisy that will, for its own gratification, rally without much bother about the respective merits of good and bad faith in art criticism. The attitude of such critics towards all art is usually one of latent suspicion: they eagerly fasten upon any gossip that seems to justify it, and are only too pleased to hear the exciting stories denouncing the uncovered immorality of modern art and its exponents. And they seem not by any means to constitute the whole of the public ready to ponder over imbecilities such as the earnest assertions that Epstein's art is not only "immoral" but "hostile to life," tending to "destroy" beauty and health, and in their place exalt disease and purulence, glorify the abscesses of existence, the pus of society.

This particular relation of art to values borrowed from the region of morals is a most elusive and hardly definable one. Artistic perfection and beauty are in the work and not in the subject, and the qualification of the subject from a moral point of view does not any longer apply to the work of whose contents it forms a part. The subject in itself may be objectionable, but that does not make the work so. The work can only become objectionable when the artist's intentions are of an immoral kind, a contingency whose occurrence it is infinitely harder to prove. But, again, when this should happen to be the case the resulting immorality would be, this time, in the work, and the subject, considered separately, might be perfectly harmless and free from any obnoxious elements.

Many a moralizing spectator, however, is quick to ascribe to the artist intentions that are analogous to thoughts the work is suggesting to him by its perception through the instrument of his own perverted imagination or psycho-pathological aberrations—" The fault, dear Brutus. . . ."

But other *bona-fide* moralists of unsoiled fancy attack works under the stimulus of a falsely conceived and wrongly applied piety because they act from a total misconception of an artist's vocation. They lamentably fail from an ethical standpoint that seems to suggest they have badly read the examples of Christ and the Saints, which can teach us that the purest intelligence, the highest form of human understanding, that divine perspicacity and deepest penetration do never in disgust turn away from whatever aspect life and humanity may present. Genuinely sincere art, which is not concerned with calculating the effect of its utterances on any particular section of the human race, but addresses itself to an ideal whole of its brothers, may strive to emulate these examples because it is the earthly reflection of the divine power. It does not engage in chasing the chimera of certain æsthetes who dream of a definable canonical ideal of " the " beautiful which *per se* is believed by them to have an abstract independent existence. Though, whence that should derive and how it could be divorced from human equation none of them ever was able to explain, because whether conscious of it or not they are inevitably faced at some stage of their investigations by the uncomfortable fact that things have no existence we can conceive, in other words, as far as we are concerned, *are not* apart from our perceptions.

The realization of this and its consequent effects is essential to the artist's attitude towards his intellectual and sensual apprehensions, and explains the absence of a driving principle that would lead him to strip existence of its disturbing sides rather than of its comforting or pleasing ones. He uses his gifts to convey whatever offers itself to his perception with sufficient clarity to suggest the possibility of an employment that suits his artistic purposes for any particular work.

His admirers are free to extract from his productions a criterion of what beauty must mean to them, if they feel the need for it,

while others are equally free to derive from them a standard of ugliness that may suit their personal tastes, but they have no more right than the admirers to expect anyone else to accept a standard they have thus formed as applicable or holding good in respect of works of art in general.

But the spectator who would wish to offer a standard that is not even derived from the work he proposes to judge by it, or from others that owe their existence to analogous intentions, one, on the contrary, that is based on considerations whose connections with the work in question only the artist himself is competent to appreciate, cannot expect support for his preposterous claim to make such judgments generally acceptable as sound and relevant, nor any confidence in his opinions on the works' artistic merits, since he has by the very way in which he approached the work disclosed the ludicrous inadequacy of his method and attitude. In this respect he appears to belong to the category of those legendary fools who incurred picturesque forms of failure when proposing such performances as to judge guilt or innocence by smell, or test a building by tasting of the bricks, the wine by putting their ear to the barrel.

There was more detectable sense in judging heresy by means of the thumb-screw and the rack, or discovering the witch by going for the cat or seeing whether she would float on the water or survive the fall from a tower.

If many a respectably competent art critic has defended works against attacks on irrelevant moral points by attempting to justify them by these, he has probably shown if not any more conscientious adherence to his own convictions at least as much world-wise recognition of the power of popular prejudice as did the exalted philosopher who, when defending his mother accused of witch-craft, did not scruple to renounce his own writings, and without denying the possibility of the existence of witches, the sabbaths and the helpful broomstick, only questioned the validity of the charge on " technical " grounds.

The renunciation of his principle by Galileo shows conclusively how far a cynic may go in this direction, only one would wish that everyone would, as he did, make it clear how little reliance

should be placed on the actions of the most discerning mind under certain circumstances. There are, however, cases in which the attack on the artist's work by the outraged moralist is not a direct one, but subtly disguised in the shape of a legitimate criticism leaning on the pillars of historical tradition by more accomplished scribes, who, recognizing the strength of the opposing position, reverse the procedure of the defenders, to whom I referred above, who borrow their adversaries' weapons. As those moralize amongst the moralists the former, too, becomes as Saul amongst the prophets and howls " Art " with what to him are the art wolves.

They have made us familiar with the, at first sight, plausible enough accusation, categorically launched as " modern " art, that it goes for its inspiration to the asylum, the brothel and the pest-house. Many a student of contemporary art has been so far fascinated by its apparent vraisemblance to have his thought led into the channel that flows to reason's perdition. They have forwarded the compromising excuse that, the classic masters having finally treated every other subject, nothing else remained for the moderns but to take refuge in the study of morbid psychology. They overlook the undeniable interest apparent in every great master's work in every phase of life and death. It is not generally recognized that all those differences between art and culture as a whole of one period and another have no actual existence, but lead, as do the " archaic," the " baroque," the " rococo " a chimerically artificial existence in the professor's mouldy study.

This parody of an existence originates in the pretentious Teutonic so-called scientific comparative analysis of artistic productions. Its chief function, apart from raising pedants, snobs and art-idiots generally, is to supply backbone to the " professional " art-critic's preconceived notions. And a joyously hailed rampart they form for the critic-antiquarian, the dealer's-devil, the average wealthy collector's faithfully devoted galloper. He has an axe to grind, and if not spurred by conviction, must at least preserve an appearance of artistic decency. Either to hide his incapacity or the commercial motives of his disinclination to appreciate or admit the qualities of any work not yet assimilated through the

sustained efforts of the mental superiors of several consecutive generations, he is anxious to unmask the degeneracy of contemporaneous art. If one goes into the question with a mind cleared of cant and prejudice based on hearsay, one finds that no " morbid " interest in pathological phenomena, no demonomania, no eroticism healthy or diseased is foreign to the great artists of any period.

The famous words that introduce the name of " man " in the fullest significance, considered next to each other, suggest the reason in a remarkably cogent manner : " *Ecce homo* "—" *homo sum*. . . ."

Antique art has been pointed to frequently in a misleading manner to supply a contradiction, but it is too transparent. Its greatest periods produced their Marsyas being skinned and similar popular subjects in equal numbers to the " idealistic " works.

Besides, the art professors themselves have treated antique civilization as a rounded off whole, presenting the same famous phases of a " golden " period and subsequent degeneration which they set out to find back in modern civilization ; by adopting their own method one can show that in this way one only leads the mind to a different orientation.

Thus the identical question returns placed in another milieu.

But let us take a period whose direct connection with our own time is incontestable, one between which and ours there is no historical break, no closing phase of one culture and the rise of a new one, knowing new aims and conforming to other ideals.

When looking to France of the eighteenth century we see what to eyes in search of it must appear a perfect orgy of perverted eroticism in the works of a Boucher, or earlier yet, a Watteau, later a Fragonard. Of course there are authors who cut short any discussion by simply asserting that the subjects of those masters' works stamp them as degenerate, but in face of such dogmatic statements, apodictically given, the possibility of controversy ceases. One can only step over them and proceed. I can hardly imagine an artist who would not, whatever his opinion of these painters may be otherwise, admit their works to show insatiable interest in things that, of themselves considered, were

undoubtedly symptomatic of moral decomposition. And practically every museum in Europe harbours, often hidden from public view, works by nearly every great master from the fourteenth to the twentieth century, which the thoughtful philistinism of the European male wishes to spare the sight of to his wife and sister of whose moral delicacy he is the natural guardian.

Need I speak of some of Callot's engravings, of the horrible fantasies of Breughel or Bosch and most of their contemporaries. Or of the repulsive prostitutes, the horrifying old courtesans of Goya, the dwarfs and monstrosities of Velasquez; the miscarriages of animals and generally unspeakable things by no less a cultured humanist and chaste personality than Dürer, whose unflagging interest in every abnormality (though I should perhaps make clear once more at this point in every normal thing equally) is well known. Of this same master who painted the *Salvator Mundi* that is in the Bremen Museum and the *Virgin with the Iris* in the possession of Sir Frederick Cook, are the perfectly ghastly *The Avarice* in Vienna, the nightmarish *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians* and the too many so disconcertingly naturalistic studies from the nude (the so-called *Paris* drawings of bathing women) that recall in every respect those of the most " notoriously decadent " of French masters between 1850 and to-day.

From the shockingly decrepit old women, the criminal lunatics and satanists of Leonardo to the sickening wretched miserable idiots, thieves and whores of a Garschin or Dostojevski where is the novelty of interested motive? Is not Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, seen from the point of view of psychological art criticism, a detailed study of pathological aberration, as are Goethe's *Faust*, *Werther* or the *Wahlverwandtschaften?* There was nothing new and before unexplored in the mysticism of crime and disease that held E. T. A. Hoffmann in his feverish descriptions of abominably decayed souls and hellish apparitions, or the similar ones of E. A. Poe.

And where could one find more exhaustive studies presented in a series of dramatic portrayals of every thinkable aberration, of the entire " Psychopatia Sexualis," of all diabolism, Satanism, demonomania, mental disease and degeneracy, criminal decay,

blasphemous rages, hysterical trances and epileptic ravings or the agonies of neurasthenic obsessions, than in the books of the Old Testament? There are the familiar works of Rembrandt showing corpses dissected, surgeons trepanning patients, bloody carcases displayed in butchers' booths, and both paintings and engravings of lewd beings in the course of vicious occupation.
Yet who would be sufficiently insensate to suspect lewdness or cruel sensuality as motive power in the man before whose self-portrait in the National Gallery no seeing eye can remain dry? Works by the greatest masters picturing torturings of the martyrs, the terrifying convulsions, the dislocated limbs, the gouged out eyes, the streaming, writhing, lacerated bodies of the massacred innocents abound, as do their terribly unsparing crucifixions, passing no minute detail of horror.

The pietist standpoint in this matter is a strange one to find in a Christian who significantly adores a God who in His own person waded through all the excrements of life, underwent every humiliation, every abomination and died a death of terror at the hangman's hands!
One cannot help thinking of this in front of Epstein's *Christ*, the Christ who has passed through the entire ordeal and can show the stigmata, not only in the five holy places, but in those eyes that, after seeing every thinkable outrage have forgivingly looked down on Longinus and in those lips through which the agonizing wail has passed: "*Eli, Eli, lama Sabachtani.*"
But the majority of Christians shrink from looking at this uncomfortable side in their Redeemer's human existence and prefer to see His suffering only as symbolically represented in ritual ceremonies whose meaning they can forget for their magnificence. They are disagreeably impressed by any representation reminding them of: "Ce Christ au tetanos . . ."

> ". . . le Christ vulgaire, laid, parce qu'il assuma toute la somme des péchés et qu'il revêtit, par humilité, les formes les plus abjectes." "Le Christ des Pauvres, celui qui s'était assimilé aux plus misérables de ceux qu'il venait racheter,

> aux disgraciés et aux mendiants . . .” “ . . . il avait accepté que sa Divinité fût comme interrompue depuis les soufflets et les coups de verges, les insultes et les crachats, depuis toutes ces maraudes de la souffrance, jusqu'aux effroyables douleurs d'une agonie sans fin. Il avait ainsi pu mieux souffrir, râler, crever ainsi qu'un bandit, ainsi qu'un chien, salement, bassement, en allant dans cette déchéance jusqu'au bout, jusqu'à l'ignominie de la pourriture, jusqu'à la dernière avanie du pus . . . ce Rédempteur de vadrouille, ce Dieu de morgue. . . .”

Only the great, convinced minds have dared thus to represent the idea of Christ on the earth, who in the moment of supreme consummation of unequalled suffering, lovingly consoled the murderer ! “ *Hodie mecum eris in paradiso.*”
Our time, feeble in faith, would wish to see a veil drawn over certain phases of the Saviour's being, but the artistic integrity and perspicacity of Epstein's attitude command admiration. He has dared to return to the conception of a time of burning faith that produced the artist whose pictorial representation of the Crucifixion moved the author quoted.
I will quote also the superbly terrible description forcibly recalling Epstein's masterful work :

> “ . . . de cette tête exulcérée filtraient des lueurs ; une expression surhumaine illuminait l'effervescence des chairs, l'eclampsie des traits. Cette charogne éployée était celle d'un Dieu, et sans aureole, sans nimbe.”

The author's impression of the artist's attitude is one that strikingly applies to Epstein's as revealed in his *Christ* statue :

> “ Il avait ” (the artist is Matthias Grunewald, whose *Crucifixion* in Colmar is being discussed), “ le plus forcené des idealistes . . . si magnifiquement exalté l'altitude et si résolument bondi de la cime l'âme dans l'orbe éperdu d'un cile . . . était allé aux deux extremes et il avait, d'une triomphale

> ordure, extrait les menthes les plus fines des dilections, les essences les plus acerées des pleurs . . . revélait le chef d'œuvre de l'art acculé, sommé de rendre l'invisible et le tangible, de manifester l'immondice éplorée du corps, de sublimer la détresse infinie de l'âme."

Though the nature of the vision is legitimately inspired by that of our religion, the professor, staring at the ideals of a neo-classicism distilled from a totally misinterpreted Hellenism, imagines that art as such could become " purer " if it developed without any direct relations to the miseries and excrescences of life.

Quite appropriately it is in the products of drawing-room art in which reigns supreme an ideal of suave beauty aiming at the absence of any shocks, at sweetly pleasing, well-proportioned, regulated, agreeably sensuous utterances, that one discovers the artist " selecting " from so-called " artistic " matter and emotions. I have seen it quite seriously stated by a writer on economic subjects, who, occasionally ventures on the slippery path of moralizing art criticism, that what was the matter with Epstein was his incapacity " to select." That in the same breath he accused him of intentionally selecting always " unsavoury " subjects, may in passing be mentioned as characteristic enough but need cause no amazement, as logic is the one thing never to be expected from those gentlemen who invariably write under the highest emotional pressure of either furious indignation or open-mouthed abandonment of unconditional admiration.

It is this " selective " art which tremblingly rejects anything that could rouse the facile and sleepy mind and might appear disquieting or repulsive.

It goes without saying that for this art the image of the suffering Redeemer does not exist, but is replaced by a picture of suffering that suggests as much reality of sorrow as does the discreetly sobbing gentlewoman in evening dress who, placed in the fitting milieu of an exquisitely furnished apartment, puts in a familiar appearance on the walls of the Academy's exhibition rooms every year.

The substitute is the Christ of " *ces debonnaires Golgotha* " pre-

senting in always the same author's words whom I have been quoting :—

> " Le Christ des Riches, l'Adonis de Galilée, le belle être bien portant, le joli garçon aux mèches rousses, à la barbe divisée, aux traits chevalins et fadés."

A figure such as this *Christ* of Epstein, so far from presenting a degeneration after the period in which the sculptures of the Canovas and Thorwaldsens personified the beau-ideal of plastic art, takes us back to the strong healthy utterances of those masters whose work is at present sometimes described as primitive-naturalistic. It realizes the idealism of the creative artist, a thing very much distinct from the " idealism " of the crowd, which means nothing but smug sentimentality where art is concerned.

Again, we have been told, for the benefit of those with whom the protest just dealt with might not serve, that Epstein is to that extent obsessed by the sexual element of life (procreation, maternity in their various aspects are according to confused pietists such intimately holy things that by some mysterious process of psychic alchemy they become obscenities when an artist handles them !) that he has made it the basis for the majority of his conceptions. Once more this is a matter that independently from the subject can only be discussed in view of the artist's attitude. But in any case, to put it as his critics have repeatedly been doing is to put the most malicious construction on a thing perfectly natural. No artist has ever been more profoundly inspired by any other subject than by that of love.

