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MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE OF

WILLIAM COLLINS, ESQ., R.A.

WITH SELECTIONS FROM
HIS JOURNALS AND CORRESPONDENCE.

BY HIS SON,
W. WILKIE COLLINS.

VOLUME I.

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MDCCCXLVIII.

TYLER & REED,
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BOLT-COURT, FLEET-STREET.

TO

THE RIGHT HONORABLE

SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.,

ETC., ETC., ETC.,

THIS BIOGRAPHY OF AN

ENGLISH PAINTER,

WHOSE GENIUS HE ENCOURAGED

AND WHOSE CHARACTER HE ESTEEMED,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE.

The writer of such portions of the following pages as are not occupied by his father's diaries and correspondence, has endeavoured to perform his task with delicacy and care, and hopes to have succeeded in presenting to the friends and lovers of Art, a faithful record of a life devoted, with an enthusiasm worthy of its object, to the attainment of excellence in a pursuit which is admitted, by common consent, to refine no less than to exalt the human heart.

The Journals and Letters of Mr. Collins, which are interwoven with this Memoir, are not presented to the public on account of any literary merit they may be found to possess, but merely as expositions, under his own hand, of his personal and professional character—of the motives by which he was uniformly actuated, in his private and public capacities; and of the reflections which were suggested to his mind by his genius and experience throughout his professional career.

Having blended with the passages of the Memoir to which they refer, such explanations as might otherwise have been looked for in this place, the only duty which remains for the Author to perform, (and a most grateful one it is,) is to return his sincere thanks for the valuable assistance which has been afforded to him in various ways, throughout the progress of his work, by many of his father's friends; among whom he begs to be allowed to mention: the Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel, Bart. (who favoured him further by accepting the dedication of the book); the late Sir Thomas Baring, Bart.; C. R. Leslie, Esq., R.A.; C. L. Eastlake, Esq., R.A.; Joseph Bullar, Esq., M.D.; Mrs. Hunter; Miss F. Clarkson; R. H. Dana, Esq.; Bernard Barton, Esq.; William Richardson, Esq.; Samuel Joseph, Esq.; and E. V. Rippingille, Esq.

Among the more intimate associates of the late Mr. Collins, who have favoured the Author with anecdotes and recollections of their departed friend, are: William Etty, Esq., R.A.; C. R. Leslie, Esq., R.A.; James Stark, Esq.; and George Richmond, Esq.: whilst, by the courtesy of Thomas Uwins, Esq., R.A., he has been enabled to obtain access to his father's works, painted for His Majesty George IV., now in the private apartments of Windsor Castle.

Through the kindness of Messrs. John and James Kirton, in furnishing him with their recollections of Mr. Collins and his family, at a very early period, he has been enabled to present some interesting particulars of his father's life, at a time not included in the sources of biographical information possessed by other friends.

In conclusion, the Author has to express his sense of the benefit he has received from the valuable literary advice of Alaric A. Watts, Esq., during the progress and publication of the work.

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MEMOIRS OF THE

LIFE OF WILLIAM COLLINS, R.A.

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Introductory remarks—Mr. Collins's parents—Notices of his father's literary productions, and of "Memoirs of a Picture" especially—Anecdotes of his first attempt to pourtray coast scenery and of his introduction to George Morland—He adopts the Art as a profession, and commences his studies under his father and Morland—Anecdote of the latter—Letters, etc.—Admission of Mr. Collins to study at the Royal Academy.

To write biography successfully, is to present the truth under its most instructive and agreeable aspect. This undertaking, though in appearance simple, combines among its requirements so much justice in the appreciation of character, and so much discrimination in the selection of examples, that its difficulties have been felt by the greatest as by the humblest intellects that have approached it. A task thus experienced as arduous, by all who have attempted it, must present a double responsibility when the office of biographer is assumed by a son. He is constantly tempted to view as biographical events, occurrences which are only privately important in domestic life; he is perplexed by being called on to delineate a character which it has hitherto been his only ambition to respect; and he is aware throughout the progress of his labours, that where undue partiality is merely suspected in others, it is anticipated from him as an influence naturally inherent in the nature of his undertaking.

Feeling the difficulty and delicacy of the employment on which I am about to venture, and unwilling to attempt a remonstrance, which may be disingenuous, and which must be useless, against any objections of partiality which may meet it when completed, I shall confine myself to communicating my motives for entering on the present work; thereby leading the reader to infer for himself, in what measure my relationship to the subject of this Memoir may be advantageous, instead of asserting from my own convictions, how little it may be prejudicial to the furtherance of my design.

To trace character in a painter through its various processes of formation; to exhibit in the studies by which he is strengthened, in the accidents by which he is directed, in the toils which he suffers, and in the consolations which he derives, what may be termed his adventures in his connection with the world; and further, to display such portions of his professional life, as comprehend his friendly intercourse with his contemporaries, as well as the incidents of his gradual advance towards prosperity, and the powerful influence of rightly-constituted genius in the Art, in exalting and sustaining personal character; are my principal objects, in reference to that part of the present work, which depends more exclusively upon its author, and less upon the journals and letters which are connected with its subject. In thus reviewing my father's career as a painter, it is my hope to produce that which may interest in some degree the lover of Art, and fortify the student, by the example of reputation honestly acquired, and difficulties successfully overcome; while it tends at the same time to convey a just idea of the welcome, steadily, if not always immediately, accorded to true genius in painting; not only by those whose wealth enables them to become its patrons, but also by the general attention of the public at large.

In what measure my opportunities of gathering biographical knowledge from my father's conversation, and from my own observation of his habits and studies, may enable me in writing his life, upon the principles above explained, to produce a narrative, in which what may appear curious and true shall compensate for what may be thought partial and trifling, it is now for the reader to judge. The motives with which I enter upon my task are already communicated. To emulate, in the composition of the following Memoirs, the candour and moral courage which formed conspicuous ingredients in the character that they are to delineate, and to preserve them as free from error and as remote from exaggeration as I may, is all that I can further promise to the reader, to give them that claim to his attention which may at least awaken his curiosity, though it may not procure his applause.

William Collins was born in Great Titchfield-street, London, on the 18th September, 1788. His father was an Irishman, a native of Wicklow; his mother was a Scottish lady, born in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. He was the second of a family of three children,—the eldest of whom, a girl, died a month before his birth; the youngest, a boy, lived to see his brother attain high celebrity in the art, but died several years before him. It was a favourite tradition in the family of the painter, that they were descended from the same stock as the great poet whose name they bore. Of his ancestors I am enabled to mention one — Doctor Samuel Collins—who signalized himself in the seventeenth century by his professional skill, and who has found a place in our Biographical Dictionaries as one of the most remarkable anatomists of his time. The family originally came from Chichester, whence, about the time of the Revolution of 1688, a branch of it emigrated to Ireland, and fought on the side of King William, at the battle of the Boyne; settling definitely in Ireland from that period to the birth of Mr. Collins's father. An imprudent marriage, bringing with it the usual train of domestic privations and disappointments, had so far reduced the pecuniary resources of the family of Mr. Collins's grandfather, that his father found himself, on arriving at manhood, entirely dependent on his own exertions for support—exertions, which were soon rendered doubly important by his subsequent union with a young and portionless wife.

It will be found that I shall advert at greater length than may appear immediately necessary to some of my readers, to the character and employments of Mr. Collins's father. But the pursuits that he chose for himself, as a man of letters and a dealer in pictures, and the remarkable influence that his knowledge of art and artists had in determining his son in following the career in which he was afterwards destined to become eminent, concur to make him an object of no ordinary importance and interest, at this stage of a work devoted to the curiosities of painting, as well as to the biography of a painter.

His poetical abilities, developed, I believe, at an early age, and his social accomplishments as a man of polished manners and ready wit, soon brought Mr. Collins, sen., into contact with most of the painters and authors of his time. In choosing, therefore, as a dealer in pictures, a pursuit that might swell his precarious profits as a man of letters, the company he frequented may reasonably be imagined to have had no small influence in urging such a selection. But his choice was an unfortunate one; too honourable to descend to the rapacities, and too independent to stoop to the humiliations, attaching to picture-dealing in those days, neither by principles, nor disposition, was he in any way fitted for the uncongenial character he had assumed; and, though he continued throughout his life to force his attention to the pursuit in which he had engaged, he remained to the last a poet in his inward predilections, and a poor man in his outward circumstances.

His "Memoirs of a Picture"—to which I shall presently refer at length—his "Life of George Morland," and his "Poem on the Slave Trade,"—illustrated by two of Morland's most successful pictures, subsequently engraved by J. R. Smith—were his principal works; but they brought him more popularity than profit. In those days, when literary genius was yet unemancipated from the fetters of patronage, the numbers of the reading and book-buying public were comparatively small; and the fine old race of genuine *garret* authors still existed, to fire the ingenuity of rapacious bailiffs, and point the sarcasms of indignant biographers. Articles in the public journals, songs, fugitive pieces, and all the other miscellanies of the literary brain, flowed plentifully from Mr. Collins's pen; gaining for him the reputation of a smart public writer, and procuring for him an immediate, but scanty support. No literary occupations were too various for the thoroughly Irish universality of his capacity. He wrote sermons for a cathedral dignitary, who was possessed of more spiritual grace than intellectual power; and, during the administration of Mr.

Wyndham, composed a political pamphlet, to further the views of a friend; which procured that fortunate individual a Government situation of four hundred a year, but left the builder of his fortunes in the same condition of pecuniary embarrassment in which he had produced the pamphlet, and in which, to the last day of his life, he was fated to remain.

But no severity of disappointment and misfortune was powerful enough to sour the temper or depress the disposition of this warm-hearted and honourable man. All the little money he received was cheerfully and instinctively devoted to the pleasures and advantages of his family: and in spite of the embarrassment of his circumstances, he contrived to give his sons, William and Francis, as sound and as liberal an education as could possibly be desired. Surrounded from their earliest infancy by pictures of all ages and subjects, accustomed to hear no conversation so frequently as conversation on Art, thrown daily into the society of artists of all orders, from the penniless and dissipated Morland, to the prosperous and respectable West, nothing was more natural than that the two boys should begin to draw at an early age. In overlooking their ravages among old palettes, their predatory investigations among effete colour-bladders, and their industrious pictorial embellishment of strips of old canvas and scraps of forgotten paper, it was not difficult for the practised eye of the elder Mr. Collins, to discover in William,—who took the lead, on evenings and half-holidays, in all ebullitions of graphic enthusiasm,—some promise of the capacity that was lying dormant in the first rude essays of his childish pencil. Year by year the father watched and treasured up the son's drawings, until the boy's spontaneous intimation of his bias towards the painter's life enabled him to encourage his ambition to begin the serious direction of his studies, and to predict with delight and triumph that he might perhaps live long enough "to see poor Bill an R.A."

Before, however, I proceed to occupy myself with the incidents of Mr. Collins's boyhood, I would offer a few remarks on the principal work which his father produced,—the "Memoirs of a Picture." I have been told that this book enjoyed, in its day, no inconsiderable share of popularity. It is so novel in arrangement, it belongs so completely, both in style and matter, to a school of fiction now abandoned by modern writers, it is so thoroughly devoted to painters and painting, and so amusingly characteristic of the manners and customs of the patrons and picture-dealers of the day, (and I might add, of the hardihood of the author himself, in venturing to expose the secret politics of the pursuit to which he was attached,) that a short analysis of its characters and story, whether it be considered as a family curiosity, a literary antiquity, or an illustration of the condition of the Art and the position of the artists of a bygone age, can hardly be condemned as an intrusion on the purposes, or an obstacle to the progress of the present biography.

The work is contained in three volumes, and comprises a curious combination of the serious purpose of biography with the gay license of fiction. The first and the third volumes are occupied by the history of the picture. The second volume is episodically devoted to a memoir of George Morland, so filled with characteristic anecdotes, told with such genuine Irish raciness of style and good-natured drollery of reflection, that this pleasant biography is by no means improperly placed between the two volumes of fiction by which it is supported on either side.

The story opens with an account of the sudden disappearance from its place in the royal collection of France, of the subject of the memoirs, "an unique and inestimable jewel, painted by the immortal Guido." The perpetrator of this pictorial abduction is an accomplished scamp, named the Chevalier Vanderwigtie, whose adventures before the period of the theft, and whose safe arrival on the frontiers with his prize, advance us considerably through the preparatory divisions of volume the first.

All is not success, however, with the Chevalier. After he and his picture have run several perilous risks, both are finally threatened with ruin by a party of Prussian cavalry, who, utterly ignorant of the existence of Guido, begin paying their devotions at the shrine of his genius by scratching his production (which is painted on copper) on its back with their knives, to ascertain whether any precious metal lurks beneath. Finding themselves disappointed in the search, they resign "the gem" with contempt, but take care to make use of its possessor by enlisting him in a regiment of dragoons. Unseated, like many an honester man, in the course of his martial exercises, by his new Bucephalus, the Chevalier is placed, for the injury thereby contracted, in the hands of a surgeon, who robs him of his divine picture, probably from a natural anxiety to secure his medical fees, and sells it, after all its adventures, to a Dutch picture-dealer at Rotterdam for a hundred guilders.

At this point the narrative, true to its end, leaves the ill-fated Vanderwigtie inconsolable for his loss in the hut of a peasant, to follow the fortunes of the stolen Guido, which has become contaminated for the first time by the touch of a professed dealer.

And now has this charming picture—shamefully stolen by the shameless Vanderwigtie, outrageously lacerated on its sacred back by the knives of illiterate Prussians, treacherously ravished from its unscrupulous possessor by a larcenous Hippocrates, and unworthily sold for a paltry remuneration to a Dutch Mæcenas with commercial views—fallen into hands that will treasure it with befitting respect? Alas, our virtuoso of the Dykes is darkly ignorant of the value of the Vanderwigtian jewel! he immures it contemptuously amid the gross materialism of oil, candles, and the miscellaneous and household rubbish of his upper shop. The cheek of the Virgin (who is the subject of the picture) is pressed, perhaps, by an old shoe-brush, and the fleecy clouds supporting her attendant cherubs are deepened to stormy tints by the agency of an unconscious blacking-ball! Does this profanation speedily end?—far from it. Two English dealers purchase "the show-pictures" in the burgomaster's collection, but think not of diving for concealed gems into the dirtiest recesses of his kitchen floor,—the shoe-brush and the blacking-ball remain undisputed masters of the sentiment they profane, and the atmosphere they cloud! But a day of glory is approaching for the insulted Guido: a Flemish artist discovers it, appreciates it, purchases it, carries it home, washes it, wonders over it, worships it! The professors of picture-dealing (ingenuous souls!) see it and depreciate it, but artists and connoisseurs arrive in crowds to honour it. A whole twelvemonth does it remain in the possession of the fortunate artist; who at the expiration of that period suddenly proves himself to be a man of genius by falling into pecuniary difficulties, and is compelled by "dire necessity" to part with the inestimable gem,—of which, however, he takes care to make two copies, reproducing the original exactly, down to the very scratches on its back from the knives of the Prussians. Scarcely has he completed these fraudulent materials for future profit before the story of the original theft of "Guido's matchless offspring" has penetrated throughout the length and breadth of artistic Europe. Among the dealers who now cluster round the

Flemish artist are two, commissioned by an English nobleman to buy the Guido. After a scene of hard bargaining, these penetrating gentlemen relieve their professional friend of one of his copies, at an expense of seven hundred and fifty ducats, and start for England with their fancied prize; while the Flemish artist, having palmed off one counterfeit successfully in Holland, departs, like a shrewd man of business, to disembarrass himself of the other mock original in the contrary direction of Spain.

But the copy is destined to no better fortune in its perambulations than the original. The dealers are robbed of the counterfeit Guido, on English ground. In vain, on their arrival in London, do they advertise their loss of their "unique original"—it has passed into the possession of a broken-down dandy, the captain of the robbers; who, in a fit of generosity, has given it to a broken-down painter—a member of his gang—who, desirous of ready money, sells it to a broken-down lady of quality, who is the captain's "*chereamie*," and who leaving the mock Guido in the care of her servants at her house in London, shortly after purchasing it, starts with the captain on a tour of pleasure on the Continent. The poor painter is generously included in their travelling arrangements; and, to improve him in his art, the party visit the different collections of pictures on their route. While examining one of these, its owner, in consideration of the presence of the painter, volunteers the exhibition of a hidden and priceless gem; and, unlocking a drawer, displays to their astonished eyes the indubitable original Guido, which, under the seal of strict secrecy, he has purchased from the Flemish painter in his season of destitution and distress.

Meanwhile the story returns to the counterfeit picture, which the captain's lovely companion has left in the custody of her servants in London. These faithful retainers, finding their time in their mistress's absence hanging heavily on their hands, determine, like their betters, to employ it in seeing society. The rooms are lighted up; the company invited; the supper is prepared; the cellar is opened. Each courteous footman sits manfully down to his bottle; each skittish Abigail sips enchantingly from her partner's brimming glass. The evening begins with social hilarity, proceeds with easy intoxication, ends with utter drunkenness. On the field of Bacchanalian battle, sleep and snore profoundly the men of the mighty calf and gaudy shoulder-knot. The hours pass, candles burn down, sparks drop unheeded, linen catches light, no one is awake, the house is on fire! Then, "the summoned firemen wake at call;" the house is saved, but the furniture is burnt; and the counterfeit picture, among other valuables, is actually lost. Time wends onward, the lady and her companions return, and prove their patriotism by falling into debt as soon as they touch their native shores. An execution is put into the house, and marauding brokers seize on the domestic spoil. To the share of one of their numbers falls an old butt, filled with stagnant water.

The myrmidon of trade's interests, on emptying his prize, discovers a cabinet at the bottom of the butt (thrown there doubtless during the confusion of the fire). He breaks it open, and the mock Guido, radiant and uninjured as ever, meets his astonished gaze. Friends are found to apprise him of its value, and swear to its originality: he endeavours to sell it to the connoisseurs; but failing in that, disposes of it, in desperation, for forty guineas, to a dealer in Leicester-fields.

Two years elapse, and the mock picture, for which all offers are refused, is still in the possession of its last purchaser. The story now reverts to the owner of the real Guido, and to a young artist whom he is employing, who is a son of the dealer in Leicester-fields. As a man of real taste, he recognizes in his patron's picture the original of his father's counterfeit in the shop in London; but his penetration is far from being shared by two illustrious foreign professors of picture-dealing, who are on a visit to the connoisseur's collection. One of these worthies is the celebrated
Desanfans? Des-chong-fong, a Chinese mandarin, who presents himself as engaged, with his companion, by the Great Mogul, to strip all Europe of its pictures, to form a collection for the imperial palace. The artist and the patron shrewdly suspect the professors to be fools in judgment and knaves in intention. In order to prove their convictions they represent the real Guido to be a copy, and exalt the fame of the picture in Leicester-fields as the great original of the

master. Des-chong-fong and his friend fall helplessly into the snare laid for them; and, after proving by an elaborate criticism that the picture before them is a most arrant and preposterous copy, set off for London, in order to possess themselves—or rather their master, the Great Mogul—of the original gem. After a sharp scene of diplomatic shuffling, they obtain the dealer's counterfeit Guido for six hundred guineas. With this, and other works of art, they open a gallery; and, determining to "break" the whole army of London dealers, commence purchasing; and (oddly enough considering their mission to Europe) selling again, at enormous profits, whatever pictures they can lay their hands upon. Matters proceed smoothly for some time, when they are suddenly threatened with ruin by the loss of their Guido, which is stolen for the second time;—all London is searched to recover it, but in vain. At length, one morning, a Liverpool picture-dealer calls on them with works for sale, one of which is exactly similar to the lost Guido. They tax him with the theft; he vows that the picture was never in England before it came into his hands. Des-Chong-fong and Co. are furious, and refuse to part with it. An action is entered; and all picture-dealing London awaits in horrid expectation the impending result of an appeal to law.

On *his* side, the Liverpool dealer is fitly furnished with evidence to support his cause. He has bought the picture of a captain in the navy, who, during the war with France, received it as part of his prize-money from the capture of a French lugger—the owner of the contested Guido having been slain in the conflict. On inquiry, this unfortunate virtuoso turns out to be our old friend the Flemish painter, who, not having succeeded in disposing of his second copy of the Guido, has retained it in his possession ever since it was produced. A young lady, with whom the copyist was eloping at the time of his death, still survives, to bear testimony, with the English captain, as to the manner in which the Liverpool dealer became possessed of the second of the counterfeit gems.

But this portentous mass of evidence fails to stagger the immoveable obstinacy of the great Des-chong-fong. He scouts logic and probabilities with all the serenity of a juryman waiting for his dinner, or a politician with a reputation for consistency. The action is to be tried in the face of everybody and everything. Already the gentlemen of the wig hug joyfully their goodly briefs—already the day is fixed, and the last line of the pleadings arranged, when a stranger darkens the Des-chong-fongian doors, and flits discursively among the Des-chong-fongian pictures. No sooner does he discern the disputed Guido than he flouts it with undissembled scorn, and declares it to be but the copy of a wondrous original that is lost. Des-chong-fong and Co. open their mouths to speak, but the words die away upon their quivering lips: the stranger explain—sit is Vanderwigtie himself!

And now, like one of the Homeric heroes, the enterprizing Chevalier—the old, original Vanderwigtie—narrates his achievements and adventures to the deluded ambassador of the Great Mogul. How he stole the real Guido from the royal collection of France; how he lost it to the Prussian doctor; how he heard of it in the foreign connoisseur's gallery; how that illustrious patron of the Arts has been lately driven from his pictures and his possessions by the Revolution; how his collection has been ravaged by the British troops; and how he himself has been sent to England, by the Elector of Saxony, to recover the lost Guido—which is suspected to have passed into Anglo-Saxon hands—flows overpoweringly from Vanderwigtie's mellifluous lips. Humbled is the crest of Des-chong-fong—he compromises, apologises, pays expenses, and stops the action. "A fig for all copies, where is the divine original!" is now the universal shout. Vanderwigtie has "cried havock and let slip the dogs of" picture-dealing! Des-chong-fong; the dealers of Liverpool and Leicester-fields; the Chevalier himself; all men who have a taste for pictures and a turn for knavery, now spread like a plague of locusts over the length and breadth of the land. But, alas, it is too late! The waters of Lethe have closed over the precious picture—bribery and intimidation, knavery and eloquence, exert themselves in vain—Des-chong-fong and "every beast after his kind," may howl their applications to the empty wind—the labours of the historian of the picture are irretrievably closed—the hero of the Memoirs: the real inestimable Guido, from that day to this, has never been found.

Such is an outline of the story of this amusing book. The Shandean profusion of its digressions and anecdotes I have not ventured to follow, from the fear of appearing to occupy too large a space in this biography with a subject connected only with its earlier passages. In originality and discrimination of character the work I have endeavoured to analyse may be inferior to the novels of Smollett; but in execution I cannot but think it fully their equal—for in some of its reflective and philosophical passages it even approaches the excellence of the great master of British fiction—Fielding, in his lighter and simpler moods. With these observations I now dismiss it—only remarking, that, though intellect is not often hereditary, it has passed, in the instance of Mr. Collins's father, from parent to child; for I cannot accuse myself of a supposition merely fanciful, in imagining that the dry humour and good-natured gaiety of the author of "Memoirs of a Picture," has since been reflected, through another medium, by the painter of "Fetching the Doctor," and "Happy as a King."

In mentioning the habits and customs of his father's household, as a cause, awakening Mr. Collins to a perception of his fitness for the Art, another advantage afforded to his mind at an early period should not have been left unnoticed: this was the uncommon enthusiasm of both his parents for the charms of natural scenery. The rural beauties of their respective birthplaces — Wicklow, and the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, on the side of Lasswade and Rosslyn—were themes of ever-delighting conversation and remembrance to his father and mother. While yet a child he became imbued with the spirit of these descriptions, which, acting upon a mind naturally formed for the appreciation of the beautiful and the pure, became as it were the young student's first alphabet in the Art—preparing the new field for its after cultivation; nursing the infant predilections that Time and Nature were destined to mature, until, in attaining their "local habitation" on the canvas, they became the missionaries of that universal worship which the loveliness of nature was first created to inspire.

Once set forth seriously on his new employments, the boy's enthusiasm for his pursuit began immediately—never afterwards to relax: every moment of his spare time was devoted to the pencil. Year after year passed on, and found him still patiently striving with the gigantic and innumerable difficulties attendant on the study of painting. Whatever natural object he perceived, he endeavoured to imitate upon paper: even a group of old blacking-bottles, picturesquely arranged by his friend Linnell, (then a student like himself) supplied him with a fund of material too precious to be disdained.

Ere, however, I proceed to track the progress of his mind in his youth, an anecdote of his boyish days may not appear too uninteresting to claim a place at this portion of the narrative: his first sight of the sea-coast was at Brighton, whither he was taken by his father. As soon as they gained the beach, the boy took out his little sketch-book, and began instantly to attempt to draw the sea. He made six separate endeavours to trace the forms of the waves as they rolled at his feet, and express the misty uniformity of the distant horizon line: but every fresh effort was equally unsuccessful, and he burst into tears as he closed the book and gave up the attempt in despair. Such was the first study of coast scenery by the painter who was afterwards destined to found his highest claims to original genius and public approbation on his representations of the various beauties of his native shores.

As he proceeded in his youthful employments in the Art, his studies became divided into two branches,—drawing from Nature as frequently as his then limited opportunities would allow, and copying pictures and drawings for the small patrons and picture-dealers of the day. In this latter occupation he soon attained so great a facility as to be able to produce resemblances of his originals, which I have heard described by those who have seen them as unusually remarkable for their fidelity and correctness. To the early habit of readiness of eye and correctness of hand thus engendered, is to be ascribed much of that power of transcribing the most elaborate minutiæ of

Nature, which, in their smallest details, his original and matured efforts are generally considered to present.

His father's intimacy with the gifted but eccentric George Morland enabled him to obtain that master's advice and assistance in the early superintendence of his son's studies. Mr. Collins's first introduction to the great painter was but too characteristic of poor Morland's dissipated habits. For some days the young student had awaited, with mingled anxiety and awe, his promised interview with a man whom he then regarded with all the admiration of the tyro for the professor: but his expectations remained unfulfilled,—the tavern and the sponging-house still held Morland entangled in their toils. At length, one evening, while he was hard at work over a copy, his father entered the room and informed him, with a face of unusual gravity, that Morland was below, but that his introduction to his future master had better be delayed; his impatience, however, to gain a sight of the great man overcame his discretion. He stole softly down stairs, opened the kitchen door, by a sort of instinct, and looked cautiously in. On two old chairs, placed by the smouldering fire, sat, or rather lolled, two men, both sunk in the heavy sleep of intoxication. The only light in the room was a small rush candle, which imperfectly displayed the forms of the visitors. One, in spite of the ravages of dissipation, was still a remarkably handsome man, both in face and figure. The other was of immense stature and strength, coarse, and almost brutal in appearance. The first was George Morland; the second, a celebrated prize-fighter of the day, who was the painter's chosen companion at that particular time. As soon as his astonishment would allow him, Mr. Collins quietly quitted the room, without disturbing the congenial pair. The remembrance of this strange introduction never deserted his memory; it opened to him a new view of those moral debasements which in some instances are but too watchful to clog the steps of genius on its heavenward path.

My father was never himself of opinion, on looking back to his youthful career, that he gained any remarkable advantage in the practical part of his Art from the kind of instruction which Morland was able to convey. He always considered that he was indebted for the most valuable information of his student days, before he entered the Academy, to the higher and more refined taste of his father. Gifted and kindhearted as he undoubtedly was, Morland's miserably irregular habits, and coarse, material mode of life, rendered him poorly available as the instructor of an industrious and enthusiastic boy; and the young disciple reaped little more advantage from his privilege of being present in the room where the master painted, than the opportunity of witnessing the wondrous rapidity and truth of execution that ever waited upon poor Morland's vivid conceptions, and never, to the last hour of his wayward existence, deserted his ready hand.

Among the anecdotes of Morland mentioned in his Biography by Mr. Collins's father, is one that may not be thought unworthy of insertion, as it not only proves the painter to have been possessed of ready social wit, but shows him to have been capable of accomplishing that most difficult of all humorous achievements—a harmless practical joke :

" During our painter's abode in the rules of the Bench, he was in the habit of meeting frequently, where he spent his evenings, a very discreet, reputable man, turned of fifty at least. This personage had frequently assumed the office of censor-general to the company, and his manners, added to a very correct demeanour, induced them to submit with a tolerably obedient grace. George used now and then, however, to 'kick,' as he said, and then the old gentleman was always too *hard-mouthed* for him. This inequality at length produced an open rupture between the two, and one night our painter, finding the voice of the company rather against him, rose up in a seemingly dreadful passion, and appearing as if nearly choked with rage, muttered out at last, that *he knew what would hang* the old rascal, notwithstanding all his cant about morality. This assertion, uttered with so much vehemence, very much surprised the company, and seriously alarmed the old man, who called upon George sternly to know what he dared to say against him. The painter answered with a repetition of the offensive words: '*I know what would hang him.*' After a very violent altercation, some of the company now taking part with Morland, it was agreed upon all hands, and at the particular request of the old gentleman, that the painter should declare the worst. With great apparent reluctance George at length got up, and addressing the company, said: ‘I have declared twice that I knew what would hang Mr. —— ; and now, gentlemen, since I am called upon before you all, I'll expose it.’ He then very deliberately drew from his pocket a piece of *lay cord,* and handing it across the table, desired Mr. —— to try the experiment; and if it failed, that would prove him a liar before the whole company, if he dared but to try. The manual and verbal joke was more than the old man was prepared for, and the whole company for the first time (perhaps not very fairly) laughed at his expense.”

I am here enabled to lay before the reader some interesting particulars of the painter's boyhood, and of his connection with Morland, which are the result of the early recollections of Mr. John Kirton, (one of the oldest surviving friends of his family,) and which have been kindly communicated by him to assist me, in the present portion of this work:

“We were both of an age,” writes Mr. Kirton. “At seven years old we went to Warburton's school, in Little Titchfield-street. He was not very quick, and was often in disgrace for imperfect lessons. Warburton was a clever man, but very severe. * * * His father often took him to pass the day with George Morland, at Somers Town, of which he was very proud. When Morland died, in 1804, we watched his funeral, which took place at St. James's Chapel, Hampstead-road; he was buried exactly in the middle of the small square plat, as you enter the gates, on the left hand. At that time I think it was the only grave in that plat. When all the attendants were gone away, he put his stick into the wet earth as far as it would go, carried it carefully home, and when dry, varnished it. He kept it as long as I knew him, and had much veneration for it.* His father is buried in the same cemetery a little farther down, on the left hand side, close to the path. His father, himself, his brother Frank and I, made long peregrinations in the fields between Highgate and Wilsden. He always had his sketch-book with him, and generally came home well stored. He was then very quick with his pencil. He had great respect for the talents of Morland. When we were by ourselves, more than once we went to the public-house for which Morland had painted the sign to eat bread and cheese and drink porter, merely because he had lived there for some time. The room where he had painted the sign was once, at his request, shown to us by the landlady, at which he was much pleased. Another time we went over ditches and brick-fields, near Somers Town, to look at the yard where Morland used to keep his pigs, rabbits, &c., and where he said Morland had given him lessons: he even pointed out their respective places, and the window where he used to sit. When Frank and myself were in the van, during a walk—he being behind, sketching—and we saw anything we thought would suit him, we called to him to come on, saying, 'Bill, here's another sketch for Morland.' The first oil-painting he ever did was not a happy subject for a young artist; it was a portrait of himself, dressed in a blue coat and striped yellow waistcoat, *à la* Morland. I can now well imagine how he must have been vexed, when he showed it to me the first time, and asked if I knew who it was like: it baffled me to guess. However, as he said all our family knew who it was, I was allowed to take it home for their opinion: they were all, like myself, at fault. When he told me it was himself I could not help laughing; it was no more like him than it was like me: this made him very angry, and caused him to give my judgment in the Art a very contemptible name. When I got married our meetings became less frequent; and although we were friendly, and he called several times to see me in Wardour-street, they gradually became fewer in number."

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* The deep reverence for genius in the art which induced the painter in his youth to preserve some fragments of the earth in which Morland was buried, as above described, animated him with all its early fervour in the maturity of his career. The same feelings which had moved the boy over Morland's grave, actuated the man, when long afterwards, on the death of Wilkie, he painted a view of the last house that his friend had inhabited, as a memorial of a dwelling sacred to him for the sake of the genius and character of its illustrious owner.

Such are Mr. Kirton's recollections of the painter's early apprenticeship to the Art. To those who find pleasure in tracing genius back to its first sources,—to its first bursts of enthusiasm,—to its first disappointments, this little narrative will not be read without curiosity and interest, and will prepare the mind agreeably to follow those records of the youthful progress of the subject of this Memoir which it is now necessary to resume.