" Love is a very different matter " is usually the critics' rejoinder as soon as one turns the matter this way, but it is not, and the intuition of the creative mind grasps everything the psychologists are groping for when in the course of their analytical investigations they call the countless forms and aspects of love by an appalling variety of ugly names. It is the inexhaustible subject of human creation not only because it presents the overwhelming manifestation of the creative principle entering our lives at every moment and at every place, but because it constitutes the one great

undoubted redeeming factor of humanity and represents the, in most instances, only remaining ideal element in and amongst human transactions.

Practically every immaterial aspiration of the human race, religion and art alike, is rooted in it, and so it unavoidably becomes the eternal theme, admitting endless variation, for all creative instinct. In Epstein's work, quite in harmony with the original force and directness of his character and vision, the presentations of the theme tend to go to the soil and to the sun, and its inspiration seeks to embrace, as they did once in " the cradle of humanity," a rock, and in a furore of impulse hew it into shapes, as the roaming lover in the wood carves names and symbols in stones and trees, thus obeying the pressure of the same impulse in weaker manifestation.

So, in his works, his conceptions will frequently remind one of so-called " pagan " ones. Love becomes identified with the origin of all life, of organic growth, of fecundity and with the bacchantic exaltations which the announcement of fecundity's labours has always evoked: and, on the other hand, associating the tenets of Christianity, introducing its familiar traditional aspect as the origin of sin, even as in the material sense, the Pagan preoccupation brings the hosts of perversions in its train.

Though religion may not officially recognize that particular aspect of it, a sentiment not in any way incompatible with the requirements of Christian love is the artist's tender interest for the pariahs created by man's blind, instinctive search for the sweet oblivion of love's ecstasies, which produces the humiliating paradox of beastly cruelty and unmentionable ferocities committed in unconscious submission to the whisperings of the only one soft voice sounding within him.

How could the artist fail to be held by the moving spectacle of the artificial paradises of those miserable existences who seek in love's cultivation, or pathetically in its most pitiable perversions, the poetic intoxication, the desire of which means their only striving after the immaterial, and which, however sickeningly they err, must provide the one promising light in their dark peregrinations !

One of Epstein's works that has, like his *Rock Drill*, given rise to heated controversies, the misplaced exhibition of wit of the ignorant, and indignant cries of outraged guardians of public morals is his *Venus*. I am dealing elsewhere with the ridiculous descriptions given of this work as a " cubist " extravagance. Here I am first concerned with the indictment that it is an objectionable work because it is " suggestive," and exalts the sterile love that leads human beings to perdition as it did Sire Daniel of the mediæval legend, the *Tannhäuser* of the later German singers. I can again ask here whether it can appear to sound sense a reasonable method of criticism to decry a work because it conveys what it sets out to do. The failure to achieve this is, on the contrary, one of the few things criticism can rely upon to provide it with a justifiable basis for measuring the lack or presence of artistic success.

But a work like this, it has been argued, is an ominous manifestation of its maker's hatred of life [*sic*] (not of the sins of *Venus* or of the men of whose desires she is the resulting projection, but of those of Epstein). I remember an extremely laboured and ponderous essay apropos of the work in which the writer purported to show that Epstein here indulged in the idealization of sterility and the female type representative of it and for which his tastes betrayed a sinister preference. Of course this predilection was itself again of a Sadistic nature, because he manifested in his subject a love that would seem to any innocent observer his best hatred. But, a new Nero, possessed of a furious lust to cut the throat of humanity if it would only provide such a collective appurtenance, he was mimicking the satisfying of his maniacal purposes and trying to infect the unsuspecting lamb of a spectator whom the writer was protecting against Epstein's wicked plans, with his necrophilous leaning to decay and monstrous anger against healthy life.

I cannot help quoting the priceless remark : " But Epstein will not permit you to forgive his Venus, she has no face." Here we see again a most amazing confusion of plastic motives and intentions with psychological and moral ones. If the writer had been acquainted with Epstein's works, as he obviously was not, he would have found the sculptural motive of the facial mask, at

various phases of development, in the direction of assuming a suggestion of features or the opposite, back in several of his sculptures, deriving from the most diverse external inducements, all leading to this returning result of artistic compromise. I need only mention the *Rock Drill*, the *Mother and Child*, the *flenite figures* as conclusive instances.

But assuming his intention to be partly psychological in origin, for the sake of argument, it is clear that the sculptor, wishing to present an eternal symbolic type was accentuating the schematic and avoided the final stamp of individuality which the facial features give, as he did in limiting any appearance of individual character by his treatment of the limbs. Therefore such criticism is not to the point and is short-sighted even as regards any moral intention one might, by some detour of reasoning, discover in the artist's attitude. One could argue that indulgence towards Venus and the spectator, leads him to hide her face, as the face of Truth remains hidden from the latter for reasons he has cause to be grateful for. How while exhibiting the body one may as an act of charity hide the face, Camille Lemonnier describes strikingly in his book on F. Rops :

> " Toute chose par indice irrécusable, se révèle toujours de son temps, et si le corps a des gestes éternels, le visage a des grimaces variables. . . . Le masque, avec ses stigmates, avec la griffe et l'estampille de la vie, avec l'empreinte spéciale de l'animalité du siècle, voilà la part de la modernité dans le tréfond classique . . . cachez le, ce masque . . . en mettant le corps à nu : c'est l'harmonie plastique paienne des Phryné et des Aspasia." . . . " Mais que le visage seul demeure visible et c'est alors, comme là-haut aux tours des cathèdrales, la stryge, des gargouilles, toute la bête d'une fois remontée du pli agressif d'une grimace maquillée de fille. Et cette fois, nous sommes bien chez nous, aux sources mêmes de notre morbide érotisme."

In the overwhelming majority of instances this observation is physiognomically applicable ; where the body has still preserved

its eternal type the face is already able to draw it out of the sphere of the infinite and place it in a definite milieu either bridging over the ages and taking us back to a definite historic period, thus providing the artist with the popularly understood means of supplying pictorial anecdote, or immediately reporting from our own surroundings, offering the subject for a notation of contemporary life.

In a time and land where the form of the body is not only hidden but contradicted by costume, it loses its expressive power and appears hopelessly embarrassed by the consciousness of its nudity, while the artists themselves show an enfeebled sense of its physiognomical potentialities, therefore, as recent sculpture demonstrates only too overwhelmingly, concentrating attention on the head and conventionalizing the body. Unless after the manner of academic art they substitute for life and nature the canons construed from reproductions of older works of art, they hire the professional models who, for their exceptional physique, can serve as imitations of ancient sculptures, and have been trained to adopt the poses which illustrations of it have vulgarized. Those methods are at least partly responsible for the mummified plastic products of most eighteenth and nineteenth-century European sculpture and its deadly lack of pulse and sincerity. That to the minds that have been reared on it Epstein's studies from the nude (as for example the *Nan*) seem disconcertingly crude, " unkindly " uncompromising is perfectly understandable as it is equally when we find such minds absolutely at a loss in face of those of his sculptures whose conception has been concerned with the human frame or anatomy as an accessory motive only, when they must be totally devoid of the faculties necessary for obtaining a notion of the connecting link between the work and the suggestions nature offers. However much sympathy such incapacity may command, it can provoke nothing but disgust and anger when it imagines itself to be unspoilt sound sense justifying a critical attitude. All the more so when from instinctive apprehension of its own inadequacy or from sheer stupid conceit and impudence it proposes to complete and support its criticisms by the adoption of the moral standard as a further basis for them.

A remarkable analogy for the relations of face and body we can discover in the portraits by Epstein, where, the effort concentrating on the comparative importance and meaning of the various groups of features, their relations on a different scale become eloquent of the contrast between the eternal and the individually representative. I am the more led to draw attention to it at this juncture because on the strength of the intermixture of diversity-revealing traits, the sculptor has been again made to receive a shower of reproaches for his obscure "dualism," for his ruthless cruelty towards his sitters, and other sinister dispositions enumerated above.

Going over the reproductions one must inevitably be struck by several admirable instances of the sculptor's transcendent power lovingly to reveal and unpityingly unmask, and, without sacrificing the integrity of his sculptural utterance, to make it contain the complete expression of the type of ages modified by the personal characteristics of its particular vessel. The moralizing critic exposes his insufficiency and dishonesty even in his rôle of a moralist when, according to what the artist's standpoint may appear to be in any particular work, he closes one or the other eye and refuses to see how, inspired by the same feeling, he may, as the Great Dispenser, be forgiving the adulterous, raising the despised woman, and comforting her with gentle word, pardoning the publican, consoling the murderer and relentlessly chastizing the money-changer, rebuking the Pharisee with unfaltering rigour, and damning the traitor.

It should also be remarked how one sentiment or disposition appears under a totally different guise and with an altered meaning in two or more different portraits of various sitters. I alluded to one of these instances when comparing the *Marcelle* and the bust of *Lillian Shelley*. I need not again enter into detailed particulars, and it will be sufficiently clear what I am aiming at when I suggest the comparison between the heads of *Billie Gordon* and *Lillian Shelley*.

The vindictiveness of the *Marcelle* is quite absent from the first of these three, who is far from appearing the pity-deserving girl whom the world and life have thrown now this, now that way,

but, on the contrary, the face, with its apocalyptic sensuality, reveals the working of a free and purposeful will and is in its unswerving singleness of motive and ambition, of desire and expectation, remarkably contrasted to the not unrelated *Lillian Shelley*, whose wavering of intention, whose almost generously indiscriminating, frank surrender to the obscurest and the most obvious impulses, constitute an attractiveness that matches her beauty and makes her infinitely more human, more pathetically human, without tarnishing her bewildering brilliance.

An element of motherliness is clearly apparent in two such contrasted works as the *Nan Condron* and *Mrs. McEvoy*. In the first one sees the quiet, homely tender feeling of the wild primitive spirit, caught in servility and outwardly seeming tamed, and in the wonderfully moving portrait of *Mrs. McEvoy*, it is the crowning subdued radiance to which high intelligence, fine womanly instinct, refined sentiment and a thoughtful self-sacrifice lend peaceful loveliness.

How vastly different is the naïveté of the Quixotic poet in the *Davies* head from the knowing childishness of some two or three of a young woman's portraits.

The direct force, the manly vigour and incisive deliberation of the *American Soldier's Head* is equally notable in the head of *Lord Fisher*, but what a far subtler meaning it acquires here where it is combined with a lapidary intelligence, an assiduously applied perspicacity and the angrily haughty defiance of a contemptuous conviction of superiority and, in addition to the concentration of physical power and application, an heroic centralization of mental powers naturally versatile enough to demand it.

I do not believe I could forward any important argument in support of my assertions concerning the alleged degeneracy and morbid preoccupations of "modern" art and its exponents that would be likely to convince anyone who does not admit my point of view on the strength of the observations I have made already.

I have, I hope, made it sufficiently clear that the objections preferred on ethical or moral points, when they are not directed against art in general but against the art of our time, are betraying

bad faith, ignorance and a hypocritical injustice; in fact, whatever their ultimate purpose, a strategic feint, or an incident in the embittered contest, a certain class of minds are ever waging war against the artists of their own time.

I made a fairly minute analysis of the motives, aims and tactics of the leaders of this ever-present movement in the first chapter of this study. Now, however, after I have made mention in this chapter of the several matters connected with it, which for obvious reasons it would have been premature to introduce at that stage of generalizing treatment, I can complete my observations on the subject.

The force and value of the arguments advanced against contemporary art by its professed antagonists are pretty equal, but the form they adopt varies with the particular period of the incriminated works' appearance.

One should not forget that whatever is stable in the public taste has its constituents modelled on the so-called " æsthetic " criterion the art-critics have distilled from what they accept as the canons perceptible in the familiar works, of which they have obtained a knowledge, usually at second-hand, during their initial period of " æsthetic " education. Unfortunately even when the critic is sincere and genuinely striving after the honest satisfaction of his enquiring impulses, he may not intend to see his dictum applied to any other work than the one he is judging by its tests, while his public, wanting dogma, will see it in spite of his own possible repudiation of it. On the other hand, the critic with a popular reputation to lose will, if necessary, become soon reconciled to the recurring contingency of acting the charlatan. He will wish to be understood as professing dogma and will appear to be disposing of a criterion for " æsthetic valuation " based on it. As the alchemist who, intending to retain his prince's favour and the position he held by the grace of it, knew he would be well-advised not to shake the latter's belief in his wizard's possession of the philosopher's stone, so the established critic will be careful to preserve his patron's belief in his infallible touchstone. He will wish to be regarded as having the free and full enjoyment of, as his inalienable property, the imperishable norm by which he can

measure anything between the two opposing poles of " beauty " and " ugliness."

His public will then be only too eager to rejoice in the advantage of taking the ready-made opinions with which his ex-cathedra discourses provide them.

But a truth remaining unaltered through the flight of time, the creative artist is, as I remarked before, in whatever period he lives, aiming at the same thing, and the value and power of his work derives from the personal expression it assumes on being reflected by his individuality. And this, while it is responsible for the intrinsic significance of any work of art, happens to be just the one thing it is humanly impossible to foresee, even though one were equipped with an absolutely complete knowledge of all the works of art ever produced. Therefore when, for the æsthetes and dogmatists, the last word in artistic utterance has been spoken (which happened invariably the day before yesterday), and the advent of another original master threatens to break the magic circle of their system, giving the lie direct to their claims and pretensions, the wild man remaining impervious to any adjuration for their own justification, in self-defence they attack him without being over particular in the choice of their weapons. And, let us hope, unconsciously, certain that " l'art c'est moi," and very conscious indeed of the danger to their own privileged position which the new man's appearance creates, they raise the alarm and cry that " art " is being endangered, that another vandal is determined to " destroy " it.

If the new master is expected to be walking in the footsteps of the former one, the expectation is reasonable. I have pointed out already why he mostly will and frequently must do so. But the trouble is that of those who want to watch the performance in order to be quite reassured, the one does not know who that preceding master really was, while the other may see the footprints without recognizing them or be quite incapable of discovering them where the discerning eye of genius is an unfailing guide on the trail. Thus the new master's mission is not understood because the one is expecting another variation of the last popularized mode of expression and the other who has never grasped

the true meaning of the blindly idolized classic's manner, cannot even recognize it, much less a kindred one, or one derived from it, if it is not accompanied by the authority of the name which is everything for him, so that the work is taken for granted.

Once more, it is only the new master himself who is capable of knowing where lies the connecting duct between his own work and that of the men whose works or perhaps whose only partly realized intentions have provided the central point whence his perceptions radiate. A sadly diverting spectacle is the familiar one occurring when the artist who in this way realizes the origin of his own style-characteristics imprudently points to it only to be scolded for a fool or a blasphemer by an ignorant public as little able to observe from the latter's altitude as it has been to sense the innermost being of the older master's work whose name they have been carrying in their mouths ever since it became worth their while to be heard shouting it abroad.

Now the form of the objections one can expect to be raised against the inclinations of creative artists by the critics of their own time, depends on what, according to popular conception, the style character of the period immediately preceding it has been.

According to their particular temperament the two opposing æsthetic theorisers will expect, nay demand, either a restatement, a confirmation or a " revolutionary " negation, an emphatic contradiction. After a victory of creative artists whose work has been classed as " *romantic* " the next generation will be found preparing for the reception of men who are to cause a reaction in the direction of either " realism," " naturalism " preferably accompanied by the pretence to have discovered it for the first time in its purest, yet insufficiently realized shape, or a reversion to also rediscovered classic ideals, or, in as far as it prides itself on its conservative propensities, an ever further-reaching development of those " romantic " tendencies which would have found in them, had the historical sequence been in the inverse line, or had those conservators lived fifty years earlier, their most implacably irreconcilable adversaries.

The creative artist whose ideas of style are based on totally different notions and perceptions from those the public hold, who reckons

with his individual artistic needs in the first place and may derive from either or both of the styles which he knows to be striving in essentials after the consummation of aims that are by no means the opposing poles and clear contrasts the non-creative mind believes them to be, is certain to disappoint everybody and upset his potential friends quite as much as he inevitably must upset those who mean to be his enemies.

One should not forget that the " revolutionists " are, in artistic matters, always revolting against the principles their fathers attacked and are the unbending critics of the man, who is revolting against themselves, and their sacred tenets. One may still to-day see the amusing spectacle of petrified Wagnerians fighting the ghosts of memories, going with all their might for the dear old dead Brahms and his admirers with the same gusto as they do for any living mortal who would undertake to emulate Wagner's pretentions and propose to defy the schools where the realization of his individuality seemed to him to necessitate it.

An as yet unrecognized master may uphold the old master's tradition in its purest form, but the " classicists," unable to see his relation to their idols, will never admit it and will reject unconditionally what they daily accept in the works of their blindly revered great, which in the new man's work appears to them the flat contradiction of it. The " modernists," who must be supposed to know why they call themselves so, will be quite as convinced in their refusal to accept the work of any independent personality though he may be achieving the completest consummation of their recognized master's ideals. If he is not the latter's slavish imitator he must be leaning toward the anathematized traditions of which neither their own idol nor their new enemy is likely to have been the violent opponent they have made him after their own images.

It needs an almost congenial mind to understand that this way of judging works of art is a perfectly insane one, and that in the first place, for the creatively endowed intellect those concrete distinctions, so dear to the philistine, are as superfluous as they are absurd. And one would seem to be justified in the assumption that it requires a most exceptionally lucid and penetrating intelli-

gence to recognize the exceedingly simple and, one should think, obtrusively obvious truth that what the artist has a right to expect is not " classification," nor a judgment on his work, but a generous interest, and a patient and earnest study of it. If only the pretended art-lovers would spend the time and energy they employ discussing his work in looking at it !

Why should he expect their judgment ? What, forsooth, should he want it for ? Any doubts on his part leading him to desiring the encouragement of flattering appreciations would reveal only the immaturity and the insufficiency of his artistic instincts. But to presume their occurrence in a man of genius would be an appalling absurdity. That, on the other hand, the sheerest childish vanity may occasionally make praise pleasing to him is a totally irrelevant matter that proves nothing with regard to his artistic needs.

What is due to him first and last is an unfaltering interest not moved by preconceived notions; and where, from the world's point of view, the artist's desire to express himself is one that enriches it, thus as he sacrifices his entire existence to humanity, the mightiest of philanthropic deeds, it is unquestionably the very least he may expect.

I am perfectly aware that this contention supplies an evergreen subject for mirth, and has, whenever it has been presented, let loose torrents of wit and sarcasm, the artist being popularly supposed to be the supremest egoist, an unequalled libertine of sensual self-indulgence, and, though pleasing himself occasionally in the rôle of a moral humbug, long ago known as of necessity immoral. I have already pointed out elsewhere that however well the vulgar conception may be applied to the neurasthenic impressionalist who is really no more than a gramophone, or an emotional sponge, it does not apply in the very least to the creative genius.

One sees only the strongly tendentious element in the relations of anecdotes people are so fond of reading as the biographies of men of genius. But who shall make a biography of the man who is as profound and impenetrable as nature itself on the only aspects that matter in him ?

The easily satisfied reader who imagines he understands anything more about lightning when he has been told it comes from a cloud, will, no doubt, fancy he is brought nearer to Beethoven when he has seen the ridiculous accounts of his wild splashing at the wash-stand and heard the nauseating story of his crazy walks, how he roared and furiously beat time with arms and legs, the yokels running after him, tickled to convulsions by his antics for all the world as if he were the village idiot.

But if one could see their lives, if not with the clarity and precision of the revelations that even their own most intimately personal work can hardly afford to any but the greatest receptive capacities, at least shorn of the ludicrous superficialities and the howlingly insipid anecdotes the average biographer delights in, and with the firm wish to see them as one wishes to understand the saints' lives, one could not but arrive at the conclusion that the really great, the men of incontestable creative genius, are indeed the great examples, the best men, the anointed leaders of humanity as David, and the prophets, as the patriarchs, as Moses or the Judges, as Samuel.

VIII

IN the last chapter I alluded to the pretentious attitude of the so-called lay public toward art works, to their mistaken belief that the nearer they come to their guiding æstheticism's ways the more they reveal their knowledge and the value of their opinion. Their sophistication is a perfect curse. No self-respecting artist wants their æsthetic pretentions and no one but would be grateful for a great deal more naïveté on their part. But they are, as much as the second-hand artistic mind, caught in the fossil conventions of academic mannerism. The senseless conversions of perspective and colour have for their appreciation replaced the natural appearance of things. Objects drawn to resemble their familiar presentation which rests on a feeble theoretical reasoning appear therefore to them more acceptable renderings of their real aspect than the same things when drawn by artists who with a mind free from pre-established considerations render the appearance of objects as they actually see them instead of as they have been taught and suggest to themselves they ought to see them. To what absurdities this leads must be clear to any unprejudiced observer who has noticed that people accept any schoolmaster's drawings and question the competence of a Cezanne's draughtsmanship.

A child who, left to himself, would try to copy exactly the projection of objects on its retina, is trained to substitute examples of the same things on paper until its eye has been trained to see the lie instead of the truth, till it believes it sees them under the forms the convention of perspective have created. The fact that it is apparently a paying proposition to insert newspaper advertisements offering to teach drawing by correspondence (!) is highly significant.

Just as people for their personal artistic efforts sooner believe the

schoolmaster than their own eyes, so for the formation of their opinions on the artist's work they will rather follow the " æsthetician " than their own sense, and be concerned to " understand," to analyse and reduce to principles, to pigeonhole, to recognize " isms " instead of trying to enjoy things because they exist as they might enjoy nature if they were not spoilt into looking for " views " and " landscapes," and instinctively felt that they should love things for what they are. Unfortunately it is a common error that it bespeaks good education when one pretends to a judgment of instead of " only " pleasure in and taste for the work of human hands.

When in front of a work of art the brain that should be preferably as a clean wax tablet is usually more like an ant-heap teeming with confused recollections of analytical descriptions, annotations, monographs, commentaries, manifestos picked up indiscriminately here, there and everywhere, only bending always to the authority of the author and the power of the printed word.

It certainly is not only the professional writers on art who are responsible for this lamentable state of mind ; it is a special symptom of the hesitating artist to stifle his own faltering convictions—as a frightened child will loudly shout out its intrepidity —by issuing bawlingly clamorous decrees in which he gratuitously communicates his own primitive notions concerning the elementals of his art. Thus one finds painters and sculptors pontifically announcing such enormous simplicities—with the air of making new stupendous revelations to a staggered world—as that, the constituting factors of a work of art being the combinations, constellations, juxtapositions, modulations, of lines, colours, planes, angles, masses, it should occupy itself with those.

The public and artists who are inclined to intoxicate themselves with words will enthusiastically hail these wonderful discoveries. And they will expect to see those theories demonstrated in their most obvious primitive forms, apparently ignoring the fact that the analysis applies to anything under the sun, that every work, good, bad or indifferent, must of necessity consist of the identical elements. They remind one of M. Jourdain realizing with a stupefaction he is anxious to see shared by his wife and his maid-

servant that he has been unconsciously speaking prose for forty years.

And in a great many more instances they do not even draw these intelligent conclusions, but just love to babble, prattle and gibber about a thing they take to be highly original and fashionably "up-to-date."

But with an amazing number of quite serious lovers of art the trouble, as I said, is that they, vaguely apprehending the unassailable truth of such proclamations, begin to believe it should be directly apparent in the finished work; they start looking for the skeleton and the viscera, for the blood corpuscles and the phagocytes of the man who presents himself in the living flesh to them. Having been told that sunlight is composed of several different colours they henceforth expect to see them separately. One might be inclined to think the comparisons absurdly out of proportion, but I have actually heard noted musicians, humbugging in their innocence, claim the faculty of hearing, separately and individually, the overtones they knew the single tone to be composed of (not the independently sounding overtones which the simultaneous sounding of several tones, or the body of a musical instrument set in vibration do produce)—a claim to aural faculties that is quite in line with that of the man who would want us to believe his naked eye capable of performing spectrum analysis.

A man of genius (no one is that without being aware of it) never would hesitate to confess his natural limitations, but he that pretends to it, in his fear to understate the gifts he believes should be its attributes, frequently claims dispositions and endowments that are physical and physiological impossibilities.

Now the mind which transcribes the impressions the senses convey into those the current conventions demand must, where it is not even able to perceive the natural appearance of objects, be the more incapable of detecting the subtler connections between nature's suggestions and the artist's conceptions. Provided its appreciation of a work is not simply that of a school whose tenets and aspirations it accepts without questioning, approaching the work equipped with those prejudices, but that it reacts honestly within its own limits, it is to be expected it should be more at a

loss than ever in face of so-called " imaginative " art, i.e. art not obviously derived from nature's examples, presenting no parallel in nature for its entire structure, though necessarily dependent on nature for its constituent elements.

One is used to hear such elements, as they appear in Epstein's *Rock Drill*, his *Venus*, *flenite carvings*, *Mother and Child* described as " decorative " (be it noted that because a motive may be decorative or ornamental in its effect this need not mean always that it *is* so in the popular sense, viz. pleasingly meaningless and, strictly speaking, superfluous, certainly not essential, in a work that pretends to be more than an ornament), but one should be exceedingly careful in accepting the description. The relations of similar motives may be correlative to those of an organism the artist has understood from nature, and they may be of supreme intrinsic significance.

The work's conception may derive from these, and so far from being an addition everything else may depend from them. The comparison with imaginative works such as Oriental carpets, where the design or pattern may represent the whole work and where elements introduced as an after-thought may be entirely absent, is dangerously attractive ; its suggestions mislead many who overlook the fact that here, as in architecture, the forms, which have become traditional under the hands of generations of workers and adapted to the use made of the object, have for the most part been originally direct and minute representations of familiar things.

They are generally such " realistic " pictorial or sculptural renderings that, according to their employment, have become modified either in order to be practically more useful or to fill a geometrically logical place in the surrounding design, as their mechanical importance either increased or decreased.

The distinctions possible on those grounds are, in works of an art whose origins reach back to distant periods of human culture and obscure sources that are only intuitively revealed to the creative mind, extremely subtle ones, and here more than anywhere it must be the undeniable appearance of the artist's conviction that guides the auditor or spectator. The kind of sterile virtuosity that excels and delights in handling similar motives

indiscriminately without an imperative internal need may be damned, but the attempts to " purify " Bach's melodies of ornamentation or present Beethoven's intricately figurated melody as a skeleton line with embroideries is perfectly ludicrous. One might with equal right propose to eradicate the costumes from such paintings as the *Death's Triumph* (in the Campo Santo of Pisa), Crivelli's *Annunciation* (at the National Gallery) or Pinturicchio's compositions, carve away—or think away—the draperies on the three sisters of the Parthenon's eastern front, or wish to see Rembrandt's portraits deprived of the frills and ruffles, the gauffered collars, the fantastic headgear, Dürer's engravings of the countless objects of the most varied nature that enter into the picture.

While the expectation that there shall be a relation between a work of art and some point in nature, to which instinctively or reasoningly every discerning intellect comes, is of the most legitimate, not everyone arrives at the further apperception that the action of the human mind itself must be counted amongst the phenomena of nature. The process of reasoning that leads to the conclusion is perhaps too simple and the fact commands indulgence for the painful superficiality of the assumption that the artist whose work does not directly reveal its connection with nature has renounced the supreme teacher.

One should not be surprised to find second-hand artists fulminating against the obsolete convention that " Natura " is " artis magistra," as long as one is careful not to lose sight of the fact that the apostle of originality at any price, the radical art rebel who asserts that it must be art's aim and vocation to deliver itself from the tyranny of nature, is as considerably distinguished an idiot as the pitifully idealistic simpleton whose " back to nature " means an exhortation to dodder sleepily on all fours in pastoral insipidity.

If the flower is a very tangible product of nature it is not any more so than its invisible, intangible scent. In the same way, practically every object has an aspect not presenting itself to our perceptions in the shape of a structure subject to mechanical analysis. As I argued elsewhere, it is genius' power of intuitive perception that enables it to receive suggestion from forces and

their effects in the universe that remain hidden from any but the minds of its spiritual profundity and penetrative capability. To it are equally revealed the external forms of the things and the internal forces acting in and through them—macrocosmos and microcosmos, matter and motion, past and future, as they exist for us by the limitations of our senses, are for the understanding that is above them approachable to the same extent. The mind is part of and one with cosmic intelligence and vibrates in unison with cosmic energy, of which it is one of the intangible emanations. Therefore the effects of its workings are for us justified by their very existence, as apart from personal likes or dislikes we have to accept both as inevitable and inscrutable.

Beyond its materialization, behind the manifestation we can perceive will lie the common point of origin that connects the work with its correlative embryonal or developed and sensuously apprehendable nature. But the latter may be non-existent and the manifestation through the instrumentality of the creative mind may be the only one our perceptivity permits to reach us. To assume the creative intelligence could dissociate itself from nature is to ignore the fact that it is part of it ; and, consequently, the non-creative mind's investigation of the character of the reference to nature in the work of productive genius remains so absurdly incomplete and inadequate that it can never provide a reliable basis for methodical critical test.

Even as in the direct manifestations of nature, it is the use made by the mind of those gifts that contain its potential " originality " and the significance its perception discovers in them that makes the artist strive to reveal them to humanity. Whether he takes a model from nature as it presents itself in visible form or as it manifests itself in his own being constitutes no disparity. But while in the first case another intelligence may critically compare —though with what right is a question that depends on its own qualifications—the model and its presentment, it must, when in the second case this becomes an impossibility, admitting its own incompetence, assume the artist's good faith on the strength of his affirmation : because one cannot receive any other guidance if one's instincts fail to supply it.

Also, one should realize that the creative faculties do not need support from the theories of the æsthetes, or the various " isms " of anxiously groping artists for whom they are the promising last straw. Their assistance is as laughably superfluous as it is to nature. Therefore it is an infelicitous purism that with forbidding indignation watches creative genius in its diverse works, according to the requirements of the subject, appear painfully elusive in its seeming conformation now to the tenets and principles of one school, now of another whose aims seem incompatible with those of the former. Every time it has just succeeded in fitting him on the Procrustean bed of " realism " or " cubism " it will find him obstinate at the next attempt to repeat the process, but apparently preparing to be received as a brother by the " classicists " or the " impressionists " who in their turn are disappointed till the man whose essential aims remain unchanged throughout is given up and censured by all on account of his indecent lack of æsthetical good manners. In the same way we hear nature described according to the temperament of the observer as disconcertingly " realistic," sentimental or fantastic, economical or wasteful, generous and anodyne or cruelly indifferent.

Whether in either of these cases (of personal and impersonal creative intelligence) the manifestation of cosmic energy is the exercise of an absolute consciousness or an equally absolute unconsciousness (whether in the naturalist's world there is a universally pervading completeness of law or an entire absence of it) is a question for religion to answer and irrelevant to our present purpose. The artist, the intermediary of the creative principle, strives after truth only (for the sceptics who always, after the manner of Pilatus, questioningly pause in front of this word I must interpolate that one can perfectly well operate with a word and lose nothing of the precision of one's reasoning without being able to offer a satisfactory definition of it) and that he can express it in an unlimited variety of aspects as regards style and method, as any subject, any material and every relation between them has its particular requirements.

These and the conditions obtaining during the work's conception, *status nascens*, and ultimate formation determine, as they do in

the forms of flora and fauna, its final form and appearance, and the artist's incapacity to conform to them denotes the relative mediocrity of his gifts.
On the other hand, the more he adopts, in contradiction to them, a style and self-conscious manner, the more chance he has, while becoming even more displeasing to one " school " of thought, at least of pleasing the opposing one, and in consequence the corresponding part of the general " public," which, a few unspoilt, unsophisticated instinctives excepted, is without this complaisance and as little capable of appreciating a work of art as they are of a work of nature, and for the same reasons. Those minds that are honestly capable of seeing the beauties of nature should be equally capable of seeing the beauties of art. The genuinely unprejudiced mind which is not in the first instance open to the impression of a natural phenomenon may have its essential being revealed to it through the individual emphasis of the artist's presentment of it. Or by a similar process it may have the work of the artist again revealed by the stimulus of a congenial mind's assistance. The latter's indication may act on the nebula of the spectator's thought as the hypothetical initial disturbance of the mutually stabilizing forces that start the formation of the ordinate system : or to draw the comparison within the narrower space of humanly conceivable time limits, as the grain dropped in the saturated solution which causes the immediate crystallization of the substance contained in the solvent.

Minds capable of exercising this stimulus are, however, exceedingly rare. They may lack the predisposition and special adaptability of the creative intelligence, but the congenial faculty of penetrative appreciation is in itself of a high order. Unfortunately, it is very seldom that it enjoys its vocation, as its qualities are too frequently mistaken for creative, while vanity's seduction helps to make the notorious solicitations proceeding from its environment effectual. A rich receptive existence is renounced in favour of the endless misery and depression of an incompetent effort towards creative activity. The adolescent enthusiasm for truth and beauty is unsuspectingly perverted when yielding to the

pressure of well-meaning admiration posing the fatal question why its impressions should not be communicated in a material shape.