The year 1807 brought with it an important epoch in the painter's life. By this time he had for many years drawn from the best models he could procure, had studied under his father and Morland, and had attained correctness of eye and hand, while assisting, at the same time, in his own support, by copying pictures of good and various schools. He was now to devote himself more usefully and entirely to his own improvement in the Art, by entering as a student at the Royal Academy. His name appears in the catalogue of that Institution for 1807, as a contributor to its exhibition, as well as an attendant on its schools; but as I never heard him refer to the two pictures then sent in, (both views near Millbank) I can only imagine that he had forgotten them, or that he thought them productions too puerile to be deserving of mention to any one. In a letter from his pen, written to answer a demand for some autobiographical notices of his life, to be inserted in a periodical publication, he thus expresses himself with regard to his early education and first successes in the Art.

"My father, William Collins, was considered a man of talent. * * * In the early part of his life he contributed very largely to the Journal published by Woodfall. His taste in, and love for, the Fine Arts, he constantly evinced in his writings and his encouragement of rising merit. From such a source it is not extraordinary that I should derive a partiality for painting. He was my only instructor—indeed his judgment was so matured that the lessons he imprinted upon my mind I hope I shall never forget, * * * In the year 1807, I was admitted a student of the Royal Academy, where I was regular in my attendance on the different schools. In 1809 and 1810, I became honoured with some share of public notice, through the medium of the British Institution. * * *"

In the following letter, written by the painter from a friend's house to his family, and in the kind and cheerful answer which it called forth, will be found some reference to the time of his entry on his new sphere of duties, and employments at the Royal Academy.

"To Mr. W. Collins, sen.

"Dorking, July 8th, 1807.

"Dear Father,—I think I shall come home either on Saturday or Monday next; but as it will be probably necessary to pay the carriage on or before my arrival, (you understand me) and having got rid of most of my cash, it follows that, as usual, you must raise if possible a certain sum, not exceeding a one pound note, which I think will come *cheaper* to me than any smaller amount. I received the colours the same evening you sent them. I am very much obliged to you; as also for the letter. I live here like a prince.* I was at the theatre, Dorking, a few nights since, which most elegantly gratified the senses, that of smelling not even excepted—there being *four* candles to light us all; two of which, by about nine o'clock, (no doubt frightened at the company) hid themselves in their sockets! There were also four lamps for stage lights, which helped to expose the following audience:— Boxes, six; Pit, sixteen; Gallery, twenty-five!

"I should be glad to know if the Academy is open; and any other information you choose to give, will be very acceptable to yours affectionately,

"W. COLLINS."

"TO MR. W. COLLINS, JUN.

"London, 9th July, 1807.

"* * * We were certain our good friends would entertain you in the most hospitable manner, though we could have had no such ambitious hope of your being treated "like a prince." However, I trust my good friend Moore will impart a little of his philosophical indifference respecting the good things of this life to you, before you depart for humble home, lest the contrast between living "like a prince," and being the son of a poor author, may be too much for the lofty notions of your royal highness. Enclosed, for all this, you will find the sum you desired; and, were my funds equal to those of our gracious Monarch—or rather, had I as many pence as he is said to have millions of pounds, be assured you should be infinitely more than welcome to twenty times this paltry sum. You inquire respecting the opening of the Academy, and I can tell you it opened last Monday, notice of which was given to all the students by public advertisement; and I shall be glad if you can, without being pressed to the contrary, come up to town when my friend Moore does—knowing that you can never come in safer, or better company. * * *

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* His usual anxiety to deserve the hospitality of his friends prompted him to ornament a summer-house, belonging to the gentleman with whom he was now staying, with imitations of busts, in niches, all round the walls. They remained there until very lately.

"Your affectionate Father,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

A few days after this, the "son of the poor author" quitted his little paternal studio, and with a beating heart entered the Academic lists that were to prepare him for the Artist's course—then little suspecting that he was destined to add one more to the bright list of modern English painters, who have passed through the schools of the Academy on their way to the gates of Fame.

CHAPTER II.

1807—1816.

Summary of the course of study at the Royal Academy—The painter's industry in his duties there—Anecdote of Fuseli—Pictures of 1809—Letter from Mr. Collins, sen.—Pictures of 1810, 1811, and 1812—Epigram by James Smith—Correspondence with the late Mr. Howard, R.A.—Death of Mr. Collins, sen.—Extracts from the Painter's Journal of 1812—Pecuniary embarassments of his family—Pictures of 1813 and 1814—Election to associateship in the Royal Academy—Anecdotes respecting picture of "Bird-catchers," communicated by Mr. Stark—Diary of 1814—Anecdotes of the painter; of Elliston; and of James Smith—Pictures and Diary of 1815—Tour in that year to Cromer—Letters—Removal of the painter to a larger house in New Cavendish-street—Letter to the late Sir T. Heathcote, bart. — Pictures of 1816 — Extract from journal—Serious increase of pecuniary difficulties—Determination to set out for Hastings, to make studies for sea-pieces—Kindness of Sir T. Heathcote in making an advance of money—Departure for Hastings.

In commencing his course of instruction at the Royal Academy, the student sets out by making drawings from the best casts of the finest antique statues. By this first process his taste is formed on the universal and immutable models of the highest excellence in the Art he is to adopt; and he proceeds to the next gradation in his studies, drawing from the living model, with such fixed ideas of symmetry and proportion as preserve him from confusing the faults and excellencies of the animated form, and enable him to appreciate its higher and more important general qualities, as the ulterior object of one main branch of his professional qualifications. While his ideas are thus preserved from the degeneration which the unavoidable imperfections of the models before him might otherwise inspire, the most perfect outward and mechanical correctness of eye and hand is demanded from him, in his representations of the form; while a readiness in rightly interpreting the position, action, and appearance, of muscles and joints, is instilled by the annual delivery of lectures on pictorial anatomy, by the best professors which that class of English medical science can afford. Nor is this all. While he is thus attaining knowledge of Nature, with ease, harmony, and correctness of pencil; from the study of the living model, he is enabled at the same time to learn colour, composition, and light and shade, by the privilege of copying from pictures by the old masters, in the School of Painting. Here his studies (as in the other schools) are superintended directly by the Royal Academicians, who advise, assist, and encourage him, until he is fit for the last ordeal of his student-life—the composition of an original historical picture, from a subject selected by the Institution to which he is attached. For this work, as for all his other labours, medals and copies of lectures on Art, are awarded by the Royal Academy.

He is then left to the guidance of his own genius—either to continue his employments in his own land, or, if he has gained the highest gold medal, to be sent, at the expense of the Royal Academy, to study, for three years, among the great collections of Art which the continental nations possess.

In Sculpture and in Architecture, (as completely as, in the instance of the latter Art, its peculiar features will admit) the same gradations are observed, and the same privileges scrupulously offered—painting, sculpture, and architecture furnishing the travelling student, on each occasion of the grand award of prizes, in impartial rotation. Such is a brief summary of the course of study adopted by the Royal Academy of England—an Institution whose palpable and practical excellencies have ever been as sufficient to excuse error and to confute calumny, as to form the mind of genius, and to elevate the position of Art.

Mr. Collins's attention, during his attendance at the Royal Academy, was devoted to all branches of its instructions most necessary to the school of painting, towards which his ambition was now directed—the portrayal of landscape and of domestic life. As a student his conduct was orderly, and his industry untiring. Among his companions he belonged to the unassuming, steadily labouring-class—taking no care to distinguish himself, personally, by the common insignia of the more aspiring spirits among the scholars of Art. He neither cultivated a mustachio, displayed his neck, or trained his hair over his coat-collar into the true

Raphael flow. He never sat in judgment on the capacity of his masters, or rushed into rivalry with Michael Angelo, before he was quite able to draw correctly from a plaster cast. But he worked on gladly and carefully, biding his time with patience, and digesting his instructions with care. In 1809—two years after his entrance within the Academy walls—he gained the silver medal for a drawing from the life.

The gentleman who held the offices of keeper of the Academy and instructor of the students, in those days, was the eccentric and remarkable Fuseli. The fantastic genius and bitter wit of this extraordinary man did not disqualify him for the mechanism of his art, or the dogged patience necessary to teach it aright. His character was, in many respects, a mass of contradictions. He spoke English with an outrageously foreign accent, yet wrote it with an energy and correctness not unworthy of Johnson himself. He lived in carelessness of " the small, sweet courtesies of life," yet possessed, when he chose to employ it, a power of polite sarcasm, before which some of the most polished wits of the day irresistibly trembled. His pictures touched, almost invariably, the limits of the wild and the grotesque, yet he discovered and reprobated the minutest exaggerations of drawing in his pupils' works. By all the students he was respected and beloved ; and by none more than by Mr. Collins, who trembled before his criticisms and rejoiced in his approbation as heartily as any of the rest. Among the few instances of his quaint humour that have, I believe, not hitherto appeared in print, is one that I shall venture to subjoin, as—although it does not illustrate his more refined and epigrammatic powers of retort—it is too good, as a trait of character and a curiosity of sarcasm, to be advantageously omitted.

When Sir Anthony Carlisle was Anatomy Professor at the Royal Academy, he was accustomed to illustrate his lectures by the exhibition of the Indian jugglers, or any other of the fashionable athletæ of the day, whose muscular systems were well enough developed to claim the students' eyes. This innovation on the dull uniformity of oral teaching, added to the wide and well-earned reputation of the professor himself, drew within the Academy walls crowds of general visitors—many of them surgeons of the highest eminence—who seriously incommoded the rightful occupants of the lecture-room. One night, when the concourse was more than usually great, Fuseli set out from his apartments in the "keeper's rooms," to mount the great staircase, and join his brethren in the lecturer's waiting-room. The effort was a trying one; every step was crowded with expectant sightseers, a great majority of whom were doctors of station and celebrity. Through this scientific mass the keeper toiled his weary way, struggling, pushing—advancing, receding,—remonstrating, rebuking; until at length he gained the haven of the lecturer's room, his brows bedewed with moisture, his clothes half torn off his back, his temper fatally ruffled. Under these circumstances, it was not in the nature of Fuseli to consume his own gall: he forced his way up to Sir Anthony Carlisle; and, looking at him indignantly, muttered, as if in soliloquy, (in an accent which the most elaborate distortion of spelling is, alas, incompetent to express)—" Parcel of d—d ' 'potticaries' 'prentices!" Sir Anthony, though the mildest and most polite of men, could not swallow silently this aspersion on the dignity of his professional admirers on the staircase. "Really, Mr. Fuseli," he gently remonstrated, " I have brought no apothecaries' apprentices here!" " I did not say *you* did," was the prompt retort; " but they *are* 'potticaries' prentices *for all that!*"

In 1809, Mr. Collins contributed two pictures to the Royal Academy Exhibition, entitled, " Boys with a Bird's Nest," and " A Boy at Breakfast." He had previously exhibited, at the British Institution, in 1808 (having sent thither five small pictures:—A Study from Nature on the Thames; a Scene at Hampstead; a Landscape, called " A Coming Storm;" and two Views at Castlebridge, Surrey); and he now sent in, as his contributions for the following season, the same number of works. They were described in the Catalogue as, " A Green Stall,—a Night Scene," (now in the possession of Mr. Criswick); " A View in Surrey;" "Seashore,—a cloudy Day;" " Morning;" and " Evening,—a View on the Thames." All these pictures, presented under their different aspects the same fundamental characteristics of careful study and anxious finish, still overlaid by the timidity and inexperience of the " 'prentice hand." Some of them were here and there shortly, but kindly noticed, by the critics of the day; and among those sold, the "Boys with a Bird's Nest" was disposed of to Mr. Lister Parker, the painter's first patron, and a generous and discriminating supporter of modern art.

For the next three years little is to be noticed of Mr. Collins's life, beyond the works that he produced; but these will be found of some importance in tracking his progress in his pursuit. Throughout this period he enjoyed the calm uniformity of the student's life; save when his occupations were varied by a sketching excursion in the country, or interrupted by the petty calamities which his father's increasing poverty inevitably inflicted upon the young painter's fireside. The more perseveringly this honourable and patient man struggled for employment and competence, the more resolutely did both appear to hold aloof. The following extract from one of his letters, written during a picture-cleaning tour in the country, will be found worthy of attention. It displays his anxiety to forward the interests of his family in a pleasing light, and alludes, moreover, rather amusingly, to some of the minor characteristics in the composition of the niggard patronage of the day:

"To Mrs. Collins.

"Ford Abbey, 1810.

* * * "The day after my last letter completely changed the scene here. A few moments before four

o'clock the 'squire and his suite arrived in state. * * * * I have selected from the wreck of the pictures about sixteen, and have literally slaved at them, that I might be able to set off for home as soon as possible. God only knows how anxiously I have longed to be with you, and the pains I have taken to give satisfaction. Perhaps, as far as I ought to expect, these pains have not been altogether ineffectual. But there has been one great fatality attendant upon most of my exertions, namely, they have been generally made before those who were incompetent to appreciate their value. At all events, I have had some kind of satisfaction in refusing to undertake the recovery of some vilely injured pictures, under a remunerating price. The first intimation I gave of my incapacity to restore, or even line, the pictures, without the aid of my son William, was on last Wednesday. There was a beautiful large landscape by Ostade, the figures by A. Teniers. I pointed out the necessary repairs in the sky, which were wanted to make the picture complete; and of course mentioned Bill as superior to every other artist in that department! The 'squire listened very attentively until I had done, and then inquired what the expense of such repairs might be. I answered, about two or three guineas: 'Oh! d—n the sky! clean it, and stick it up without any repairs then!' * * * * Yours, &c.

"WILLIAM COLLINS."

During the three years already referred to, my father contributed regularly to the exhibitions of the

Royal Academy and to the British Institution. His pictures—for the most part small in size and low in price—generally found purchasers; and though not productive of much positive profit, gained for him what throughout life he ever valued more, the public approval and attention. In 1810, his new pictures exhibited were:—"Cottage Children blowing Bubbles," a simple, rustic scene, sold to Mr. P. H. Rogers and engraved in an "Annual" for 1831; "Boys Bathing;" and, "Children Fishing," sold to the Rev. E. Balme. Although these pictures displayed little of the grasp of conception and vigour of treatment of his matured efforts, they were remarkable for their fidelity to Nature, for their quiet humour, and for the real purpose and thoughtfulness of their unpretending design. In 1811, he advanced in elaboration of subject, exhibiting, "The Young Fifer;" "The Weary Trumpeter; or, Juvenile Mischief," sold to Mr. Mills; "The Tempting Moment," sold to Mr. Leeds, and engraved in the "Forget Me Not" for 1830; and a "Study of a Country Kitchen," now in the possession of Mr. Sheepshanks. The first three of these pictures challenged and received greater attention than any of his former efforts. On "The Young Fifer," which was purchased by the Marquis of Stafford, the following smart epigram was written by James Smith, one of the authors of the admirable "Rejected Addresses:"

"The Fifer when great Stafford bought,
The music was no more the same;

By him to public notice brought,
The *Fife* is now the *Trump of Fame!*"

"The Weary Trumpeter," and "The Tempting Moment," were as successful as the "Young Fifer." In the first picture, the trumpeter is represented sleeping uneasily in a cottage chair, while a little urchin, mounted upon another seat, has assumed the soldier's cocked hat, (which threatens to fall over his head and face, like an extinguisher) and is blowing, with distended cheeks and glaring eyes, into the sleeping hero's trumpet, the mouth of which he has mischievously placed within an inch of its possessor's ear. The other picture, "The Tempting Moment," depicts an old apple-woman, lulled in the slumbers of inebriation, and cautiously approached, in contrary directions, by two cunning boys, who are reaching out their hands to levy a peaceful "black mail" upon her unguarded stock in trade. A small print of this picture will be found in the "Forget Me Not" for 1830.

It may be some consolation to those ill-fated votaries of the graphic muse, who, in present, or future exhibitions, groan, or may be destined to groan, under the young artist's inevitable tribulation —a bad place on the Academy walls, to know that one of Mr. Collins's best pictures rested, this year, on that dark Erebus of pictorial indignity—the floor of an exhibition-room. The following correspondence on this subject is a curious exemplification of smarting disappointment on the one hand, and dignified official composure on the other:

"To H. HOWARD, ESQ., R. A.

"Great Portland-street, 1st May, 1811.

"Sir,—Finding one of my pictures put upon the hearth in the 'Great Room,' where it must inevitably meet with some accident from the people who are continually looking at Mr. Bird's picture, I take the liberty of requesting you will allow me to order a sort of case to be put round the bottom-part of the frame, to protect it (as well as the picture) from the kicks of the crowd.

"Even the degrading situation in which the picture is placed, would not have induced me to trouble you about it, had it been *my* property; but, as it was painted on commission, I shall be obliged to make good any damage it may sustain.

"I remain, Sir,
"Your obt. humble servant,
"W. COLLINS, jun."

"To MR. COLLINS, JUN.

"Royal Academy, May 1st, 1811.

"Sir,—I conceive there will be no objection to your having a narrow wooden border put round the picture you speak of, if you think such a precaution necessary, provided it be done any morning before the opening of the exhibition; and you may show this to the porter, as an authority for bringing in a workman for that purpose.

"I cannot help expressing some surprise that you should consider the situation of your picture degrading, knowing as I do, that the Committee of arrangement thought it complimentary, and, that low as it is, many members of the Academy would have been content to have it.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient servant,
"H. HOWARD, Sec.

Mr. Collins had undergone mischances of the same nature before, but this was the last disappointment of the kind that he suffered. In three years more, he was honourably connected with the Royal Academy, and became the friend, as well as the warm admirer of his former official correspondent—one of the most refined and poetical painters whom the English school has produced.

In the year 1812, the prospects of the painter's family showed some symptoms of brightening. His father's transactions as a picture-dealer began to improve in value and importance; and he, himself, had sold some of his later works, at what he then considered an encouragingly remunerating price. Each now ventured to plan more hopeful and ambitious schemes — one talked of enlarging his business; the other of extending his range of subjects. But a heavy and irretrievable affliction was approaching, to crush the new hopes and disperse the humble enjoyments of the artist's home. In this year, the father who had been to him master, critic, companion, and friend; who looked forward with eager impatience, to the time when he should enjoy the triumph of seeing his son widely celebrated and

Academically honoured in the profession to which he was attached—in this year, leaving his beloved family destitute, the kind husband and generous father died!

Of the few journals kept by Mr. Collins, the first begins with this melancholy period. If it be objected that, in the extracts I shall make from it, I have exposed feelings too private and domestic to meet the public eye—I would answer, that the history of the heart of a man of genius is of as great importance, and is as much the property of his posterity, as the history of his mind: the emotions are the nurses of the faculties, and the first home is the sanctuary in which they are created and reared.

Journal of 1812.

"January 7th.—At home in the morning—at home in the evening—sat up with my dear father till three o'clock—went to bed in my clothes. 8th.—At home in the morning, thought my dear father better, but was anxious for the doctor to come. Sharp called about two; my father shook hands with him and seemed better. Sharp thought he would have been well in a few days. Hyde came, for the second time, about six; when my father seemed to me to be worse, as he did not at all attend to what Hyde said to him. This alarmed me; when I requested he would send for a physician—he did so. Doctor Mayo came at about eight, to whom I stated the principal part of what follows; to which he particularly attended:

"The first symptoms of disease were observed about three weeks before he took to his bed, which were an inclination to be always dozing; frequent vomittings after meals, particularly breakfast; and excessive low spirits. On the 18th December, he was very low, which was caused in a great measure by the want of money, as there was very little in the house. He seemed completely dejected; when Mr. Heathcote * called and paid me £42, in advance, for a picture he had ordered. When I told him of this he seemed greatly relieved, and thanked God; which he never neglected to do. Upon every fortunate occasion, he always said, 'God be praised!' I gave him the cheque; it was of service in discharging some trifles about the neighbourhood * * After Christmas, he kept his bed, and came down on the Friday to my painting-room for a short time. He then did not come down again till Saturday, the 4th January, to see my pictures. He was very weak * * * A few days after Christmas, he was so violently attacked with cramp in his thighs and stomach that he quite alarmed me. I took some flannel and soaked it in hot water, wrung it out, and put it upon the parts affected; which did him so much service that he was never again troubled with a return, and he frequently said I had saved his life * * * I went to Mr. Carpue, and told him his case, and what I had done; he said it was perfectly

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* Afterwards Sir Thomas Heathcote, bart.

right * * * I wrote for a friend of his, Mr. Hyde, who was out of town, but came the next day, (7th January) and said he would have him up in a few days. Hyde came the next day, as before stated, as also doctor Mayo, who, after hearing the material part of this statement, said it was a bad case—went up to see him—called to him—got no answer—said he wished to see his tongue, which he could not—felt his pulse—shook his head—and gave me the most severe shock that I ever felt, by telling me that my father might live a few hours, but was certainly a dying man; and that it was useless to give him anything, as it was utterly impossible he could live. I then told him he had been ordered a blister on the back of his neck; and I took him into my room and requested him, as a man of honour, to tell me, if he had been called in sooner, could he have done anything for him? He said that if he had been his own father, and he had known of his complaint from the first moment, he could have prolonged his life for probably one day, but that it was utterly impossible, from the symptoms, that he could have been restored, as his constitution was completely decayed. Hyde then came again; when he wished to give him a spoonful at a time, of brandy-and-water. Doctor Mayo said he might give him anything that he pleased, as it could do him no harm. * * * But it was all in vain; my father never struggled—breathed hard, and groaned. I gave him, about a quarter of an hour before his death, two spoonfuls of port wine, warm—by Hyde's advice. The rattles were in his throat, and he breathed his last!

"It was twenty minutes after two, on Thursday morning, when this dear martyr to bodily and mental afflictions left his miserable son and family * * * He was completely insensible—had he been sensible, his only misery would have been to see his family in the anguish the certainty of his death caused them,—for his affection for them was beyond all comparison; and, thank God, it was reciprocal.

"9th.—Sat up the whole of last night and this morning, in the utmost misery, waiting for daylight, with my wretched mother, brother, and Mrs. Sharp. At home all day, lay down in my clothes in the parlour at night * * * 15th.—Went to the burial of my poor dear father, accompanied by my brother, Mr. Moore, Mr. Langdon, Mr. Cartwright, and Mr. Sharp * * * 17th.—Went out for half-an-hour, for the first time since my dear father's death (except the funeral). At home in the evening—my mother very ill: kept my clothes on all night, to attend her * * * 28th.—Went to the Gallery, to see how my pictures were hung. Never felt so wretched, or less ambitious, although my pictures were most capitally situated. February 1st.—Went with Frank to Mr. Langdon's: from thence to the different offices, for the purpose of renouncing the administration, in favour of Mr. Langdon. Dined with him at Andrews's; and came home at eight o'clock, for the remainder of the evening. 3rd.—Mr. Heathcote called in; and, when I made him acquainted with my melancholy situation, most nobly offered to pay me the remainder of the purchase-money of the picture—which I could not think of taking, as the picture was not a quarter finished—and then offered me the loan of £50 upon my note of hand. This I also refused; but agreed, if I should be in distress, to write to him for the loan of £20. 4th.—Painted, for the first time since my dear father's death, for about an hour * * * 8th.—Signed a paper with Frank, containing our renunciation of the estate of my dear father; the one we signed before being only sufficient for my mother. * * * 12th.—Received a letter from the Gallery, containing an offer of fifty guineas for my "Trumpeter"—which I accepted. In the evening, Green was kind enough to bring me the money. I think highly of Green's friendship and feeling. * * * 17th.—The sale of the furniture took place; Frank attended, and purchased my dear father's ring, spectacles, and snuff-box. * * * March 1st.—At home in the morning—went to visit my father's grave! 3rd.—The sale of the stock took place to-day; at which the pictures I gave in for the benefit of the creditors, produced £57."

The painter's position was now seriously changed. Nothing remained to him of the humble possessions of his family: the small relics sacred to him for his father's sake—the ring, the spectacles, and the snuff-box—even these, he had been forced to purchase as a stranger, not to retain as a son! Insatiate and impatient creditors, unable to appreciate any sacrifices in their favour that he endeavoured to make, harassed him by their alternate disagreements and demands. His mother, overwhelmed in the first helplessness of grief, was incapable alike of consolation or advice. His brother, with the will, and the ambition, possessed little power and found few opportunities of aiding him in his worst exigences. To *his* genius his desolate family now looked for support, and to *his* firmness for direction. They were disappointed in neither.

As the lease had not yet expired, the family still occupied their house in Great Portland-street,—now emptied of all its accustomed furniture and adornments; and, while the elder brother, inspired by necessity,—the Muse not of fable, but of reality; the Muse that has presided over the greatest efforts of the greatest men—began to labour at his Art with increased eagerness and assiduity; the younger made preparations for continuing his father's business, and contributing thereby his share towards the support of their afflicted and widowed parent. So completely was the house now emptied, to afford payment to the last farthing of the debts of necessity contracted by its unfortunate master, that the painter, and his mother and brother, were found by their kind friend, the late Mrs. Hand, taking their scanty evening meal on an old box,—the only substitute for a table which they possessed. From this comfortless situation they were immediately extricated by Mrs. Hand, who presented them with the articles of furniture that they required.

In the year 1812, my father's exhibited pictures were:—"Children playing with Puppies," painted for his generous friend, Sir Thomas Heathcote; and "May-day," sold to the Rev. Sir S. C. Jervoise, Bart. Both these works were considered to display the same steady progression towards excellence as those which had preceded them. Of the latter, a critic of the time thus writes in one of the public journals:

"Mr. Collins has attained to a very high degree of success in this picture. The characters are various and natural, and of all ages. The groups are well distributed, and employed in a combined purpose, so that each severally assists the humour and action of the whole. There is great mellowness and richness in the humour of the several faces, particularly in the countenance of the drunken chimney-sweeper. Upon the whole, this piece has more imagination, and shows greater knowledge of life, than the 'Weary Trumpeter,' by the same artist."

In the course of this year, Mr. Collins produced a picture, the success of which at once eclipsed the more moderate celebrity of all his former works; it was "The Sale of the Pet Lamb," purchased by Mr. Ogden. Composed as it was during the season immediately following his father's death, the simple yet impressive pathos it displayed, was a natural consequence of the temper of his mind at the period of its production. It pleased at once and universally. People ignorant of the simplest arcana of art, gazed on it as attentively and admiringly as the connoisseur who applauded the graces of its treatment, or the artist who appreciated the elaboration of its minutest parts. The sturdy urchin indignantly pushing away the butcher's boy, who reluctantly and good-humouredly presses forward to lead the dumb favourite of the family to the greedy slaughter-house; the girl, tearfully remonstrating with her mother, who, yielding to the iron necessities of want, is receiving from the master butcher the price of the treasured possession that is now forfeited for ever; the child offering to the lamb the last share of her simple breakfast that it can ever enjoy, were incidents which possessed themselves, unresisted, of the feelings of all who beheld them; from the youthful spectators who hated the butcher with all their souls, to the cultivated elders, who calmly admired the truthful ease with which the rustic story was told, or sympathized with the kindly moral which the eloquent picture conveyed. From this work, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1813, two engravings were produced; and from fourteen to fifteen thousand impressions of the smaller print alone were dispersed among the many who recollected it with admiration and delight.*

Among other pictures exhibited by the painter this year, the most important were:—"The Bird-catcher

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* Vide "Literary Souvenir" for 1836. Art.—"On the Works of William Collins, R.A."

Outwitted," sold to one of his first and kindest patrons, Mrs. Hand; and " The Burial-place of a Favourite Bird," purchased by Mr. T. C. Higgins. This latter picture aimed at the same pathos of subject as the Pet Lamb; but differed from it in this,—that it did not depend so greatly upon the action and expression of the agents of the story, but was mainly assisted by accessories, drawn from the most poetical qualities in simple and inanimate Nature. The background of this composition is filled by a deep wood, whose sombre array of innumerable leaves seems to stretch softly and darkly into the distance, beyond the reach of the eye. A perfect and melancholy stillness rules over this scene of dusky foliage, and casts a pervading mournfulness—to be felt rather than perceived—upon the group of children who are standing in the foreground, under the spreading branches of a large tree, engaged in the burial of their favourite bird. One boy is occupied in digging the small, shallow grave; while another stands by his side, with the dead bird wrapped in its little shroud of leaves. Their occupation is watched by a girl who is crying bitterly; and by her companion, who is endeavouring unsuccessfully to assuage her grief. Not devoted—like the sale of the Pet Lamb—to the representation of the stern and real woes of humanity, this picture addresses itself to feelings of a quiet, ideal nature, such as are easily and gracefully aroused by the representation of the most innocent emotions, simply developed, as they exist at the most innocent age.

During the year 1813, the painter continued to lead the studious and retired life to which he had now for some years devoted himself; and, on the tranquil monotony of which new and important events were shortly about to encroach. Whatever time he could spare from his professional occupations was still much absorbed by the attention required by his father's affairs; which, though fast becoming settled by the self-denial of the family, were still in a disordered condition. No inconveniences attendant upon these matters of business interrupted the rigid and ambitious course of study, to which he was now urging himself with increased vigour. He felt that the Academy and the lovers of Art were watching his progress with real interest, and he determined to fulfil the expectations forming of him on all sides. To the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1814, he contributed two pictures :—"Blackberry Gatherers ;" and "Bird-Catchers." To the British Institution, he sent, in the same year, "The Town Miss Visiting her Country Relations," purchased by Lady Lucas; and "Forenoon," a landscape, (sold to Mr. T. C. Higgins.) The last of these pictures is mentioned and criticised in a Diary which I am about to subjoin, and it is consequently unnecessary to describe it here. "The Town Miss Visiting her Country Relations," represented a young lady, dressed in the height of the fashion, sitting by a homely cottage fire; and, to the astonishment of some staring children, refusing, with a high-bred disdain of a very second-hand order, the refreshments which one of her uncouth rustic relatives is respectfully offering her. The "Blackberry-Gatherers," displayed a group of those charming cottage children for which his pencil was already celebrated, standing in a fertile English lane, whose pretty windings are dappled, at bright intervals, by the sunlight shining through the trees above. This picture exhibited throughout the highest finish and truth to Nature, and was purchased by Mrs. Hand. But the work which most remarkably asserted the artist's originality and power of treatment, was the "Bird-catchers." The vigour and novelty of this composition—its clear, airy expanse of morning sky; the group of boys standing upon a high bank, watching for birds, and boldly relieved against the bright, pure, upper atmosphere, proved his mastery over a higher branch of the Art than he had hitherto attempted. This work was purchased by the Marquis of Lansdowne; but the painter derived from his successes of this year a yet greater benefit than exalted patronage, and mounted the first step towards the highest social honours of English Art, by being elected an Associate of the Royal Academy.

I am here enabled to communicate some interesting particulars connected with the production of the picture of "Bird-catchers"—kindly communicated to me by Mr. Stark, the accomplished landscape-painter—which, to those unacquainted with the practice of Art, will convey some idea of the intensity of study required (and in my father's case invariably given) for the production of a complete picture; while to those still occupied in surmounting the first difficulties of painting, the following extracts will offer encouragement to increased effort, by the practical example of successful perseverance. Speaking of the progress of the "Bird-catchers," Mr. Stark thus expresses himself:

"I was much impressed with his entire devotedness to the subject—every thought, every energy, was directed to this one object. I remember having attended one of Mr. Fuseli's lectures with him, and on our return home he said he had endeavoured to apply all that he had heard to this picture; and acting on one observation in the lecture, that 'breadth would be easily given, if emptiness could give it,' he determined on introducing more matter into the mass of shadow; and some implements used in the catching of birds were consequently introduced. In order to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the process of bird-catching, he went into the fields (now the Regent's Park,) before sunrise, and paid a man to instruct him in the whole mystery; and I believe, if the arrangement of the nets, cages, and decoy-birds, with the disposition of the figures, lines connected with the nets, and birds attached to the sticks, were to be examined by a Whitechapel bird-catcher, he would pronounce them to be perfectly correct.

"He was unable to proceed with the picture for some days, fancying that he wanted the assistance of Nature in a piece of broken foreground, and whilst this impression remained, he said he should be unable to do more. I went with him to Hampstead Heath; and, although he was not successful in meeting with anything that suited his purpose, he felt that he could then finish the picture; but, while the impression was on his mind that anything could be procured likely to lead to the perfection of the work, he must satisfy himself by making the effort—even if it proved fruitless.

"I have perhaps said more on this picture than you may deem necessary, but it was the first work of the class that I had ever seen, and the only picture, excepting those of my late master, Crome, that I had ever seen in progress. Moreover, I believe it to have been the first picture, of its particular class, ever produced in this country; and this, both in subject and treatment, in a style so peculiarly your late father's, and one which has gained for him so much fame."