In this connection, and especially because it confirms my assertion of the genuinely creative artist's human superiority as contrasted with the notorious feeble character of the majority of artistic mediocrities, it is not superfluous to dwell yet longer on the consequences of this misunderstood sensitivity. The conditions of the artist's life demand an energy and perseverance that taxes highly the mental strength of a man of genius, and almost always prove pernicious to the appreciatively gifted mind that has to contend with them. The symptoms are familiar. They soon well-nigh inevitably become tainted with the minor artist's vices. They become embittered, hypochondriacal—a " sad un-Grecian hypochondriac " is the term Goethe coined—vain and jealous. Their self-indulgence and gross sensuality, or the hypocritical travesty of chastity that is the usual result of the consequential loss of virility are responsible for the contempt—or worse, the sneaking envy—provoked by their so-called " artistic temperament " (which is not the artist's temperament).* The spitefulness which is the natural outcome of their torturing pessimism makes them, in lamentable contradiction to their original predispositions, incline to judge the artistic products of their contemporaries with the crassest prejudice. So, instead of being the most valued and desirable receptors of the works of important artists, they heartily detest them. And their detestation is usually the more vehement because, their faculties remaining subconsciously active, they cannot help instinctively recognizing the excellence of a genuinely great work, and with silent mortification having to admit its superiority over their own.

It is a painful and frequently recurring spectacle to see those

* ". . . No man ever becomes distinguished in any art who does not early begin to acquire the power of supporting heat, cold, hunger, thirst and other discomforts ; wherefore those persons deceive themselves altogether who suppose that while taking their ease and surrounded by all the enjoyments of the world, they may still attain to honourable distinction—for it is not by sleeping, but by waking, watching and labouring continually, that proficiency is attained. . . ." (Vasari.)

who could be the most powerful and authoritative of supporters, the most helpful of propagating patrons of creative art and its exponents, become instead their direst, most redoubtably ruthless and implacable enemies. The authority with which their position—"I also am an artist!"—invests them for an ingenuous public makes the harm of their words and acts incalculable, in one respect because those that accept their judgment without doubting their good faith will feel confident of its reliability as it is pronounced by the very men who should be capable of understanding: and, in another and far more regrettable one, because an overwhelming public accepts the opinion of writers on art who penetrate far enough into the truth to see the whole extent of effects without yet arriving at their causes and point out with delight how artists themselves prove the worst and most partial of critics. From their joyous observations generalizing conclusions are drawn which are far from flattering to the morality and mental powers of all artists. This most unjustly reflects on the reliability of judgment and on the intentions of the very great men who have expressed their thought through the medium of art. The application of such criticisms to the elect, to Shakespeare, Leonardo, Palestrina, Rembrandt, the great revealers of the divinity reflected in them, is very much more than ridiculous; its blasphemous levity is nauseating; it is a sacrilege, a crime against the Holy Spirit.

IX

IN the last chapter I have emphasized the fact that as the human mind cannot, being itself a part of nature, detach itself from nature, the spiritual and material forms that constitute the man-created organism must originate in observation and perception of those that nature presents. The so-called elemental forms whose more obvious use has been identified with the tendencies of recent artistic expression have been described as geometrical, implying that they were the product of intellectual artificiality rather than of full throbbing life absorbed by powerful sensuous apperception.

Now in the first place to regard their appearance as symptomatic of " modern " art is the same error committed by the pathologists who are misled into assuming the clinical entity presented by some specific disease to be only of recent rise and spreading since from that recent period date the contributed observations of men whose attention it had formerly escaped.

In the second place, it is necessary to count with a frequently recognizable inability on the part of otherwise shrewd observers to discover in nature the suggestions of formal elements man has adopted for the structure of his works. I have seen it stated by an author noted for his imagination and insight that the straight line and the circle were inventions of the human brain into which nature's co-operation did not enter ; that nature did not " make use of them " to quote his rather inept expression. As for the straight line, it is very materially represented in many formations, the " geometrically " shaped crystal being an obvious instance where it results as intersecting (secant) where two planes cut each other, and it is produced in movement as described by a falling object. As for the circle—if its suggestion by the projection

on the retina of a sphere (as the soap-bubble for example) or the celestial bodies is not acceptable, here also in its pure geometrical form it appears through movement under certain restricting conditions, as when an object following mechanical impetus returns to the point of its start if attached to the end of a material radius whose opposing end is fixed so as to permit of motion in one plane only. When stated the facts seem so perfectly self-evident that it requires the experience of having them seen ignored by an otherwise lucid intellect to summon the courage of expounding them.

I am insisting on these things because their recognition explodes the fallacy of reasoning which ascribes, whether for good or bad, certain manifestations of art to the effect of arbitrary performances of the artist's consciousness. Thus one finds people arming themselves with these notions of lauding or censuring an artist's independence, his escape from the leading strings of nature, as apparent in the generally misnamed " simplification," " abstraction " (cubing) of form his work seems to them to reveal.

This so-called simplifying, sometimes consciously perpetrated and as often demonstrably absurd, is, in the majority of cases where it seems diagnosed with some justification, yet entirely illusory in so far as it is supposed to be the outcome of a " supra-naturally " acting faculty. It exists then only in the imagination of observers whose field does not extend to the comprehension of the facts in nature that were grasped by the artist.

However modified a form may appear when compared to its supposed correlative in nature, the employment of the term " simplification " in this connection betrays a faulty appreciation of the constituting elements of form, because the complexity of existing things is infinite and seems only to increase and decrease as dimensions, seen from the immovable point of the limited human power of apprehension, become too large or too small (so to say infra-microscopic or " ultra-telescopic "). In the same way as the human brain does not permit realization of events moving in units of time (which is but another aspect of space) of much longer or shorter duration than those which the pace of our functional existence fixes as the " normal " for our conception,

so, where its relativity is nothing else but the reflection of our mental insufficiency it stands to reason that no one thing is simpler than another.

There is no more a tenable logic of formal simplification in plastic art than there is anywhere else. The craving for the sanction of this particular lie is nothing else but the effect of the inertia in which the mind, tired of handling things that constantly demand the most concentrated application, attempts in self-defence to obtain the oblivion of rest. Therefore, also, it will the soonest and most imperatively manifest itself in the mentally incompetent, in the piteous wretches who are living " above their spiritual income," with all the unbearable strain and nervous tension, the never-abating gnawing anxieties and exhaustion attendant on it.

If, however, this is the sweetly deceptive call of a Fata Morgana, if this chimerical " simplicity " is unattainable, as the mentally virile artist of genius can afford to realize with equanimity, it is not so with the highly desirable simplicity which exists in the relation between the work's subject and its execution. This simplicity is the badly described " economy " of the artist's method. What is called " economy " here is a negative ; it is the absence of wasteful effort, and superfluous expense of energy, so only the perfection and precision of method. And this is common to the great masters of creative art of all times.

It was the natural method of the first good sculptor as it must be of the last, and it is through yielding to the seduction of a comfortable system of æsthetic morals that theorizing sluggards have prevented sculpture passing through the evolutions corresponding to the varying aims and intentions of sculptors (this is a process of inverted reason, because the aims of good sculptors are naturally identical and only contrasted at any place or period to those of a bad one) from simple beginnings to bewildering complexity and in a desire for relief escaping back again to the lost paradise of simplicity. Such processes, when abruptly performed, the theorizing sluggards must, for the sake of consistency, describe as " revolution " which, as it does not synchronize in speed with the " evolutions " they accept, they are bound to condemn for its indecent rush ; for these " evolutions," they admit, are

the communal work of the herd whose sacrosanct movements they assiduously follow.

An instance of it is provided by the anxious protests provoked by such an alleged " revolutionary " work as Epstein's *Rock Drill*, a work which for all its originality does not exhibit anything that is incompatible with the unassailable traditions exposed in the works of the great masters of sculpture (of which traditions originality is one). The governing principles of this work are the same that moved the great masters. In this, as in theirs, the presentation of a new aspect of human activity implies a corresponding new effect of the means that are in harmony with it. Naturally, Praxiteles could not have presented a rock drill. " It would be self-contradictory and unsound fancy to expect that things which have never been expressed could be expressed unless by means that have never yet been tried." The man who has almost become part of the machinery he controls is exactly as new an apparition as the machinery happens to be. On the other hand, the outward manifestation of the controlling spirit, of the purely human forces coming into play is not a new thing, but it is as much contained in Epstein's presentment as in any other of " les noces primitives de l'homme et de la terre : l'homme par ce grand contrat, abandonnant à la terre l'héritage de ses sueurs, et la terre s'engageant en retour a porter fidèlement les moissons et les cendres de l'homme."

Nothing could be further from the truth than the view that regards a work like this as a challenging negation of " classic " ideals, a work which for its admiration demands one's consent to the attempted overthrow of the supreme masters of the craft.

In Epstein's *Rock Drill* the characteristic anatomy of the figure is of a kind frequently described as " abstracted " because it is considered to present the kind of simplification of forms to their nearest geometrical equivalent, a method that is supposed to put into practice the notions to which I have alluded and which has recently been so enthusiastically advocated by artists who are anxious to find a prescription for " originality." In the present case it is erroneous to assume that tendency ; the particular requirements of the work would have made the reproduction of

the anatomy of the human body an absurdity, and in this respect there is nothing in the work that shows intentions that contradict those of the great " classics " who in a similar case would have acted in an analogous manner. The attempt to explain the style of this work by looking on it as exhibiting simplifications of the anatomical shapes referred to is a demonstrable failure. If it conformed to these, it must be obvious its structure should have been entirely different from what it is. How by any process of " *simplification* " that reduces forms to their barest essentials, the shape of a knee-cap could be made to appear in the shape of a cube escapes understanding. It seems clear that the relations, though the moving intention of the sculptor may be a constant factor, are not of the same nature as, for instance, they are between such anatomical parts as the breasts on the *Venus* or the *Maternity* or the hands on the *Venus* or the marble *Mother and Child.*

It is in this case desirable to dismiss the inelastic reasoning that insists on the direct similarity of the work's forms and the familiar forms in nature that are correlate to them. Rather one should attempt to follow the sculptor thinking in terms of the material he employs. Unavoidably his metal structure, having its own organic requirements, demands a " metallic " anatomy of its own which, however related, must count with principles alien to the anatomy of the flesh. The logic the material engenders will by the guidance of the sculptor's procedure reveal itself to the unprejudiced observer.

The soul of the stone or of the metal communicates to the artist's perception its laws and determines the medium's physiology and anatomy, and the spectator, if he does not obstinately resist as the fossil æsthete does, if he does not set up the barrier of ignorance and prejudice against its transmission, will find his trust in the artist's sensitivity justified and will receive the full warmth of the work's absorbed life instead of the chilly deceptive satisfaction of seeing his own obtrusive notions more or less justified according to the degree of precision he can attain in endeavouring to unravel the tissue of cross references to a different order of organisms which the work may recall to his mind.

But in the overwhelming majority of cases the spectator would

indignantly refuse to admit that he must necessarily abandon his own habits of thinking when, as a foreign visitor, he is introduced to the universe of the artist's thought. He dislikes to feel that, instead of being a solicited patron, a distinguished guest who honours his host's house by his august presence and who can rightly expect to see his comfort and wishes submissively studied, he should as a humble, but for that the more welcome, visitor to a temple, leave the pride of his personal importance behind him and seek to efface the disturbing effect of his pretences as an informed connoisseur. He should understand that he will then find the access to the innermost sanctuary of the artist's thought made possible, while by posing as one initiated in the mysteries as one of the honoured adepts he will derive no other profit from his pretensions than possibly the degrading adulation of the undiscerning crowd of the vulgar who will on his claims readily ascribe to him the artist's power of penetration supported moreover by the " sound common sense " it denies to the latter. But if he is in quest of this, he has no relation to the artist's work at all ; he only uses the name of it to make his imbecile vanity appear impressive in the eyes of the basely ignorant.

But in the case of the spectator who renounces those foolish aspirations it depends, apart from his intelligence and intuition, almost entirely on his good will to come under the power of the artist's thought, which alone can reveal to him that greater universe of which it is the reflection.

He must be prepared to understand from this that it is the right of genius to appear the maker of its own laws ; the derivation of these laws, the reference or the copying from example that remain unapproachable for the spectator he may take for granted on the strength of the artistic integrity which is inalienable from the spiritual dispositions of the really creative mind.

But where the latter sees clearly and the former must trust, this requires, in view of the little capacity for faith that is in most men, an exceptionally difficult exercise of confidence—instinctive perception of the artist's imaginative reliability—or a feat of personal effort of imagination of which most minds, lacking both predisposition and training, are quite incapable.

It appears to be one of the last things one can expect of the average human intellectual capacity, to recognize the possibility of laws and organizations conditional on premises that are intrinsically different from those of which it has cognizance. I alluded already to the questions of matter, time and space that are apt to discover the conceptual insufficiency of even comparatively capable and disciplined intelligences. An easily ascertainable example of this incapacity in minds of superior intelligence and more than ordinary lucidity is supplied by their almost general incapability to recognize the probabilities of organic existence, of life, on other planets for example, under any conditions but those they are used to associate with the forms of life familiar to themselves.

One hears in all seriousness men of extensive scientific training dispose of any hypothetical organic existence on some celestial body on the ridiculously flimsy ground of the absence round it of a gaseous atmosphere similar to the layer of air round the earth. Granting the accuracy of physical observation one is stupefied by the lack of imaginative faculty as well as by the stultifying pedantry that presumes conscious life and organic growth and existence to be universally dependent on respiration in some form, or on the presence of oxygen or a certain grade of temperature. But for our present purpose we have only to establish the fact that these are pretty common limitations, and calculate their effect on the potential appreciation of the artist's work to which is not even brought, as a rule, the measure of assiduous application and desire for research that, in the case of investigations by scientifically trained minds, shows such restricted results. The man who would forward the thesis of possible existence of living, thinking bodies of liquid or gaseous composition, in a medium of solid matter at a temperature of 3000 degrees Celsius would be treated as a harmless lunatic by the very scientists who, ridiculing the philosopher's stone or the magic formula or incantation, feel themselves comfortably at home in the fantastic menagery of molecules, atoms, ions, electrons, the " ether " and the various mnemotechnic cribs they themselves insist on having taken seriously.

In view of this it is not surprising to find people hampered by

similar difficulties when confronted by the creation of an artist of which the beauties and significance are the outcome of an organic order whose foundations are not known factors within the sphere of their comprehension. The assimilation of any methodical æstheticism which attempts to give an explanatory representation of the arts as a " universal language," requiring of the spectator or auditor a knowledge of its grammar and syntax and leading him to expect the artist reciprocally to adopt its vocabulary and alleged rules in order to be intelligible, is of no use. As a rule it is pernicious, making ridiculous pedants and unbearable snobs of any but the strongest and clearest minds who, while able to escape its fatal influences, happen to be practically the only ones who do not feel the need of its deceptive support.

If only it were possible to convince others of the truth, self-evident to the degree of being the more easily overlooked, that it is more rational to have confidence in the creative artist than in the professors and critics who trudge behind him, face backward to keep up the pretence of looking in front ! If one could only make others understand that it is obviously more reasonable to trust the work itself than someone else's comments, to convey to them its maker's intentions, and that it is the boiling-point of absurdity to expect the latter to succeed where the former fails !

But unfortunately such is the tyrannous power exercised over the average mind by the plausibly insinuated notions with which the journalist-æsthete and art dissector flatters its " amour-propre," that the victim becomes as incapable as he is unwilling to undergo the " subordination " of his thought to the artist's ideas. They pervert the originally inoffensive mediocrity into a stupendous arrogance, an immeasurably grotesque self-esteem. The passive rôle of a " mere spectator " is felt to be unworthy of the spiritual and cultural aristocrat-by-the-grace-of-his-sixpenny-weekly. He regards himself rather as the courted idol for whose suffrage and consideration the artists compete, to whose taste their works must pay homage, the inspiring patron (the Roi Soleil of Clapham Common, the Golders-Green-Lorenzo !) from whose pronouncements the shades of the departed great must depend for the severance or continuation of their works' lease of life, and from

whose anxiously evoked approval the living artist derives his *raison d'être.*

While it goes without saying that these suburban Incroyables, the " Précieuses Ridicules " of the bead shop at some point of their career start dabbling for their private account in æsthetic speculation (alone or in " coterie," according to whether they are fanatics of individuality or the most up-to-date enlightened thinkers who have found out individualism and its cult as an obsolete pose and a particular piece of Victorian sham), they are in this respect like to the " old faithful reader of your esteemed journal " who, by force of habitually spelling out its contents, ends by writing to it " about it," in that they have long been victims themselves before they start victimizing others in their turn.

> " *Béralde.* ' Faites vous médecin vous-même. La commodité sera encore plus grande d'avoir en vous tout ce qu'il vous faut.'
> *Toinette.* ' Cela est vrai . . . et il n'y a point de maladie si osée que de se jouer à la personne d'un médecin.'
> *Argan.* ' Est-ce que je suis en age d'étudier ? '
> *Béralde.* ' Bon, étudier ! Vous êtes assez savant ; et il y en a beaucoup parmis eux qui ne sont pas plus habiles que vous.'
> *Argan.* ' Mais il faut savoir bien parler Latin, connaître les maladies, et les remèdes qu'il y faut faire.'
> *Béralde.* ' En recevant la robe et le bonnet de médecin vous apprendrez tout cela ; et vous serez après plus habile que vous ne voudrez.'
> *Argan.* ' Quoi ! l'on sait discourir sur les maladies quand on a cet habit-là ? '
> *Béralde.* ' Oui. L'on n'a qu'a parler avec une robe et un bonnet, tout galimatias devient savant, et toute sottise devient raison.' "

Besides, the æsthetic education those dilettanti receive encloses to the full those potentialities for rivalling their teachers ; as the medical encyclopædia offered for sale by certain unofficial " Uni-

versities " contains the certificate made out to the purchaser bestowing upon him the institute's doctoral degree which, with a deep and splendid faith in humanity, it adjures and trusts him not to consider as obtained before he feels worthy of it, i.e. has acquainted himself with the magic vade-mecum's contents.

The instruction the aspiring art-lover, ambitious of judicial privileges, receives from his august leaders, the propagators of the critical idea and applied æsthetics, is responsible for the spreading of the type, this curious monster of the artistic fauna, the " *asinus ruminans*." The seduction is too great ; the individual with a vague sensibility is given to understand that by climbing the short ladder of æstheticism at the hand of the professor who guarantees the reliability of the instrument made in his workshop after approved and tested models he will find himself on the summit of Parnassus in the company of the great masters, men of genius but unconscious dreamers, who unlike the resourceful professor are obstinate enough to make the ascent by the unscientific, unmethodical means their childlike, instinctive haphazard ways prefer (to the never ceasing wonderment of the professor, who marvels that they ever arrived there—occasionally —be it whispered pianissimo, quasi niente, without, ay, before him). And there on that giddy height they feel themselves more steady than the great, with the presence of the good guide whose offices these irresponsible children of genius frivolously, opinionatedly rejected. The obvious advantages of accepting these services instead of following the erratic wayward genius on the whimsical meanderings into which his unaccountable fancies steer him would convince stronger minds. Why should one be sceptical and not admit with the proofs before one that æsthetics can perform miracles at will ? Did not that cynical materialist Sancho Panza admit the same powers in knight-errantry and practical magic when he held the governor's sceptre in his hand and, reality surpassing his boldest imagining, sat in the chair disposing of the weal and woe of his isle's inhabitants ? One might as well expect the guileless reader to resist when the quack advertisements, in the style of the immortal César Birotteau,

inform him that he can praise his lucky stars for being alive on the day that offers to him unique and unprecedented opportunities; that he may obtain "while-you-wait" the inestimable and priceless benefit of the-most-famous-scientific-minds-of-our-age's lifelong and patient researches, enabling him to dispose without any sort of personal effort (immediately-the-first-instalment-is-paid) of the precious fruits of his magnificent benefactors' disinterested sacrifices, to be put to whatever uses the subject of this grandiose philanthropy may desire. The wonderful helpers of the charitable demigods who thus succour deserving humanity, having "reduced-everything-to-the-strictest-scientific-principles-of-the-most-up-to-date-discoveries," one may feel perfectly safe in accepting and making unrestricted use of the present of so much brilliancy. Quite in the approved tone the aspiring dilettanti are interrogated, answered and encouraged finally by the blinding promise of having themselves turned into infallible connoisseurs and of having put into their hands a never-failing æsthetic criterion —simplicity itself, a child learns to handle it in four minutes—the product of highly expert specialists, the splendid result of incessant investigation and years of untiring study of the most famous, etc. —the big drum *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam* . . . of high academic distinction, splendid heritage of culture . . . the great educational opportunity dreamed of by reformers for so long at last an accomplished fact . . . brought to your own home, brought to your own home* . . . to be had for the asking, brings the world within your grasp without moving from your chair (irresistible ideal).

But it should be well understood that the æsthetic cattle formed in this way, while acutely feeling it incompatible with the dignity of their knowledge and conscious taste to trust in the power of an

* It should not be said that I quote pill advertisements to attack æsthetic humbug which is not likely to be of so coarse a character. But the nauseating cult of "æsthetic" discernment and artistic judgment acquired: "why not"—"give us a trial"—"let us send it you now"—"what would your friend say, if . . ." —"no drudgery." . . . "let us beautify your life"—is a painful fact, and the majority of the above are textual quotations from a prospectus bearing the name of one of the world's most venerable institutes. The theme has no special actuality though. Idiots, too, are of all ages and, unlike the true poets, are not only born, but also made, on the whole, with conspicuous success.

artist whose works defy their thumb-rule tests, appear quite expansively impressionable and ready for any acquired display of enthusiasm before works whose meaning may completely escape them and yet possess for them all the suggestive power of their makers' solidly established reputation. It is almost touching to see how the proud and unapproachable can, under such circumstances, assume the most lamb-like submissiveness and docility. But it would be a mistake to ascribe much significance to their now and then loudly proclaimed humility in face of the classic master's works. They feel in reality on a footing of equality with them and intimately at home in their company. Their obtrusive humility and their pompous modesty is not the intimidated guest but the superior graciousness of the host.

In the cases where they do not feel watched and so can abandon pose, their attitude towards the work of art is the meaningless state of confident expectation of the visitor to the magician who comes to have magic for his money, who means to be enchanted when he goes to the enchantress. He goes to a concert to be excited or soothed, according to his state of mind, and feels as much cheated if the pastor does not console or elevate him as he would if Circe did not turn him into a swine.

Such people go to a museum or an exhibition as the traveller who has things arranged for him by a tourist agency goes on a traditional journey to see the vaunted landscapes, and is duly prepared to undergo the proverbial sensations, " the overpowering beauty of the Swiss mountain scenes " or " the might and superb grandeur of the tropical skies."

And the " guides " who are, sometimes innocently, but more often very guiltily, responsible to a great extent for the stupid arrogance and ridiculous pretensions of the " dilettanti " jealously guard their position of power. In our society they have established themselves after the manner of the caste of priests serving as intermediary between deity and man. But the effect of the activity of this caste-of-æstheticians, lacking the justification of ardent faith, is without exception detrimental. It abuses its usurped pontifical powers from the very first moment of its existence. Even if the case might be thinkable in which a mind, helpless with-

out support, profits by directions and arrives at the capacity of interesting itself in and to some extent enjoying art, the resulting profit goes to its possessor only, while the fatal influence exercised in the other cases has widespread and much more positive results.

Whatever might be the personal loss to the artificially nurtured adept, the loss of his attention and pretentious homage to the arts is nil. The mind that by its own effort is incapable of any manifestation of faith and love is not of consequence to anything but itself. Any favourable influence in this respect that could be ascribed to the æsthetes' ascendency over the more feeble-minded well-intentioned is more than outweighed by the notoriously detestable state of mind they engender in many a possessor of perhaps mediocre intelligence but also of honest curiosity and pure instincts untainted by the conceit of the vulgar, who trusting to his own disposition might derive a sincere unaffected enjoyment from art without spoiling the possible pleasure of others by adopting the self-conscious, critical attitude of his prophets to satisfy his own vanity. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the fact that the professional critic and æsthete may be a man of far more than ordinary intelligence and quite convinced of the utility and necessity of his calling—but the rules of the caste are not ignored with impunity; he has to prove its assumptions and to uphold its theories, and the consciousness of his position is a formidable ally of incapacity and laziness, altogether keeping him in the slavery of the criterions, canons and fixed principles of which he must pretend to be the master.

Thus his habits are contradictory and hostile to the free attitude the work of art, quite apart from the valuation of its merits, demands from any spectator, if it is to be loved and appreciated. The best among them, since naturally they conceal the loss of their liberty, become necessarily of bad faith in their pronunciations. They become doubly so because, in order to preserve whatever prestige they have acquired in the eyes of their "public," they must avoid disappointing it and therefore they continue to supply the products that have made their reputation. They cannot afford to lose it by becoming inconsequent and self-

contradictory in their public's eye, because their claims to leadership are precisely founded on the unfailing applicability of their stable methods of criticism. They would then be on a par with their docile readers who do not expect them to discourse on art as the man does who says : " I am very fond of it, but I do not know anything about it." The critic must know all about it ; he must in their eyes remain the expert who " understands," for whom every work is an utterance in a familiar language to which he has only to listen to know what is said. The " plain man " who " loves music " but does not " understand it," when he hears " the musical critic " speaking with perfect assurance of the " contents " of a composition as if he were referring to a conversation or a lecture, would undoubtedly be shocked if he knew that on this particular point the " initiated " critic's notions are not likely to be any more precise than his own. And when, moreover, the critic has for his readers been pretending to classify these " contents " of the work in the same way as his colleagues who cater for the political section of the readers do those of public speeches, the pretended leader becomes as sheepish as can be. He bleats the familiar tune he is paid for—whether in money or admiration —bleats conservatism, liberalism, revolution as inevitably as any. He is a black or a white or a red sheep or a multi-coloured monstrum—without prejudices—that means with all the other prejudices combined—and wants the world black, white, red or motley ; but in any case he knows exactly what he wants, and that is why he may be damned.

He has accustomed his followers to dogma, and he must give them dogma. To distinguish himself from a shopkeeper and a penny-in-the-slot machine he has for the description of his activity invented some wonderful journalistic euphemisms ; he listens to the step of the ages ; he keeps his finger on the pulse of the world's opinions.

Verily, if one might accept his word as truth, one could be sure that from this to listening to the music of the spheres is but one step, and thence to the padded room only one more. The fate of the æsthetic charlatan Jullien, who at least was sincere in his folly, points a pretty moral ; the universality of his æsthetic

functions went to his head as he believed in his calling, and when Berlioz saw him in London playing the flute from the top of a carriage for the public enlightenment he enthusiastically accosted the latter to demonstrate his great discovery that: when he put his fingers in both ears he heard " a colossal A "—" the diapason of the universe " !

Fortunately for themselves most æsthetes and art critics are made of sterner stuff and successfully ward off the danger that hypersensitiveness of conscience may put an untimely end to their professional careers. They are occasionally faced by the painful necessity of arming themselves with deceit and swindle when their own dogma forbids them to praise the work of some infamous genius whom on former opportunities they could sincerely disparage.

Against this unwelcome conviction of the moment the critic has to set off his earlier propagated one that has already gained his public, whose faith in his judgment as well as his own authority that depends on it have to be considered.

But when an irresistible vanity drives him to a naïvely impudent attempt to make his judgment respected in a private circle of men in whose eyes he is aware his apparent incapacity to recognize the value of some particular work makes him out a poor figure, one may hear the feared judge apologize for the public avowal of opinions that in this environment would leave a false impression of his discerning power.

It may therefore be noted in his favour that rather than see his intelligence undervalued he rouses contempt when he is not ashamed to have it remarked that he knows a certain work is deserving of recognition while yet the public's sanction of his principles obliges him to condemn it ex cathedra.

As regards honesty and moral decency one must prefer the equally harmful ignorant who, I am anxious to admit, are a far more familiar subject. The vast majority cannot in extenuation of their blunders plead their professional loyalty to principle and public in justification of their dishonesty. They are quite honest and quite stupid. A third category and quite an influential one, who, however stupid they may be, are more dishonest than any, unblushingly

praise and condemn, their mouth full of the most exalted professions, swayed entirely by personal motives, flattery or revenge, or material gain. They make themselves the willing tools of dealers and the henchmen of the commercial opposition of artists embarrassing to the " trade "—but the effect in the different cases is very much identical. From the point of view of art and artist's interest it is immaterial whether the chief representative of a caste whose activities are detrimental to it happens to be an intelligent cad or an ignorant parasite or just a fool, whether of the honest or dishonest variety.

It should also be taken into account that the more unsuspecting section of the reading public is inclined to trust the writer on art, apart from the notion that whatever comes from the printing press is infallible, because they take it for granted that he is constantly occupied with questions concerning art. The professional art critic is supposed to be at home in an atmosphere of " artistic thought " and intimately familiar with every product of at least those artists whose work embody his own professed ideals. The fundamental aims, the striving after whose achievement characterizes the work of the masters of all times and countries, are presumed to be before the writer's eye as an ever reliable inspiration.

The so-called lay public, who as a rule are only acquainted with a very limited number of even the most popularly idolized works and whose only knowledge concerning the entire produce of artistic creation has been gained at second hand from their " cicerone's " descriptions, would be very surprised to know that the latter more often than not is in a precisely similar position, that his attitude and point of view is not worth more than their own, only an infinitesimal fraction of his information having been obtained at first hand and his curiosity being generally quite satisfied with it.

The man who is thought to be consumed with the intensity of his eager love and unflagging interest for the great master's works will in reality prove to be anxious to have his occupation looked upon as a business-like activity not substantially different from a

commercial or any other one. In consequence of this view he does not feel obliged to take a greater interest and acquire a more extensive knowledge than suffices for the ambitions he entertains with regard to the advancement of his career. If he is in the first place concerned with making a living he will not trouble to expend more energy than will be sufficient for the particular grade of comfort of which he is in need. He can generally plead in justification of his lukewarm state of ambition the similarity of attitude of the multitudes of indifferent artists whose interest in their own and others' work and art decreases as their forced occupation increases in the constant attention and intensity of application it requires of them.

Apart from externalities which may cause them to pose as either the " bohemian " or the " gentleman," they think it incumbent on the consideration they owe to their personal well-being to be as little different from the average mortal as is feasible—on the whole with conspicuously satisfactory results—and take as little cognisance of various tiresome realities as they can possibly help. One of the consequences of this antiseptic discipline is that even men of naturally distinguished intellectual potentialities become entirely incapable of apprehending the moving forces of a newly appearing artist's existence.

And they will carefully avoid displaying any enthusiasm that might rouse thought and intensify the conception of the artist's aspects of life in others, as this would inevitably react on the intensity of effort demanded from themselves. As a prophylactic against this danger, whose employment, however, is suggested by a rather questionable logic, they are ever trying to level down the aspirations they can discern in the incriminated artist's manifestations in accordance with the leisurely facile standards representative of what they describe as " normal life." These attempts are naturally disguised in the moral of common sense and prayers for the " sanity " of art. But the motives of the sound and sensible critic's appeals for " sobriety " and " healthy " relation with " life " of contemporary or future art are too painfully transparent. It may be exceedingly difficult to point out what exactly these relations in the case of any artist are, from his

work, but this is primarily a concern for himself, while the critic should know that whatever their nature they are always defensible from the artist's point of view and that the severance of them is a physical impossibility; but in any case the critic's notorious formula as that " art is life " or that " life and art should be one " may mean anything and nothing. They are the kind of clichés that remind one of nothing so much as of some photographs of ghosts, in which the producer can make himself or others see practically anything he or they may wish. They belong to those singularly adaptable and handy propositions that lose nothing by being put on their head or turned inside out, that reveal their greatest loveliness to the blind and sound most agreeably in the ears of the deaf. If for the artist's perception there can exist " common " aspects of life that should enter into his work they become by his treatment raised to the level of his supposedly superior " artistic thoughts," and the lazy, vulgar mind which, when formulating the necessity of " daily life " art, or " art for the people " (which curious property they, vaguely and insultingly, imagine as some sort of semi-digested, savoury palatable commodity), expects somewhat the reverse to take place does little more than obey the craving for repose its instincts know is to be found for it in a snugly-unrolling display of pompously " arty " hearth-rug platitudes.

If the pitiable " plain man " has not much good to expect from the guidance of a class of alleged experts whose ignorance, though not much less complete than his own, is successfully concealed from him by their impudence, he cannot hope for any particularly helpful assistance from the self-styled " scientific " art critic, even when the latter is free from the worst vices of irresponsible journalism. The Teutonic gift to the world of " historic comparative critical analysis of art " is not one to be specially grateful for. The tendentious historian's point of view is not under any circumstances a convincing one. It might be if he would trust to his intuition if he can dispose of any. But where its absence must be compensated for by an extra show of ponderous insistence and laborious plodding conscientiousness, the chances that he will

gain much insight into the meaning of events become ever more negligible. Yet he deals with facts concerning which he can at least collect suggestive documents and apply the test of ordinary human experience, and while he may be a prodigious bore he can yet for a courageous reader be sufficiently informative to deserve every indulgence.