The subjoined extracts from Mr. Collins's Diaries of the year 1814, contain several interesting opinions on painting, and show the perfect absence in his character of that spirit of petulant defiance of the opinions of others, which has sometimes conduced to narrow the hearts and debilitate the minds of men of genius, during their inevitable subserviency to the searching examination of criticism and the world. Passages in this Journal, also, remarkably display the leading influence in his intellectual disposition—his incessant anxiety to improve. Throughout life, he set up for himself no other standard in his Art than that of the highest perfection. Every fresh difficulty he conquered, every increase of applause he gained, was less a cause for triumph, than an encouragement to proceed. During the progress of his pictures, the severest criticisms on them ever came from his own lips. He never forgot, to the last day of his practice as a painter, that the inexhaustible requirements of Art still left him a new experiment to try, and a fresh dexterity to acquire:

Journal of 1814.

"January 21st, 1814.—Resolved that I keep a common-place book of Art, as I find the necessity of not depending solely upon my recollection for the many hints I get from the critiques of those who see my pictures; as well as for the purpose of retaining the impressions which I find so easily effaced from the *blotting-paper* memory which I have inherited from Nature, or derived from inattention.

"Two days since Constable compared a picture to a *sum*, for it is wrong if you can take away or add a figure to it.

"In my picture of "Bird-catchers," to avoid red, blue, and yellow—to recollect that Callcott advised me to paint some parts of my picture thinly, (leaving the ground)—and that he gave great credit to the man who never reminded you of the palette.

"Why would a newly painted carriage ruin any picture it might be placed in?—Because the negative tints are the valuable ones. They are the trumpeters to Rembrandt, Ostade, Ruysdall, Vandervelde, Vandyke, and all the great colourists. Reynolds seems to have felt this; for example, look at his pictures of the 'Duke of Orleans,' 'Sleeping Girl,' 'Sleeping Child,' 'Holy Family,' 'Infant Hercules;' and, in short, all his best pictures. Titian is perhaps the finest example. His picture of 'Venus and Adonis,' has not one positive colour in it. The drapery of Adonis, although to superficial observers a red one, placed by the side of any of our modern painters' red curtains, would sink into nothing—notwithstanding which, it is really as much richer, as the painter was intellectually, compared with any of the present day.

"February 1st.—How much better informed should I be at this moment, if I had written down all the observations I have heard from the painters with whom I have conversed—at least a selection. This should be done as soon after the impression as possible; otherwise, there is danger of making them your own.

"Saturday, 5th.—Received notice from Young, of Lady Lucas having purchased my 'Town Miss.' Went to see Kean, in *Shylock*, in the evening. He appears to be fully aware of what the *public* likes in an actor, rather than determined to do what *he* thinks right. Does this proceed from modesty, policy, or weakness? His voice is good; his figure too short —he has too much of Cook. The farce ('Rogues

All') was justly damned—Elliston did much towards this—he was worse than impudent. Monday 7th.—Went to the Gallery with Deval. Painted in the morning; which I am now sure is the better plan, as I feel too idle to work, upon my return from any walk, except the walk before breakfast.—9th. Young called to say he had sold my 'Sale of the Pet Lamb,' to W. Ogden, Esq. Fuseli's lecture in the evening—never more delighted than on hearing it.

"From the observations I made, and the hints I received at the British Gallery, on Friday and Saturday, I perceive the following:—A tameness, or want of spirit in the general appearance of my landscape—'Forenoon'—occasioned, I am afraid, by the want of attention to the general effect—as when close it looks well enough. Too much attention bestowed upon things comparatively easy to paint, as the docks, old trees, &c.—a want of connection between the sky and ground, or principal light. Owen observed that the painting was not equal, as the docks were too highly wrought for the distant trees, as well as for those not so far removed from the eye: he thought the foreground too minutely finished. Linnell thought the sunlight affected only the principal light, and that the trunks of the trees in particular had not the sharpness of sunlight. I think him right in insisting upon the necessity of making studies—without much reference to form—of the way in which colours come against each other. The sharpness and colour of the shades, as well as the local colours of objects, may be got in this way. Havell disliked the touchiness of the trees—thought they should be flatter in their masses; and the light, shade, and reflections, attended to. On the masses of leaves the green in some places too much of a pea-colour. My own critique upon the picture is, that I have certainly left all my other works behind in point of negative tint—although the greens are still too positive—that there is a want of opposition, approaching to monotony—and that there are (as Callcott once before told me of a picture I had painted) too many large, unbroken masses.

"I feel the necessity of looking at *generals,* as I conceive I have only arrived at the power of painting *particulars.* But, although I am not quite sure which I ought to have done first, yet I am inclined to think that, knowing what I do of *particulars,* I shall not make my *generals* too indefinite—and, in addition to this, I know more exactly what I want, as well as more how to value it when I get it.

"Those who never particularise, are apt to build entirely upon their general knowledge (which, after all, is only a slight knowledge of particulars); and those who never look to the *generals,* are not aware of their consequence. Both are wrong; and each from pure vanity ridicules the other.

"A painter should choose those subjects with which most people associate pleasant circumstances. It is not sufficient that a scene pleases *him.* As an extreme instance of this; the mere appreciation of the delight he felt at getting up at four o'clock to study Nature, will present itself, whenever *he* sees a picture painted so well as to indicate that period of the day, when the very same circumstances of a beautifully clear morning, etc., may recall, in the general spectator, only the disagreeable remembrance of being called up to go a journey in a stage-coach —or, to others, the uncomfortable recollection of having been obliged to get up, because they could not sleep. * * * March 2nd.—Rose at half-past seven; walked, for the first time this season, before breakfast. My pictures want a lightness in drawing and touch—objects too much detached—a lightness of hand quite necessary. * * * Heard this evening of Munroe's death—poor fellow, to be snatched away from his parents and the Art, at a time when he could least be spared! I should think he must have been about two-and-twenty. Can it be doubted that his parents will be compensated by Providence for their sufferings? Do not these things happen for the purpose of convincing us that we ought to have something to fly to in our greatest miseries? Can his parents, at this moment, derive any alleviation from anything, but a hope that his better part is not annihilated?

" * * * 12th.—Went to see Kean's '*Hamlet*,' and had great reason to think most favourably of it. The nature without vulgarity, or affectation, which he displayed throughout the part, came home to the feelings. His crawling upon the carpet in the play-scene was bad. His kissing *Ophelia's* hand, his forgetting and recollection of the speech about Pyrrhus, &c., prove him to be a man of genius,—(notwithstanding, I prefer the purity of Kemble.) His walk on the stage is, I think, rather mean; but he improves most rapidly. 21st—Flaxman's last lecture; his best. More thinking in it. * * * April 5th.—This evening my two pictures were removed to Somerset-house. I think it necessary to get the outline of my figures completely determined, before I venture to paint them. Sometimes, when a part is well coloured and decently painted, I am under the dreadful necessity of erasing it, because it is too small, or too large, or has some other defect in the drawing. The whole figure ought to be completely determined on, at the first, or second sitting; after which the parts may be successfully studied.

"The waving line and graceful playfulness of the joints of children, closely imitated, would immortalise the painter who should persevere in his observations on them—which he may, *ad infinitum*.

"Sparkle may be obtained without glazing. Linnell's observations, with respect to the warmth of objects, against the cold sky—always opposite the sun—is perfectly correct.

"Proportion of the parts is a quality my pictures have never yet possessed in a proper degree.

"The figures in my pictures do not induce the spectator to think I know what is under the clothing.

(Haydon.) I saw a picture, this evening, of a lady, as large as life, where the head was not large enough for a girl of ten years old. Should I have observed this in a work of my own?

"* * * April 25th.—Went to Spring-gardens, to see Haydon's picture of "The Judgment of Solomon." In this most extraordinary production, there is everything for which the Venetian school is so justly celebrated; with this difference only, that Haydon has considered other qualities equally necessary. Most men who have arrived at such excellence in colour, have seemed to think they had done enough; but with Haydon it was evidently the signal of his desire to have every greatness of every other school. Hence, he lays siege to the drawing and expression of Nature, which, in this picture, he has certainly carried from, and in the very face of, all his competitors. Of the higher qualities of Art are, certainly, the tone of the whole picture; the delicate variety of colour; the exquisite sentiment in the mother bearing off her children; and the consciousness of Solomon in the efficacy of his demonstration of the real mother. In short, Haydon deserves the praise of every real artist for having proved that it is possible (which, by the way, I never doubted,) to add all the beauties of colour and tone, to the grandeur of the most sublime subject, without diminishing the effect upon the heart. Haydon has done all this; and produced, upon the whole, the most perfect modern picture I ever saw; and that at the age of seven-and-twenty!

"30th.—The Marquis of Lansdowne desires to know the price of my 'Bird-catchers.' I wrote him the terms—one hundred guineas (including frame). Sunday morning I received his polite note, agreeing to give me that sum. I do not think I was ever so much gratified by the sale of a picture, as in this instance.

"* * * Sentiment in pictures can only be produced by a constant attention to the food given to the painter's mind. A proper dignity and respect for one self is the only shield against the loathsomeness of vulgarity.

"The habit of determining the course of action would prevent a great waste of time. In every ungratified desire, the mind is so worried by the continuance of doubts on both sides, that a complete debility ensues; the consequence of which is an uncertainty in all its speculations. What renders this still more vexing is, that, in general, the things about which it has the greatest doubt, are either above its powers, or beneath its notice. For an instance of the latter: a man orders a coat—he is in doubt about the colour—perhaps, he says, I will wait a few days. During these few days the cursed coat so frequently interrupts his more useful cogitations, that he orders one at last of, most likely, a colour he hates, merely to get rid of the subject. Had he, in the first instance, determined upon it before he set about anything else, his mind would have been in a more clear and proper state to receive other ideas. This would soon become a habit, and he would acquire a power, from necessity, of fixing his attention.

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"November 7th.—The election at the Academy, (at which, I afterwards heard, I was chosen an Associate.) Sketched at home in the evening—felt too anxious about my election to do much. 8th.—Received notice from the Secretary of my election. 12th.—To aim greatly at reformation in the leading features of my private character—the little weaknesses that almost escape detection, and which, notwithstanding their pettiness, seem to be the obstructing cause to all dignity of character in an artist, or a man. This improvement is not to be made by ridiculous and hasty resolutions, but by private reflections. The result, and not the means, ought to be seen. 16th.—Received notice to attend the Council of the Royal Academy, on Tuesday 22nd, at nine o'clock in the evening, for the purpose of receiving my diploma, and signing the instrument of institution. 17th.—From the great success I have met with, the eagerness I feel to deserve it, and my struggles against sluggishness, I never was more confused in my intellects than now—dreadful want of confidence—my mind must be weeded—method quite necessary—good habits may be gained by watchfulness—bad habits grow of themselves; good ones require cultivation. * * * December 3rd.—Remarkably dark day. This circumstance combined with the interruptions occasioned by some callers, and my own idleness, produced a great want of exertion on my part. Having taken snuff occasionally, since Tuesday last, and finding it hurtful, I again leave it off. Should I take any more, I will set down my reasons for so doing—bad, or good.

"Suppose the mind (vital principle, director of the body, or whatever else it may be called) obliged to pass through, or make use of certain organs, to the end that it may attain some purpose—suppose these organs in a morbid state, will the operations be sound? Certainly not. No more so than the attempt will be successful of a man who wishes to go a journey on foot and breaks one of his legs by the way. Then, how clearly does the necessity appear of doing as much as is in our power to keep these organs in the most perfect state. What excuse has the man to offer, who suffers them, or occasions them to be, in an unfit condition for the use of the mind?"

Such are the passages in the Diary of 1814, most worthy of attention. Those entries of a purely personal nature which have been inserted here, have not been introduced without a reason. It has been considered that they may contribute to vindicate genius from the conventional accusations of arrogance and irregularity, which are too frequently preferred against it, by demonstrating, in the instance and from the reflections of the subject of this biography, that the eager desire for fame may exist, without the slightest alloy of presumption; and that an ardent devotion to an intellectual pursuit, is not incompatible with the minutest attention to the moral cultivation of the heart, and the social training of the mind.

The painter's circle of friends now began to widen. Men of genius and reputation sought his acquaintance, and found his qualifications for society of no mean order. A plan of reading, various and extensive; an unwearied anxiety to receive and impart information on all subjects, from his Art downwards and upwards; and a fund of anecdote and capacity for humour, not easily exhaustible, fitted him well for the general topics discussed among the circles to which he was now welcomed. Among the gayest of his companions, at this period, were that "joyousest of once embodied spirits"—Elliston, and that inveterate jester and capital writer, James Smith; both of whom found in the artist's company no mean stimulus to conversational exertion; for when the ball of wit was once set going, it was rarely suffered to drop in Mr. Collins's hands. As an humble example of this—should the incident not appear too trifling—an anecdote may be mentioned, not unworthy, perhaps, to take its place among the laconic curiosities that enliven our jest-books.

Mr. Leslie, R.A., and an artist named Willis, were guests, one evening, at the painter's house; when Willis left his friends rather abruptly—in spite of their remonstrances—before the usual hour of parting. After he was gone his host sent out for some oysters, and proposed that Willis should be mortified, by being informed of the supper that he had missed through his hasty departure. Accordingly the painter wrote on a large sheet of paper—"After you left us we had oysters;" and sent it, without name or date, or paying postage, (which was then threepence) to Willis. The latter, however, discovered the handwriting; and, to revenge himself, sent back for answer another letter—not paid of course—and only containing the words:—"Had you?" He was nevertheless mistaken, if he imagined that he had beaten his antagonist in brevity; for, the next day, he received, at the price of threepence again, an answer to the interrogatory, "Had you?" in a letter containing the eloquent monosyllable—"Yes!"

Whether, in these days of intellectual profundity, when books on abstract science decorate ladies' boudoirs, and children lisp geology to the astounded elders of a bygone generation, any appearance in print of such superficialities as *puns* can hope to be tolerated, is probably doubtful in the extreme. If, however, those light skirmishers in the field of conversation still find favour in the eyes of any readers, who may not yet be occupied in writing books to prove that Moses blunders in his account of the creation of the world, or in clearing up, wholesale, the reputations of all historical bad characters, from Oliver Cromwell and bloody Queen Mary, down to "lions" of later days, the following samples of the quick humour of Elliston and the elder author of "Rejected Addresses," may not be found unworthy to revive, for a moment, in others, the hearty laughter they once raised in those to whom they were originally addressed.

Mr. Collins and some friends were one night sitting with Elliston in his box at the theatre, when one of the inferior actors attracted their attention by the extreme shabbiness of his costume, and the general poverty of his whole appearance. His stockings, particularly, were in a miserable condition; and the embroidered ornament at the ancle of one—called the "*clock*"—was positively ragged. Elliston first discerned the latter feature in the costume of his humble brother actor; and, in tragic seriousness of tone, directly drew the painter's attention to it, in the following words:—"*Watch* his '*clock!*'—He got it upon *tick!*"

Between James Smith and the painter, a good-humoured reciprocation of jests of all sorts was the unfailing accompaniment of most of their meetings. The latter, however, in some instances, gained the advantage of his friend, by calling in the resources of his Art to the aid of his fancy,—as an example of which may be quoted his painting on the boarded floor of his study, while Smith was waiting in the next room, a new pen, lying exactly in the way of any one entering the apartment. As soon as the sketch was finished, the author was shown in, and stopping short at the counterfeit resemblance, with an exclamation at his friend's careless extravagance, endeavoured to pick it up. A few days afterwards, with the recollection of this deception strong in his memory, Smith called again on the painter, and found him working on a picture with unusual languor and want of progress. Anxious to take the first opportunity to return the jest of which he had been the victim, Smith inquired in tones of great interest, how his friend was getting on? The other replied that he was suffering under so severe a headach as to be almost incapable of working at all. "Ah," said Smith, "I see why you have not got on; you are using a new material to-day,—painting in *distemper*."

In the year 1815, my father exhibited at the Royal Academy,—"The Reluctant Departure," (sold to Mr. Carpenter;) "Half-holiday Muster," (sold to Lady Lucas;) and "A Harvest Shower," (sold to Mr. Currie.) To the British Institution he contributed in the same season two pictures,—"A Cottage Child at Breakfast," (sold to Sir Richard Hoare;) and "Reapers," a landscape. In "The Reluctant Departure," the incident of a mother taking leave of her child as it lies in the nurse's arms, ere she descends to a boat in the foreground, which a fisherman and his boy are preparing to push off from shore, is treated with singular boldness and simplicity of effect. The drawing and action of the figures, the painting of the water in the foreground, and of the bank rising beyond it, with weeds and broken ground just visible beneath, in shadow, and the depth and harmony of tone thrown over the whole composition, combine to make this picture a fine example of the painter's careful observation of Nature and industrious study of Art. "Half-holiday Muster" will be found described in a letter which will be immediately subjoined. The "Harvest Shower" was suggested on a visit to Windsor, by a beautiful effect, produced during a shower, by the appearance of bright clouds behind falling rain. As soon as he perceived it, although reminded by his companion, Mr. Stark, of an engagement they had the moment before been hastening to fulfil, Mr. Collins produced his sketch-book; and, careless alike of rain and punctuality, made a study of the scene, which he afterwards transferred to canvass, and exhibited as above related. "The Cottage Child at Breakfast," and the "Reapers" are sufficiently indicated by their titles. From the former picture the artist executed a beautiful etching, included among a collection published by Hogarth, during the latter period of his life, under the title of "Painter's Etchings, by W. Collins, R.A."

His papers for this year are principally occupied by rules for conduct and experiments in practical Art. Among the few entries of general interest in them may be extracted the following:

DIARY OF 1815.

"* * * I must get the sparkle and vigour of objects in the sun; considering the distance at which most pictures are viewed, they ought to be painted very sharp.

"* * * I am now going to the Academy, where for some days I shall be in the company of, and in some measure on a footing with, the greatest painters in the country. To aim at surpassing them all; and, that my mind may never more be prevented from actual employment on this point, to discard all low and useless acquaintance with men, or things, not immediately connected with this aim.

"* * * To study in the country for future figures and groupings, with the accompanying backgrounds, and to make the most accurate painting and drawing studies of anything *in itself a subject:* sketches of *anything* I have too many. To be always looking for what constitutes the beauty of natural groups, and why they please in pictures.

"* * * In 1801, I began in the autumn to draw; although previous to this I had made some attempts, yet from this moment they were somewhat regular. Not long after this, I was instructed by a few lessons from T. Smith, to set a palette and begin to paint, which I continued to do with some degree of perseverance until, in 1805, I saw some necessity for drawing the figure. After much difficulty and fretting, I got into the Academy in the summer of 1806, where I passed my most happy moments, regularly attending that instructive and delightful place,—the place where I dared to think for myself.

"My great desire for improvement and my acquaintance with those who could benefit me as a painter, was at its height when and whilst I painted the fishing picture,* 'Blowing Bubbles,' and 'Boys Bathing.' This was in 1809 and 1810. The notice taken of the fishing picture also brought me acquainted with some persons, from whom, although I gained a great knowledge of the world, I profited little as a painter,—as the pictures I then painted, although better, had less real study in them, and were produced *notwithstanding*, instead of *by the help of* the persons with whom I too frequently associated. * * * I had some heavenly moments when in company with my real and only friends, my pencil and palette. * * * After this I studied as hard as I could, but not as hard as I ought. * * * I have served my apprenticeship (fourteen years exactly.) Having now set up for myself, I must become a master. * * * I purpose to aim more at method and order; and to begin, have determined not to read in the morning, but to paint or draw all day, and to go out when I feel any lassitude. To attain lightness and correctness of drawing. My lights are too equally diffused. I generally want a form in my pictures. By painting three studies, and drawing three nights each week, as well as painting by night, I may improve much. * * * Why should I have one weakness? Why should I be anything short of a fine painter? I will certainly, at any rate, have the consolation of *knowing* why.

"Why I am not so at this moment—or, at least, some of the causes why I am not so, are indolence,

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* Entitled "Children Fishing."

(only habitual), and too much of what is termed the good fellow, by good fellows; but by hard-headed and sensible men, downright weakness."

Such evidences as these of the painter's increased longing after fame, and of his uncompromising reprobation in himself of the most venial habits and irregularities, if they caused him to retrograde for a moment in the pursuit of excellence, show that the elevation he was now shortly to acquire in his range of subjects, was already preparing in his mind. Circumstances, immediately to be detailed, suddenly and roughly urged upon him this direction of his studies towards higher and more remarkable progress in the Art. An excursion in which he indulged himself, in the autumn of this year, contributed, in no slight degree, to awaken his mind to the near prospect of the change in his style which was ere long to become necessary. Accompanied by his friend Mr. Stark, he visited Norfolk and its coast; and found himself standing by the after-source of no inconsiderable portion of his future popularity, as, sketch-book in hand, he looked for the first time over the smooth expanse of Cromer Sands.

Before his departure for Norfolk, he ventured on a domestic change of some importance—the removal, by the advice of his friends, from the small and inconvenient house in Great Portland-street, to a larger and more eligible abode in New Cavendish-street. His success with the Academy and the world of Art, and the attention due to his interests as a professional man, appeared, to all who knew him, to warrant his incurring the increased expenses attendant on thus making a more respectable appearance, as regarded his abode. In a letter to Sir Thomas Heathcote, written in answer to an application from that gentleman for a companion picture to one he already possessed from the painter's hand, Mr. Collins writes hopefully—as the context will show, too hopefully—upon his future prospects.

"To Sir T. F. Heathcote, Bart.

"11, New Cavendish-street,
"18th July, 1815.

"Dear Sir,—It is not a little extraordinary that I should have a picture by me, precisely answering, in subject, size, etc., your descriptions. The picture was exhibited last month, under the title of 'Half-Holiday Muster,' (being an assemblage of village children, playing at soldiers before a cottage door), and as yours is an interior, I think this a most suitable companion. Should you think proper, I shall feel happy to have it sent for your inspection, which will not be in the least inconvenient to me. The price, including a frame of the right pattern, which I will have made, will be a hundred guineas.

"I thank you much for the hope you express as to my prosperity. I had intended to-morrow to have called in St. James'-square, to inform you that I have taken a very excellent house, in which I have been three days; and, as the situation and appearance are advantageous, I think my prospects are not altogether hopeless; although the artists have, this season, had much reason to complain.

"I remain, etc., etc.,

"WILLIAM COLLINS."

Of his excursion to Norfolk, the following incidents are related by the painter's companion, Mr. Stark:

"In 1815, he paid a visit with me, to my family at Norwich. There is but little in the city, or its immediate vicinity, to interest the painter; and, after two or three weeks' stay, we went to Cromer. An early patron of his was, at that time, residing at Cromer Hall (Mr. Reed), and he frequently dined at his table. But, however pleasurable the hours might have been to him so spent, he always regretted, if the evening chanced to have been sunny, that he had been shut up from the study of Nature under such favourable circumstances, sunlight being his great object. He was much delighted with the simple character of Cromer, and with the general colour and tone of its cliffs. The forms of these were then, as they still are, very monotonous; and some late landslips have not improved their character. Yet the impressions made upon his mind by the scenery of this place, seem to have lasted through life; for I find, so late as 1845, a picture entitled, 'Cromer Sands, Coast of Norfolk,' exhibited at the Royal

Academy; and many of the backgrounds to his coast pictures I can trace to sketches made in this locality. He was much amused, on one occasion, by the remark of some fishermen. Having made a careful study of some boats and other objects on the beach, which occupied him the greater part of the day, towards evening, when he was preparing to leave, the sun burst out low in the horizon, producing a very beautiful, although totally different effect, on the same objects; and, with his usual enthusiasm, he immediately set to work again, and had sufficient light to preserve the effect. The fishermen seemed deeply to sympathize with him at this unexpected and additional labour, as they called it; and endeavoured to console him by saying, 'Well, never mind, sir; every business has its troubles.'

"As near as I can remember, we remained at Cromer about two months. He was indefatigable in his pursuits while there; but I have no recollection of his having sketched any figures. His attention appeared to be directed to the beach and cliffs, almost exclusively."

The painter's own studies and impressions in Norfolk, are glanced at in the following letters to his mother and brother:

"To Mrs. Collins and Mr. F. Collins.

"Norwich, 1815.

"My dear Mother and Frank,—My reason for sending the last by mail was, that I began my letter too late for the post, and made a parcel of it, thinking it better to send it by that conveyance than keep it from you another day. * * * When you send the parcel, (I stand in great need of the shoes) I wish you to put as a base, two, or three, or four, (or more,) smooth, small panels. I wish to make some studies more finished than I choose to do on millboard. I do not wish them large. * * * I wish you would write often, telling me how you keep your health,—how you like the house,—whether you have found any defects, or 'unpleasantries,' in or out of it: how rich, or how poor,—how the situation suits our profession,—and a thousand 'hows,' that would like me well at this distance from you. From the day you receive this, and as far back as you recollect, keep a diary of the weather to compare with one I intend to make. *We* have had much gloomy weather, and, except eating, drinking, and visiting, I have not done much. However, as I find much to admire, I shall exert myself to bring some of it home.

"With regard to the comfort and pleasantness of my situation in the family I am staying with, I cannot hope to give you an adequate idea of it on paper,—at least on so small a quantity as I find I have left. Suffice it to say, that Mr. Stark, his wife, and sons are so much to my liking, that I feel as if I had been connected with them by some closer tie than the one that at present exists. He is a fine, open-hearted, clear-headed, generous Scot; his wife, born in Norfolk, is in heart, a complete second to him. I cannot tell you how much, and how frequently, they talk of you both, and wish you here. Mrs. Stark has formed a decided friendship for my mother. I hope this is one reason for my fondness for the family; and about 'his ain kinswoman,' old Jamie Stark is continually 'speering.' I have also seen the daughter, who appears to be made of the same material as the rest of the family.

"I have met at this house, and at others in this neighbourhood, some of the most acute and learned men, from whom I have learnt enough to convince me that intelligent men are of more service to each other in a provincial place than in London. The sharpness of the air, or some other quality of this place, certainly tends to give a smartness to the people, surpassing the inhabitants of any locality I ever was in before. This, however, induces more equality, or attempts at it, in the common people, than is strictly consonant with my feelings.

"I will, in conclusion, put it to both your honours, whether or not I deserve a long letter for all this information. I am quite comfortable: how long may I stay?—send for me, if you want me,

"Most affectionately yours,
"William Collins."

"To Mrs. Collins.

"Cromer, September 18th, 1815.

"My dear Mother,—On this my birthday, I know not how I can be better employed than in writing to you. My reasons for not having done so before were, that I hoped to have had a letter from Mr. H—, (which has not been the case) and, more particularly, because I had not made up my mind as to the time of quitting Norfolk. My plan, at present, is to leave this place for Norwich on Saturday next; to visit some places which I have not yet seen in that neighbourhood; and, in about a fortnight, to have the pleasure of presenting myself to you in London. I have made some sketches of sea-shore scenery, etc.; but, although I have opened the door of every cottage in the place, I have not yet seen an interior good enough for Mrs. Hand's picture. But I hope, and indeed from the description received of it, feel no doubt that, at a place called Arminghall, I shall get the thing itself.

"Tell Frank, that, although I have no (what is termed) certainty of becoming rich, in the world, yet I never lose hope; and that it is my decided opinion, that if the Almighty was to give us every thing for which we should feel desirous, we should as often find it as necessary to pray to him to take away, as to grant new favours. Whatever happens, as nothing can possibly happen without His permission, must be, and is, good. The thousand cases I could bring forward in proof of this assertion, (I mean cases that I have met with since I saw you last) I shall reserve till our meeting in London. * * *

"Most truly, dear Mother,
"Your affectionate son,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

To the Exhibition of 1816, the painter contributed, besides two portraits, a picture, called "The Argument at the Spring," and a sea-piece (afterwards engraved) entitled "Shrimp Boys—Cromer." The first work was in his now popular and accustomed style, and represented a young girl standing in the water, and endeavouring to induce a little urchin, ready stripped for the bath, to approach her and submit himself to the process of ablution. The second displayed extraordinary truth to Nature and originality of arrangement, but could hardly be said, though a sea-side view, to be—intellectually—the commencement of the series of coast-scenes, which he was afterwards to produce. It was an evidence, rather, of the dawning of the capability for new efforts in the Art, than of the triumph of the capacity itself. How that capacity became suddenly awakened and called forth, it is now necessary to relate.

Although Mr. Collins's pictures this year were sold—"The Argument at the Spring," being disposed of to Mr. Williams, and the scene at Cromer purchased by Sir Thomas Heathcote, (probably as the companion picture he desired; "Half-Holiday Muster," having been ultimately bought by Lady Lucas) his pecuniary prospects, towards the autumn, became alarmingly altered for the worse. Liberal and discriminating as many of the patrons of Art were in those days, they were few in number. The nation had not yet rallied from the exhausting effects of long and expensive wars; and painting still struggled slowly onward, through the political obstacles and social confusions of the age. The remuneration obtained for works of Art, was often less than half that which is now realised by modern pictures, in these peaceful times of vast and general patronage. Although every succeeding year gained him increased popularity, and although artists and amateurs gave renewed praise and frequent encouragement to every fresh effort of his pencil, Mr. Collins remained, as regarded his pecuniary affairs, in anything but affluent, or even easy circumstances. Passages in his Journal for this year, will be found to indicate his own consciousness of the gradual disorder that was, at this period, fast approaching in his professional resources.

JOURNAL OF 1816.

"January 1st, 1816.—Went with Willis to the Elgin Marbles, observed the simple attitudes of some of the figures to be peculiarly adapted to a new style of portrait. Then to Westminster Abbey, where I heard the organ playing, etc., and saw the bad monuments of some modern sculptors. I must write notes in my book before the thing criticised, mentioning the name, etc.; for I have seen most of the objects in this place often enough, but having forgotten them, I lost my time looking at them again, and coming, most likely, to the same conclusion, again to be forgotten, unless I keep a book for the purpose of entering everything I think worthy of remark.

"* * * Some time since I praised, from charitable and opposition motives, a certain picture, certainly much more than it deserved. I was told the other day, by an inferior artist, that he could not much value the opinion of one who had so much deceived him.

"* * * Feeling the thing, and being able to express it, makes the difference between amateur and painter—some persons put their ideas better than others. Has a man who cannot put them so clearly as to be understood, the ideas at all? Can he distinctly see it—could he not describe it, if he did?

"* * * April 13th.—Chatted with a visitor till twelve, when I posted this dreary ledger, on a dreary, black-looking April day, with one sixpence in my pocket, seven hundred pounds in debt, shabby clothes, a fine house, a large stock of my own handyworks, a certainty (as much, at least, a certainty, as anything short of 'a bird in the hand' can be) of about a couple of hundreds, and a determination unshaken—and, please God, not to be shook by anything—of becoming a great painter, than which, I know no greater name. Although I have not at this moment a single commission of any kind whatever, I have property considerably more than adequate to discharge the debt above-mentioned—I mean property that would, even in these worst of times, sell for such a sum. Therefore, should my present views prove abortive, I shall not lose my independence—which whilst I have, I want no more.

"* * * July 5th.—How comes it that after all my struggles, I am at this moment so poor in purse? Those of my friends able to push me, are not inclined; and those inclined, not able. Now, as it is impossible to rise in the world, without connection—connection I must have. Therefore, I will paint some high personage, for the next Exhibition. (Why not the Princess Charlotte?) For my own comfort, I must paint this, as well as everything else I touch, in a superior style. I have no reason to be dissatisfied with the public judgment on my works, although, from various causes, I am not rewarded agreeably to, or consistent with, their acknowledgment of my deserts. As I have great reason to believe that their approbation of any particular picture (although not the one that I consider the best, at the time) is the criterion, I shall certainly bow to it. In the particular instance of the Cromer scene, I feel now that their selection is marked by judgment: the faults, however, of the 'Spring,' I hope to be able to remedy in my future productions—for which purpose, I will note those objections which have been made by others, and follow them with a critique of my own. * * *"

Hopeful as the painter's anticipations still continued, untiring as were his efforts to extricate himself from his gathering embarrassments, they did not bring with them the success and security that he desired. The autumn was approaching, his exertions were the main support of his family, he had attempted to render them more advantageous by removing to a convenient and well situated dwelling; and now, to his dismay, he found, as the season advanced, that his income grew more and more insufficient to supply even the daily demands—economical though they were—of his new scale of expenditure; and that, unless some sudden change took place in his fortunes, his affairs were threatened—after all his industry, and all his successes—by no less a visitation than absolute ruin.