But with the tendentious art-historian (and his artistic pretences imply the constant presence of tendentiousness) the case is different ; he cannot hope to supply the reader with documents more revealing than the works themselves, which after all are the foundation of his whole activity and which are physically existent and at any time approachable by everyone. Therefore he cannot expect the patience the reader can give to his confrère, and his distressing vagaries in the field of comparative valuation cannot be excused on account of any analogous usefulness of the references and documentary material he can hope to discover. And his familiar insistence on the course of events in artistic evolution presenting the same characteristics as that of human civilization or the development of racial culture is as absurd as it is irritating. Where he does not lose himself in poetic irrelevances and literary fantasies apropos of some work that appeals to him, he generally appears obsessed by the tendency to detect progress, development, births and deaths of " schools," imitation, and devolution, decadence, disintegration and revival. With this queer outfit he perverts any unapprised susceptible reader till he can no longer look with innocent eyes on any work of art.

That those influences are responsible for the widespread erroneous notion that " modern " art has been based on " theories " which are supposed to be hostile to " classic traditions " I have pointed out elsewhere already. Spectators whose attitude has been determined by them imagine that when admitting works like Epstein's *Rock Drill* or *Venus*, they admit by silent implication those " theories " they presume to have provided a stimulus for the works' conception. These preposterous notions moved many students pro and contra to the heated controversies that raged about these works. Many a critic who violently attacked them might have condescended to being won by the works' qualities

and to withhold his objections if he did not feel obliged to refuse his praise to a work he takes to be a living expression of ideas to which he takes exception in their entirety.

Now I have already given as my opinion that it can be easily shown, point for point, that what is new and original in the *Rock Drill*, for instance, which no human eye has seen before, is yet the outcome of analogous apperceptions to those that preceded the presentment of anything new and original in any master's work in whatever period, distant or near. Epstein, like every convinced and courageous artist, has only followed the example of the great masters who never hesitated to adopt new means of expression where their use was indicated by new elements in a subject. The notorious fault in the reasoning of the academic theorists is that they expect salvation for art in the imitating of the unquestionably great, overlooking the fact that while they are predisposed to accept their works with all they contain, their predisposition towards living masters is generally the reverse, and that by denying to the latter the very rights whose use established the fame of the exceptional original creative minds, they negate their great example and expect the later artists to become what the former never were—imitators. I have frequently emphasized my opinion that every artist works after " the " traditions ; but it should be understood that the courage to add to them, to innovate (occasionally to display a ruthless independence of them !) is one of the most valuable qualities. The most fanatical defenders of the traditions are usually, like Don Quixote, keeping watch over his rusty armour in the yard of the wayside inn, ready to fight any donkey-driver in their honour. But Orlando in the proud consciousness of his own glory would be the first to value the temerity of the hero who might come and put his trophy next to the arms by the road, ready to incur the ire he need not fear (and every great artist is himself a Roland again who in *his* fury might overthrow the monument though he will be the first to see the greatness of his predecessor and restore it again, being the only one who could do so, while the mere dunce who could not has to be looked after so that he does not display any lack of respect). The threat was not meant for such, and it is significant

that it was Zerbino, not Orlando himself, who placed the defiant warning at the foot of the trophy :

" Nessun la muova
Que star non possa con Orlando à prova."

How can anybody hope to offer a final judgment or even a reasoned criticism in the face of a work of whose constituent elements he knows not the origin ? His intuitive perception of the artist's power alone can give him the conviction that the means the latter employs are incontestably commanded by the works' requirements. The timid mind naturally distrusts its own discerning powers and, where the artist dares choose and establish, must wait till the sanction of the dictionary invests the new expression with the dignity of official recognition. It is sufficiently remarkable that the makers of the dictionary who might be capable of recognizing where a new word's mode of originating assured it equal rights with the existing ones of which they—as the æsthetes of the vocabulary and syntax of artistic expression—know and understand so much more than the lay public, wait for the latter's acceptance of it to make them feel justified in extending the approbation of their authority to it.

The " boldness " of the artist who is sure of himself (which the public are ever somewhat doubtful of because they are no more sure of him than of themselves and therefore inclined to question the possibility altogether where it suits them), so far from causing the destructive revolution his critics fear, and most of his indiscriminate admirers hope it to be, really denotes a constructive acceptance of the real meaning of the tradition. The spectators' incapacity to read this meaning is natural as only the creative artist can makes them incredulous ; when the essentials of the traditions to which they pay lip service are presented to them in any unfamiliar light they are ready to blaspheme.

They are as delighted to see the critics making short work of an artist who pays more valuable tribute to their idols than either they or their henchmen ever did or could, as the father and mother who did not recognize their son and walked twenty miles to see him hanged.

X

THE appearance of familiar objects represented in a work of art is naturally different from the appearance they present to the eye of the non-creative observer, in the majority of cases.

Instead of drawing the obvious conclusion that the artist's rendering cannot be but more trustworthy than their own, the most vulgarly indifferent people who may give occasional thought to the problems the artist struggles with every second of his life, on the rare occasions when they look at a work of art with some interest and a slight concentration of attention, are quite prepared to lay down their apperception as normal, ignoring the way it was formed and the fact that it is much more dependent on prejudices than on physical fact, as I explained in an earlier chapter.

They ignore also the fact that a great many of what are so rashly pronounced to be abnormal representations on the slender evidence of the " I-can-use-my-own-eyes " type of philistine impertinence recur in the works of nearly every one of the greatest draughtsmen. Instead of learning the lesson, the observer will give according to the moment of its appearance two explanations of one phenomenon which are self-contradictory to the extent of being mutually annihilating, i.e. that the " old " artist has an arbitrary style of presenting certain objects because he reveres conventions, and that the " new " artist adopts the same stylization because he execrates these conventions.

The " normally " seeing artist who calls himself the vassal of nature and not of the craft is supposed to be free from the eccentricities of either school and to represent things " as they are," that means as they seem to Smith and Brown, on the walls of whose rooms the reproductions of his works are welcome ornaments.

A horse or a dog, in fact any animal from a cricket to a lion as

presented in painting or sculpture by the best of the " moderns," is as notably different from what it looks on " realistic " pictures or sculptures of the Landseer type as are the representations by the old masters. The human anatomy which the public see with the eyes of the Victorian academicians and as it appears on the popular " natural " pictorial and plastic renderings is a proposition notoriously discrepant from what it is in Egyptian or Assyrian, as well as contemporary French art or mediæval Italian and German. It is a curiously childish way of reasoning to assume then that things " are " what they seem to the mediocre power of observation, because the average spectator will have his vision chiefly defined by suggestions derived from those works whose maker's psyche he feels to be most like his own. Therefore his notions do not proceed from his " innocence," which might indeed supply useful material for a test, but the reverse. He is not free from prejudice but consists of nothing else.

Nothing daunted by the divergencies of the various arguments, their propagator, the historical art critic, is generally prepared to make one set of conventions the norm from which he judges the degree of success in representation reached by the artists of all times. Either the " canon " of the antique or some " ism " abstraction of the moderns or the " actuality " of " objective " appearance of material forms must serve ; though while by each method he may succeed in discovering as much order as will satisfy him it must, when applied to any of the two others, yield complete absurdity, and when he becomes sufficiently aware of this to introduce slight modifications the absurdity will become somewhat less in one case and increase as much in the other till a perfectly balanced stability of the absurd has been established. The very same things which in the works of one period are ascribed to naïveté, ignorance, unworldly helplessness, ingenuous clumsiness, lack of resource, undeveloped vision, infantile imagination and nervous insensibility are, when they appear in another period, explained as the unmistakable results of sophistication, tiredness, pathological sensitiveness, lust of sensation, degenerate refinement, perversity, an over developed vision and diseased, decayed imagination.

If only the law givers, who are perhaps themselves well-intentioned and intelligently sincere, saw the nonsensical use made of their proposed tests, they would flare up and break their æsthetic stone tablets; but they never do, probably realizing they would not like the great irate prophet, so soon obtain new ones.

It should be mentioned that many highly intelligent readers derive a real enjoyment and receive mentally invigorating suggestions from reading essays on the history of art and descriptions of its products. But while this may rouse their interest sufficiently to make them devote more energy to the study of these, it depends on their own intuition whether they come any nearer to the kernel of the matter. They are usually no wiser after those lectures, though they may be stimulated to a desire for opportunities of undergoing emotions works of art may convey to them, because with the rarest exceptions the things to which their attention has been drawn are elements of the works irrelevant to their artistic significance. Therefore the pleasure derived from the study of such writings does not prove their worth as an analysis of those parts that constitute the work a plastic or pictorial creative utterance.

What these writings generally discuss, in the readable sections that abandon for the moment abstractly æsthetical pretensions, are the anecdotal aspects they with more or less justification detach and which they consider as literary or philosophic vehicles of expression. With regard to works in a pure style this method is superfluous and misleading and it only becomes more applicable as the works themselves become more pronouncedly the transcriptions of literary or philosophical thought into plastic or pictorial medium. Anecdotal and philosophically intentioned paintings or sculptures are often quite genuinely appreciated by people who are full of a very fine human sentiment. Only they are inclined to give the artist credit for a quite different achievement from what he should legitimately strive after. Their mistake proceeds from insufficient realization of the nature of the artist's taste. They fail to realize that they, as spectators, bring to a work, incomplete as an utterance in the medium through which it comes to them, the support of a willing emotionalism and so take upon themselves a trans-

formation of the artist's idea which should have preceded his conception—should be his work, not theirs. The artist has only suggested to them things which by the act of their eager imagination excite in them emotions the work as such would be incapable of causing.

If a man is shown an actual " landscape " through a frame and he is capable of seeing it as a self-contained organic composition, that means his eye and imagination are those of an artist. If a sequence of occurrences from actual life were divided into a number of acts, no playwright would be justified in calling it his creation, and if the spectator followed the connections between the happenings, discerned the motives, and brought form and order into what he observed, the creative principle at work would be a product of his own brain.

Think, for example, of the popular painting representing a man being let out of a dungeon by a grim gaoler who, keys in hand, peruses the document commanding his discharge while the loving spouse who brought it, pressing the infant to her breast, casts a defiant glance at the reading official over the head of her man who weeps, his head resting on her shoulder. Everyone must recall the pages upon pages of enthusiastic and poetic descriptions of every thinkable kind of painting that form nine-tenths of all that is written on art—sometimes with reasonable justification, often without any. But when the writers of such effusions have to say anything of a pyramid or a drawing of Picasso they are baffled, as their method appears useless. Sometimes in similar instances they will, without further ado, declare that these works are perfectly " meaningless " ! But if they have not the ingenuous courage of their opinion in its logical consequences, they will, far from abandoning the good fight, pluckily go on to the bitter end, vapouring merrily on the most distressing irrelevancies. In extreme instances they may then become conscious of emitting nothing but flatulent nonsense ; but in the majority of cases where the works do not in the least justify their methods, though the fact may not be so overwhelmingly apparent, they remain unconscious of the gaseous consistency of their comments.

With regard to the well-known painting by Millais to which I alluded, the dramatic display of conjugal love and faithful devotion is always a most touching thing, but picturing a moving sentiment does not make a picture moving. It is the painter who does so, and how he does so is a less tangible question that generally eludes description in words. A pair of old boots are not things that wring the heart as does the maid of Orleans, yet van Gogh's painting of them conveys a deeper feeling* than a great many heartrending representations of the fair saint at the stake.

The spectator before the anecdotal work is moved, quite independently from the effect of whatever qualities the work may possess, by the nature of his own thoughts, his imagination having been set going in a certain direction by the subject and the anecdotal details the artist is presenting. It might, however, receive this directing stimulus from any happening in actual life that he might chance to witness. The state of feeling that remains from this action of the imagination should have been established in the artist's mind in the first instance, and if through the filter of his disposition and human comprehension he extracts from it elements which allow a purely pictorial or plastic embodiment, he could find in his medium the corresponding expression for the sentiment he otherwise by literary suggestion must leave it to the spectator to conceive.

The spectator's mind having been adjusted to the perception of literary intentions in painting or sculpture, he will naturally, when confronted with modes of expression that are unfamiliar to him, attempt to find an explanation for their appearance which presumes in the artist a point of view that is akin to his own. The occurrence of similar characteristics of style in works where they are an integral part of a subtly organized complex—say a sculpture by Michel Angelo or Donatello—is most likely to escape his attention, his power of analytical observation being rudimentary.

* Only not of a literary complexion; it should be well understood there is no question here of the sentimental sort of rhetorical caterpillar-dredger that calls for "soft music behind the scene"; a pair of old boots—the dear old toiler that walked in them—how many a night through storm and rain—the curly head of his little granddaughter—etc. etc., till the last clod thuds on the coffin and the audience sobs.

Lacking such guidance he will be the more confused by the same elements in a work that exhibits them more plainly so as to appear to his understanding the outcome of an arbitrary treatment that conforms to some theory. Egyptian, Assyrian or Gothic sculpture, for instance, may give him this impression or works as Epstein's *Maternity* or the *Oscar Wilde* monument. He will assume this theory to rest on a literary philosophical reasoning and consequently ascribe to the artist, perhaps admiringly, intentions he never dreamed of and be bitterly disappointed when the latter appears more shocked or irritated than gratefully pleased by his tributes. A few concrete examples may be helpful in elucidating my meaning. It is perfectly justifiable to draw attention to the fact that in much Greek sculpture animals are presented on a scale relatively smaller than that on which the human figures in the same work are executed, and to note that the sculptor obviously intended the latter to occupy the spectator's interest to a greater degree and that he found the modified relations of size a useful means of establishing in his composition that harmonious balance he desired to exist between its more and less important constituents. If, on the other hand, I assert this to be a manifestation of philosophic idealism and that the sculptor intended by this preponderance to convey his belief in the ascendancy of man, of the superiority of the human intellect over the beast, I arrive on the slippery path of literary speculation where the justification for my assertions would be far to seek. The reduction to absurdity of the hypothesis is easily arrived at when I consider that in this case Dürer when he drew an enormous horse next to a small man must be an inverted idealist. I may note that the ancients presented Hercules with a head that is diminutive in relation to the body and that the latter's size is successfully suggested by these proportions, but it would be ridiculous to say they intended us to understand that the hero was a mere jack-screw with " no more brains than ear wax." Yet one meets on every hand with such foolish comments, not only on pictorial anecdotes that provoke them, but also on works exhibiting a stylistic manner that by puzzling the observer who cannot rely on his intuition creates in him a desire to have it " explained " to him ; and the professional cicerone rushes in to oblige.

Of Epstein's *Rock Drill* I may say it embodies the epic of MAN's Promethean efforts to force the earth into his service—the strained neck suggests how his eyes seek to pierce into the distant night of the hidden future—that its tragic intensity betrays his consciousness of his power's limitation, while his redeeming hope clings to the tender embryo he carries lovingly in his toil-racked body because it promises him immortality, the saving reward of his heroic labours which alone can sustain the glorious battle to the last stage of the race's progress on the woeful path. This does not mean that the sculptor necessarily conceived the thought in this form and is not an " explanation " of the work. The mistake would enter were I to attempt to find detail of meaning in the anatomy, the lines and proportions which give the work its real beauty and are untranslatable into the medium of words.

Their origin lies in the artist's thinking in terms of sculpture pure and simple. Again, in the *Maternity* I may draw attention to the smile of fecundity, to the half-sleep of happiness that dreams of the divine mystery of the new life developing. To see, however, tendencies to emphasize this meaning in the style in which the work is executed would be unjustifiable. One might go so far as asserting that the fact that the figure is hewn out of the block from which it does not entirely detach itself but in which it remains slumbering, as the unborn form is itself not wholly separated from the mother earth, is a powerful means of preserving profound unity between the material form and the form giving thought. But the style of execution, having once been fixed by the nature of the idea, has its own demands that further determine the shapes. I may be excused for the introduction of pedantic-sounding technicalities when I point out that a sculpture which only in part detaches itself from the block out of which it comes forward cannot be logically " worked in the round." Its " dimension " must necessarily remain rudimentarily indicated in the direction towards the block of stone seen from the point from which the sculptor faced it when starting to detach the form of his vision from the chaotic infinity of the containing material. The shape of the mass of the hairs on the *Maternity*, for instance, demonstrates this clearly. Seen from the front its outline is completely modelled,

while from the side where it comes out of the block it shows hardly any accentuation of the surface towards left or right, but the curved plane is an almost exact reproduction (infinitely repeated) of the line at its ultimate front (as the cylinder is the result of the movement in the direction of the perpendicular on its centre that reproduces the (n) dimensional form in its (n+1) dimensional equivalent.