A calamity so severe and disheartening as this would have overwhelmed a man of inferior mental powers,—it stimulated the subject of this biography, however, to fresh effort, to stronger determination, to more vigorous hope. Gradually and surely, year by year and thought by thought, his old boyish anxiety to draw the sea at Brighton, had been expanding within him into a higher and finer aim; and, as he now looked the hard necessities of his position in the face, as he remembered the approval bestowed on the Cromer sea-piece, and as he saw that he must grasp at wider popularity, or sink at once into penury and failure, his mind opened at once to a knowledge of its resources, and to a discovery of all that it had hitherto left unstudied and unachieved on the English coast. That which, under happier circumstances, might have been a gradual process, became, under the pressing influence of necessity, a sudden operation—a thorough conviction that inexhaustible Nature presented, in the scenery and population of the shores of England, a fund of untried and original material for the capacities of Art. Thus has it ever been with genius. Thus, as the child of chance and the creation of sudden accident, does that mysterious gift vindicate its unearthly origin. The inferior faculties and accomplishments of the mind are under human control, are linked visibly to the chariot of journeying Time; but, genius owns no mastery, bows to no application, lives for no season. In one unregarded moment it springs into being, on the mute, obedient soil of the human mind! To the veriest trifles, the merest chances, is the world indebted for the most eloquent appeals of mortal intellect that have been addressed to it. A boyish frolic, or a momentary want, a heartless insult, or a careless jest, is the Prometheus that steals from its native heaven this hidden fire, this creating spirit that kindles in the poet's verses, and glows in the painter's forms.

Whatever intellectual rank Mr. Collins's sea-pieces may be considered to hold, as original and popular works of Art, it is not to be doubted that from them his highest celebrity as a painter first arose ; and it is not less certain, that the immediate awakening of his mind to the conviction of the real extent of its capacities, and the discovery of the direction which those capacities for the future should take, was coeval with the sudden responsibilities forced upon him by his embarrassments at this period. Once conceived, his purpose was immediately settled. He determined to quit London and London friends; to proceed to Hastings; and there to make, on new principles, a series of studies on the coast, which should enable him to exhibit such thoroughly original works as would obtain for him an honourable celebrity, relieve his family and himself from the difficulties which oppressed them, and procure him the satisfaction of having restored the prosperity of his household, by the honest exertions of his own genius.

But so serious had the pecuniary pressure of his position now become, that he looked in vain for even the inconsiderable means necessary to accomplish this saving progress towards prosperity and fame. To procure any immediate assistance by his professional exertions in London was impossible, and to leave his mother and brother to struggle with their difficulties (the instant settlement of some of which had now become imperative), and depart for Hastings under all obstacles, was equally impracticable. At length, emboldened by this positive absence of pecuniary resources, he resolved, though at the risk of losing a valuable patron and generous friend, to state his case, and apply for an advance of money (on the strength, I believe, of a picture he was commissioned to paint for him) to Sir Thomas Heathcote.

The name of this good and generous man will be found in Mr. Collins's Diary for 1812, coupled with an offer of advancing a sum of money to him, during the time of trouble and confusion consequent upon his father's death. On this occasion, therefore, it will be readily imagined that the painter's application was not made in vain—with the kindest expressions of sympathy and interest, Sir Thomas Heathcote responded to it, by the remittance of the sum desired.

The following passages in a letter from Mr. Collins to his liberal patron, account in a manly and candid spirit, for the disorder which was now prevailing in his affairs; and which, it is to be remembered, was produced by no careless extravagance on the part either of his family, or himself.

"To Sir T. F. Heathcote, Bart.

"New Cavendish-street, 1816.

"Dear Sir, * * * A part of the amount I requested of you, was necessary to prevent the seizure of my goods for taxes; and the remainder to pay a note of hand, (which, being overdue, left me at the mercy of a stranger who held it), and to procure a few pounds to enable me to obtain some studies I wished to make at Hastings.

"That you should be surprised 'at the pecuniary distress of a person of such apparently prudent habits,' I can readily conceive, for I am pointed out as one who has been extremely fortunate—and as far as popularity may be considered fortunate, I must confess myself peculiarly so; but I am sorely mortified to add, that it is only in report that I am in affluent circumstances; for allow me, sir, to assure you, that in some cases, the whole produce of a twelvemonth's study and its attendant expenses, has been rewarded by about a hundred guineas. The impossibility of living upon this sum, with the absolute determination I had set out with, to neglect no circumstance that could in any way tend to my improvement in Art, has produced difficulties not frequently paralleled.

"From these difficulties I had the fairest prospect of being relieved by the apparent increase of the importance of Art, and consequently its greater encouragement; but the unpropitious state of the times has produced a sensation, calculated to damp the hopes of those whose existence depends upon, what are termed, superfluities. Should I have power to struggle until these temporary evils are removed, I trust that, with industry and economy, I shall be enabled to devote my future years, undisturbed by pecuniary evils, to a pursuit (in that case) replete with happiness.

"In pursuance of our plan of economy, my mother purposes letting half the house we now occupy; which will reduce our annual expenditure for our greatest comforts, to the sum of sixty guineas. That I might accede to this proposal, I have, at a trifling expense, converted our attic into a most complete and desirable study.

"The pleasing way in which you desire an explanation of the causes of my difficulties, must plead my excuse for a letter necessarily egotistic. But, the interest you take in my success has produced an inclination to convince you that I really feel your kind condescension.

"I remain, dear Sir,
"Your obliged and obedient servant,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

With his departure for Hastings, which took place immediately, the first epoch in my father's life as a painter closes naturally with the first preparation for a change in his style. I have endeavoured, up to this portion of the narrative, to exhibit what may be correctly termed, looking to his after efforts—his early progress in the Art—to trace the pictorial faculty, as it orginated in his mind, from self-bias, instruction and example—to follow it in its gradual development, during and after his academical studies—to display it, as fortified by steady industry, as dignified by regular improvement and honourable ambition, and as displaying itself in productions, drawn from sources of interest, eloquent in their simple homeliness to all. Arrived now at another period, another division begins in the Biography, as in the life that it commemorates—a division which is to describe the success of higher efforts, undertaken not only at the promptings of the noble selfishness of ambition, not only with the intention of attaining purer originality of pictorial design and stronger distinctiveness of pictorial illustration, but also for the sake of relieving the anxiety and meriting the gratitude of others, and of widening the influences of genius, to fit them the better, in the first instance, for the protection of home.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

1816 to 1820.

Sojourn at Hastings in the autumn of 1816—Letters to Mrs. Collins, Mr. F. Collins, and Sir Thomas Heathcote—Domestic and professional life in London—Sir David Wilkie and Mr. F. Collins—Mr. Leslie, R.A.—Anecdotes of the painter's dog "Prinny"—Pictures of 1817—Mr. Carey's criticism on the sea-piece called "Sun-rise"—Effect of the new coast scenes on the public—Journey to Paris with the late Washington Allston, A.R.A., and Mr. Leslie, R.A.—Journal of 1817—Recurrence of pecuniary difficulties—second application to, and timely loan from, Sir Thomas Heathcote—Pictures of 1818—Sea-piece purchased by the Prince Regent—Sir George Beaumont—Lord Liverpool—Increase of employment—Visit to the Duke of Newcastle's country seat, Clumber Park—Visit to Sir George Beaumont, at the Cumberland Lakes—Anecdote of Southey—Tour to Edinburgh with Sir Francis and Lady Chantrey—The late Mr. Marshall, of Leeds—Remarks—Sketches—Letter to Lady Beaumont—Notice of, and letters to and from Washington Allston, and S. T. Coleridge—Commission from Sir J. F. Leicester, Bart.—Correspondence with that gentleman—Description of the picture painted for him—Pictures of 1819—Extracts from Journal—Tour to Devonshire—Letters to Mrs. Collins—Elected Royal Academician in 1820.

HAD Hastings in 1816, been what Hastings is in 1848, the fashionable loiterers who now throng that once unassuming little "watering-place," would have felt no small astonishment when they set their listless feet on the beach, yawned at the library window, or cantered drowsily along the sea-ward rides, in beholding, at all hours, from earliest morning to latest evening, and in all places, from the deck of the fishing boat, to the base of the cliff, the same solitary figure, laden, day after day, with the same sketching materials, and drawing object after object, through all difficulties and disappointments, with the same deep abstraction and the same unwearied industry. Such a sight would have moved their curiosity, perhaps excited their interest, could they have known the object with which those sketches were made, or have foreboded the pleasure and instruction which, in their after combination they were so shortly to convey.

But, in those days, the visitors to Hastings were comparatively few, and the streets of the little watering-place had not yet expanded into splendid terraces, or spacious drives. Saving in the presence of a few local idlers, my father remained undisturbed by spectators, and unapplauded by friends. Conscious of the responsibility that now weighed upon him, of the serious chances that awaited the result of his new studies, he practised the most rigid economy, and laboured with the most unfailing care. The character, dress, implements, and employments of the fisherman,—every peculiarity in the expression of his weather-beaten countenance, in the "fit" of his huge leathern boots, in the "rig" of his stout boat, was as faithfully transcribed by the hand, as his manners, feelings and pleasures were watched by the mind of the observant painter. Nor were the features of the sea-landscape forgotten in their turn. They were studied under all their characteristics,—in the glow of the morning sunshine, and the gloom of the evening shower. The cliffs were copied in their distant grace, and in their foreground grandeur; the beach was portrayed—now as it shone, dry and brilliant, in the midday sun; now as it glistened, watery and transparent, from the moisture of the retiring wave. The ocean was transcribed in its calm, as the clouds breathed their shadows over its cool surface, and caught in its momentary action, as it dashed upon the beach, or rocked the fishing-boat on its distant waters: and the sky, in the variableness of its moods, in its fleeting and magical arrangement of clouds, in its spacious form and fathomless atmosphere, more difficult of pictorial expression than all the rest, was yet, like the rest, studied and mirrored on the faithful paper which was soon to be the rich storehouse of the artist's future wants. Studies such as these, interrupted only by the intervals of his scanty and simple meals and his needful rest in his humble lodging, he persevered in for six weeks, nursing his aspirations secretly in his own mind, and building his hopes where he found his pleasures, in the aspect of Nature and the capabilities of Art.

The subjoined are, unhappily, the only letters written by him during his sojourn at Hastings. His correspondence will, throughout his biography, be found to be in quantity the reverse of what it is in quality. Cheerful, graphic, and unconstrained as are most of his letters as compositions, they were all written with great labour and hesitation, from the nervous fastidiousness about the commonest words and expressions which invariably possessed him whenever he took up the pen, and which made epistolary employment so much a task and so little a pleasure to him, that he avoided it on all ordinary occasions with undisguised alacrity and delight.

"To Mrs. Collins.

"Hastings, 1816.

"Dear Mother,—The inconvenience occasioned by my folly in not taking your advice with respect to the boxes, namely, to send them by a porter before seven, is not worth paper, any further than as it may serve as a lesson. However, I give myself credit for starting when I did; for, although I ran almost all the way, the coach was coming out of the inn-yard when I reached it. But the impossibility of remedying an evil is its best cure, and the fineness of the day, and the beauty of the road removed all unpleasant notions. A person who sat on the coach with me, and who I expected was no joker, after about an hour's ride, turned out exactly the reverse, and more than this, an acquaintance—Mr. Collard, who has enabled me to look smart, by lending me a cravat, marked, too, with his initials, '*W. C.*' I have a thousand other little things to say, but as I am under the necessity of writing by daylight, *my mind is on the beach*, and my only inducement to attempt this employment at such an hour is in the hope that you may receive my letter a day earlier than writing by candlelight would admit of.

"The packages came safe last night, and I am very comfortably situated in lodgings, (which are had with difficulty, poor, *dear* things) as under. — Frank's handwriting is much improved, and negligently neat.

"Your affectionate son,

"WILLIAM COLLINS.

"At Mrs. Nash's, All Saints'-street, Hastings."

The following letter to his brother, not only illustrates the painter's constant anxiety for the welfare and pleasure of others, but exhibits some amusing and creditable details of his conscientious principles of economy under the straitened circumstances that now oppressed his household:

"TO MR. F. COLLINS.

"Hastings, 1816.

"Dear Frank,—Your letter, with two halves of five-pound notes, came safely. My plan of coasting home I had entirely abandoned, before I received your opinion on that head. I now purpose quitting this place by the Wednesday's coach, should nothing arise to prevent it. Now, as London is so dull, and if there should be every prospect of a fine day on Monday, (there is no Sunday coach,) you might come down and return with me, if mother thought proper.

You would then have one clear day to dip in the sea, and stock yourself with some entirely new ideas. The whole amount of the expense would be the coach, provided you put two biscuits in your pocket, which would answer as a lunch; and I would have dinner for you, which would not increase *my* expenditure above *tenpence.* You could sleep with me, but as my lodging is out on Wednesday, it would be encroaching on a new week to stay any longer than Wednesday morning. I shall be at the place where the coach stops for you, should you be able to come. Write me nothing about it unless you have other business, *for a letter costs a dinner.* * *

"Now, observe, I shall be most dreadfully hurt and mortified if, during your absence, mother does not get Mrs. Langdon to sleep in the house with her. You are to consider, yourself, whether, under all the circumstances, the journey is practicable. The expense will be about twenty-five shillings altogether. This we can save in five-and-twenty other ways; and if everything at home can be made comfortable to mother, I think it will be of service to your head. Will the journey be too much for you?—sixty miles down, and, to the best of my knowledge, the same up again.

"I came here to make sketches and not acquaintances. I have had no heavy time on my hands; a man should be able to bear his own company. * * I spend my time more satisfactorily than I usually do; live at a fisherman's house; lodging, twenty-five shillings a week, (nothing to be had cheaper;) but as his wife cooks for me, and as I live upon fish and tea, (and live *well*, too,—sometimes to be sure with a chop,) I have something to spare for models, which I frequently make use of.

* * *

"Don't trouble yourself about the exact tint of the painting-room wall. I shall cover it with sketches.

"Your affectionate brother,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

At the beginning of October the painter returned to London, and resumed his Journal in the following manner:

"October, 1816.—On Sunday, September 29th, 1816, I made a solemn resolution to abstain from any compliance with desires calculated to weaken my faculties. This resolution was made in St. Clement's church, at Hastings; and, as it has for its end the improvement of my powers as an artist and a man, I shall proceed to adopt a more strict and periodical examination of my conduct, with a view to banish from my constitution those inclinations to indolence, which, by their unobserved agency, might overcome my mental resources.

"I have for some years kept a common-place book and diary; but the irregularity with which it has been attended to renders it little more than a book of remorse. I shall, in order to make atonement for this neglect, consider it an imperative duty to render the diary begun this day a more complete abstract of my employment of each four-and-twenty hours. It has this moment struck my recollection, that the day on which I made the above determination, which did not occur to me at the time, was my dear father's birthday. God grant him peace—he had little here! His life was one scene of narrow poverty; which, to my finite capacity, he less deserved than any one I ever knew. 'God's holy will be done!' was his saying under each affliction.

"22nd, Thursday.—Arose at seven o'clock; walked, thought, and planned; read and resolved; hoped for power to carry my plans into execution; found myself in health and strength of body; and, so far, with no excuse for gloom. Strict attention will, I hope, enable me to preserve this necessary condition of my faculties.

"At twelve, began to paint upon Mr. Heathcote's picture of 'The Kitten Deceived,' upon which I worked till five o'clock. 23rd.—Painted upon Mr. Heathcote's picture until five o'clock. Mrs. L—— called. In my endeavour to paint while I was talking to her, (or rather *she* to *me*,) I painted the wrong side of the kitten in the looking-glass introduced into the picture. This shows the futility of attempting to paint with company, and the necessity of giving the entire attention to the work in hand. Went in the evening to Mr. P——'s, for the first time, where, in attempting to be as precise as himself, I rather bewildered myself. 24th.—Painted till half-past two; went out to walk till dinner. At Murphy's chess party in the evening. 25th.—Painted on Mr. Heathcote's picture till two o'clock, with repeated interruptions from the smoking of the chimney, the inconvenience of which was such as to induce me to submit to the alternative of taking down the grate, and having it reset upon my own plan. This occupied the rest of the day. Henry —— came to give us a lesson in chess. I fell asleep frequently between the moves. This I tried all in my power to prevent. I hope it is not a disease with me, perhaps being up so late might have produced this effect. 26th.—My study is in a miserable state, in consequence of the grate being reset; painted, however, till four o'clock; read the 'Antiquary' in the evening till twelve. * * November 1st.—Up at eight o'clock; heavy and gloomy, head wandering. Began to clear away obstacles at twelve. Read No. 127 of the 'Rambler;' then to study upon Mr. Heathcote's picture till five. Johnson says, in the above number, 'When indolence once enters upon the mind, it can scarcely be dispossessed but by such efforts as very few are willing to exert.' Perhaps I may be one of the '*few.*' By a close examination of everything I see and hear, I hope to improve as a painter and as a man. 2nd. Went to —— in the evening. My hours there were most foolishly, or rather, as affording a *lasting* lesson to me, most profitably spent. 3rd.—Rose ill; talked with visitors till three o'clock; also upon religion with Mr. Allston, whom I like much. Deduced the necessity of three resolutions from my follies of last

evening, all to be rigidly enforced; read at night.
* * * 5th.—If I am indolent during the progress of a picture, that picture, at every sight of it, will make me so uncomfortable that I either risk putting it by unfinished, or getting it out of hand in a hasty manner."

Sentiments such as those above displayed will sufficiently testify that Mr. Collins's expedition to Hastings was morally, as well as intellectually, useful to him ; and will, moreover, explain the secret of the unwearied endurance with which he struggled against the new disappointments which it will be seen misfortune for a time still directed against him—provided though he now was with the material, and the capacity to produce the most forcible pictorial appeals to the world of Art. Before however proceeding further in the progress of the painter at this important period of his life, it will not, in the first place, be irrelevant to show that one at least of his kind friends still continued to watch his doubtful fortunes with interest, by the insertion of the following letter, written by him in answer to a most liberal and spontaneous offer of payment in advance for a commissioned picture, by Sir Thomas Heathcote:

TO SIR THOMAS HEATHCOTE, BART.,

"Dec. 7th, 1816.

"Dear Sir,—I shall not attempt to describe the pleasure I received upon the receipt of your letter of yesterday, nor to apologize for accepting your kind offer, as, after the account of my arduous situation which I troubled you with in a former letter, it would be perfectly inconsistent to conceal the necessity you have so generously anticipated.

"From my excursion to Hastings I returned early in October, with a sufficient number of sketches and observations to complete the pictures I propose exhibiting in the ensuing season; and should it please God to continue that degree of health which I have so happily enjoyed for the last twelve months, I hope to prove that I have not been idle.

"By the exhibition of these pictures, I trust I shall not lose that favour the public has shown towards my works; but, although I cannot exist without fame, yet I cannot live upon it, so that, in order to accomplish the increase of my resources, I must devote some of my intervening time to the production of one, or perhaps two highly-finished small portraits. Upon this subject, Mr. Owen has kindly given me advice, so decisive, that I shall not fail to adopt it. On this head, I hope to have the pleasure of communicating more at large when you favour me with a call. * * *

"Yours obliged and obediently,

"William Collins."

It is now necessary, viewing the painter as already provided with his new stock of materials, to return with him to the mingled pleasures and anxieties of his London home. Designs for his projected efforts, of all sizes and peculiarities, soon flowed from his pencil; and like the beginnings of all his other works, were shown to his family and his friends, before they were seriously undertaken for the approaching exhibition. In this peculiarity of his character, he differed all his life from some of his professional brethren. No man ever lived who less affected mystery in his Art, or more thoroughly despised the easy ambition of shining before a "select few"—the unworthy satisfaction of being contented to remain the colossus of a clique, the great man of a small party. His efforts, from first to last, were addressed to every grade of his fellow beings who were likely to behold them; and were tried in his own mind by no other final standard than that of general approbation.

Among those whom he most frequently consulted at the different stages of his pictures were his brother and his friend Wilkie, to whom he had been introduced while they were students together at the Academy. The first of these companions and advisers, Francis Collins, added to a quick and lively intellect a profound knowledge of the theory of Art and an uncommon capacity for just and intelligent criticism—qualities which his brother never omitted to call into action for his benefit, and never found to fail in directing and encouraging him aright. Of Wilkie's capabilities as the adviser of his friend it is unnecessary to speak. The powerful genius of that simple-minded and amiable man never failed in its deep sympathy with the efforts of his brother painter. From the first to the last day of their friendship, Wilkie and Collins sought each other's advice and enjoyed each other's confidence, without a moment's alloy on either side, of jealousy or doubt: both were as fully impressed with the necessity, as they were happy in the privilege, of a connection too rare among the members of their profession—the free communication between painters—of their thoughts, their hopes, and their undertakings in the Art. Each was more the enthusiast of the other's genius than of his own—rejoicing equally in each other's triumphs, and submitting equally to each other's criticisms.

Of the painter's household, at this period, one who was then, as afterwards, ever among the most welcome of his guests, and who still survives for the advantage of modern Art, Mr. Leslie, R.A., thus writes, in a communication with which he has favoured me on the subject of his departed friend:

"Very many of the pleasantest evenings of that period of my life" (1816 and 1817) "were spent at your father's house, in New Cavendish-street, looking over his beautiful sketches and valuable collection of prints. The recollection of your uncle Francis—whom you, I should think, can hardly remember—is associated with those evenings. He was a most agreeable man, and had a fund of quiet humour—he had also great information on all matters connected with the Art, and an excellent judgment. Your father's house was therefore to me like a school — but a school of the most pleasant kind."

The group that, in those days, often assembled in my father's painting-room, as they sat in judgment on his projected pictures, would have formed no unworthy subject for a picture in themselves. The calm serious features of Wilkie, as he silently and thoughtfully contemplated the work of his friend, contrasted by the merry countenance and animated gestures of Francis Collins, as he hinted a joke, or hazarded a criticism—the appearance on the scene of Mrs. Collins, a remarkably dignified and handsome woman, contemplating with all a mother's affectionate admiration the progress of her son's labours; and the position of the painter himself, as he sat at his easel, now adding and altering, and now watching the approbation of Wilkie's attentive eye—these, surrounded by the quaint furniture of the little studio—the heap of variously-tinted canvasses here; the articles of fisherman's clothing and models of fishermen's boats there; the finished studies, hung confusedly on the walls; and the painter's implements, scattered over the tables; in one place the green bough ravaged from Hampstead fields, as a study for foliage; in another the toppling "lay figure," displaying, above, the counterfeit resemblance of the female form, and ("Desinat in piscem mulier formosa supreme") clothed at its lower extremities with a fisherman's apron and boots

—might have formed, altogether, a representation of an interior, not unworthy to rank, in point of interest, with many of those which have been already submitted, successfully, on canvass to the public eye.

While I am occupied in mentioning the companions of the artist's home, I must not omit to notice one who was ever as ready to offer his small aid and humble obedience as were any of his superiors, to confer the benefit of their penetrating advice—I refer to Mr. Collins's dog "Prinny" (Prince). This docile and affectionate animal had been trained by his master to sit in any attitude which the introduction of a dog in his pictures (a frequent occurrence) might happen to demand. So strict was "Prinny's" sense of duty, that he never ventured to move from his set position, until his master's signal gave him permission to approach his chair, when he was generally rewarded with a lump of sugar, placed, not between his teeth, but on his nose, where he continued to balance it, until he was desired to throw it into the air and catch it in his mouth—a feat which he very seldom failed to perform. On one occasion, his extraordinary integrity in the performance of his duties was thus pleasantly exemplified:—My father had placed him on the backs of two chairs—his fore legs on the rails of one, and his hind legs on the rails of the other—and, in this rather arduous position, had painted from him for a considerable time, when a friend was announced as waiting for him in another apartment.

Particularly desirous of seeing this visitor immediately, the painter hurried from the room, entirely forgetting to tell "Prinny" to get down; and remained in conversation with his friend for full half an hour. On returning to his study, the first object that greeted him was poor "Prinny," standing on his "bad eminence" exactly in the position in which he had been left, trembling with fatigue, and occasionally venting his anguish and distress in a low, piteous moan, but not moving a limb, or venturing even to turn his head. Not having received the usual signal, he had never once attempted to get down, but had remained disconsolate in his position "sitting" hard, with nobody to paint him, during the long half-hour that had delayed his master's return.

Out of the mass of his new designs, Mr. Collins selected two, which, when completed, were exhibited with other pictures in his usual style, at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1817. They were entitled, "Fishermen coming Ashore before Sunrise," and "Sunrise." To the latter picture, a melancholy interest attaches itself. As it was the first, so it was among the last of the great sea-pieces he ever painted; a repetition of it, having been produced by him at the Exhibition of 1846, the year in which his employments in the Art ceased for the public eye for ever!

In "Fishermen coming Ashore before Sunrise," the left corner of the sky is tinged by a mild, dawning light, which rises over a bank of misty vapour, and touches the wild, sharp edges of a large cloud, stretching across the heaven towards the light. Above this, still lingers the deep, purple, transparent atmosphere of the departing night, studded, in one or two places with the glimmer of a fading star. Beneath, the fresh, buoyant sea, dances onward to the foreground, garnished here and there fantastically with the rising light. In front, a single fishing-boat —(whose large sail, flapping lazily against the mast, rises grandly against the lighter part of the sky)— is stranded in shallow water. Around, and on it, stand the burly fishermen, hauling in their nets over the wet sand. In the distance is seen a town, faintly discernible on the cliffs that rise on the right hand of the picture; while, on the horizon, appears the sail of another boat, approaching the beach. The tone of colour in this elaborate work is dark, yet transparent—representing a sort of brightening obscurity, and suggests at every point the mysterious morning stillness which reigns over the scene. The picture was purchased by the late Mrs. Hand.

Of "Sunrise," I am enabled to provide a graphic and masterly criticism, extracted from Mr. Carey's "Descriptive Catalogue of the Gallery of Sir J. F. Leicester, Bart;" (afterwards Lord de Tabley) in whose collection the picture was placed.

"Two fisher-boys are here, on the shore, at low water. One is kneeling in a front view, with a turbot in his hand, and his fish-basket beside him. He is looking up, in conversation with his companion, who stands beside him with his back towards the spectator. The latter has his prawn-nets suspended upon an implement like a short boat-hook, over his shoulder; and has also a small basket, slung at his back. The reflections of the rising sun are expressed with great richness on the face of the kneeling boy; and the warm light, with a vigorous glow, on the other. These figures are transcripts from Nature, painted with that admirable truth which stamps a superior value on the works of this artist. They occupy the right side of the rocky beach, and a large dog, of the Newfoundland breed, stands behind the prawn-fisher in the centre of the foreground. A buoy and chain, left aground by the tide, are the only objects in the left corner. A thin flow of water is visible in some parts of the strand; and, in the middle ground, a pier extends into the sea. A boat-builder's yard is behind it, with vessels lying dry—a horse and figures are seen near them—and a small house stands on the side of a high and sheltering hill, above. From the termination of this hill, the sea forms the extreme distance, and extends the whole length across the view. The sun has just risen a little above the horizon, and its brightness is reflected on the waves immediately behind the kneeling fisher-boy, with wonderful truth, brilliancy, and force of local colouring. The golden light is opposed to the deep blue of the ocean, with a lustre and vivacity to which no language can do justice.

"On the extreme sea, some dark sails are discernible against the bright light—on the same line the white sails of some fishing smacks, distinguished by remote distance, glitter in the sun, and help to soften the effect by spreading the light in these parts upon the water. The dark sails of a fishing vessel, which is much nearer the shore, rise above the horizon, take away from the formality of its line, give a picturesque effect to the angle formed by the boy, and contribute to unite the shadows of the sea and sky. The ruddy light is diffused upon the flickering clouds, upon the water, upon the distant hill, the sands, and the figures, with a variety and gradation of tint, a living glow and lustre, which place this admirable transcript of nature, as a standard of excellence, among the very finest productions of its class. As the spectator views this fascinating picture, the cool serenity of a clear summer morning, in all its aërial loveliness, sheds a sweet and tranquil influence on his mind."

"The Kitten Deceived"—a little incident of rustic life—(painted for Sir T. Heathcote) pourtraying a group of cottage children astonishing their favourite kitten by exhibiting to it its resemblance in a looking-glass; with two other works, (portraits,) in one of which three children are represented playing at cards, in a garden, were the other productions of the painter, exhibited at the Royal Academy this year. The specimens of portraiture were painted in pursuance of the purpose he had expressed, in his letter to Sir Thomas Heathcote, of increasing his means of subsistence by the practice of that branch of the Art. Fortunately, however, a few years more worked such a change for the better in his circumstances that he was, from that time, spared all further necessity of quitting his own chosen studies to paint portraits, except when previously disposed to do so from his own inclinations.

At the British Institution the painter's new contributions were:— "The Young Cottager's First Purchase," (sold to Mr. Danby,) and "Preparing for a Voyage," (sold to Mr. Ludlow.) Both works were treated with the same truth and simplicity as their predecessors in a similar style.

Of all these pictures, those which attracted, and deserved to attract, the most attention, were the two sea-pieces. They presented to the public eye, in their genuine novelty of subject and treatment, the most welcome of all sights,—the appearance of thorough originality; and were at once admired and understood. The Art which connected the figures with the landscape, making each of equal importance, combining each into wholeness and singleness of effect, and yet gifting each with a separate importance and charm, was immediately acknowledged. Individual criticism found in them few latent excellencies, that general observation had left undiscovered and unapproved. They were works that attained a superior quality in all intellectual efforts—whether in poetry, painting, or music—that of levelling themselves, in expression, to the general capacity, while, in conception, they rose beyond it.

In the reception of these pictures by the public, Mr. Collins found some reason to hope that he should, ere long, accomplish his own extrication from his embarrassments—a process which he felt must be necessarily gradual, but which he now began to anticipate might be as inevitably sure. Elated by these reflections—more sanguine than any that had occupied his mind for some time past—he permitted himself, this year, the relaxation of a journey to Paris, in company with Mr. Leslie, and Washington Allston, the celebrated American historical painter.

It is a peculiar quality in the mental composition of those enthusiastically devoted to an intellectual aim, that they make—often unconsciously—their very pleasures and relaxations minister to the continued study of their pursuit. This was remarkably the case in the instance of the subject of this biography. In sickness and in pleasure, as in health and occupation, he was incessantly garnering up some fresh collection of material for his Art. Thus, in his journey to Paris, not satisfied with the acquisitions which, in the mere conversation of the two great painters who accompanied him, he was sure to obtain, he contrived in the short space of a month, and in the midst of the gaieties and amusements of the French capital, to make several copies of the great works in the Louvre, and to gain matter for two pictures of French subjects, and French localities, which he painted on his return to England. Of this short expedition, no notices beyond a few travelling memoranda, have been found in his Journal for 1817; which, however, during a later period of the year, when he was again occupied in London by his regular studies, presents some remarks on Art worthy of insertion, which are expressed as follows:

"* * * The foundation of the connoisseur's preference for the Dutch masters is exceedingly slender; it is the painter who in reality enjoys and admires their works; whose reputation (which induces the connoisseur to purchase them) is derived from the painter's appreciation of their technical merits. Most of the Dutch pictures are composed of subjects gross, vulgar, and filthy; and where this is not the case with the subjects, the characters introduced are such as degrade the human species below the level of the brute creation. As a proof of the correctness of this statement, let any one put the employments of most of the figures into words, and see whether the description would be tolerated in any decent company. And further, is the selection of scenery in these works remarkable (or is it not the reverse) for any of those features which delight either in Nature or Poetry?

"If the low and beastly characters pourtrayed by the Dutch painters were introduced by way of contrast, or for some moral purpose, as in Hogarth's works, there might be some excuse; but in their hands, even children have the faces of squalid old men and women: yet, notwithstanding these objections to them, they are most profoundly skilled in the great technical beauties and difficulties of the Art, and are accordingly highly valued by the artist. As these merits, however, can only be tested by the enlightened and initiated, persons who belong to neither class must buy the Dutch pictures, for purposes unconnected with a legitimate admiration of painting.

" * * * Daylight scenes are usually painted by inferior artists, with shadows resembling, because they are only painted at home, such as are never found but in rooms peculiarly lighted—these rooms being, moreover, seldom seen by any but painters. Hence, to those who are not accustomed to see groups of ploughmen, cattle, etc., etc., within doors, these pictures—though they know not how to express it—fail in producing the desired effect. For, although general spectators may not be so far acquainted with the minutiæ of Nature as to be able to talk about them, the general characteristics are nevertheless strongly impressed on their feelings. This may be perceived, when pictures painted with a real knowledge of the peculiarities of daylight come before them; then, they instinctively declare their satisfaction by some such expression as, 'There I can breathe!'

"How frequently do we find views of interiors, of stables and cottages, not really differing in atmosphere, from pictures of midday and sunrise effects in the open air, where the glimpses of cloud and landscape without, visible through doors and windows, appear so dexterously lowered, as to form a delicious artificial half tint to a head placed in the middle of a room. If painters are too indolent to court Nature *ad infinitum*, their works should be described somewhat thus :—' No. 1. Cottages and Cattle'—*in a painting-room!* No. 2. ' A Thunderstorm'—*raised in the artist's study!*

" * * * The reason why most of the late attempts made in this country have done so little for the Art, seems to have arisen, not from a want of inclination to further the interests of the modern school, (except in one notorious instance) but from the difficulties which naturally attend an undertaking, which is now exposed to the danger of over-patronage on the one side, and of under-patronage—or as it has been said, the stimulus of the fear of starvation—on the other. It would be a wise plan to make '*places*' on purpose for great talent in Art—they are found a stimulus abounding with advantage in most other professions. Without the high rewards attendant upon brilliant individual success, what great lawyers and divines might we not have lost?

" Since the great demand for Art has been satiated with the works of the old masters, what encouragement has the modern painter now to hope for, beyond those honours which the Academy offers, unless he becomes a portrait painter? It is, by the way, a strong argument in favour of the excitement produced by hopes of great pecuniary profit, that in portrait painting, notwithstanding the disadvantage of the most unpicturesque dresses, the English school has attained to a decided superiority over that of any other country.

"* * * Difficulties overcome in any art or science, may give reputation of skill, on some occasions, where no really useful or agreeable object is attained. Amongst scientific men, artists and poets, who have little intercourse with the world at large, these technical triumphs are too much valued. What may be termed a legitimate and praiseworthy aim, is where success produces great general advantage or gratification. In my own branch of the Art, for instance, an undulating bank, made up of a great variety of grasses, wild flowers, docks, &c., &c., which, when represented with genuine taste and genius, is one of the most beautiful and attractive objects that can occupy the foreground of a picture, becomes in the hands of a man who can only paint it with considerable mechanical intricacy and skill, an ineffective, and sometimes even a disagreeable object.

"* * * A sketchy picture is easily done, because one is accustomed to overlook in it a hundred violations of truth, which are insisted upon in a finished picture. In making sketches, the very violation of the laws of Nature is a proof of 'spirit,' as it is called."

Notwithstanding all his successes of the past year, it was with feelings of bitter despondency that the painter proceeded with his works for the Exhibition of 1818, for he had the mortification to perceive, as time advanced, that the demands made on him, moderate though they were, still exceeded the resources of his purse, and that a second crisis in his affairs, as painful and peremptory as that from which the kindness of Sir Thomas Heathcote had formerly extricated him, was fast approaching. The times had indeed slightly altered for the better; but it is a convincing proof of the continued poverty of the general patronage of that day, as compared with this, that the sea-piece "Sunrise," universally as it had been praised by all classes of the public, by critics and connoisseurs alike, had remained upon the artist's hands since the Exhibition of 1817, and was not sold till the March of the following year. An extract from Mr. Collins's Journal will convey some idea of the state of his mind under this fresh check on his most darling hopes; this unexpected defeat of the hard economies and applauded pictorial efforts of a whole year:

"January 20th, 1818.—From this day until Monday 26th, a series of miserable feelings and disappointments. Pecuniary difficulties, debilitating idleness, waging war upon me; dreading what, to my poor and finite capacity, appear insurmountable embarrassments. Notwithstanding my conviction that my troubles are real, and their number great, yet I feel that my desultory habits are adding to the list, (which is voluntarily and criminally incapacitating me for the performance of my numerous duties,) and that my prayers for power cannot be from the heart, when the talents I already possess are suffered to lie idle until their whole strength shall be exerted against me; as the sweetest water becomes, under the same circumstances, first stagnant and then poisonous. Fearing consequences, which God of his infinite mercy avert, I once more implore his assistance."

His was not, however, a disposition to sink helplessly under such bitter and unjust self-upbraidings as these. His devotion to his Art upheld him now, under the crushing pressure of misfortune, as faithfully as it did long afterwards under the darker evils of debility and pain. From the time when he had first aided him, Sir Thomas Heathcote had never ceased to make constant inquiries, in person and by letter, after his well-being and success; and to this gentleman, after having tried in vain every effort to extricate himself, self-aided, from his difficulties, he once more addressed himself, applying, as a last resource, for the loan of a hundred pounds.

Most men in the position of Sir Thomas Heathcote would have hesitated at granting this fresh application; but, discriminating as he was generous, that gentleman had formed, from long and intimate observation of Mr. Collins, a true estimate of his character and genius. He saw that the painter's integrity of intention and energy of purpose fitted him remarkably to urge his intellectual qualities through all obstacles to ultimate competence and success; and once more, though he had made a general rule against lending money on any consideration, he complied with my father's request.

It may be imagined that, in mentioning these circumstances, and in publishing the letters on this subject inserted in a former part of the present work, I have dwelt somewhat too much at length upon matters generally held by the world to be of too delicate and private a nature for the public eye. But transactions such as those between Sir Thomas Heathcote and Mr. Collins, reflect too much credit upon human nature, and display too remarkable an example of graceful generosity on one side and manly integrity on the other, to be hidden at the promptings of morbid delicacy from the world. Let it be remembered by the wealthy, that for want of such timely kindness and confidence as are here exhibited, many a man of genius has lived for disappointment, or perished from neglect; and, by the suspicious or the cynical let it be equally remarked, that in this instance liberality was neither wasted nor outraged, that those pictures paid for in advance were completed first, and that the loan contracted unwillingly was gladly and scrupulously repaid.

To the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1818 my father contributed "The Departure of the Diligence from Rouen," and a new sea-piece, called, "A Scene on the Coast of Norfolk." At the British Institution his new productions were entitled "The Bird's Nest," and "A Scene on the Boulevard, Paris." These pictures, gaining for him more exalted patronage than he had hitherto enjoyed, marked the commencement of a new era in his fortunes. From this year, his pecuniary difficulties gradually ceased; and he laid the foundation of an after competence, alike honourable to his own efforts and to the encouragement and appreciation of them by others.

The "Scene on the Coast of Norfolk," a sea-piece full of the finest qualities of the painter's works of this description, is to be noticed first among these pictures, both from its own intrinsic merits, and from the fortunate destiny that it achieved. At the annual dinner given by the Academy to the patrons of modern art, Sir George Beaumont, (to whom my father had been lately introduced) intimated to him that the late Earl of Liverpool had become the purchaser of his sea-piece. He had barely time to express his acknowledgments to Sir George ere they were joined by the late Lord Farnborough, (then Sir Charles Long,) who informed them that the Prince Regent had been so delighted with the picture at the private view of the day before, that he desired to possess it. Mr. Collins replied that he had just sold his work to Lord Liverpool, and that under such embarrassing circumstances, he knew not how to act. Observing that the matter might, he thought, be easily settled, Sir Charles Long introduced the painter to Lord Liverpool, who expressed his willingness to resign his purchase to his royal competitor, and gave Mr. Collins a commission to paint him another sea-piece for the next Exhibition. The picture was accordingly delivered to the prince, and is now in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle. The honest, uncompromising study of Nature, the high finish, the softness and purity of tone, united with power and brilliancy of effect, apparent in all parts of this work, combine to make it in every way worthy of the high approval that it gained. Nothing can be more simple than the scene it depicts: the level beach, in fine perspective, running into the middle of the picture from the foreground; two boys with fish and a fisherman's hut at the right hand; the sea at left; the sky above, charged with a mass of light, airy cloud, from behind which the sunlight is breaking in faint misty rays, are all the materials of the composition; but they are presented with such consummate truth and skill as to give to the picture that genuine appearance of originality and nature which in all works of art is the best guarantee of their value, as possessions which are always welcome to the eye, and never too familiar to the mind.

My father's introduction to Lord Liverpool was productive of advantages to him, which he ever remembered with gratitude and delight. At Fife House and Coombe Wood he was a constant guest. On all occasions his interests were forwarded and his pleasures consulted by Lord Liverpool, with a kindness and condescension, which the more important political occupations of that upright and amiable nobleman could never suspend. At no period of his intercourse with the world was the painter's time spent more delightfully and improvingly than in the cultivated society that he met under Lord Liverpool's roof. There, he was first introduced to the present possessor of some of his finest pictures—Sir Robert Peel; and there, in the beautiful scenery around Walmer Castle—then a country seat belonging to his noble host—he found materials for many of the most successful of his works. One of the last acts of Lord Liverpool's life was as characteristic of his affectionate regard for Mr. Collins as any that had preceded it. During an interval of ease in the illness that produced his dissolution, he desired that the painter might be sent for to visit him, at Coombe Wood. As he was proceeding towards the drawing-room to welcome his visitor, he suddenly stopped, and, sighing heavily, exclaimed:—"No, I cannot see *him*—I feel it would be too much!" Mr. Collins never beheld him again. He returned to his room, and soon afterwards died.

The painter's second picture at the Royal Academy Exhibition—"The departure of the Diligence from Rouen"—was well calculated to display the versatility of his genius. As the sea-piece was all repose, so this work was all action. The one was full of freshness—atmosphere—day; the other—

representing the departure of the clumsy vehicle, on a dark night, surrounded by a bustling and varied crowd, and illuminated only by the wild light of a single lamp, swung over the middle of the old French street—displayed precisely opposite characteristics, in every feature of the subject which it portrayed. This picture (one of the results of my father's tour to Paris) was purchased by Sir George Beaumont. The "Scene on the Boulevards," (drawn from the same sources, and exhibited at the British Institution) was bought by the Duke of Newcastle, who invited the artist to Clumber, the same year, to sketch the scenery and paint the portraits of his sons. The fourth work, "The Bird's Nest," (also sent to the British Institution) was sold to the Countess de Grey.

The report that Mr. Collins's "Coast Scene" had fallen under Royal protection soon circulated, and aided the effect of the merits of the work itself so powerfully, that commissions began to flow in upon him with unaccustomed prodigality. It was necessary, however, before he proceeded to execute them, that he should repair to Clumber, in compliance with the Duke of Newcastle's invitation. Of his journey to that place, and of his studies, thoughts, and resolutions in the earlier part of the year, the following account is furnished in his Diary.

Journal of 1818.

"March 20th.—I received the Holy Sacrament at

Fitzroy Chapel to-day; (Good Friday,) and in pursuance of certain hopes to amend my life, I commence this Journal for the purpose of examining how my time and talents, in this my thirtieth year, are employed. After having done all I can towards the attainment of any temporal object, should I not accomplish it, it is useless to lament the failure. I must never mistake the means for the end, must study hard, and for understanding must implore Almighty mercy. I believe that I must answer for every idle, vain, and unprofitable word that I utter; how absolutely necessary it is then, that I should use those means already in my power to attain the blessing of mental watchfulness. I know no cause so adequate to the entire frustration of the acquisition of this faculty, as indolence, which I believe to be of the will first, and then of the body; where, when it has once taken hold, it is cancerous. God of his infinite mercy grant that I may escape its fatal grasp! and become pure and holy through the merits of Jesus Christ—in the hope of whose assistance, I trust for the power to act consistently with hopes and fears drawn from an entire belief in his holy mission.

"23rd.—Went with Sir George Beaumont to visit Sir Thomas Lawrence—painted on the 'Departure of the Diligence.' Sir John Leicester called; and in consequence of a conversation with him, I offered the picture of the 'Diligence' to Sir George Beaumont; who desired to have it on Saturday last, but to whom I could not promise it then, as I conceived it to be in some measure engaged by Sir John Leicester; in which I now believe I had misapprehended him. Sir George and Lady Beaumont called, to thank me for my note offering the picture to Sir George. Allston dined and stayed the evening with me.

"27th.—Only at work by half-past eleven, although I have but eight whole days to finish my pictures for Somerset-house; but, in addition to this loss of time, I begin to suspect that by doing disagreeable things to please others, we may come to doing bad things to please ourselves. Certainly there was nothing that used to be more disagreeable to me than inhaling the smoke of tobacco, and yet I now find myself inclined to take a cigar, as much for the purpose of gratifying my own indolence, I suppose, as from a companionable feeling. This habit of smoking begets an inclination, and in fact a necessity, to allay the heat and dryness of the throat; and, as one smokes in the evening, liquor is always at hand; in addition to which, although I have given up snuff, yet the use of cigars and spirituous drinks would of course beget an inclination for their former companion: seeing all this, I hope I shall be resolute enough to resist the slavery of attachment to what it is best that I should hate. * * * April 7th.—Finished the 'Departure of the Diligence,' and the 'Scene on the Coast of Norfolk,' and took them to the Royal Academy at five o'clock. * * * May 1st.—Overlooking and planning new subjects till two o'clock: at the private view of the Exhibition afterwards—the Prince Regent there. Dined at Wilkie's. 2nd.—At the dinner at the Royal Academy, where Lord Liverpool purchased my picture of a 'Scene on the Coast of Norfolk,' at a hundred and fifty guineas. A few minutes afterwards, Sir Charles Long told me that the Prince Regent desired to have the picture: Lord Liverpool afterwards expressed his willingness to give up his purchase to the Prince. 5th.—With Jackson, who called to say that the price settled by Sir George Beaumont, Mr. West, and himself, for the 'Departure of the Diligence,' was two hundred guineas. 6th.—Drowsy all day, from having taken spirits and water, to prevent catching cold after getting wet: the chance of a cold better than the remedy for it. 8th.—Called upon the Duke of Newcastle, who engaged me to paint a view of his country seat, Clumber Park, Notts; for which purpose I agreed to visit that place, soon after three weeks from this day. Afterwards saw Sir George Beaumont, in St. James's-street, who declared himself satisfied with the price Mr. West had put upon my picture of the 'Departure of the Diligence.' * * * 4th June.—Mr. Danby bought, for forty-five guineas, 'The Young Cottager's First Purchase.' Walked—and at Allston's late. 5th.—Mr. Danby called; and the result of our conversation is so highly pleasing to my mind, that I am most happy in having made his acquaintance. * * * June 11th.—Arose at about five o'clock: left the Saracen's Head, for Clumber, the seat of the Duke of Newcastle, at about a quarter before seven. Dreadfully hot day; six inside; three of whom, vulgar, common women, were certainly the most troublesome passengers I ever met with. One of them was particularly deaf; asking questions, and never remembering, even when she heard them, the answers she received. Unfortunately, this old lady had a very bad cold; or, what is every whit as disagreeable, had a trick of expectorating from the window. I thought I never beheld a more annoying physiognomy than Nature and her mind had conspired to furnish her with. It so happened that a very well-bred Irish gentleman, about fifty, one who had been a great traveller, and had evidently been in good society—really a sharp, witty, and gentlemanlike person—sat opposite this dame; and it is entirely beyond my powers of description to give an idea of his half-suppressed curses upon each of her gettings up to the window. Although I derived considerable information from this gentleman, my four-and-twenty hours' ride, with the disagreeable dozings I had by way of sleep, had so completely—with the foregoing accompaniments—exhausted my nerves, that I never recollect to have experienced a more grateful sensation than my arrival, rather before six o'clock, at Tuxford, occasioned me. At this place I went to bed for a couple of hours, by which I was so much refreshed as to be enabled to proceed to Clumber; for which place I left Tuxford at about eleven, and arrived there before two. The remainder of the day, (Friday the 12th) was devoted to exploring the beauties of this delightful seat. Saturday 13th.—During this day I made sketches in water-colours, and further explored the grounds, accompanied by the Duke. Sunday 14th.—Heard service in the Duke's chapel, where Mr. Mann preached a very excellent practical sermon. His Grace, the Duchess and family, with a numerous retinue of servants and persons in the Duke's employ, were the auditory. The remainder of the day spent in the park. * * * Monday 15th.—Began, in oil, a sketch of the house looking towards the bridge. Tuesday 16th.—Worked on the above sketch: stormy evening—lightning. * * * Saturday 20th.—Began a portrait of Lord Lincoln. In the evening began a south-west view of Clumber Park. * * * Monday 30th.—Painted a north-west view of Clumber, and finished Lord Lincoln's portrait. * * * July 9th.—Made studies for portraits of Lords Charles and Thomas Pelham Clinton. Very fine day; evening cloudy and without a breath of wind—a warm, calm scene. 10th.—Began the portraits of Lord Thomas Pelham Clinton, and Lord Charles. From Friday 17th to Tuesday 28th employed upon the portraits of the twins, and a sketch in oil at the old engine-house; and on that day (28th) left Clumber for Nottingham."

After quitting Clumber, Mr. Collins proceeded to visit Sir George Beaumont at the Cumberland Lakes. Here he was introduced to Wordsworth and Southey, and enjoyed the advantage of visiting in their company, as well as in that of his accomplished host, many of the most exquisite features of the surrounding scenery. He often mentioned, as an instance of Southey's remarkable facility in composition, his having been shown into the study of that fertile and valuable writer, while he was engaged over a MS. Before, however, the painter could make his apologies for the intrusion, Southey started up, threw down his pen in the middle of a sentence, and, taking his hat, gaily proposed a pedestrian excursion for the morning. They went out, extending their walk to some distance, and talked over no inconsiderable variety of miscellaneous topics. On their return, Mr. Collins again entered Southey's study, (for the purpose, I believe, of consulting some book in the library) when, to his astonishment, he saw his friend sit down again immediately at the writing table, and conclude the imperfect passage in his MS. as coolly and easily as if no interruption had happened in the interval to distract his mind for a moment from its literary task.

Notices of the above tour, and of one that followed it, with Sir Francis and Lady Chantrey, to Edinburgh, where he visited for the first time the lovely scenery of his mother's birth-place, are thus scattered among Mr. Collins's papers:

"August 22nd, 1818.—Left Manchester for Kendal, where I arrived at about 8 P.M. Beautiful day—stayed there till Monday 24th, at five, when I started for Keswick. Went to Sir George Beaumont's, where I spent the remainder of the day. 25th.—Rode with Sir George, to Borrowdale and Buttermere, where we dined; returned by Newlands—saw a man descend with a sledge of skates from Howester Crag: he appeared so small, from the height of the place, that I frequently lost sight of him during his descent. Occasional showers—fine effects: charmed with the place. 26th.—Rainy morning; painted from Sir George's window. 27th.—Showery day, walked about with Sir George; went to see Southey. 28th.—Made a sketch, for Sara Coleridge's portrait. 29th.—Painted all day upon the portrait of Sara Coleridge: a drenching day, hardly ceasing to rain from ten o'clock till bed-time. Mr. Coleridge dined with Sir George. 30th.—At Keswick Church, walked afterwards to Lodore waterfall—fine day, with a few slight showers. 31st.—A very fine day: at Ormthwaite and Applethwaite—sketching all day. September 1st.—From six o'clock, A.M., till night, hardly ceased raining a minute—worse than Saturday: painted till three, on Miss Coleridge's portrait. 2nd.—Painted, from my window, Grisdale Pike—showery all day. Lord Lowther and Mr. Wordsworth at dinner. In the evening at Mr. Southey's—lightning in the evening. 3rd.—Showery day: painted, from the barn at Browtop, a view of Borrowdale. * * * 15th.—Started after breakfast from Keswick, with Mr. and

Mrs. Chantrey, for Edinburgh: slept at Langholme—rainy. 16th.—Started early, and breakfasted at Hawick; from whence went to Melrose Abbey, and afterwards to Edinburgh, where we arrived at ten P.M. * * * 20th.—Went to hear Doctor Alison in the morning; and, in the afternoon, Doctor Brunton: excellent discourses from both. 21st.—Sketching at Leith with Mr. and Mrs. Chantrey—driven home by the rain. 22nd.—Breakfasted at Rosslyn; walked from thence to Lasswade, by the river side: beautiful day. 23rd.—Walked about in the morning; got wet through, in the evening, upon Arthur's Seat. 24th.—Saw Queen Mary's apartments at Holyrood-house; dined at Raeburn's. 25th.—Sketched the Castle, and left Edinburgh at two P.M., for Keswick. * * * 28th.—Left Keswick, with Sir George and Lady Beaumont, for Ulswater: dined and slept at Mr. Marshall's. 30th.—Left Mr. Marshall's for Patterdale; dined and sketched there: after dinner set out for Wordsworth's. * * * October 3rd.—Took leave of these excellent people: walked to Ambleside with Wordsworth and his wife—sketched the mill there. * * * 5th.—Rainy morning; Wordsworth read to me: walked out before dinner—took my farewell of the Lakes; and, at ten, arrived at Kendal."

Among all the pleasant acquaintances made during this tour, none was recollected with greater pleasure, or improved with more assiduity by the painter, than that procured for him by his introduction to the late

Mr. Marshall of Leeds. While in the North, and ever afterwards, he continued to receive from that gentleman, and all the members of his family, the most unvaried kindness and attention. Many of his finest pictures are now in their possession; and many others owe their first conception to the sketches, which his visits to their mansion at Ullswater enabled him to make, amid the rarest natural beauties of the Cumberland Lakes.

It is not always that a painter finds a sketching tour productive, beyond his Art, of general intellectual benefit. This fortunate privilege was, however, enjoyed by my father throughout his excursion, of this year, to the North. Although but lately introduced to Sir George Beaumont, his acquaintance with that cultivated and amiable man speedily expanded into friendship. To sketch in his company, and in that of Wordsworth — to hear from the mouths of each the antiquarian and poetical associations connected with the scenes which the pencil portrayed, proved an addition of no slight value to the painter's professional studies; for it fortified him in the possession of the most important of the minor ingredients of success in the Art—general information. It opened to his leisure hours new sources of literary studies; and by a natural consequence, roused in his mind new trains of pictorial thought. It is to the absence of habits of reading—of frequent intercourse with the intellects of others, in a sister pursuit, that the inaptitude to originality—

the perverse reiteration, by some modern artists, of subjects discovered and exhausted by their predecessors, is to be considered in no small degree to be due. The originality of the conception is more thoroughly dependent on the novelty of the subject, than is generally imagined. A new passage in history may mould a new form of composition, and a fresh description of Nature lead to a fresh choice of scenery, more frequently and more readily than the artist may always suppose.

During the tour to the Lakes—as indeed in all other country excursions—the number of sketches made by the painter excited the surprise of all who beheld them. No obstacles of unfavourable weather, incomplete materials, intrusive spectators, or personal discomfort, ever induced him to resign the privilege of transcribing whatever objects in Nature might happen to delight his eye. His talent in forcing a large amount of labour into a small space of time, and in making the lightest and hastiest touches produce an effect of completeness and finish, insured success to his industry, and advantage to his enthusiasm. To all his works of this description an extrinsic value is attached, through his invariable practice of never placing a touch upon his sketches after he had quitted the scene they were intended to represent. What they were at the time of their original production, that they invariably remained, when stored in his portfolio, or hung round the walls of his painting-room.

On my father's return from his visit to the Lakes, his collections of drawings did not, through the carelessness of the people attached to the different conveyances, reach London with him. They were at first supposed to be lost, but were subsequently recovered. Lady Beaumont wrote to him in London upon the subject of this misfortune, and began her communication by good-naturedly rallying him upon his notorious disinclination to letter-writing. The answer she received, was as follows:

"To Lady Beaumont.

"New Cavendish-street,
"November 1st, 1818.

"Madam,—That a most indescribable helplessness overcomes me, when I am under the necessity of writing, I readily admit; but, that I am not dead to the stimulus of a letter from your ladyship, this immediate reply will, I trust, furnish an adequate proof—and the paper I sent to Coleorton, many days since, carries with it an assurance of unartistlike punctuality, which argues at least a *desire* to be a man of business.

"The recovery of my sketches, after having been separated from them for nearly a week, was a sensation amply repaying me for the three hundred miles I travelled, in a state little short of frenzy; for, notwithstanding I endeavoured to bring myself to a belief that they were not worth lamenting, still I saw them in the light of the most useful things I had ever done.

The picture I have begun from these studies is somewhat advanced; and I have the very great advantage of occasionally painting upon it Sir John's Gallery.*

"I dined with Wilkie, about a week since. He is entirely recovered; and I feel the highest gratification in saying, that all that his picture of the Scotch Wedding promised in its unfinished state has been most essentially realized—and I know not how I could say more in its praise. The depth of the tone and richness of colour are equal to Ostade. Of the characters, refined feeling, and exquisite humour, you have already a complete idea.

"I have also seen the head Jackson has painted of Mr. Smith. Of the likeness I know nothing, but do not hesitate to say that the clearness, colour, and spirit of the execution, surpass most of his other attempts.

"With my best regards to Sir George—to whom, and to your ladyship, I shall always consider myself indebted for some of the happiest moments of my life,

"I am, with great respect,
"Your Ladyship's obliged and obedient servant,
"William Collins."

Among others, to whom my father was largely indebted, at this period, for some of his most important mental acquisitions, may be mentioned the names of Washington Allston, the American painter; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet. The first of these gifted men, is principally known in England, as the painter of the noble historical pictures:—"Uriel in the Sun"—"The dead Man restored, by touching the Bones of Elijah"—"Jacob's Dream"—and others of equal merit and importance; but, he possessed poetical and literary abilities of no common order as well. To a profound and reflective intellect, he united an almost feminine delicacy of taste and tenderness of heart, which gave a peculiar charm to his conversation, and an unusual eloquence to his opinions. It was on his second visit to England, from his native country, that he became acquainted with Mr. Collins, who soon found himself united to him by the warmest friendship; and who owed to his short personal intercourse with this valued companion, not only much delightful communication on the Art, but the explanation of many religious difficulties under which his mind then laboured, and the firm settlement of those religious principles, which were afterwards so apparant in every action of his life. After a stay of some years in England, (during which, the merit of his exhibited works procured his election as an Associate, by the Royal Academy; and would, had he remained longer, have insured his election as an Academician,) Mr. Allston departed for America—never, as it afterwards proved, to leave it again. During the years of his after life, he continued to enrich the collections of his native land with some of the most admirable productions of his genius; and, when in the year 1843, he died, so widely had the influences of his gentle and admirable character extended, and so intimately had they connected themselves with the beauties of his works, that his death was mourned by all—even by those among his countrymen, who had only known him by fame—as a calamity, in which the ranks of virtue suffered as great a loss as the interests of Art.

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* This was a new commission, to which reference will be shortly made.

In a future part of this work will be inserted a letter by Mr. Collins, written on the occasion of his friend's death, and containing a just and interesting review of his character and genius. In the mean time, the following letters exchanged soon after Mr. Allston's return to America, will testify that—though both the painters were indolent correspondents—neither was forgetful, in absence, of the common dues of friendship and esteem.

"To Mr. Allston, A. R. A.,

"London, November 4th, 1818.

"Dear Allston—From my very heart's core do I congratulate you upon your election, as an Associate of the Royal Academy; a circumstance as honourable to that body as to yourself, and of which I received the gratifying intelligence yesterday. I immediately sent to Leslie, who came over, out of breath; and the news I had to communicate to him has, I believe, kept him, to a certain degree, in the same state ever since. Had you been here!—but you will come.

" And now to the fulfilment of your commission, to send all the news I can: to which end, I shall give you a succession of such events as may serve to remind you of ties you have in this country. The letter you sent me at Sir George Beaumont's, came during dinner; and I, of course, made Sir George and her ladyship acquainted with that part of it relating to themselves; if I have any knowledge of the human heart, what the two said of you was direct from that spot. May all the success we that day wished you, attend your steps!

" With the scenery of the North I am charmed; and, considering the time necessarily occupied in travelling, I have not been altogether idle. Your hints about Coleridge, I did not fail attending to. With his wife I am pleased; and his elegant daughter, Sara, I have made a painting of. She is a most interesting creature, about fifteen years of age, and the parties we occasionally form with these good people, Southey, Hartley, Coleridge, etc., I shall not soon forget.

" From Keswick I went with Chantrey to Scotland—and had this part of the world nothing but Edinburgh, it would be well worth boasting of.

" After spending ten days at Edinburgh, I returned to Sir George's; and, with himself and Lady Beaumont, visited Ullswater and Ambleside—where we stayed some days with Wordsworth, with whom

I am very much delighted; and in some of our rambles, when he could have no motive but that of gratifying his own love of truth, he left me perfectly persuaded that, among all your friends and admirers, you had not a more disinterested one than himself. The kind regards I am desired by Wordsworth, his wife, Southey and Hartley, to send to you, are testimonies of a friendship by no means common; and, therefore, will have their true weight with you. My excellent friend Leslie was, of course, faithfully at his post for nearly two months; and a more complete Major Domo I could not desire. Frank has not yet returned from Northamptonshire—Willis is in France—Stark has just returned from Norwich, and I am attempting a mountainous subject, upon a large scale; the commission I was to undertake when I last saw you. My uncle has accepted a Chaplaincy at Cape Coast Castle, four degrees north of the line; which, although a lucrative appointment, is yet, from the nature of the climate, one of considerable risk—of course we are in great agitation about him.

"Having now, at the least possible expense of style, told you so much, I have only to assure you of the warm wishes and hopes of all your friends, and (as you already know) of how much I am—my dear Allston, Yours, ever,

"William Collins."

"P.S. My mother has been unwell; but has now recovered—she desires her best regards. I shall expect a letter from you ; and I beg to remind you, that this is a sample of the quantity of *blank paper* I am desirous of.* Come *home*, and take your seat at the Lectures — have you no *esprit de corps.*

"I presented your poems to Lady Beaumont, who had never seen them; and I had the very high gratification to hear them spoken of in terms of considerable approbation, not only by her ladyship, but by Southey and Wordsworth. Southey said that, whatever defects some of them might have, he had no hesitation in saying that thay could not have proceeded from any but a poetic mind; in which sentiment he was most cordially supported by Wordsworth, who was present at the time. Fare thee well—God bless you! How did you find your mother, relations, and friends? Have you numerous commissions? Write soon—Sir George Beaumont and Wordsworth propose writing to you."

Although a little advanced in date, Mr. Allston's reply to the foregoing letter will be inserted in this place, in compliance with a rule which will be observed throughout the present work—that of making a correspondence as complete as possible by appending to letters the answers received.

"To Mr. Collins, A.R.A.

"Boston, 16th April, 1819.

"Dear Collins,—I send you a thousand thanks for your kind letter. It should have been answered before; but you, who so well know my procrastinating spirit will easily forgive the delay, especially when I assure you that I have written you at least twenty letters *in my head*, whilst I have been smoking my usual evening cigar. The only way I can account for not putting them on paper is, that they invariably ended in a reverie on past times, which, carrying me back to London, placed us opposite to each other by the fireside, with your good mother, and Frank, and Leslie between: where we have generally had so much to talk about, that, when I at last thought of leaving you, in order to write, the warning hand of my watch would silently point to the hour of bed.

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* The whole of this postscript is written on the outer page of the original, leaving little more than room enough for the superscription.

"I need not say how highly gratified I was at my election. Indeed, I was most agreeably surprised; for though I am generally sanguine, yet in this instance I had not suffered myself to calculate on success. It was, therefore, doubly welcome. To my countrymen here, who value highly all foreign honours, it seems to have given almost as much pleasure as if it had been bestowed on the country: it must, therefore, be no small aid to my professional interests. But, were it wholly useless, I should yet ever value it, as connecting me on more friendly terms with so many men of genius. If you know the members to whose good opinion I am indebted for my election, I beg you will present them my acknowledgments.

"I am pleased to find there is nothing like a French taste in Boston. A portrait by Gerard has lately been sent here, and still hangs in quiet on the walls, with no raptures to disturb it. There are few painters here, and none of eminence, except Stuart, who certainly paints an admirable portrait. There are some clever ones, however, I hear, in Philadelphia. Fisher, who was lately here, is a very promising young man; and would, I think, make a great landscape painter, if he could study in England.

"Your account of our friends at Keswick was read, as you may well suppose, with no small interest. I longed to have been with you; and, if it is lawful to be proud of praise from the wise and good, I may well be so of the esteem of such as Sir George and Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth and Southey. Perhaps it may be gratifying to Mr. Wordsworth to know that he has a great many warm admirers on this side of the Atlantic, in spite of the sneers of the *Edinburgh Review,* which, with the *Quarterly,* is reprinted and as much read here as in England. There is still taste enough amongst us to appreciate his merits. I was also pleased to find the same independence with respect to Coleridge and Southey, who are both read here and admired. You tell me to 'come back.' Alas, I fear it cannot be soon, if ever! Mr. Howard, in his letter to me, wishes to know when I shall return to England. I do not think there is any probability of my returning for many years, if ever. The engagements I have already entered into here will employ me for several years; and I have others in prospect that will probably follow them, which will occupy me as many more. Yet, should it be my lot never to revisit England, I still hope to preserve my claim, as one of the British School, by occasionally sending my pictures to London for exhibition—a claim I should be most unwilling to forego; my first studies having been commenced at the Royal Academy, and the greater part of my professional life passed in England, and among English Artists. At any rate, I may have the satisfaction of founding an English school here; and I may well stickle for it when I think of the other schools in Europe. If I ever write on the subject, I shall let them know here how much the Art owes to Sir Joshua Reynolds. By-the-by, could you procure me a copy (from Sir G. Beaumont) of the inscription for a monument to Sir Joshua, written by Wordsworth?