If the reader has grasped the meaning of my remarks and their application to this particular instance, he will without difficulty be able to recognize the effect of the formal requirements of the shape of the eyebrows, the lips and the fingers, the chin, cheeks and temples of the *Maternity* figure. Also he may find much become intelligible to him that I have noticed baffles many quite unprejudiced spectators in sculptural works. In this connection I should mention here the carvings on the surface of the little *flenite* block, or the torso of the *Sun God*, or the shoulders, chest, the face and the ornaments and figures above the head on the *Oscar Wilde* fragment here reproduced.

Now I should not omit to emphasize the fact that the treatment of shapes in relation to the spectator's—or sculptor's—position should not be mistaken for the deliberate distortion of shapes practised by sculptors who by means of such artifices intend to reproduce in their plastic products not the relative measures of an object but its projection on the retina from one certain point of view, nor for the even more artificial distortion that is intended —by practising the same substitution of reasoning for the organical logic of the formal conception—to suggest to the eye a more complete image of the object than would be visible from his standpoint.

In the first instance the sculptor attempts to abrogate the effects of "optical illusion," while in the second he endeavours to let his work have the benefit of its potentialities by deliberately creating them himself. Whatever they may be in respect to painting that seeks acceptable conventions for the suggestion of depth on the canvas (i.e. of an added dimension to those in the plane on which the shapes are presented) the artist's justifications to apply analogous methods to sculpture are of the most doubtful.

The sculptor certainly cannot, like the painter, offer the weighty plea of practically inevitable necessity. The eternal problem of the painter to find a convincing relationship between the concessions to the contradictory demands of the space he represents and the plane on which he does so is one that for a satisfactory solution needs the infallible intuition of the creative genius. It is to the few such " standard " solutions reached by the most profound and lucid minds that the minor artists wisely conform, realizing that apart from slight modifications, a new and equally convincing solution is beyond their powers. A few immature minds with a craving for originality at any price and a contempt for traditions that is not counterbalanced by reliable discernment and creative capacity, now and again surprise the world with freak solutions of their own that naturally fail to establish themselves though, while the results convince no one, a plausible advertisement of the innovator's intentions may succeed in maintaining both friendly and hostile interest for some while.

If an extension of the same problem might be said to exist for the sculptor at all, it is only of theoretical importance and consequently none of the great sculptors have ever seriously occupied their minds with it. Its importance has at times been artificially inflated by ingenious cranks, but for a sculptor of genius, who always finds his time and energy insufficient to materialize his conceptions, life is far too short to afford him the leisure to bring to the test of actual embodiment answers to a question which by no stretch of the imagination could be considered vital to his artistic occupation.

It is only in those times where as in the era preceding the period of Donatello or more recently that of Rodin, there is an absence of any creative genius and unprecedented personality that the minor talents, amidst the general mediocrity of contemporary sculpture, are apt to squander their gifts on fruitless preoccupations with the feasible means of constructing devices from reasoned contingencies whose application must automatically yield new forms and original truth. Their desperate conduct reminds one of the mediæval itinerant journeyman who, when he had exhausted his resources, was easily tempted to trust to the persuasive edge

of his dagger to procure for him some of the wealth that in such an unaccountable way would persist in going to fate's favourites. Precisely as the despairing artist, he usually gained the disheartening experience that his murderous violence turned out to be most disappointing as a short cut to comfort and that for all the precarious result secured by the experiment he might as well have remained honest. Like Dr. Faustus they discover too late that the devil drives a sharp bargain and is an old practised hand at false pretences, giving precious little for a soul.

Many of those sculptors when abandoning the modelling of figures " in the round " were not equal to the embarrassing problems which the presumption of the spectator's incomplete vision is apt to introduce to the various methods that can take its place. The most generally distracting is that which culminates in the hybrid form of the " bas-relief " where it becomes necessary to decide on a method between the two extremes represented by the conventions of the Chinese and Mantegna. The sculptor, though starting from a conception that is occupied with form in the terms of space, must adapt it to the modifying restrictions that derive from the painter's pretences of " perspective " from the point of view of the spectator whose introduction, not being as in painting silently implied by a formidable edifice of tradition, becomes painfully obtrusive. The calculation of the results in sculpture being of a disconcerting intricacy it appears practically impossible to foresee them with any measure of success, and to the spectator for whose gratification they are admittedly envisaged they prove ultimately more bewildering than anything else. If the latter were to attain to the proper appreciation of the forms presented to his vision it would be necessary in order that he might profit by the presentment of a projection with the resultant infractions, foreshortenings, altered angles and juxtaposition to have him fixed on to one base with the sculpture. It would be the more logical procedure because the work remains incomplete without his presence. The intrusion of the painter's mental equipment in these products of sculpture has had one curious effect that might be specifically mentioned, that is the displacement of the chief momentum of expression of the human psyche (which in the antique—as I

mentioned in the preceding chapter—spread over the entire body and limbs of the figures) to the features chiefly.

The reason is that while it becomes ever more impossible to give free expression and life to the human body which, in sculpture that presents a " front " and no " back," is but partially shown, it always remains possible to present with slight conventionalizing the whole of the face on which naturally the entire physiognomical power of expression becomes concentrated. On the effects of ornamentally treated clothing and drapery, which (as in the bas-relief, where it proves charitably useful to fill, hide, or relieve the " surface ") naturally play an important rôle in " pictorial " sculpture, and on its style I have dwelt at length elsewhere. On those of Epstein's sculptures that victoriously revive the best traditions of " sculpture in the round," and which show garments on human figures, their treatment is a significant element. The physiognomical vitality of the limbs and body of the impressive *Christ* figure is wonderfully preserved by the treatment, technically as ingenious as it is original, of the tight-fitting garment. Yet for all its originality it is as admirable a vindication of one long neglected tradition as the massive repose of the rhythmically arranged folds of the draped portrait head of *Mrs. Jacob Epstein* is of another and different one. The perfection and completeness of Epstein's modelling of a whole figure is convincingly demonstrated by the infinite variety of formally fully balanced and harmonious aspects they reveal from any point of view under different lighting. The number of sculptures that can stand this test will, after careful examination, prove to be a surprisingly small one.

Anyone who never thought of attempting it would probably be amazed to discover how numerous are the sculptures in which the makers, emulating the ways of the painter, have sculptured the " lighting " by a series of accentuations that, as much as the " perspective " attempts alluded to above, presuppose and necessitate a fixed relation between the work's and the spectator's positions, thereby diminishing the expressional versatility of the work.

This question of lighting, as revealing the perfections or deficiencies of the form, should not be confounded with that of the work's

position or surroundings. A work may be perfect in every respect but hidden from view. Here it entirely depends on whether the sculptor had the opportunity to place his own work in accordance with its ideal destination and in a way that satisfied his own conception of required surrounding and position. The consciousness of the spectator's presence need not necessarily, but should, at this stage at least, enter when conditions enable the sculptor to reckon with it without having to degrade his conscientiously considered vision. How different the results may be even when a perfectly competent sculptor is given every opportunity to make his wishes respected with regard to the neighbouring architecture, pedestal, block serving as base and ornaments on or round it, one may see from Rodin's failure to find a satisfactory position for his *Burghers of Calais* (the placing of which in the garden by the Houses of Parliament on the Embankment in London he personally directed and supervised), and on the other hand from Donatello's unqualified success in the choice of base and position of the *Gattamelata* on the square of St. Antonio in Padua.

However, apart from the characteristic difficulties this part of a sculptor's task presents, he is in our time and social conditions in an uncommonly unfavourable position to have fair opportunity for the development of his gifts in this respect, because art cannot be said to constitute an integral part of contemporary European life, in fact enters so little into it as to make torture of that artist's life who would desire to see his works take their proper place in our social organism. Even in the Catholic Church where Occidental art found a last refuge it is at the present day admitted only under mortifying conditions and stultifying restrictions. This is the more regrettable as it is one of the few possibilities remaining for the artist to see his works attaining to the dignity of a destination commensurate to art's aims if it becomes part of the surroundings of the place for worship where its presence can acquire a ritual significance. It is now continually brought home to any other but the commercial artist (who purveys *objets d'art* as a marketable commodity) that he is a supernumerary in modern society to whom it charitably extends a qualified tolerance.

No painter or sculptor—as distinct from the ambitious academician who aspires to honours the community appreciates and can dispose of and whose " career " it admits as a legitimate and laudable " professional " proposition—creates with the object of seeing his works solemnly entombed in a museum that does not even always present the attractions of the mausoleum, any more than the musician (I mean : the musician ; not the species of musical clown that goes by the name) does so for the prospect of having his composition brought to sound in a concert hall sandwiched between any two others at the choice of the concert giver, to have them contaminated by the presence of any hearer who may hold them in the most venomous detestation but can for a few pence buy the right to attend the mystery of its material realization and to profane it by hissing and sniggering if he feels so disposed. The man who desecrated one of the holy things in the temple by laying his hands on it forfeited his life, but the wretch who stabs, rips out or steals a canvas painted by Velasquez or Leonardo may by our laws applied with the utmost severity be made to spend a few weeks in prison and boast of his prowess.

A very few of the greatest create works that whatever their destination make sacred the surroundings in which they communicate themselves to those present ; the works devoted to the Gloria in Excelsis Deo of a Michel Angelo, of a Palestrina or Rembrandt carry the invisible temple round them at every time in every place, even as the Ark of the Covenant that, when it had no home, made holy the ground on which it stood and made the house or the town and those dwelling in them prosper. But : " Iratus est (itaque) Dominus contra Ozam, et percussit eum, eo quod tetigisset arcam : et mortuus est ibi coram Domino."

But those works are not therefore less that are not by themselves capable of eliminating the thorny question of surroundings. Then, according to conditions of time and place and the character of racial culture, we find products of art taking their place in the ceremonial of state, in popular festivity or entering as an integral element into the arrangement of the houses of a wealthy and spiritually refined aristocracy. None of those destinations is preserved at the present ; with the exception of shattered and

abortive attempts to make the architecture of towns a natural frame for the product of sculpture which with the general absence of practised discernment, good taste and reliable instinct, has resulted in the barbarous monstrosity of modern German cities and the insane " artistic interior," the search for a home for art has been abandoned by the clearer minds who have recognized its present hopelessness. They wait hoping for the advent of more favourable conditions in a more worthy future as David renounced the building of the Temple.

Meanwhile the exasperating tourist may continue " doing " the musea, catalogue in hand, giving a superficial glance and an appropriately superficial remark to any number of works, every one of which, to be seen with some of the mental concentration its maker devoted to it, would require as many days as the visitor spares seconds in front of it. And the " music lover " sits through his " program " whose length would exhaust the receptive powers of any musician (I mean again " musician " . . .).

This ghostly mirage of a Gargantuan appetite is so insatiable that no " art dealer " or gallery owner, no concert giver would undertake to arrange for the showing or production of one single work unless that itself were also of such antediluvian dimensions as to deserve the attention of the art-loving ogre.

When referring to Epstein's *Venus* I alluded to the difficulties most spectators have to contend with when seeing unfamiliar forms in painting or sculpture. But it should be borne in mind that these difficulties have a curious habit of only presenting themselves where contemporary sculpture is concerned and when the sculptor is still alive; also when they cannot be evaded by the simple process of classing the work as " exotic."

Nothing is more striking than to see someone staring with a puzzled air at a piece of sculpture and to see his face clear with an assured look of final understanding as soon as anyone obliges with the convincing information that " it is Gothic, you know " or that it is " antique " or " mediæval " or " Indian " or " Chinese." That seems to settle the matter in advance and preclude the necessity for any further demonstrative curiosity. Now although this

contentment may be absurdly exaggerated, it is certainly founded on a proper recognition that it is rather fruitless to find fault with conceptions of form that created a certain style ; one would only wish people were prepared for its logical consequences and would not insist on laborious " explanations " as soon as their amazed incredulity is roused by the unexpected appearance of contemporary sculpture. The somewhat exasperating certainty that the sceptical critic in front of Epstein's flenite figures would be immediately satisfied if one were to tell him they are copies of gargoyles from Notre Dame de Paris does not create a disposition for a detailed justification ; all the less so because one knows that this uncritical acceptance is not simply that of the anatomy student who is not inclined to question the miscarried calf's right to two heads and six legs, but that it is part of the outfit of the " connoisseur " who is ready to admire unconditionally when he knows he does not risk a contradiction that has not already been met by someone else.

He knows he cannot make a fool of himself without the justification of precedent and if he does so it will be in, for him, select company. Like his illustrious leaders, the professional critics, he displays a courage based on a prearranged mutual understanding that eliminates dangers. When his connoisseurship fails him it is because he is put in the regrettable case of the poor fellow who for thirty years performed nightly prodigies of marksmanship in the music-halls till he lost his life because by misadventure some uninformed assistant had actually loaded his rifle in ignorance of the fact that one of the revived William Tell's wise precautions was never to use any cartridges.

I have already discussed the infinite number of forms nature suggests to the artist that remain hidden from coarser perceptions and less native imaginations, and the implied justification which evades the control of any but an equally fine sensitiveness. At that place I briefly alluded to one of the more obvious instances of this, viz. that of the forms revealed by motion for which a material equivalent is not readily presentable.

In so far as it defines it and makes it apprehendable for our senses, motion creates space. Spatial infinity being for us inconceivable,

no space can be said to have for us an appreciable existence before motion has taken place. Therefore every variation of defined space is suggestive of motion which has taken place, and so of arrested motion at least which has established the ultimate form.

The fact that this impresses on the mind not only space circumscribed but also the as yet undefined form in space which would have been involved if the arrested motion had been completed in the direction logically indicated by the nature of the partly achieved process, provides a rich field of suggestion for the representation of which every artist has made use. It goes without saying that a great many have made use of the recognition without being personally conscious of it and that it is not necessary for doing this to reason out the justifying causes of one's procedure because the conviction of the artist gives him the courage and right to trust to his instincts. These are, however, the very things which constitute the origin of what I called the sculptor's " language " and which, with the demands of the materials in which he produces form and of the tools the process requires, make the " laws " to which his medium of expression conforms.

It is hardly necessary to point out that this medium is as capable of conveying thought as any other and that the sculptor's language is as definite and allows of as much precision as the language of words. Only the most superficial appreciation of the possibilities of communication can permit the erroneous belief that the language of words is a superior vessel for the conveyance of human thought and enables its user to attain to a greater precision and definiteness than any other, because only the most superficial observer can overlook the fact that the significance of any one word is different for every human mind. It is only the common factor of the various groups of associations it denotes in as many brains that presents the generally reliable power of communication it offers to its user whose more or less comprehensive intuition of the remaining factors belonging to an infinity of different mental equipments supplies him with that power of achieving influence over other minds whose effects are usually ascribed to his " power " over the " words." It is in the same way the

sculptor's intuitive knowledge of effects and their common factor on human minds that makes applicable his power for conveying his thought.

This way of considering the different media of expression so to say from the outside shows that however definite may be the relation between two expressions in two different " languages " it remains yet impossible to establish the analogy. While words, lines, tones and colours may exactly " mean " one and the same thing, it is not feasible to give a translation from one medium into the other because no one mind that " speaks " one of these " languages " perfectly can speak any of the others equally well, though he may as perfectly " understand " them. As a matter of fact the very perfection of his " understanding " would show him the hopelessness of the attempt to preserve the appropriateness of its expressions in " translation " which he knows are the qualities on which rests the value of the work.

The task seems easy enough on the borderland of the different domains, where their spheres of power overlap, but as each of the two extensions derives its meaning not from its contact with the other but from its immediate relation with the centrum of its own sphere, the references would take one back to the remotest points where the old problem represents itself. It is as in those lands on the frontier of two countries where a mixture of two languages is spoken ; the points of similarity facilitate intercourse, and difficulties would not be reduced by reference to the centres behind, where the two languages are spoken in their purest forms.

One can put the facts to a simple test by observing how a commentator, when he detaches the anecdotal element from a painting, is apt to forget he is speaking of a painting at all, being only occupied with the occurrence it presented. But he may talk of King Charles's head for twenty-four hours without bringing us any nearer to Van Dyck.