"Tell Chantrey that I made my report, and showed his letter to the Committee of Directors for the statue of Washington in this town; and they were highly gratified to learn that he had engaged to execute it. The Academy of New York talk of forming a Gallery of the works of some old masters, and the works of the principal living artists in England, when they shall have funds for the purpose, which I hope the State will grant.

"I did not forget to celebrate your and Mr. William Ward's birthday on board ship, and Stark's after I landed. The captain, whose father-in-law is a wine-merchant, lugged out some choice old Madeira on the occasion. I shall never forget the last evening we spent together. God bless you and yours! Remember me affectionately to your excellent mother and brother, and to Leslie and Collard, to whom I shall write very soon. I beg also to be particularly remembered to Mr. James Ward, and to Mr. Thompson, who treated me, when I last saw him, with a cordiality I shall not soon forget. Above all, present my best respects to Sir George and Lady Beaumont.

"Adieu, dear Collins, and believe me,
"Ever your friend,
"WASHINGTON ALLSTON.

"P.S.—In my next I will give you some account of what I have been and am doing; at present my paper will only allow me to say, that I have received a commission to paint a large picture for the Hospital of this town—the subject left to me."

Of the second of my father's remarkable friends, Coleridge, little need be said to an English reader. To state that from the day of his first introduction to that powerful and original poet, the painter omitted few opportunities of profiting by his extraordinary conversational powers, and that he found as many attractions in the personal character as in the poetic genius of the author of "The Ancient Mariner" would be merely to give him credit for a natural attention to his own pleasure and advantage, and an ordinary susceptibility to the pleasures of intercourse with an amiable and superior man. In subjoining the two following letters, it is therefore only necessary to remark, by way of explanation, that the portrait of the poet's daughter, referred to in both, is identical with the picture mentioned in Mr. Collins's Diary, and also in his letter to Allston.

"To W. Collins, Esq., A.R.A.

"Highgate, 1818.

"Dear Sir,—Do me the favour of accepting the inclosed tickets.* I flatter myself that the first course will prove far more generally interesting and even entertaining, than the title is, in the present state of men's minds, calculated to make believed; if this cause should not preclude the trial, by preventing even a tolerable number of auditors. The misfortune is, that, with few friends in any rank or line of life, I have almost none in that class whose patronage would be most important to me as a lecturer.

"Your exquisite *picture* of Sara Coleridge (which, from my recollecting it under the supposed impossibility of its being so intended—as Mr. Leslie had never seen her—I must suppose to be no less valuable as a *portrait*) has quite haunted my eye ever since. Taken as a mere fancy piece, it is long since I have met with a work of Art that has so much delighted me. If I described it as the union of simplicity with refinement, I should still be dissatisfied with the description—for refinement seems to express an after act, a something superinduced. *Natural fineness* would be more appropriate. Your landscape, too, is as exquisite in its correspondence with the figure as it is delightful to the eye, in itself.

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* Tickets of admission to Mr. Coleridge's first course of Lectures were enclosed in the above letter.

" My friends, Mr. and Mrs. Gillman, desire their kind remembrances to you, and I remain, dear Sir, with sincere respect,

" Your obliged,

" S. T. COLERIDGE."

"To S. T. COLERIDGE, ESQ.

" Dec. 6th, 1818.

"Dear Sir,—For some months past I have indulged the hope of visiting Highgate. I should have done so immediately on my return from the north, had I not waited for Leslie's arrival in town, by whom I had resolved to send the picture of your amiable daughter. Coming at an unprejudiced opinion respecting the resemblance, I feel much flattered by your approbation of it.

" That I have, since that period, failed to deliver to you the kind regards I was charged with from our friends at Keswick and Ambleside must be attributed to the shortness of the days, and to somewhat of a disposition to procrastinate. I trust, however, I shall ere long have the pleasure of your conversation. For the tickets of admission to your lectures I send my sincere thanks. Would I could bring such an audience as you deserve, and that for their own sakes. With my best regards to Mr. and Mrs. Gillman,

"I am, dear Sir, with great respect and esteem,
"Yours faithfully,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

In adding to the above correspondence the subjoined letter from Coleridge, I am aware that (though it is apparently not directly connected with this Memoir) the patient and dignified sentiments, and the eloquent outbreak of warm and tender feelings, suffering under the chilling visitation of undeserved neglect which it exhibits, would of themselves make it of sufficient interest to demand insertion here; but this remarkable communication has a certain positive claim to introduction into the present work, inasmuch as the recommendation conveyed in it to the study of Herbert's Poems, which my father immediately followed, was the first cause of the conception, some years afterwards, of one of his most admired works, the picture of "Sunday Morning."

"To W. COLLINS, ESQ., A.R.A.

"Highgate, Dec. 1818.

"My dear Sir,—I at once comply with, and thank you for, your request to have some prospectuses. God knows I have so few friends, that it would be unpardonable in me not to feel proportionably grateful towards those few who think the time not wasted in which they interest themselves in my behalf.

There is an old Latin adage,—' Vis videri pauper, et pauper es,'—Poor you profess yourself to be, and poor therefore you are, and will remain. The prosperous feel only with the prosperous, and if you subtract from the whole sum of their feeling for all the gratifications of vanity, and all their calculations of *lending to the Lord*, both of which are best answered by conferring the superfluity of their superfluities on advertised and advertisable distress—or on such as are known to be in all respects their inferiors—you will have, I fear, but a scanty remainder. All this is too true ; but then, what is that man to do whom no distress can bribe to swindle or deceive ; who cannot reply as Theophilus Cibber did to his father Colley Cibber, (who, seeing him in a rich suit of clothes whispered to him as he passed, 'THE'! THE'! I pity thee!') 'Pity me! pity my tailor.'

" Spite of the decided approbation which my plan of delivering lectures has received from several judicious and highly respectable individuals, it is still too histrionic, too much like a retail dealer in instruction and pastime, not to be depressing. If the duty of living were not far more awful to my conscience than life itself is agreeable to my feelings, I should sink under it. But, getting nothing by my publications, which I have not the power of making estimable by the public without loss of self-estimation, what can I do? The few who have won the present age, while they have secured the praise of posterity,—as, Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Southey, Lord Byron, etc., have been in happier circumstances. And lecturing is the only means by which I can enable myself to go on at all with the great philosophical work to which the best and most genial hours of the last twenty years of my life have been devoted. Poetry is out of the question. The attempt would only hurry me into that sphere of acute feelings, from which abstruse research, the mother of self-oblivion, presents an asylum. Yet sometimes, spite of myself, I cannot help bursting out into the affecting exclamation of our Spenser, (his 'wine' and 'ivy garland' interpreted as competence and joyous circumstances,)—

'Thou kenn'st not, Percy, how the rhyme should rage!
  Oh if my temples were bedewed with wine,
  And girt with garlands of wild ivy-twine,
How I could rear the Muse on stately stage!
  And teach her tread aloft in buskin fine,
With queen'd Bellona in her equipage—
  But ah, my courage cools ere it be warm! * * *'

"But God's will be done. To feel the full force of the Christian religion, it is perhaps necessary, for many tempers, that they should first be made to feel, experimentally, the hollowness of human friendship, the presumptuous emptiness of human hopes. I find more substantial comfort, now, in pious George Herbert's 'Temple,' which I used to read to amuse myself with his quaintness—in short, only to laugh at—than in all the poetry, since the poems of Milton. If you have not read Herbert, I can recommend the book to you confidently. The poem entitled 'The

Flower,' is especially affecting; and, to me, such a phrase as, 'and relish versing,' expresses a sincerity, a reality, which I would unwillingly exchange for the more dignified, 'and once more love the Muse,' &c. And so, with many other of Herbert's homely phrases.

"We are all anxious to hear from, and of, our excellent transatlantic friend.* I need not repeat that your company, with or without our friend Leslie, will gratify

"Your sincere,
"S. T. Coleridge."

During his tour to the North, one of the painter's objects was to collect materials for a picture he had been desired to paint by the late Sir J. F. Leicester—afterwards Lord de Tabley—to whose liberality and enthusiasm, as a patron of modern Art, too much praise cannot be accorded. On my father's return to London, his first employment was to commence the execution of this commission—to which slight reference has been already made in a note at a former page. The work was to be of the same size as one by Wilson, to which it was to hang as a pendent in Sir John's Gallery. The compliment to his powers and reputation, implied in this honourable comparison, was deeply felt by Mr. Collins, who laboured on his subject—a landscape with figures—

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* Mr. Allston.

with even more than his usual care and industry, in order to deserve the flattering confidence that had been reposed in his abilities. When his work had made some progress towards completion, Sir John Leicester forwarded his first opinion of it to the painter, in the following letter.

To W. Collins, Esq., A.R.A.

December 6th, 1818.

"Dear Sir,—With the warmest wish for your advancement as an ornament of the British School, and hoping by my frankness, in the present instance, to conduce to your reputation and promote your best interests, I avail myself of my view of the picture yesterday, in its present state, to express my apprehensions that the class of subject which you have selected, although so congenial to your taste and general style, will not enable you to display your genius against so formidable a pendent as the Wilson, to as much advantage as I think you could, on a subject of fewer parts, and more simplicity and breadth in the masses. What strikes me as the feature most likely to operate against you in the comparison is, that his picture has but few objects, and those are largely treated, and the grandeur of his colouring consists in its sobriety and harmony. The landscape which would form a fit companion for his must partake of this magnificent character without servility or imitation.

"I offer these plain thoughts to your better judgment as an artist, with a reliance on your candid allowance. I am confident that your wish is to meet the public favourably, and to give me satisfaction; and you may assure yourself that my most earnest desire is to see your genius fully displayed and fully appreciated. I know you would be concerned were I to suppress what I think, on an occasion where my openness may be for your benefit; and I therefore leave it to your own choice, either to proceed and finish the picture for me, and send it, if you please, to the Exhibition at Somerset House, as it might not fulfil all our expectations opposed to the Wilson in my Gallery; or, as you have ten weeks yet, if you will, (having a compensation for what you have done on the present picture,) begin another with fewer parts and more simplicity, you will no doubt have it finished in time.

"The sketch which I saw and admired yesterday will, I think, with your powers, place you on a much higher ground of competition with Wilson. * *

"I remain, dear sir,
"Yours truly,
"J. F. Leicester."

To this somewhat perplexing communication for the artist, Mr. Collins thus replied:

"Dec. 16th, 1818.

"Sir,—I know no event of my professional life attended with so unpleasant a result as the one upon which you have written to me this day.

"With the most gentlemanlike regard for my feelings as a man, and a solicitude for my reputation as an artist, you have thrown me into a situation from which I must confess my utter inability to extricate myself,—each of your proposals being so entirely impracticable. That a picture unfit to hang with a Wilson should yet have nothing to fear upon a comparison with the works of living artists at Somerset House, (notwithstanding the very high estimation I feel of Wilson's powers) is a reflection upon the painters of this day to which I can never subscribe.

"Respecting the other proposal.—When I take the liberty to assure you that my present picture engrossed my thoughts during the whole of my tour in the north; that the principal sketches I made there were done with a reference to this work; that I have already been actually engaged upon it for nearly two months; and that I have also put aside many considerable and lucrative commissions, which it would be highly imprudent longer to neglect, solely for the purpose of availing myself of an opportunity of painting upon a larger scale, I trust you will see the futility of my attempting to complete another picture, either by February, or for some time to come.

"I remain, Sir,
"Your most obedient servant,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

Further correspondence and explanations upon this subject ensued, before Sir John Leicester found reason to change his opinion. Ultimately, however—as might be conjectured from the candour, delicacy, and liberality, displayed by the patron, and from the firmness and courtesy preserved by the painter, throughout the correspondence of which the above was the commencement—the picture was placed in the position in the Gallery originally intended for it. The scene of this production (which was never exhibited) is laid in Cumberland. The middle distance is occupied by a mill, peculiar to that country—the stream from which winds smoothly onward, until it dashes out, into the foreground, over rocks, stones and brambles, that intercept it, to the left hand, in its course. To the right, some villagers approach the spectator down a mountain path, overshaded by a large tree. Around the mill, and partly behind it, the summer foliage waves in thick and various clusters; while beside and beyond it, the open country—lake, plain, and river—stretches smoothly and shadily onward to the far mountains that close the distant view. The sky is at one point charged with showery vapour, at another varied by light, large clouds—tinged at their tips with a soft, mellow light, and floating lazily on the brighter atmosphere whose transparency they partly veil. The tone of colour pervading this picture was pure, deep and harmonious—it was considered by all who saw it to be one of the painter's most elaborate and successful works.

To the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1819, my father contributed two pictures: — "Portraits of Lords Charles and Thomas Pelham Clinton," painted for the Duke of Newcastle, and a new sea-piece, painted for the Earl of Liverpool, entitled "Fishermen on the Look Out." This picture is beautifully engraved by Phelps. It displays, throughout, that bold and successful simplicity, which at once strikes the eye as natural and true. On an eminence in the foreground of the picture, stands a fisherman, with his back to the spectator, looking through his telescope towards the distant horizon. By his side a lad reclines on the ground; and, at his feet sits a dog, looking up inquiringly into his master's face. The beach stretches beyond, through the rest of the picture, with its native accompaniments of distant figures, and fishing boats, while still further, smooth and brilliant beneath the morning sun, lies the peaceful ocean on which the fisherman's attention is fixed. In solemn, true, and vigorous "*chiar-oscuro*" and in the poetical composition of the sky— in that power of presenting original and faithful combinations of atmosphere and cloud, for which, in Wilkie's opinion, his friend stood unmatched among his contemporaries — this picture surpasses all its predecessors. The pure harmony of the sky seems to shed an influence of Elysian repose over the rest of the scene, the sentiment of which is at once aided and reflected by the still, contemplative attitudes of the figures, and the deep shadows that appear to steal, at intervals, over the expanse of the distant beach.

As it is a remarkable fact that Mr. Collins's pictures, from the earliest dates, are still in as perfect a state of preservation, as regards colour and surface, as on the day when they were first painted, an extract from his Diary of 1819, mentioning incidentally a few of the mechanical aids to painting which he then adopted, may not be uninteresting—at least to such readers as happen to be intimately connected with the Arts:

"10th February, 1819. Lost my election at the Academy by one vote; Hilton chosen. Sent home, after having made considerable alterations, the large landscape to Sir John's Gallery, with a letter containing my sentiments upon this most unhappy commission. 23rd.—Took up my new subject—'Fishermen on the Look Out,' which I had previously painted upon during one morning. 'The Harvest Shower' has been purchased by Mr. Currie at one hundred guineas. 'Fishermen on the Look Out,' is painted entirely in copal, thinned with turpentine, without wax. From 23rd February, to 5th April, painted upon 'Fishermen on the Look Out;' I believe in all about thirteen days; also upon the picture of the 'Twin Sons' of the Duke of Newcastle, about ten—a few days in October, and many at Clumber. April 5th.—Began the portraits of Master Cecil and Miss Fanny Boothby. 12th.—Began a 'three-quarter' of the 'Fisherman's Return' (in linseed oil, boiled with copal varnish — copal varnish in the colours, as a dryer), upon an unprimed cloth.* 13th and 14th.—Finished Mrs. Gurney's portrait. 15th.—Began a copy of Lord Radstock's Rembrandt, and a river scene for Mrs. Hand, in copal varnish. 16th.—Went to Coombe Wood to finish the heads in Lady Liverpool's picture of the 'Boothby Children.' 18th.—Returned from Coombe Wood. 19th.—Began a portrait of the Duchess of Newcastle—the face in copalled oil, the other parts in copal varnish. Engaged as above, until 20th May, at which time I had painted about six days, or rather, *times*, upon the Boothby Children, and about sixteen ditto, on the portrait of the Duchess of Newcastle—painting at the Academy, viewing Galleries, and sundry idle days making the balance. 'Fishermen on the Look Out' when at the Academy, I rubbed over with copalled oil, which I wiped as nearly off as I could. 8th, 9th, 10th, 18th, and 19th. — Making alterations upon the never-to-be-done-with picture at Sir John's. Sketch of Boothby Children, begun 29th March. 1st April. — Varnished the whole thickly in copal and finished it in the same."

In the autumn of this year, Mr. Collins explored, for the first time, the scenery—coast and inland—of Devonshire. That he found in this tour many materials for extending his Art and increasing his variety of subjects, will be perceived in the list of his works yet to be enumerated. His progress and impressions, during his journey, will be found hastily indicated in the following extracts from his letters:

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* It may perhaps be necessary to inform the unprofessiona reader, that a "three quarter" is a term indicating the size of a particular canvass, and an "unprimed cloth," a canvass, the surface of which is unprepared with the usual preliminary covering of white paint and size.

"To Mrs. Collins.

"Dartmouth, 26th Aug., 1819.

"My dear Mother,—As it is probable I shall stay with Mr. Holdsworth long enough to receive a letter from you, I take the opportunity afforded me of sending a few lines. I am most comfortably situated here, close to the sea, in the house of a sincere and unaffected English gentleman, through whose knowledge of the scenery of this neighbourhood, I am enabled to see much more of the place than under other circumstances I could have expected. Brockedon is with us. I am writing with the sun shining on the sea before me, and this must be an excuse for not sending you a long letter."

"Plymouth, Sept. 19th, 1819.

"* * * I left Dartmouth and Widdicombe, Mr. Holdsworth's houses, about a week ago; and I purpose leaving this place for Birham, Sir W. Elford's, where I yesterday paid a visit, and where I shall remain a few days, and then proceed to Totness, Teignmouth, Sidmouth, and that neighbourhood, from whence I go to Frome. * * * I have just returned from Plympton, the birthplace of the immortal Sir Joshua Reynolds, and of which town he was mayor. I have made a sketch of the town and church, from a field at a little distance, and I prize it much on this great man's account."

"Frome, 3rd Oct., 1819.

"* * * Since I wrote to you last I have visited some of the vale scenery of Devon, which is exceedingly beautiful. From Plymouth I went to the river Dart, which I had great pleasure in tracing for many miles on foot. I then proceeded to Torquay, Babbicombe, Teignmouth, Dawlish, and Sidmouth, where I finished my coast tour, and arrived, after sundry buffetings, on Friday evening, at Mr. Shephards's, since which time I have been delightfully engaged in visiting the beautiful scenes with which this neighbourhood appears to abound; and although it is somewhat inferior to Devon, it is very excellent of its class.

"The weather, during my tour, has been exceedingly favourable, and, although showery at present, is still rich in the produce of picturesque light and shadow. * * * And now for 'the rub;'—I am worth, in the current coin of the realm, four of our smallest but one medallions! I shall therefore come upon my London bankers for two five-pound notes, the first halves of which I trust you will see the propriety of sending by return of post. * * *

It is too late now to write a longer and better letter, so you must take this with all its faults, as you must the writer, knowing, however, how much he is your affectionate son,

"W. Collins."

In the February of the next year, 1820, having, as will have been perceived by his Diary, lost his election in 1819 by one vote only, the painter gained the reward of much labour, and the compensation for many anxieties, by being chosen a Royal Academician.

Few elections were ever made more completely to the satisfaction of the profession and the public than this. Mr. Collins had now, for a series of years, exhibited works which had stood amongst the foremost attractions of the Academy walls. He had displayed in his choice, treatment, and variety of subject, a genius and originality which had won for him not only the hearty approval of patrons and friends, but of the public at large. Viewed under any circumstances, the honour which he had just received was his undoubted due; and it was not more gladly conferred than gratefully and delightedly acknowledged. To a man whose powers, hopes, and efforts were bound up in his profession, whose darling object was to assist his brethren in raising it to its highest dignity and noblest possible position; whose enthusiasm for his arduous calling lived through all the privations of his early years, and all the bodily suffering that darkened his closing life, this testimony from his fellow-painters of their appreciation of his genius and their approval of his efforts, produced no transitory satisfaction, and was hailed as no common honour. But it had yet a tenderer and a deeper interest than lay in its promise of wider reputation, and its incentive to higher ambition. It brought with it the recollection of the old boyish studio in Portland-street,—of the hard labour and crushing failures of those early days of imperfect skill,—of the gay prediction of future Academic honours, and the cheerful confidence that he should live to witness them himself, with which his father had then cheered him through all obstacles,—and of the bereavement which now, when the honours had really arrived, now, when the "poor author's" favourite day-dream had brightened at last into reality and truth, made that father absent from the family board, and voiceless for ever among the rejoicings of the domestic circle!

CHAPTER II.

1820—1822.

Remarks—Pictures of 1820—Notice of John Constable, R.A.—Pictures of 1821—Tribulations of a new Academician—Curious address to the Academy Hanging Committee—Election at the Dulwich Picture Gallery—Letter to Mrs. Collins—Reflections—Letter to Mr. Joseph—Projected marriage and visit to Scotland—Pictures of 1822—Notice, illustrated by Mr. Collins's anecdotes, of Sir David Wilkie—Journey to Edinburgh, during the visit of George the Fourth—Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott and Sir Adam Ferguson—Design of painting the King's landing at Leith—Letters to Mrs. Collins—Visit to Blair Adam—Joint production of a sketch by Wilkie and Collins—Progress of the painter's marriage engagement—Letters to Miss Geddes and Mrs. Collins—Marriage—Anecdote of the Rev. Doctor Alison.

HAVING traced the progress of Mr. Collins in the preceding chapter up to the attainment of one of the great objects of his professional life, his election as a Royal Academician, it may not be irrelevant or uninstructive, to revert for a moment to the contemplation of some of the causes by which his success as a painter was produced.

It has, I trust, been already demonstrated by his Letters and Journals, and by the remarks that have accompanied them, that ardent as was his devotion to his pursuit, it did not so wholly engross his mind, as to leave it unfitted for watchfulness over his moral, as well as his intellectual advancement. From his earliest days of apprenticeship to the Art, his ambition to acquire renown as a painter was never stronger than his desire to preserve uprightness as a man. This guiding principle of his character cannot be too strongly impressed upon those, who are as yet but setting out on the toilsome journey from the porch to the penetralia of Art; for it offers to them, not a circumstance of biographical interest only, but a practical example and encouragement as well. If the circumstances attending the progress of the subject of these pages through the difficulties of his early career be generally reviewed, it will be found that he triumphed over none of the obstacles that beset him by the aid of his genius alone, but by the additional strength and elevation acquired by those higher qualities of personal character which it was his life's aim to form, and which shielded his intellectual powers against the bitterest enemies that could assail them,—poverty and neglect. His religious dependence on the saving influence of a right performance of his practical duties, as aiding to produce a happy result from his intellectual exertions, never abandoned, because it never deceived him. It nerved his mind to labour on, when distress sank heavy on his household, and his experience of his neglected efforts might well have bid him despair; its effect on his outward bearing and character raised up for him a friend in his extremity, in the person of Sir Thomas Heathcote: its influence preserved his genius, which it had sustained to success, from over-confidence; and strengthening it in its humility, matured it safely in the final completeness to which it was its privilege to attain: and, lastly, as inclining him to receive cordially the opinions of others, it raised him in the esteem of his professional brethren; and, as constantly presiding over the production of his works, in the honest elaboration of their design and execution, and in the conscientious equality of attention given to their slightest as to their most important divisions, it preserved his faculties throughout his career from the danger of being weakened by carelessness, or misdirected by caprice.

These remarks may appear to delay unnecessarily the progress of this Memoir, but they are suggested by the great truth which the career of Mr. Collins illustrates,—that the powers of the mind, however brilliant, are never too elevated to be aided by the moral virtues of the character; and that between the aims of the intellect and the discipline of the disposition, it is intended that there should exist an all-important connexion, which the pride of genius may easily sever, but which the necessities of genius are never enabled to spare.

On now returning to the regular course of the narrative, my father's pictures contributed to the Academy Exhibition of 1820 first claim attention. They were; "Portraits of Master Cecil and Miss Fanny Boothby," painted for the Earl of Liverpool; "A Capstern at work, drawing up Fishing Boats;"

and "A River Scene—Cottage Girl buying Fish." In compliance with the rule of the Academy, that each Academician shall, on his election, present the institution with a specimen of his talents, he also painted this year what is called the "diploma picture." This work displays an extraordinary combination of deep tone and agreeable breadth, with minuteness, incident, and detail. It simply represents two boys fishing; but the water and foliage in the foreground, and the expression and position of the figures, with the village and trees in the distance, are all painted with that skill, industry, and nature, which give to subjects of this description a peculiar importance and charm. This picture was one of those exhibited after the painter's death at the British Institution, among the works of the old masters. In reference to his other productions this year publicly displayed on the Academy walls, it may not be uninteresting to observe, that the "River Scene," for which he received a hundred and fifty guineas, produced at the sale of its possessor's property, (the late Mrs. Hand,) two hundred and thirty guineas. It was a tranquil inland scene, the first fruit of his journey to Devonshire, delicately treated, and wrought to a high degree of finish. The "Cottage Girl" stands with a child, bargaining with a fisherman, on a wooden jetty at the left hand side of the picture. At the right, fishing boats are moored in the river, which winds onward past hill, village, and wood, until it is lost in the distance. Of the sea-piece, ("Capstern at work, etc.,) painted for Sir Thomas Heathcote, and much admired at the time as a new success for the painter in his most popular style, I am not enabled to furnish a particular description. These pictures are thus noticed in my father's Journals:

"14th Dec., 1819.—" I began a coast scene, with fishermen hauling up boats, etc., for Sir Thomas Heathcote. Painted upon this picture until the first of January, when I went to Lord Liverpool's at Coombe Wood, for a few days. Returned on the 5th, and, from the 6th to the 28th, again employed on it, when I began a picture of the same size for Mrs. Hand. Sir Thomas Heathcote's picture is painted in linseed oil and turpentine, and macguilph made of the shook-up drying oil and mastic varnish, with gold size, in the slow dryers. Chrome yellow and orange, (Field's,) and cobalt, (French,) used occasionally. * * * Painted upon Sir Thomas Heathcote's picture until the 8th February, when I took up Mrs. Hand's, upon which and the sketch I had occasionally spent a few days, both during the progress of Sir Thomas's commission, and frequently before I began it. Mrs. Hand's picture was finished on the 3rd of April; upon this I worked more diligently than usual, though by no means so industriously as I ought to have done. This picture is painted, in all respects, with the same material as Sir Thomas Heathcote's, excepting the use of chromes; of the yellow chrome I believe hardly a touch, and very little indeed of the orange chrome, (Field's,) and that mixed with other colours.

"Without pretending to be quite correct, and without reference to my habit of occasionally devoting a few days, at sundry times, to arranging my composition on the large canvass, and of course excepting the time, whether long or short, devoted to the original sketch or sketches, I purpose setting down, (when I can do so,) the actual time consumed upon each of my pictures.

"Sir Thomas Heathcote's picture of a 'Capstern at work,' began 14th December, finished 8th February; deducting five days for absence from home, was painted in about seven weeks.

"Mrs. Hand's picture of 'A River Scene—Cottage Girl buying Fish,' begun 8th February, finished 3rd April; was painted in about the same time,—or rather, the days having much increased in length, this picture has had more time bestowed on it. * * *

"* * * 1820. May 1st.—Went to Bayham Abbey, for the purpose of sketching at the fête given in honour of the coming of age of Lord Brecknock, (May 2nd.) 3rd. Returned with Mr. Watson Taylor and Sir Henry Hardinge."

The result of the visit above mentioned to the seat of Lord Camden, was a picture, exhibited in 1822, of the birth-day fête. Later in the autumn of this year, (1820,) I find the painter, by the following letter, visiting Lord Liverpool at Walmer Castle; and afterwards extending his visit to Chichester and the southern coast.

"To Mrs. Collins.

"Walmer Castle, 1820.

"My dear Mother,—As I shall stay here until Monday evening, or, it is possible, till Tuesday, and consequently not arrive in London as soon as I had purposed, I write to beg you will send me a few lines by return of post, telling me whether by this latter plan, I shall be too late for any engagements you may have made for me in the way of business. I write this in great haste, as I am very busy sketching. I am, thank God, quite well and happy. Lord Liverpool will leave us on Sunday evening. His lordship will probably take some of my sketches to town with him. He will send them, if he does so, to you; but I am not quite certain whether I shall have them dry enough by Sunday." * * *

"Rye, Aug. 14th, 1820.

"Lord Camden will bring the sketch I made of the Abbey to town, as it was not sufficiently dry to be removed when I left him. Should my presence in any way be useful at home, I can return immediately. I find little here, or at Winchelsea, to sketch. I am, however, not quite idle; and, consequently, not quite miserable." * * *

"Little Hampton, Sept. 14th, 1820.

"I trust I shall escape the *beauties*, so 'flat, stale, and unprofitable,' of this neighbourhood in a few hours, when I shall have reached Arundel, from whence I propose proceeding to Bognor, Chichester, and home. Unless Bognor affords more substantial matter for the pencil I shall soon leave it; and, in that case, probably reach London on Saturday evening. Frank has lost nothing by not joining me, and if I find any place worth his visiting, I will write again. * * *

"Yours affectionately,

"WILLIAM COLLINS."

In this year the painter suffered the sudden loss of two relatives, an uncle and a cousin. His father's brother, the Rev. James Collins, accompanied by his son, had, more than a year previously, departed for Sierra Leone; the former as chaplain to the British factory, the latter in some other official situation. Both, after a sojourn of short duration on the scene of their new duties, sunk under the pestilential climate of the place—the son receiving the first intimation of the father's death by hearing the digging of his grave under the bedroom-window where he then lay, sick and exhausted himself.

Among Mr. Collins's professional friends, at this period, the name of John Constable, R.A., the landscape painter, must not be omitted. As original as a man as he was as an artist, his innocent and simple life contrasting strangely with his marked and eccentric character, Constable possessed unusual claims to the friendship of one, who, like my father, was connected with the same branch of Art as himself. An intimacy soon established itself between them; and, to a student of character, few more welcome companions than Constable could have been selected. He possessed a capacity for dry, sarcastic humour, which incessantly showed itself in his conversation; and which, though sometimes perhaps too personal in its application, was never false in its essence, and rarely erroneous in its design. Although occasionally a little tinctured by that tendency to paradox, which appears an inherent quality in the mental composition of men of strong individual genius, his opinions on Art were searching, comprehensive, and direct, and were often as felicitously illustrated as they were boldly advanced. I am here, however, trenching upon ground already well occupied: the character and genius of this admirable and original painter have become a public possession, through the medium of Mr. Leslie's interesting narrative of his life and labours. During the progress of that work, my father thus wrote to the author upon the subject of Constable; noticing, it will be observed, those sportive sallies, remembered with delight by his friends, but too private in their nature and too personal in their interest to be confided with advantage to the world:

"I have been cudgelling my brains on the subject of the Constable anecdotes, and the result is the recollection of a number of good things, calculated, alas! only for table-talk among friends. This, as I told you, I feared would be the case. The great charm of our lamented friend's conversation upon Art, was not only its originality but its real worth, and the evidence it afforded of his heartfelt love of his pursuit, independent of any worldly advantages to be obtained from it. I mentioned to you his admirable remarks upon the composition of a picture, namely, that its parts were all so necessary to it as a whole, that it resembled a sum in arithmetic, take away or add the smallest item, and it must be wrong. His observations, too, on *chiaroscuro* were all that could be made on that deep subject. How rejoiced I am to find that so many of the great things he did will at last be got together, for the benefit of future students!"

In the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1821, my father's pictures were,—"A Scene in Borrowdale, Cumberland," "Dartmouth, Devon," and "Morning on the Coast of Kent." He also sent to the British Institution, in the same year, one small contribution, entitled "The Bird Trap." The first of these pictures was a beautiful combination of mountain landscape and figures, fresh and graceful in colour and treatment; it was painted for Mr. William Marshall. The second, a clear, varied scene, finely diversified in its different parts, was painted for Mr. Phillimore Hicks. The third, a bright, delicate sea-piece, the largest of the artist's pictures of the year, was painted for Mr. Jesse Watts Russell, M.P. "The

Bird Trap," a rustic scene, representing two cottage boys setting their trap, was made the subject of a mezzotinto engraving, on a small scale; which preserves much of the softness and delicacy of the original work.

Of all the Exhibitions at the Royal Academy with which the painter had been connected, that of 1821 was attended with the greatest anxiety and doubt that had ever tried his patience or perplexed his fancy; for in this year he incurred, as the new Academician, the ungracious duty of making one of the Committee appointed to hang the pictures at the annual Exhibition. It may not be uninteresting to the general reader to describe some of the tribulations attached to this difficult office; tribulations which are doubly felt by those who find themselves exposed to their share of them for the first time. From this moment they discover that one of the privileges attaching to their new dignity, is that of encountering the enmity of no inconsiderable portion of their profession at large. For, when it is considered that the average number of pictures which the Royal Academy has space enough to exhibit seldom amounts to more than two-thirds of the number of pictures sent to it for exhibition,—that out of those exhibited works certainly not more than one-third, from the natural construction of rooms, can be honoured with convenient and conspicuous places,—and that, of these two classes of the unfortunate, the discarded and the indifferently hung, there are probably not a dozen individuals who do not labour under the most insurmountable conviction that their maltreated production is the finest work of its class that can be produced,—the amount of anger, disappointment and despair inherited by the "Hanging Committee" will not be easily calculated. None but those personally acquainted with the perilous process of publishing to the world the yearly achievements of contemporary Art, can rightly estimate the difficulties and fatigues of the task. The preliminary processes of accepting and rejecting are but "prologues to the swelling act." To give each picture its due position as regards place and light, to hang no pictures near each other but such as in tone and colour harmonize with, or agreeably contrast each other; to attend to the just claims of the members, while exercising strict impartiality towards the merits of the general exhibitors, to make such an arrangement as shall please the critics in its component and combined parts, and attract the public by the variety of its materials and the universality of its interest; are some of the labours attempted each year by the Committee,—labours involving doubts, which a synod of ancient philosophers might vainly endeavour to solve, and producing difficulties, in comparison with which the cleansing of the Augean stable must be viewed as the morning's amusement of a crossing-sweeper or a groom!

The length of time occupied by this more than Herculean task is three weeks; after which, the new Academician is not unfrequently startled by the following collateral phenomena, informing him as eloquently as a visit to the Institution itself, that the Exhibition has at last opened to the public:—He goes into the street, meets an artist whom he knows intimately, stretches out to him the hand of unconscious friendship, and is welcomed by a lofty look and a passing bow. This artist is disgusted with the position of his picture. Sad and sorry, he passes on,—ventures, perhaps, within the walls of the Academy itself,—pauses opposite a picture of some merit placed in an admirable situation, and is joined by a friend, (not a professional friend this time.) "Ah," says the latter, "grand work that; painted by a relation of mine, but it has been shockingly treated. Look at that picture by the side of it,—it absolutely kills it! He says it is all *your* doing, that *you* are jealous of his talent, and have done it on purpose, and so forth. Of course I tried to pacify him, but it was of no use: he is talking about it everywhere. Great acquaintance, you know—quite thick with the aristocracy—may do you some harm, I'm afraid. Sorry—very sorry—wish you had taken more pains about him. Good morning." Irritated and disappointed, our new Academician goes off sulkily to dine at his club; and, taking up the paper, finds in it a critique upon the Exhibition. All is praise and congratulation until his own works fall under review, and on these sarcasm and abuse descend with crushing severity. He looks round indignantly, and becomes aware of the presence of a literary friend at the next table, who has been lazily watching him over his pint of Marsala for the last half-hour. Greetings, propinquity, explanations ensue. The literary friend's attention is directed to the criticism. He reads it coolly all through, from beginning to end; and then observes, that it was only yesterday that he saw a friend of his, an artist, who had heard that his water-colour portrait of an officer had been placed in the wrong light in the miniature-room, who had ascribed this indignity to the meddling spirit and utter incapacity of the new Academician, and who had gone off to his brother, who was a great critic, "in fact, altogether a very talented fellow—quite enthusiastic about all his relations," and had prompted him to forget his usual impartiality, and write down the new Academician's pictures in revenge. The junior member of the "Hanging Committee" stays not to hear more, but goes home in despair. On his table he finds several letters,—most of them in unknown handwritings. These he opens first; they are anonymous epistles, varying in style, from the abruptly insolent to the elaborately sarcastic. This last visitation of injury proceeds from a cause more deplorable than any hitherto enumerated; the authorship of the anonymous letters being attributable to those modern Raphaels and Michael Angelos whose pictures have been utterly turned out!

Such are some of the tribulations which Academic "flesh is heir to." For Mr. Collins, the task of assisting in the arrangement of the pictures was one which his extreme delicacy of feeling and great anxiety to be at once merciful and just, rendered of no ordinary difficulty and fatigue. Notwithstanding his solicitude at all times to fulfil his duties in the gentlest possible manner, the most satisfactory evidence that he inherited his due share of the persecutions above enumerated appears among his papers in the shape of letters and petitions,—some anonymous and some signed; some exceedingly insolent and some deplorably lachrymose. In addition to these, a few memorials have been found, addressed to the Hanging Committee of the Academy generally, one of which, emanating from an amateur artist, dated 1821, and consequently inferentially including Mr. Collins in its animadversions, is so unique a specimen of mock humility and disappointed self-conceit; and is, moreover, expressed with such a wonderfully romantic fervour of language, that I cannot resist the temptation of extracting it for the reader's amusement; merely premising that the different names appearing in it will be concealed, in order to avoid the remotest possibility of giving personal offence to any one.

The remonstrance, or memorial, begins as follows:

"TO THE HANGING COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

"1821.

"Gentlemen,—If, in the following lines, any expression which may in the slightest degree be construed into a want of respect to the Academy shall escape me, I must beg of you to lay it to the score of inadvertence only, and not to an intentional wish to offend, as everything of the kind is, I assure you, furthest from my thoughts. I declare, upon my honour, that I do not know the name of any one single person, out of the eight who compose the Hanging Committee (as I understand it to be called) for the year. Nothing, therefore, of a personal nature towards any individual among you, can possibly be laid to my charge.

"I have been in the habit, for the last fourteen years successively, of sending some specimens of my humble performance to your annual Exhibition, and I know, from various members of the Academy, that my pictures have been willingly received. Mr. ——, Mr. ——, Mr. ——, Mr. ——, etc., have all of them, in the strongest terms, been pleased to express to me their approbation, nay, even their praise, and these are not men to flatter. Perhaps, however, a still greater proof, (or, what at least ought to be so considered,) of the favourable reception which my pictures have obtained, is, that they have on various occasions been placed in the 'Great Room,'—yes, in the very best situations in that room!

"This year I sent up two small pictures, (they are little, very little ones,) in the hope that one of them, at least, might get a moderately good place. As I did not think them inferior to my former attempts, (such is my own opinion,) there seemed nothing unreasonable in my indulging an expectation at once so pleasing to myself and so gratifying to my friends.

"In consequence of a severe illness, I have been hitherto disappointed in my annual visit to Somerset-house; but what think you, gentlemen, must be my disappointment, at being informed by my friends that my pictures are '*shaved down to the ground,*' in the inner room, and consequently seen to the greatest possible disadvantage. To judge indeed from their report, a much worse situation, I conceive, could not easily have been assigned to them.

"Now, Gentlemen, I appeal to yourselves, is this handsome? Is this considerate? Is this just? I will answer for you; such a proceeding is no less unbecoming to yourselves, than it is injurious to the Art—an Art, for the advancement of which no one is more zealous, more anxious, than myself.

"How often have the very Academicians whom I have named declared to me, that the works of amateurs, of *Gentlemen Artists*, were most thankfully received by the Academy. 'Such little flowers, interspersed here and there,' have they said, 'make our Exhibition *smell less of the shop*—they prove to us, too, that the love of Art is disseminating through the country—they do more, they contribute themselves, very essentially, to that most desirable end: besides, they bring *grist to the mill*, by attracting, as they never fail to do, a host of visitors, whose contributions add to the general fund; that fund (observed they) which is our only support, and without which we should be no Academy at all.'*

"To what cause I may attribute the humiliation in my present case, I am at a loss to conceive. An enemy among you I cannot possibly have, I believe: on the contrary, I know full well that I may count many friends in the society to which you belong; and though I say it myself, (indeed it hurts me extremely to be thus compelled to recount favours conferred,) I feel that I have some claim to its acknowledgment and regard.

"Ask, I pray you, Mr. ——, whether he has not received payments from me for four different pictures —commissions—the produce of his masterly pencil? Mr. ——, can tell you who it was that, only last year, gave him the commission for his unrivalled picture of ——; and who, he can inform you, in addition thereto, hath been mainly instrumental in obtaining this very year for that artist, no less than for Mr. ——, commissions for their respective pictures, (painted for my son-in-law) now hanging on your walls. Mr. ——, if I mistake not, will not be found backward in making you acquainted, if required, with the terms on which, some years ago, I gave him a commission, at a time when, as I was informed, his finances were low—his spirits depressed, and family afflictions pressed heavily on his mind. Mr. ——, too, has shared of my purse.*

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* I cannot avoid hinting my suspicions, in this place, that the feelings of the Academy towards their amateur brethren, (although undoubtedly and properly those of friendship and respect) are coloured, here, a little too highly, by the fervid fancy of the author of the memorial.

"But I forbear, ashamed as I am at being driven to confessions like these!

"The inference which I wish to be drawn from all this, cannot be mistaken; and I leave you, Gentlemen, to decide whether the part you have acted in regard to me, can be considered *such as I have deserved*—in fine, whether that part is creditable either to yourselves, or advantageous to the Arts?

"For supposition's sake, let us for a moment contemplate your Exhibition (be the walls covered as they may) without the appearance of one single specimen from the pencils of Sir ——, (that giant of an amateur;) of Sir ——; of Mr. ——; of Mr.——; of Mr. ——; † and last of all, though perhaps not least, (for so I have been most kindly and encouragingly assured by good and candid judges, among whom was your late worthy President himself,) your humble servant.

"Would no sentiment of regret—no feeling of disappointment, in such a case, allow me, with all due deference, to ask, pervade the bosoms of the more liberal—the high-minded Academicians, (of such there are to my knowledge many to be found) at a sight so alarming, at the appearance of such an hiatus in the show?

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* The gentlemen thus gracefully and opportunely twitted with their obligations to the memorialist were all Royal Academicians of "name and note." Of their number not one now remains to be the recipient of future remonstrances, and the scapegoat of artistic indignation that is yet to come.

† Here occur the names of gentlemen of deserved reputation as amateur artists.

"Fully sensible how little there is of real value in my feeble attempts, I have never wished or even thought that they should interfere with the productions of Professors, to whom I am well aware a good place is everything. My claims have ever been of the moderate kind. (Mr. ——, and Mr. ——, will bear testimony, I am sure, to the truth of what I now say,) nor have I ever, even when an acquaintance has been of your number, sought by undue means an interference in my behalf, being firmly persuaded that integrity, that impartiality, that a strict attention to the fair and legitimate demands of real *merit* ought to be in the breast of the Committee the sole basis whereon its decisions should be formed. Such, I have no doubt, was the wise and ever-to-be-revered intention of the august founder of the Royal Academy.

"But I hasten to conclude, requesting your excuses for this long, and, doubtless to you all, most tiresome tirade.

"I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,
"Your very obedient servant,
"* * *"

Such is this ingenious protest. It is presented to the reader, (although he might well doubt it, from the perusal of some of its paragraphs,) *exactly* as it is written, down to the very italics. Long as it assuredly is, I cannot imagine that its introduction will be considered as wearisome, or that it will be read with any other feelings than those of the amusement which it is so admirably adapted to excite. Little, indeed, do the gay visitors to the Academy Exhibition imagine what an atmosphere of disappointment and jealousy, of petty malice and fruitless wrath, invisibly encircles no inconsiderable number of the failures they ridicule, and even of the successes they applaud.

The office of keeper of the valuable Gallery of pictures at Dulwich having become vacant in this year, Mr. Collins' brother, Francis, started as one of the candidates for the situation. With the deep affection for his brother and the ardent enthusiasm for his brother's interests, which ever characterized him, the painter exerted his utmost influence in all directions to ensure the election of Mr. Francis Collins: whose fitness for the honourable and responsible situation that he desired to fill, involving as it did the whole care and cleaning of one of the most valuable collections of pictures in England, will be found well noticed in the following extract from Sir Francis Chantrey's testimonial in his favour:

"Through my act, Mr. Collins," (Francis,) "was employed two years ago to clean a valuable collection of pictures, amounting to nearly an hundred; and it was a trust for which I was responsible. I knew him to be perfectly competent; for he had been educated to this business under his father, himself a picture cleaner much esteemed by artists; and I also knew that he was living at the elbow of his brother, the Royal Academician, and was acquainted with the whole process of a picture, even from the bare canvass. On the whole, I know of no one more competent for the preservation of a collection like yours, and I know no one in whose abilities I would more readily confide. He is an unpresuming, good-tempered, and sensible man, with a love and knowledge of Art, and possessed of much curious information respecting its productions."

In spite, however, of this and many other valuable recommendations, Mr. Francis Collins was not so fortunate as to gain the keepership of the Dulwich Gallery,—Mr. Denning being the candidate ultimately elected to that office.

Some description of a second tour to Devonshire, undertaken by the painter in the autumn of this year, will be found in the following letter to his mother:

"To Mrs. Collins.

"Bideford, Oct. 7th, 1821.

"My dear Mother,—My last letter contained, if I recollect with accuracy, an account of your dutiful son, up to his visit to Sharpham. We left that place for Ashburton, taking in our way the parsonage of Mr. Frewde, who, I am truly sorry to say, since I last visited this county has lost the mother of a numerous family. I am sure you must have heard me speak of a most elegant and amiable lady, his wife.

"We slept at Ashburton two nights; and during our stay there visited some of the finest, I think I may say all the finest scenes this beautiful part of Devonshire can show; all the property of my very excellent friend, Mr. Bastard. From thence we returned to Kitley, which I left the following day for Plymouth and Birham, Sir W. Elford's seat. I then paid a visit to the Leaches, at Spitchwick, where I made sketches of the scenes which Mr. Bastard and myself had pronounced picturesque; viz., fit for pictures. From Spitchwick I returned to Kitley, where I spent nearly a week; after which I made the necessary preparations for my northern tour. I have commenced it under the most melancholy circumstances. Upon our entrance into Torrington, we heard the most afflicting account of the loss of upwards of *forty fishermen*, who have perished in the gale of Thursday evening last, (all inhabitants of Clovelly and its neighbourhood.) With feelings of the deepest melancholy shall I to-morrow set out, please God, for this spot, the scene of so much affliction. The body of one of the sufferers has been found this morning, (a native of this place,) whose son perished at Clovelly on the same night. I shall not send this letter to the post-office until after I reach Clovelly, only eleven miles distant from this; when I trust I shall be enabled to give you some account of my future plans."

"Clovelly, Monday evening.—The above account is but too true, and the misery the accident has caused here can never be forgotten. I have this day seen some of the remains of the boats, torn to pieces in a way one would hardly have supposed possible. Going down the village, I saw a crowd assembled before a door; they were singing a psalm over the body of one of their comrades. Not above one half of the corpses have been found. I refrain from any further account of this most awful affair, as I am satisfied it would be too much for you.

"Clovelly certainly presents the finest scenery I ever beheld; but, as the days are now so short and cold, I must use despatch, particularly as I have yet many other places to visit. * * * It is possible you may receive a basket of stones, and old boughs, and roots of trees from Mr. Bastard, for me to paint from. I mention this, that you may not think you have been hoaxed when you open the parcel.

"Your affectionate son,

"WILLIAM COLLINS."

With the exception of the tour to Devonshire thus recorded, nothing occurred in this year to vary the easy regularity of the painter's life,—a life which, looked on under its brighter influences, (and to such Mr. Collins had now attained,) is perhaps the most delightful that the varieties of human existence can present. It is refreshing after having enumerated, some pages back, the petty tribulations and small worldly crosses attaching even to the most successful study of Art, to turn to the contemplation of the abstract and intellectual charms, as well as of the real, practical advantages of this noble pursuit. Viewed in his relation to the other branches of Art, —to literature and music alone—the painter enjoys many higher privileges, and suffers fewer anxieties, than either the poet or the composer. He is enabled, with comparatively little delay, to view his composition, at its earliest stages, displayed before him at once, in all its bearings, as one coherent though yet uncompleted whole. When dismissed as finished, it passes fresh from the care of his hand and the contact of his mind to a position where its merits can be easily judged, without taxing the time or risking the impatience of the public. It is then confided to the possession of but *one*—the individual who prizes it the most—not to be flung aside by the superficial, like a book, or to be marred by the ignorant, like a melody, but to be viewed by the most careless and uncultivated as a relic which they dare not molest, and as a treasure which cannot become common by direct propagation. Then, turning from the work to the workman, we find Nature presenting herself to his attention at every turn, self-moulded to all his purposes. His library is exposed freely before him, under the bright sky and on the open ground. His college is not pent within walls and streets, but spreads, ever boundless and ever varying, wherever wood and valley are stretched, or cliff and mountain reared. Poverty has a beauty in its rags, and ruin an eloquence in its degradation for *him*. *His* hand holds back from the beloved form that oblivion of the tomb which memory and description are feeble alike to avert. He stands like the patriarch, "between the dead and the living," to recall the one and to propagate the other,—at once the interpreter of animating Nature, and the antagonist of annihilating death.

Upon this subject, it was the often-expressed conviction of my father, drawn from his own experience of the good and evil of his pursuit, that "the study of the Art was in itself so delightful, that it balanced almost all the evils of life that could be conceived; and that an artist with tolerable success had no right to complain of anything."

In the following letter, addressed by Mr. Collins at the beginning of the next year, to a valued and intimate friend, Mr. Joseph, the sculptor, whose merits are well known to the public by his statues of Wilberforce and Wilkie, with many other admirable works, the painter's own reflections upon the attractions of his profession will be perused in this place with some interest:

To Samuel Joseph, Esq.

"London, January 28th, 1822.

"Dear Joseph,—Hoping I should long ere this have seen you in London, I trusted I could have satisfied you that neither neglect nor any abatement of a most sincere regard for you, but an incurable habit of procrastination, has been the sole reason why your letter has remained so long unanswered. My anxiety however to hear from you, since I cannot see you, impels me to send you such London news as my scanty means of information will enable me to collect. In the Arts we are going on much as usual, and much as I fear will always be the case in this country, namely,—cramming the public with that which they have not power to digest. I think, upon the whole, there is more said and less done in the Arts than heretofore, the alarming increase of exhibitions having a tendency to produce derangements of the pictorial system which a little wholesome and legitimate nourishment might have altogether prevented. A lamentable demand for novelty is producing in the Arts, as well as in literature, exactly what might have been expected; and, although the last Exhibition at Somerset-house has been more crowded than upon any former occasion, and readers were never so numerous, the result has been a satiety truly alarming. Every one talks of painting and literature, and what is still worse, all conceive it to be their duty to have opinions; and instead of an ingenuous expression of their *feelings*,—by which painting and poetry might gather considerable improvement — their only aim seems to be, that of persuading those who are not to be deceived, that they understand both Arts.

"But, enough of the dark side. Notwithstanding the many disagreeable circumstances attending the prosecution of our arduous profession, the real charms of the pursuit are so great, that were the difficulties an hundred times greater, we ought to thank Heaven we are permitted to pursue an employment so replete with abstractions, in their nature scarcely belonging to what is earthly.

"Although I have not made inquiries of you, still your brother has been kind enough to give me information, which, together with your own letter, is upon the whole gratifying. I long to see some of your recent productions. Chantrey has just finished a bust of the King, which entirely surpasses any work he has done in this way. He tells me he has written to you; and I *know* he has a personal regard for you, and thinks highly of your works. Are we to expect you in the spring? Is it prudent entirely to leave London? Should you determine to take up your quarters in Edinburgh, why not occasionally pay us a visit? In my humble opinion, however, reversing this would be a better thing. Perhaps you could settle the matter more advantageously in London than by any information your friends at so great a distance could give you. I lament exceedingly that I had not the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Joseph, during her stay in London.

"I shall tell you nothing about the fish *I* am frying,—come and see. Write to me as soon as convenient; I hereby promise to answer any letter you may in future send to me *directly*. Other matters when we meet, and I most sincerely wish it may be soon. With kind regards to Mrs. Joseph, in which I am joined by my mother and Frank, I am, dear Joseph, with great esteem,

"Faithfully yours,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

"P.S.—Best regards to our friend Allan, and such others as care whether I am alive or not. Wilkie has nearly completed his picture; I saw it yesterday. It is one of the most stupendous things ever produced."

The year 1822 was marked by some variety of incidents in the painter's life; among which may be noticed his entry on a new sphere of domestic duties as a married man, and his excursion to Edinburgh with Sir David Wilkie, on the occasion of the visit of George the Fourth,—the period at which he first became acquainted with Sir Walter Scott.

His pictures contributed to the Exhibition of 1822, occupying however priority of date in the year, claim priority of notice. They were entitled,—"A Scene near Chichester," painted for Mr. Isaac Currie; "Clovelly, North Devon," painted for Mr. Philips, M.P.; "Woodcutters,—Buckland on the Moor, Devon," painted for Mr. Lambton, M.P.; and "Bayham Abbey, during the celebration of a Fête given in honour of the coming of age of Lord Brecknock," painted for the Marquis Camden. "Chichester" and the "Woodcutters" were two of the painter's most successful landscapes. In the first the atmosphere is cool, gray, and serene; the high-road with trees at the right, and the open common with figures talking near an old white horse, occupy the foreground; while in the distance rises the spire of Chichester Cathedral, surrounded by the level, open scenery, presented in Nature by the view. The second picture, "Woodcutters," exhibits a background of soft, dusky, woodland foliage, sunk in quiet shadow. In front, a gleam of sunshine falls over a patch of open ground, encumbered with a felled tree, round which the woodcutters are occupied in their tranquil mid-day meal. "Clovelly," was the sea-piece of the year. The sketch from which it was produced was made after the storm mentioned in the painter's last letter to his mother, in which forty fishermen were lost. In the picture, the ocean is yet vexed with the subsiding of the tempest, which caused this terriffic calamity; the waves dash brightly and briskly in upon the beach and the fishing-boats in the foreground. To the left of the scene rises the rocky and precipitous shore, studded with cottages, built picturesquely one above the other, and relieved against the sky, whose wild fitful clouds, and fresh vivid atmosphere, remind the spectator of the storm that has lately raged. This picture is, in every respect, a remarkable and original work. The view of Bayham Abbey was a smaller production. A river occupies the foreground, the fête is proceeding in the middle distance, and the foliage that clusters round the old abbey, is finely varied by the influence of the richest autumnal tints.

The tour to Scotland with Wilkie, which preceded the painter's marriage, and to which it is now necessary to revert, will, it is presumed, be not inaptly introduced by a more extended notice than has yet been attempted in these Memoirs, of the distinguished man who was my father's companion in his journey, and whose brotherly connection with him began with their first acquaintance to terminate only with his death.

It is of Sir David Wilkie, in the capacity in which perhaps he is least familiar to the world, as a companion and a friend, that I would here endeavour to speak. In what is called "general society," there was a certain unconscious formality and restraint about the manner of this gifted and amiable man, which wrongly impressed those who were but slightly acquainted with him with an idea that he was naturally haughty and reserved. He was never one of those who mix freely and carelessly with the world, whose movements, manners, and conversation flow from them as it were impromptu. With Wilkie, an excessive anxiety to contribute his just quota of information and amusement to a new company weakened, as in such cases it almost invariably does, his social efforts. It was only in the society of his intimate friends, of fellow-painters and fellow-countrymen whom he admired and loved, that the great artist's real kindness and gaiety of disposition appeared. Then his manners became playful and winning, his voice animated and cheerful, his laugh ready and contagious, as if by magic. Then the jests and witticisms with which his friend Collins loved to perplex him awoke his fund of anecdote, his peculiar vein of humour, his relations—exquisitely amusing in their sedate circumstantiality—of good jokes and clever retorts. No egotism or self-assumption ever tinged his thoughts, or deteriorated his conversation. He appeared, in these social hours, to be absolutely unaware of the illustrious position that he occupied. Although not gifted with that peculiar flexibility of mind which, to use the nursery phrase, enables "grown people to talk to children," his kindness and patience with them was one of the finest ingredients in his simple, affectionate character. The writer of this biography remembers being often taken, when a child, upon his knee, giving him pencil and paper, and watching him, while he drew at his request, cats, dogs, and horses with a readiness and zeal which spoke eloquently for his warmth of heart and gentleness of disposition. Although full of humour of a particular kind, and of a capacity to relish it frequently in others, he was by no means susceptible of all varieties of jests. Scotch stories and "Irish bulls," he heartily enjoyed; but to a play upon words of any other description, or to a joke by inference, the "portals of his understanding" seemed to be almost invariably closed. Any attempts to make him understand a "pun" were generally abortive. Two amusing instances of this are given, as follows, in a short collection of manuscript anecdotes of his friend, written by Mr. Collins, which have never before been published, and from which several extracts will be presented to the reader in this place :

"Wilkie was not quick in perceiving a joke, although he was always anxious to do so, and to recollect humorous stories, of which he was exceedingly fond. As instances, I recollect, once, when we were staying at Mr. Wells', at Redleaf, one morning at breakfast a very small puppy was running about under the table. 'Dear me,' said a lady, 'how this creature teases me!' I took it up, and put it into my breast-pocket. Mr. Wells said, 'That is a pretty nosegay.' 'Yes,' said I, 'it is a *dog-rose*.' Wilkie's attention, sitting opposite, was called to his friend's pun: but all in vain,—he could not be persuaded to see anything in it. I recollect trying once to explain to him, with the same want of success, Hogarth's joke in putting the sign of the woman without a head, ('The Good Woman,') under the window from whence the quarrelsome wife is throwing the dinner into the street."

As a balance against the above anecdotes, it should be mentioned that, on another occasion, Wilkie succeeded better in the mysteries of punning. On the day when he was knighted, he called on his friend Collins, and, not finding him at home, left his card thus inscribed: "Mr. David Wilkie,—a *be-knighted* traveller."

A more amusing instance of the simplicity of his character is thus described in my father's MS.:

"Chantrey and Wilkie were dining alone with me, when the former, in his great kindness for Wilkie, ventured, as he said, to take him to task for his constant use of the word '*relly,*' (really,) when listening to any conversation in which he was much interested. 'Now, for instance,' said Chantrey, 'suppose I was giving you an account of any interesting matter, you would constantly say, "*Relly!*"' '*Relly!*' exclaimed Wilkie immediately, with a look of the most perfect astonishment."

Another dinner scene of a different description, at Wilkie's house, is worthy of insertion. Mr. Collins's brother Francis possessed a remarkably retentive memory, which he was accustomed to use for the amusement of himself and others in the following way. He learnt by heart a whole number of one of Dr. Johnson's "Ramblers," and used to cause considerable diversion to those in the secret, by repeating it all through to a new company, in a conversational tone, as if it was the accidental product of his own fancy,—now addressing his flow of moral eloquence to one astonished auditor, and now to another. One day, when the two brothers were dining at Wilkie's, it was determined to try the experiment upon their host. After dinner, accordingly, Mr. Collins paved the way for the coming speech, by leading the conversation imperceptibly to the subject of the paper in the "Rambler." At the right moment, Francis Collins began. As the first grand Johnsonian sentences struck upon his ear, (uttered, it should be remembered, in the most elaborately careless and conversational manner,) Wilkie started at the high tone that the conversation had suddenly assumed, and looked vainly for explanation to his friend Collins, who, on *his* part, sat with his eyes respectfully fixed on his brother, all rapt attention to the eloquence that was dropping from his lips. Once or twice, with perfect mimicry of the conversational character he had assumed, Francis Collins hesitated, stammered, and paused, as if collecting his thronging ideas. At one or two of these intervals Wilkie endeavoured to speak, to ask a moment for consideration; but the torrent of his guest's eloquence was not to be delayed —"it was too rapid to stay for any man—away it went," like Mr. Shandy's oratory before "My Uncle Toby"—until at last it reached its destined close; and then Wilkie, who, as host, thought it his duty to break silence by the first compliment, exclaimed with the most perfect unconsciousness of the trick that had been played him, "Aye, aye, Mr. Francis; verra clever—(though I did not understand it *all*)—verra clever!"

Further extracts from my father's notes on the subject of his friend, will be found to assist interestingly in the delineation of Wilkie's character. They are to the following effect:

"His friends relate of him, that he could draw before he could write. He recollected this himself, and spoke to me of an old woman, who had in her cottage near his father's manse a clean-scoured wooden stool, on which she used to allow him to draw with a coarse carpenter's pencil, and then scrub it out to be ready for another day. Showing so decided a fondness for drawing, he was sent to Edinburgh to study at a drawing academy there, and great was his despondency at what appeared to him the wonderful dexterity among the students. From the specimens that he sent home to his friends, their fears were so great that he would not succeed as an artist, that they seriously proposed making him a writer to the signet. However, it was finally determined that he should try his fortune in London. Some years afterwards, the change of life, anxious study, and confinement, produced a long and severe illness, about the period when he painted 'The Village Festival.' He went, during this illness, to Sir George Beaumont's; who, to the time of his death, continued to show the most strong interest and attachment to him. Sir George and Lady Beaumont used, by turns, to read to him. Upon one occasion, during the reading of Fielding's 'Amelia,' the wickedness of one of the characters so affected him, that he begged no more might be read. Sir George used to say that he often watched him while he was painting, when so intense was his labour that he did not appear to breathe."

"The theme on which he most delighted to talk with his friends, was painting. One day, at his house, we had been some time conversing on this fruitful subject—the mysteries of the Art—before the uninitiated, when his excellent mother thought she ought to apologize to a certain Captain present; which she did in these terms:—'You must e'en excuse them, puir bodies—they canna help it!' The delicacy with which he always abstained from boasting of the notice shown him by the nobility, was very remarkable. He was especially careful never to mention any engagement he might have to dine with great people—but, if his engagement was with an humble friend, the name was always ready; unless, indeed, he had reason to think you were not of the party. The way in which he spoke of the works of contemporaries, without compromising that sincerity which was part and parcel of the man, was truly Christian; and the extreme pains he took in giving his most invaluable advice, showed an entire absence of rivalry. He never had any secrets—his own practice was told at once. His fears, when his pictures were well placed at the Exhibition, that others not so well off might feel uncomfortable, gave him real and unaffected pain. His own low estimate of his works was, to a student in human nature, marvellous. The very small sums he required for his pictures are an evidence of his innate modesty. Four hundred guineas for 'Reading the Will,' which occupied seven months of the year in which it was produced, and was afterwards sold for twelve hundred, in a country where that sum will go as far as double that amount in England, is a proof. Many others might be mentioned—as 'The Rent Day,' painted for two hundred guineas: sold for seven hundred and fifty—'Card-Players,' a hundred guineas: sold for six hundred. It must be recollected that these sales took place during the lifetime of the painter—a most unusual circumstance. When Lord Mulgrave's pictures were sold at Christie's, Wilkie waited in the neighbourhood, whilst I attended the sale. It was quite refreshing to see his joy when I returned with a list of the prices. The sketches produced more than five hundred per cent—the pictures three hundred. I recollect one—a small, early picture, called 'Sunday Morning'—I asked Wilkie what he thought of its fetching, as it did, a hundred and ten pounds, and whether Lord Mulgrave had not got it cheap enough?—'Why, he gave me fifteen pounds for it!'—When I expressed my surprise that he should have given so small a sum, for so clever a work; Wilkie, defending him, said:—'Ah, but consider, as I was not known at that time, *it was a great risk!*'"

"In going over the pictures at Kensington with George the Fourth, he was much struck with the great knowledge His Majesty displayed, and the usefulness of his remarks to a painter. He was always most anxious to get the opinions of men of the world upon his pictures. I recollect his taking rather a cumbrous sketch in oil, for the picture of John Knox, (now Sir Robert Peel's) all the way to Edinburgh, for Sir Walter Scott's opinion. I was present when he showed it to him: Sir Walter was much struck with it, as a work of vast and rare power. Those who are exclusive admirers of his early style, ought not to forget this picture, and Lord Lansdowne's 'Monks at Confession'—'Columbus,' painted for Mr. Holford—Mr. Rice's picture of 'Benvenuto Cellini'—Mr. Marshall's 'Pope and Buonaparte'—'The Peep o'day Boy's Cabin,' at Mr. Vernon's, and many others, upon which his claims to the character of an historical painter may well be founded. I should scruple not to maintain, that such pictures as the 'Distraining for Rent,' at Redleaf, with all the pathos of a Raphael; and such exquisite touches of the deepest sentiment, as are to be found in the woman squeezing her way to look at the list of the dead and wounded, in the Waterloo picture, belonging to the Duke of Wellington, are standing evidences of his fitness for the highest departments of Art; although the figures are not dressed in the toga so lavishly bestowed upon the wooden perpetrations of many a Carlo Maratti and a Vanderwerf."