I have already referred to a few of the simple instances of forms suggested by motion, as the circle, ellipse, parabolic curve, etc. It should not be overlooked that in a derived sense the idea of arrested motion and the form-modification its effect introduces is one of the elements in some of the more familiar complexes that belong

to the well-known conventions of representative art. Significantly this is more apparent in those works in which the artist's intention has been to convey a series of connected happenings and where he has not thought it sufficient to select a characteristic moment from amongst them, taking knowledge of the others in the spectator for granted or leaving it to the commentator to divulge his meaning: not to mention the instances where he has relied on the obscurity of his incompleteness to create an impression of " profundity " or to display on the other hand his erudition by a wealth of pictorially irrelevant detail. In modern times the literary conception of painting or sculpture is so overwhelmingly evident that it is almost forgotten that there was a legitimate method for the painter or sculptor to represent action in the more obvious manner. Its place has been taken by the tiresome and irritating " snapshot " on canvas or in stone which by its painful incompleteness and accidental nature leaves a disconcerting impression of artistic insufficiency. The older artists were more justified who obviated this by selecting those arrangements that lacked these factors of accident by rendering (as the cinematographic film does at shorter intervals in quick succession) a series of characteristic phases of an occurrence they wanted to picture in a set of works forming one whole.

The more primitive method of showing this was to execute them on the same scale in the same manner and when possible to paint or sculpture them as decorations of buildings where their position would be fixed and they should not become separated. But the better and more artistically legitimate method that has become almost entirely neglected through the " intellectual " opposition of the " realistic " academicians (when they are not posing as " primitive " and " consciously archaizing " !) is that of uniting the consecutive phases which present the completest picture of the action in one composition. It is a composition of this kind Rodin discovered and praised in Watteau's *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, while in his own *Burghers* he may—on his own word—have attempted something similar.

As long as the composition is logically constructed as a picture or sculpture there is nothing from its own point of view which is

absurd, as the contradiction of the " unities " of time and place (whatever their justification with regard to the stage may be) cannot destroy its organism. Such curious attempts as modern painters have produced in which those different phases are " condensed," which only means presented not even as a form combination but put on top of each other like Bertillon's " type photographs," rest on an abstract reasoning that leaves the demands of the painting out of account, and the results are not in any way convincing.

How the composition may be made to preserve its own logic in spite of the " contradictions" that result from the multiplicity of phases or places of action it comprises is sufficiently shown by the numerous paintings of perfectly balanced construction that show Paradise, Purgatory, Hell and Earth within the same frame : or those that, like Lukas van Leyden's *Saint George and the Dragon*, present the battle and its result next to each other, or like Murillo's cure of the paralysed beggar by a monk, the performance of a miracle next to the onlooker's amazement at the act achieved. I might further mention the old painting in Rome on which, looking from right to left, one sees Jonah being thrown into the sea, the sea monster facing the ship, then the prophet in the beast's jaws being cast on shore and finally resting under a flowery bower inland : or the many beautifully grouped compositions by Fra Angelico from the life of Christ that present several consecutive phases of one occurrence, or the complete story of the miracle performed by Niccolò di Bari in his painting in the Vatican, and his various pictures of the Saints Cosmas, Damidnus and their brothers, presenting the saints before their judges, their attempted execution and their escape.

When in modern work, as in several of Epstein's sculptures, the spectator is puzzled by unfamiliar forms he would be better advised not to criticize before having reflected on the number of manifestations of things outside visible reality that have during all ages appeared in the works of the very great masters, admiration of whose works he claims in order to justify his critical attitude towards the " destructive " contemporary artist and his " unheard-of " innovations.

Also one should realize that the presentment in literature of entities constructed from material gathered by observation of the most remote separate subjects is generally accepted when the form-giving power of the author imparts to them the reality of his visionary convictions, and that in plastic or pictorial art one does at least unquestioningly accept—valuing primarily the execution—the presentment of those products of human fantasy that have become familiar through established convention. The imaginary beings, part man, part beast, of the Egyptians or of the Assyrians provide a remarkable instance, as do those of the Greeks. Mythology and its daughter-in-law heraldry have made the world so familiar with fantastic beings and fabulous monsters whose plastic representations are unhesitatingly accepted on account of their legendary existence that one cannot but feel surprised when the spectator hesitates before such creations of the sculptor's fancy as Epstein's flenites or even his *Mother and Child* (both the marble and granite), his *Cursed be the Day* or similar works. One would think that whatever his intentions, nobody keeping in mind the facts alluded to, would care to make himself ridiculous by contesting a sculptor's right to the creation of forms unknown in visible reality, without being dubbed a barbarian.

Architecture and "architectural" sculpture has everywhere executed form combinations of objects from nature, and frequently refers to flora and geologic formations to which the fertile human fantasy has lent animation and thus long familiarized modified forms of man, animal and plant as suggested by those of pillars, frames and similar objects whose own unalterable shape remains a most important factor in determining the ultimate appearance.

When, as is the case with several of Epstein's works, the individual imagination of the artist is capable of achieving what in analogous cases the collective fancy of several generations of others has done, this only means that one mind of genius can create what no combined effort of however many less gifted could equal. Besides their work is itself only a development of the use and application of what once one artist of genius imagined and first produced. The curious idea that good things spring up in a primitive form

somewhere and slowly grow into excellence as " folk songs " are supposed to do is too grotesque an assumption for serious examination. Bulls with golden discs between their horns and men with ibises' heads were no more frequently to be met on the banks of the Nile than they are in Kensington Gardens.

It should be realized that it is a high manifestation of creative imagination to produce such forms as we find in some of the sculptures of Epstein, which without having had a destination which determined them, have the beauty of logic. It is therefore also an exceedingly rare one and the instances of objects being produced of a shape that possesses the compelling veracity of those that had to obey the logic of their required use occur only at remote intervals. The wonderful shapes of the symbolic head coverings which the Egyptian artists invented for their gods and priests and their perfect proportions whose every curve and relation of mass seems as inevitable as if they were grown from a seed, are practically unique demonstrations of such powers.

It is significant that the legends of nearly every religion ascribe the origin of the sacerdotal vestments' designs to divine inspiration, of which the laboriously detailed instructions relating to them and to every vessel and ornament used at the ritual the Pentateuch affords a remarkable example.

Among the very few objects used in daily life at the present time that can be said to possess this beauty that the severe logic of construction and the importance of every part give to the ultimate form are the tools we use. The introduction into their design and construction, that must reckon at every point with the performances required of them, of an element of wayward fancy and " artistic " caprice deducts from their precision and may have disastrous consequences and is therefore rigorously avoided. A railway bridge which is modelled on a Gothic monastery not only looks inadequate and ridiculous, but is not very likely to answer the requirements expected of it. If only the " artist who admits no law but his sovereign right " to follow any momentary twist of his fancy were in danger of breaking his neck on his own structures, there would be less ostentatiously eager martyrs for their own

causes and the real artist would suffer less from the foolish notions that wanton buffoons have imparted to an ever indulgent and credulous public.

There is no need even to go so far as to compare with the shape of an anvil, a plane, a hammer or a simple chair the ornamental monstrosities of third-rate artistic invention that are recommended for the improvement of the home; it will suffice to compare to the shapes of such technically perfected instruments some of the unspeakable objects an artistically intentioned industry of arts and crafts has occasionally attempted to spring on an unsuspecting public.

It is frequently assumed that such primitively powerful manifestations of creative instinct belong to periods of racial health and youth, and their appearance is not usually associated with our time, which is often supposed to be one of general decadence and relaxing refinement, at least as far as the European races are concerned. It is not, however, the advent of a fresh race, but the birth of a new or the revival of an old ideal that stimulates fresh efforts and interest.

The apostles belonged to the very race against whose degeneration their exalted ire turned in the first place and it was the children of that time of decay that called for the salvation of their examples.

If we admire the element of freshness in early Christian art, its "naïve," its "primitive" character, which to the eyes of the uninitiated looks helpless and clumsy, we should not, as they seem to do, forget that it was born from the new idea, that it was the new conception of life seeking expression. To assume those early Christians to have been a primitive people is to crowd the events of a distant past so as to make them cover each other. They existed before the invasion of the Barbarians from the North.

That in our time the advent of a "new" art, which means the appearance of great artistic personalities in whose work are the germs of an art that will be perfect, mature and "classic" for our descendants, need not be announced by external happenings of a startlingly momentous nature, should be evident to anyone who understands that the greatest evolutions take place unnoticed by the world at the time, in the silent worker's mind. Those first

Christians from the Mediterranean peninsula belonged themselves to the decadent, over-refined Roman race whose artists had for centuries displayed a mastery of realistic draughtsmanship. That fact alone upsets the theory of art progressing and declining with the rise and fall of the races whose great sons manifested their creative genius through its medium.

The history of the arts shows to the fullest extent the notorious prejudices of the average general historian who cannot help arranging facts to suit his notions, ignoring the embarrassing features and dismissing all inconvenient evidence.

In front of an artist's work, to be just to his achievement, it is much wiser to distrust the orderly generalizations of a false erudition, to look at it rather with the freedom of one who was unaware that any other work of art existed than with the pretentious eye of the methodically instructed who, instead of judging the man from his word and act, are only concerned to distinguish his clothes so that according to his wearing the habit of the soldier, the priest, the scribe or the artisan they may confidently classify him and apply to him a ready-made opinion.

PLATE I

In Pere La Chaise Cemetery, Paris

DETAIL FROM TOMB OF OSCAR WILDE

(*Frontispiece*)

PLATE II

SUN GOD

PLATE III

THE CHRIST

PLATE IV

CHRIST (*slightly side view*)

PLATE V

John Quinn Collection

CURSED BE THE DAY WHEREIN I WAS BORN

PLATE VI

MATERNITY

PLATE VII

T. E. Hulme Collection

CARVING IN FLENITE

PLATE VIII

John Quinn Collection

VENUS

PLATE IX

Owned by John Alford, Esq.

DOVES

PLATE X

John Quinn Collection

MOTHER AND CHILD

PLATE XI

John Quinn Collection

CARVING IN FLENITE

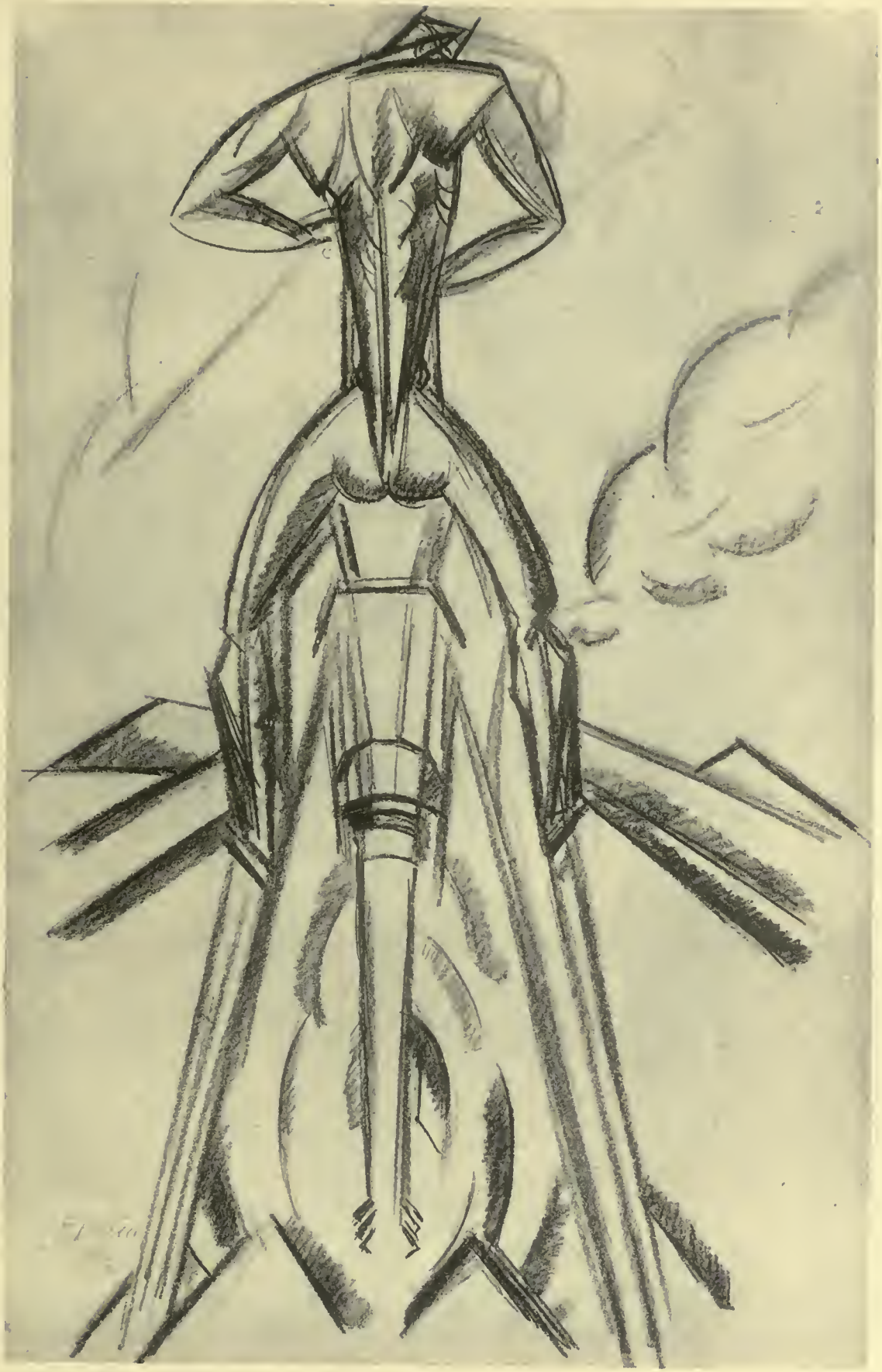

PLATE XII

ORIGINAL DRAWING FOR "ROCK DRILL"

PLATE XIII

UPPER PART OF FIGURE FROM "ROCK DRILL"

PLATE XIV

John Quinn Collection

HEAD OF A BOY

PLATE XV

John Quinn Collection

MRS. JACOB EPSTEIN

PLATE XVI

MRS. JACOB EPSTEIN

PLATE XVII

HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF HAMILTON

PLATE XVIII

John Quinn Collection

EUPHEMIA LAMB

PLATE XIX

Owned by H.M. Queen Alexandra

HEAD OF INFANT

PLATE XX

HEAD OF A CHILD

PLATE XXI

BUST OF NAN

PLATE XXII

HEAD OF A GIRL

PLATE XXIII *Imperial War Museum*

THE TIN HAT

PLATE XXIV

MRS. AMBROSE McEVOY

PLATE XXV

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

PLATE XXVI

MISS MARGUERITE NIELKA

PLATE XXVII

Eumorpopoulos Collection

EUPHEMIA LAMB

PLATE XXVIII

HÉLÈNE

PLATE XXIX

Coleman Collection

MARCELLE

PLATE XXX

MLLE. GABRIELLE SOENE

PLATE XXXI

John Quinn Collection

THE LATE LIEUT. T. E. HULME, R.M.A.

PLATE XXXII

Owned by Hon. Evan Morgan

W. H. DAVIES

PLATE XXXIII

John Quinn Collection

THE COUNTESS OF DROGHEDA

PLATE XXXIV

Imperial War Museum

ADMIRAL LORD FISHER

PLATE XXXV

John Quinn Collection

BUST OF A GIRL

PLATE XXXVI

John Quinn Collection

IRIS TREE

PLATE XXXVII

LILLIAN SHELLEY

PLATE XXXVIII

MEUM WITH A FAN

PLATE XXXIX

BETTY MAY

PLATE XL

Dublin National Gallery

LADY GREGORY

PLATE XLI

John Quinn Collection

AUGUSTUS JOHN

PLATE XLII

Dundee Art Gallery

MUIRHEAD BONE

PLATE XLIII

Owned by Josef Holbrooke

JOSEF HOLBROOKE

PLATE XLIV

BUST OF A LADY

PLATE XLV

John Quinn Collection

BERNARD VAN DIEREN

PLATE XLVI

Owned by Lady Howard de Walden

ELIZABETH,
DAUGHTER OF LADY HOWARD DE WALDEN

PLATE XLVII

John Quinn Collection

OLD ITALIAN WOMAN

PLATE XLVIII

MASQUE DE MEUM

PLATE XLIX

NAN

PLATE L

Imperial War Museum

SERGT. DAVID FERGUSON HUNTER, V.C.