Such, briefly examined, were some of the peculiarities, moral and social, in the character of Mr. Collins's remarkable companion, during his Scotch tour: peculiarities, which, though aparently trivial in themselves, are yet, it is hoped, not useless to aid in the elucidation of his general disposition, and to conduct to some of the more secret sources of his genius. With Sir David Wilkie then, and another accomplished brother painter—the late Mr. Geddes, A.R.A.—Mr. Collins now set forth for Edinburgh. The journey, as may be imagined, was all hilarity —Wilkie's notice of it, in a letter to his sister is characteristic:

"We got through our journey famously, and were less fatigued than we expected. The only subject of regret was, that Geddes's snuff-box was done, by the time we got to Berwick. I was not asked to join, but the box passed between Geddes and Collins, and from Collins to Geddes, incessantly. You will readily imagine I did not feel much for their misfortune."

In this one particular, Wilkie remained excluded from the sympathies of his travelling-companions during all his after-intercourse with them. The tobacco-plant never put forth its kindly leaf for *him*. It was never his, to woo the balmy influence of companionable snuff, or to rejoice with the world-wide brotherhood of the contemplative and peace-compelling pipe!

With the advantages of reputation and excellent letters of introduction, the painters soon became involved in all the choicest dissipations of the Northern Metropolis, at that mirthful period when court gaiety and conviviality outmanœuvred Scotch prudence, and half divested even an Edinburgh "sabbath" of its hereditary grimness and pious desolation. Wilkie forgot his discretion in a "new sky-blue coat," and caroused innocently with the rest, when the mirthful dinner closed, in gastronomic triumph, the bustling day. At one of these parties, at Sir Walter Scott's, Wilkie and Collins beheld the appearance of the author of Waverley in a new character. When the table was cleared after dinner, Sir Walter, in the exuberance of his loyalty and hospitality, volunteered to sing his own song—"Carle now the King's come." The whole company gave the chorus, and their host, regardless alike of his lameness and his dignity, sprang up, and, calling upon everybody to join hands, made his guests dance with him round the table to the measure of the tune. The effect of this latter exercise, indulged in by a set of performers, all more or less illustrious in the world's eye—and all, with few exceptions, of intensely anti-saltatory habits—would defy the pen of a Rabelais or the pencil of a Hogarth. It was enough, considering the nature and locality of the ceremony, to have brought back to earth the apparition of John Knox himself!

Among other favours conferred by George the Fourth upon his Scotch subjects, was the knighting of Captain Adam Ferguson and Henry Raeburn, the portrait-painter. A dinner-party was given, at the house of Chief Commissioner Adam, to celebrate the event. The company soon crowded about the new knights, to hear their description of the ceremony they had just passed through. Sir Adam Ferguson's narrative was quite Shandean in its quaint originality and innocent Uncle-Toby-like sarcasm. "Oh!" cried the new recipient of the baptism of chivalry, "His Majesty just gave me a smart slap o' the shouther with the back of his sword, and said, 'Rise, Sir Adam Ferguson.' The shouther was a wee bit bruised, but I just rubbed it wi' a little 'yellow basilicon,' and its aw' weel eneugh now!"

Turning from dignities and dinner-parties—preachings before the King and processions to the Castle, bonfires in the streets and balls in the houses—to professional and biographical matters, it may not be uninteresting to mention, that Mr. Collins cherished the same intention as Sir David Wilkie—of painting a picture commemorative of the King's visit to Edinburgh; but, unlike the latter, did not carry his purpose into execution. The point of time he had fixed on was the moment of the Royal landing at Leith. But although he was enabled, by the intervention of his friends in authority, to obtain an excellent view of this and all the other ceremonies and proceedings that he desired to witness, and although he carried his investigations so far as to accompany the King's yacht on its homeward way down the Forth, (on which occasion, according to his friend's account, he narrowly escaped being taken all the way to London by mistake,) the contemplated picture never proceeded beyond the first sketches. Nor was this to be wondered at, in the instance of Mr. Collins. After the first excitement of the Royal visit had worn off, there was little really attractive, to a mind whose accustomed employment was the study of simple Nature, in the conventional pomps of a Royal progress, or the gorgeous vanities of a Civic welcome.

Some reference to the gaieties of Edinburgh will be found in the following letters from the painter to his mother:

"To Mrs. Collins.

"Edinburgh, August 17th, 1822.

"My dear Mother,—As you have, I trust, received from Miss Wilkie an account of our safe arrival, I have now to give you some idea of our employment since that time.

"For some days we were uncertain when the King would arrive; and, on the day when we had great reason to expect him, the weather was so rough that it was apprehended he would land at Dunbar, and perform the rest of the journey by land. On Wednesday he was in sight, and anchored in my presence, opposite Leith, about a mile and a half from the shore, but resolved not to go on shore till the following day. The sight, of course, I took care to attend, and, as I had the advantage of a boat with six men under my command, as well as a pass-ticket from the Bailies of Leith—giving me the privilege of going into any seat on shore—the conveniences were considerable.

"I am at present quite uncertain with respect to the time of my return to London, but I think it is possible I may go to Stirling, and one or two of the Lakes; and, as I may move either in that direction or towards home, about the end of next week, I am very anxious to have a letter. I conclude you have received some communication from Mr. Lambton.

" * * * The letters we took with us have introduced us to some very agreeable society. With Sir Walter Scott we dined a few days since, at his house here, and a most delightful evening we had. I am writing this just after dinner—we (that is, Joseph, his excellent wife, and your dutiful son,) most sincerely, and with the best wishes for your happiness, drink your health.

" I am most comfortably accommodated in Joseph's house, and want nothing but a letter from home; write, therefore, by return of post. The illuminations last night presented an appearance altogether unique. The effect from the Castle, looking down upon the old and new town, was magnificent: the Castle itself was lighted with crates on its walls, filled with burning coal. It is now so near post-time that I can only say, heaven bless you, and Frank, and all enemies and friends.

" Your affectionate Son,
" WILLIAM COLLINS."

TO THE SAME.

" Edinburgh, August 28th, 1822.

" My dear Mother,—I should have written before this, could I have given you any correct views of my intended movements. As far as I am at present able to see on the subject, I may be from home some two or three weeks longer. Wilkie and your ungracious son leave this place on Saturday next for Blair Adam, a seat of the Lord Chief Commissioner's; where we stay a few days, and then proceed to Stirling, Callander, some of the Lakes, and possibly Glasgow; and, whether we afterwards return to London by Liverpool, or return to this place,—and, should that be done, how long we stay here,—is a matter upon which I cannot, in this letter, give you any further information. Of one thing I am pretty certain—that, unless we find better weather, we shall not make many sketches.

"The sketches I have already made are few and slight. I have had so much to see, that I have not yet made those more finished drawings at Leith, which, should I paint the King's landing, will be quite essential. I have been on board the *Royal George*, the ship in which His Majesty reached this port, and I have, from thence, made a drawing of Leith Harbour, backed by Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags; which I mean to paint, when I return, for "*Mamma.*" What I at present purpose painting, upon a large scale, is the approach of the King to the Pier—the above sketch to form the background; but I am vastly secret and mysterious upon what I mean to paint of the King's history here, and I have seen so much of his doings that I could paint a series of pictures,—but not one will I do (further than making sketches when I return) without commissions. I think, however, that striking things might be produced.

"The country and city are so replete with subjects in the view way, that, should the weather be fine, I might, I think, make my stay here pay me well—for my picture of 'Chichester' has satisfied me that people like *a name* to be given to a landscape.

"To-morrow we hope to be present at the embarkation of His Majesty from Hopetown-house. The Chief Commissioner, who is the commander-in-chief, and who was the first person from this place who shook hands with the King—and is to be the last—takes Wilkie and myself to breakfast on board the *Royal George;* after which, I shall be upon the watch for a picture. The Embarkation may possibly afford a companion to the Landing. From the present state of the weather, however, I fear it may be a dull scene.

"The plan at Hopetown-house is this: The grounds are to be filled with visitors, who are to partake of a cold collation, and at twelve His Majesty is expected, when, after probably remaining some time among us, he will signify his intention to embark; and, after the great kindness and loyal attention he has received from his Scotch subjects, I think he must leave them with a heart overflowing with gratitude. The delight he has expressed himself as having felt, is great. I wish I could give you a connected and progressive account of his proceedings. You cannot possibly conceive the distinguished manner in which the

Scotch people—from the lord to the meanest peasant—have behaved. The regularity and dignity of a Scotch mob is really surprising.

"Of His Majesty's landing I gave you an account in my last. The day following this was a quiet one, but in the evening there was an illumination of the finest kind. The old and new town had the windows of almost every house filled with candles, (generally one in each pane of glass,) the others illuminated with lamps—and, above all, the Castle, with crates of burning coal on its summit, as of old: and, at intervals, cannon firing salutes—answering each other from the Castle, the Calton, Salisbury Crags, etc. But the finest sight of all, notwithstanding the bad weather, was that of Thursday last, when the King went in procession to the Castle from Holyrood-house, through the High street. Upon his arrival at the Castle gate,—where Sir Alexander Hope, Governor of the Castle, presented him with the keys,—the show was most superb. His Majesty then entered the Castle gate, and, in about ten minutes, was seen standing on a platform, in the half-moon battery at the top of the building—when, notwithstanding the heavy rain, he took off his hat, and remained there, bowing in the most graceful manner, for upwards of ten minutes. As he had no umbrella, he must have been much wetted; but he seemed determined to show the people of Edinburgh that he was only anxious to return their acknowledgments of kindness.

"When we have the pleasure of meeting, I trust I can afford you some entertainment upon this and other Scotch subjects. I must not omit, although I have so little room left, to tell you a good joke I heard from a good and great man here: I fear, however, it may encourage Frank in punning—I mean the authority, not the nature of it, for it beats all his. Doctor Chalmers was asked by Wilkie, whether Principal Baird would preach before the King. (Now, Principal Baird has a sad habit of crying in the pulpit.) "Why," says Chalmers, "if he does, it will be George Baird to George Rex, *greeting!*" *

"* * * I would give a trifle to have you here; and, please Heaven, some day or other this may be accomplished. I cannot tell you how kindly Joseph and his wife have treated me, and how happy I feel in their society. Joseph has done a bust of the King, merely from seeing him at the shows here, with which His Majesty has been so much pleased, that he has given him a sitting. * * * Heaven bless you, dear mother and Frank,

"W. COLLINS."

The expedition of the painters to Blair Adam—mentioned at the commencement of the foregoing letter—produced a sketch on the estate, (finished some years after their visit,) which was the joint production of both: Sir David Wilkie painting the figures, and Mr. Collins the landscape. This work—interesting, as being the only instance in which these two thoroughly national painters ever laboured, together, upon the same canvas—was presented to the hospitable owner of Blair Adam; an estate, which it may not be irrelevant to mention, was adorned with delightful park and garden scenery, on a soil naturally the most desert in Scotland, through the skill and enterprize of its possessor the Lord Chief Commissioner, who perfected and concluded the work that his father and grandfather had begun before him.

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* To those unacquainted with the Scotch dialect, it may be necessary to observe, that "greeting" signifies, in the north, *weeping* as well as *welcome*.

Shortly after this, the painters returned by way of Stirling to Edinburgh. Sir David Wilkie then departed for London, leaving his friend behind; and little suspecting, at that time, that Mr. Collins's delay in the northern metropolis, was occasioned by his venturing on the most momentous risk in which any man can engage—the speculation of marriage.

The lady to whom the painter was now to be united, was Miss Geddes, related to the family of Dr. Geddes of theological and critical celebrity and sister of Mrs. Carpenter, the portrait-painter. Their attachment had begun with their first meeting, at a ball given by a few artists to their lady friends, in 1814; but remained undeclared until many years afterwards. At that time, Mr. Collins felt that his straightened circumstances presented an insuperable obstacle to any project of immediate marriage with a portionless bride; and, with all the uncertainties that then attended his future prospects, he honourably shrunk from the responsibility of fettering a young girl with the anxieties and disappointments of that most weary of all social ordeals, "a long engagement." In 1816 and 1818, Mr. Collins and Miss Geddes met occasionally in society, but, it was not until 1821, when they accidentally met in London and found that each had still remained single, that the painter's attachment was actually avowed. The engagement which, in his now improved circumstances, he felt justified in contracting, received the unqualified approbation of his family: but, although she fully recognised the propriety of her son's choice, Mrs. Collins, with the prudence of her age and nation, desired to delay his marriage, until the pictorial successes of a few more years had made a few more solid additions to his still fluctuating income. She remembered the embarrassments under which he had suffered, but a few years since; and, dreading the possibility of their recurrence, if he married before his prospects definitely changed from the encouraging to the secure, withheld her consent from the union which he desired should be solemnized in this year (1822), inculcating the excellence of patience, proving the duty of making fit provision for all future emergencies, and addressing much advice of the same excellent, but unpalatable nature, to ears, which, as usual in such cases, heard but profited not. From Edinburgh Mr. Collins wrote, as follows, to his future bride—a vexatious Marriage Act, requiring various oaths and attestations from parents and guardians, having lately come into operation in England, and rendering it expedient, considering the deference due to Mrs. Collins's temporary objections to the match, that the young couple should be married in Scotland, if they were then to be married at all:

"To Miss Geddes.

"Edinburgh, August 24, 1822.

"My dear Harriet. * * * As my former letter contained such accounts of my proceedings as were worthy your regard, I have now to give you some details, which I am sorry must be done briefly, as the bustle and confusion under which every one here labours, is truly harassing. I find that the King does not leave us till Thursday next; and on Saturday I must go northward, on a visit to the Chief Commissioner's. The country in the neighbourhood of his house will probably occupy my attention for about a week: at the expiration of that time, I really know not whether to return to London, or to Edinburgh.

"I think you had better either go to Alderbury, to Mrs. Bryan, or come down here (if you could get a companion to protect you.) And yet, I feel so nervous at the idea of your journey in your present state of health, and without *me*, that I am quite miserable. Write to me by return of post, and do help me to decide.

"Mrs. Joseph, to whom I have told my distress, will be most happy (and she is one of the best creatures in the world) to give you a bed here, and we might spend a short time in Scotland, and return to London, cemented by that tie, which, please God, may brighten our present prospects. * * * Believe me, my dear Harriet,

"Ever and only yours,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

Shortly after this, Miss Geddes accepted an invitation from her friend Mrs. Joseph, to meet Mr. Collins in Edinburgh. While the simple preliminaries of his marriage were in course of arrangement, the painter wrote a letter to his mother, which, as displaying the filial affection and respect that he always accorded to the expression of her sentiments, however distasteful to himself, deserves to be subjoined.

"TO MRS. COLLINS.

"Edinburgh, September 15th, 1822.

"My dear Mother,—As I much fear that I cannot reach London in time to dine with the Lord Mayor, I have to beg that you will send him a note, stating that you have received a letter from me, lamenting the loss of the pleasure I had promised myself in dining with his lordship, as I shall be unavoidably detained in Scotland until after the 24th.

"Since I wrote to you last, and indeed very frequently since I have been here, I have been sorely vexed with the toothach and to such a degree at last, that I have discarded my enemy, and am now quite easy. Upon another subject, I am not so gifted with the art of hoping, as at once to expect relief—although the only person on earth who can make me quite happy, is my own dear mother. I need not again tell you, that the only cause of my wretchedness of mind is our unhappy difference upon the most vital of all subjects, connected as it is with happiness here, and the hope of it in a better world. Your opposition to my union with Harriet, we are both aware has arisen from an affection for me, which has never ceased to show itself upon all occasions; and this affection has been met, I am ready to confess, on too many occasions, by an apparently heartless neglect of your kindness. Upon the matter nearest my heart at this moment, however, God knows I have never thought otherwise of you than as you deserve; but there are feelings which you cannot enter into, and which I shall not attempt to describe, and these tell me that, in the person I hope soon to call mine, I shall find all I can desire in a companion for the journey of this life, and through Almighty God's assistance, we feel determined to devote the best efforts of our existence to your comfort. * * *

"I have been in great uneasiness for some time upon the subject of writing to you—the determination, however, to pay you that respect which is so entirely your due, precludes the possibility of my letting any one hear of my marriage before you.

"Miss Geddes is now on a visit to my kind friend Mrs. Joseph. She has many friends here, as well as relations, with one family of whom she spends some of her time; (the Smiths—bankers here) to whom I have been introduced, and a delightful and elegant addition to my catalogue of Scotch friends they are.

"I cannot tell you how much I shall long for a letter from you—and whether it breathes forgiveness or not, still, my dear mother, shall I always be,

"Your affectionate Son,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

"P.S. I am getting sketches daily, which will, I doubt not, turn to account when I reach London; which I think may be in about a fortnight or three weeks. Love to Frank—please God we shall spend a pleasant winter all together. * * * "

Soon after this Mr. Collins was united to Miss Geddes, in the English Episcopal Church, in York-place, Edinburgh, by the Rev. Dr. Alison—author of the celebrated work on Taste; who, on this occasion, exhibited his literary enthusiasm in a graceful and pleasing light, by declining to take any fees on the conclusion of the ceremony—"You bear the name of a great poet," said he to the painter, "and you are yourself increasing the honours of that name, by your progress in one of the intellectual Arts—I could receive no fees from *any* 'William Collins;' and still less could I take them from *you*."

CHAPTER III.

1822—1824.

Pictures of 1823—Summer residence at Hampstead—Method of painting—Anecdotes of models—Correspondence with Mr. Danby—Letter from Sir David Wilkie—Royal Academy Club—Sir George Beaumont, Sir David Wilkie, and Mr. Collins—Visit to Turvey Abbey—Anecdote of "Old Odell"—Visits in the latter part of the year—Pictures of 1824—Method of painting children's portraits—Wilkie in the character of a sponsor—Commission from His Majesty—Second visit to Turvey—Letter to Mrs. W. Collins—Stay at the house of the late Mr. Wells, of Redleaf—Epigram on "Martin, the Game-keeper"—Difficulties of the Annual Royal Academy Dinner—Letter to Sir William Elford, Bart.

In the year 1823, Mr. Collins exhibited at the Royal Academy three pictures:—"A Fish Auction, on the South Coast of Devonshire"—"A scene in Borrowdale, Cumberland," and, "A View of Walmer Castle." The first of these works represented a curious custom among the Devonshire fishermen—that of selling their fish on the beach by auction, and "knocking down the lots" by dropping a stone on the sand. In this picture, the fisherman, surrounded by men, women, and children, is on the point of dropping the stone, while the objects of the commercial contention—the fresh, tempting fish—lie around in baskets, and on the beach. The calm sea and the rocky coast, form the background of the work, which attracted universal attention, from its force and originality. It was painted with extraordinary care and brilliancy, conveying the idea of a clear, sunshiny day, and a varied, animated scene, with perfect intelligibility and success. The picture was a commission from the Earl of Essex. The scene in Borrowdale, (painted for Mr. Ripley,) was an inland view, with fertile wood and mountain scenery, rising high in the canvas, and a group of Cumberland children playing by the banks of a brook, that ripples into the foreground of the picture —the tone of which is bright, lively, and transparent; the character of the figures being remarkably attractive, in their aspect of simplicity and truth. In the view of Walmer Castle, that fine building is seen across a common, the sea occupying the left-hand side of the picture, and the sky being slightly overcast. The colouring in the composition is pearly and delicate —the tone, shadowy and sober. This work was painted for the Earl of Liverpool, and afterwards reproduced, on a smaller scale, for the Duchess of Devonshire.

During the summer of this year Mr. Collins took a cottage at Hampstead,—a place which, in spite of its vicinity to London, has been the source of some of the best pictures of our best landscape-painters, and which was the scene of many of the most elaborate and useful studies collected for future works, by the subject of this biography. Here, with his wife, he lived in perfect tranquillity and retirement throughout the summer months, studying Nature unremittingly in all her aspects, removed from the interruptions of a London life, enjoying occasionally the society of men of kindred talents and pursuits, and preparing his next year's pictures under all the peculiar advantages which his residence so liberally offered to the votary of landscape Art.

Some reference, in this place, to Mr. Collins's method of painting, may not be unacceptable to those who are admirers of his works, and who may be interested in the observation of practical Art. The general composition of his pictures, the arrangement of the clouds, the line of the landscape, the disposition of the figures, he usually sketched at once in chalk upon the canvas, from the resources of his own mind, aided by sketches. The production of the different parts, in their due bearings and condition, next occupied his attention. For this he made new studies and consulted old sketches with the most diligent perseverance, covering sheet after sheet of paper, sometimes for many days together, with separate experiments,—extended to every possible variety in light and shade, colour and composition; watching, whatever his other accidental occupations, and whereever they might happen to take him, for the smallest and remotest assistance of external Nature, and not unfrequently consulting, on points of pictorial eloquence, probability and truth, the impressions of persons who, while conversant with Nature, were unacquainted with Art. After having thus collected his materials, as patiently and gradually as if he were the veriest tyro in his pursuit, after having realized completely in his own mind every part of his picture, after having weighed the merits of his projected work first in the balance with Nature and then with the old masters, he again approached the canvas; and then his power and dexterity became at once apparent, in the extraordinary freedom and decision with which he worked. His landscapes, after the first preparatory, or "dead" colouring, were invariably begun by the sky, which in many of his pictures was finished in one day, and painted honestly throughout, in all its finish, delicacy, and elaboration, with the brush, without any tricks of execution gained by the palette knife, or any artifice of surface acquired by the use of the finger. This was to him always the most anxious part of a picture; he estimated its vast importance and difficulty in their true light. When his sky was not finished at once, he never allowed any portion of it to get dry until the whole was completed; taking care, at such times, to ensure the moisture of the colours, by hanging a wet sheet before his picture during the night. His last operation was to go over the finished sky with a large camel's-hair brush, perfectly soft and dry, which he used with such extraordinary lightness of hand that it was difficult, with the closest watching, to detect that he touched the picture at all. His composition was then carried down, portion by portion, generally in a horizontal direction, to the foreground. His figures, (the true light and shade on which he sometimes secured by grouping them in a large box, using dressed dolls for the purpose,) were seldom finished till they could take their tone and sentiment from a large extent of completed landscape around them. In all these operations, from the delicate tinting of the distant horizon to the vigorous shading of the foreground masses, every touch of the brush produced an immediate and palpable effect. The applications of colour were neither wasted nor misapplied; every component part of the delicate and subtle workmanship proceeded smoothly, swiftly, securely. An instinctive impression of the harmonies of colour, the graces of shape, and the relative processes and varieties of execution, seemed ever present to direct the attentive eye, and to guide the quiet steady hand. But easy and successful as the painter's progress in his work appeared to others, his facility was not the facility of carelessness, mechanism, or chance. From the first moment when he sat down before his easel to the last when he rose from it, every faculty of his body and mind was absorbed in his task. While engaged in painting, he could seldom speak himself, or attend to what was spoken by others; the presence of any one, even a member of his family, looking over his shoulder while he was engaged in completing a work, perplexed and interrupted him if persevered in for any length of time. To so high a degree of finish were his pictures wrought, especially about this period,—so frequently and perseveringly were the parts laboured and relaboured, that, but for the dexterity and security of workmanship above alluded to, he could seldom have succeeded in contributing more than one, or at most two pictures to each Exhibition. Among the first of his anxieties was to paint with such mechanical materials as should ensure the perfect preservation of his works, as regarded colour and surface, to the most distant time. Colours whose duration was in the slightest degree doubtful, any oils, varnishes, and other aids to painting which, in their various combinations he found by long and patient experiment to be doubtful in their application, he rigorously eschewed, whatever might be their actual attraction in the processes of his Art. It was his maxim, that the purchasers of his pictures had a right to expect a possession which should not only remain unaltered and undeteriorated during their own life time, but which should descend unchanged to their posterity, as a work whose colour and surface should last as long as the material on which it was painted. To produce a good picture was his first labour, and to make an endurable one was his last.

From the pictures of Mr. Collins, the transition is natural to the different original materials from which he formed their component parts; and especially, to the rustic figures, which so often supplied some of their most powerful attractions. In selecting the models from which these figures were painted, he enjoyed advantages, and, at the same time, incurred disappointments, to which the historical painter is a stranger. In choosing for his studies people, who in their most ordinary dress and appearance were most fitted for his purposes, he escaped the inconvenience of calling in the help of those who are models by trade, and whose modern and mechanical "presence," often renders them—however lusty of limb, or regular of feature—by no means inspiring, as a foundation for the pourtrayal of the heroes and heroines of poetry and adventure. But on the other hand, in selecting his models from the country lane and the village fireside, he occasionally encountered obstacles of a somewhat irritating, though decidedly amusing nature. On one occasion, when a little cottage girl was sitting to him, finding that the child figetted so perseveringly as to defy all his efforts to paint her, he endeavoured at last to quiet her by an appeal to her vanity, asking her whether she would not like to be "*put into a pretty picture?*" No sooner, however, had he pronounced the words, than the small model fairly burst into tears, and resolutely refused to sit any longer; because, if she was to be put *into* a picture, she should "never be able to get *out* again, and go home to Mammy!" At another time, having observed a little boy in a most picturesquely dirty and ragged condition, playing before a cottage door, he was so much struck with the excellent pictorial qualities of this unsophisticated young rustic, that he engaged the boy's mother to bring him the next morning to the house he was then staying at. At the appointed time, mother and son presented themselves; but, in the appearance of the latter, a fatal metamorphosis had been worked. His dirty face had been scrubbed with soap and water, into a shining, mottled red—his tangled locks had been combed down and flattened straight over his forehead, with mathematical regularity — his various, Murillo-like rags, had been exchanged for a clean pinafore; which, in dismal monotony of white, without speck or fold, covered him decently from chin to ankles—his hands were washed — his stockings were ironed — his shoe-strings were tied; in the theatrical phrase, he had been "got up, regardless of expense, for the occasion." When the astonished painter remonstrated against this alteration, and pleaded for a future resumption of the young gentleman's working-day vestments and impurified physiognomy, the good woman indignantly replied that he should not be painted at all, if he was not painted in his clean face and his Sunday clothes; and marched off with her offspring, in high indignation and alarm.

My father was not, however, always thus unlucky in the study of Nature. He often found cottagers who gloried in being painted, and who sat like professional models, under an erroneous impression that it was for their personal beauties and perfections that their likenesses were pourtrayed. The remarks of these and other good people, who sat to the painter in perfect ignorance of the use or object of his labours, were often exquisitely original. He used to quote the criticism of a celebrated country rat-catcher on the study he had made from him, with hearty triumph and delight. When asked whether he thought his portrait like ; the rat-catcher, who—perhaps in virtue of his calling—was a gruff and unhesitating man, immediately declared that the face was "not a morsel like," but vowed with a great oath, that nothing could ever be equal to the correctness of the *dirt shine on his old leather breeches*, and the *grip* that he had of *the necks of his ferrets !*

The cool self-possession of an old deaf beggar, whom the painter was once engaged in drawing at Hendon, was as amusing, in its way, as the answer of the rat-catcher; and may serve, moreover, to tranquillize the natural apprehensions of those who may be placed, with regard to picturesque models in general, in the same position as my father on this particular occasion. Finding, from certain indications, that the body and garments of this English Edie Ochiltree afforded a sort of pasture-ground to a herd of many animals, of minute size but of magnificent propagating and feeding powers, he hinted his fears—*in a loud bawl*—to the old man, that he might leave some of his small pensioners, or body-guard, behind him. "No fear sir, no fear ! "—replied this deaf and venerable vagrant, contemplating the artist with serious serenity—"I don't think they are any of them likely to leave *me* for *you !*"

In this year my father painted a small picture, engraved, but never exhibited—" View on the Brent, Hendon," for Mr. Danby, of Swinton Park; which, that gentleman criticised, in a letter containing so many excellent remarks upon the painter's style, exhibiting so intimate a sympathy with the objects of Art, and calling forth so characteristic an answer from Mr. Collins, as to make it, in every way, worthy of insertion in these pages. It was as follows:

"To W. Collins, Esq., R.A.

"Swinton Park, June 1, 1823.

"Dear Sir,—Being lately arrived here, I am glad to take this early opportunity of expressing to you the satisfaction which the picture you last sent has given me. It is, I think, as beautiful a choice, and representation of natural scenery, as I ever saw, or can well conceive; and it has a clearness and freshness that remind me of your beautiful view on the coast of Norfolk, which was at the Exhibition some years ago, and is now, I suppose, in His Majesty's collection. The purity of the atmosphere in that picture, with which this corresponds, seems to me to be the greatest foundation of our enjoyment of natural scenery, however different it may be, and is, perhaps, one great proof of the general justice with which the Author of Nature has bestowed his gifts, as well as of the tendency which he means them all to have. In this little landscape of yours, there is, I think, everything that can be desired,—the distribution of light and shade, the brilliancy of light in the haystack, the transparency of the shades by the stream, the drawing, figures, distance, colouring, the general repose and harmony of the whole, have really a sort of magical effect, in reminding me of what I have seen of Nature in her happiest states, and of what has often occurred to me, viz.— how much the observation of natural scenery, and the representation of it in painting, assist each other. That you have felt this in the strongest degree, is, I think, evinced by the manner in which you have painted your picture; and that your feelings are, in other respects, correspondent with this, I am sufficiently induced to believe, from the little conversation I had with you in New Cavendish-street, about two years ago. That you may continue to enjoy such privileges as these, with the natural results of them, and health to secure them, is the best wish I can give you; and, should any occasion call you into these parts, I shall be happy to renew my personal assurance of it; and am, dear Sir,

"Very sincerely yours,
"W. Danby."

"To W. Danby, Esq.

"New Cavendish-street.

"Dear Sir,—I cannot do less than offer my best thanks for your very kind and flattering letter, as I have no greater satisfaction than that of pleasing one so well able to appreciate sentiment in a picture, as yourself. You do, sir, no more than justice to painting, when you say that the attraction of Nature, and the representation of it in painting, assist each other. There are a thousand beauties in landscape scenery, as there are expressions in the human face, which, but for painting, might 'blush unseen.' Sir Joshua Reynolds says that there are many expressions in faces which he either should not have observed, or, if he had, should have supposed out of the reach of painting, had he not seen them successfully imitated by great artists. Painting, too, when pursued legitimately, does, most assuredly, beget a habit of contemplating, and, as it were, tracing the hand of Providence. And when we see so many exquisite forms and colours added to objects, whose ends of being we have every reason to believe might as well be answered in a less attractive dress, we may safely conclude that they were formed to excite those feelings which attend the like pursuits of the Poet and the Painter, and which are a noble balance for the coarser pleasures of the man of the world.

"Trusting that I may have the pleasure of conversing more at large with you on these pleasing subjects, and hoping I may at some future time have it in my power to call at Swinton, I remain, dear Sir,

"Yours, faithfully and obliged,

"W. COLLINS."

Widely differing in subject from the letter of Mr. Danby, yet equally deserving of insertion, as showing the easy and cheerful terms on which the two painters lived, is the following congratulatory letter from

Wilkie to his newly-married friend. Appreciating the excellent domestic qualities of his brother-artist, Mr. Collins had frequently recommended him to engage in matrimony himself, pointing out to him on all occasions, "eligible young ladies;" hinting, as a last resource, at public advertisement; and promising him, after a year of marriage, a true certificate of the state of his feelings under his own altered circumstances, but all without avail. Wilkie admired the "eligible young ladies" with a pictorial, however, rather than an amatory eye; reflected with considerable complacency upon the project of advertisement, and read the certificate of matrimonial tranquillity which was duly forwarded to him by his friend, couched in terms of the most legal formality, but continued, all his life, to hover irresolute at a discreet distance from Hymen's permanent grasp. That he did not glory, however, in his mateless solitude, but rather, like a true knight, longed for the first opportunity *pour faire le gallant, vis-à-vis de sa maîtresse*, is pleasantly testified in the letter that is now subjoined.

"To W. Collins, Esq., R.A.

"Kensington, August 7th, 1823.

"Dear Collins,—It will be pretty generally admitted now, that it was not for nothing you and I went to Scotland last year. In starting with '*Mr. Collins*,' I knew I should have no chance upon equal terms; a court dress was therefore an indispensable auxiliary with me.* But your return a married man, while I came back single, proved how vain my endeavour would have been, had my only object been to rival you with the fair sex. Had that been my purpose, therefore, it is clear you had the advantage of me; but I have now the pleasure of informing you of a piece of news, to prove that my court dress and my appearance in it at Holyrood, though unavailing with the ladies, has not been an idle speculation.

"About three weeks ago, I had the honour of a letter from Mr. Peel, informing me that the appointment of "Limner to the King, for Scotland," become vacant by the demise of Sir Henry Ræburn, had been, by His Majesty, most graciously conferred upon me. This office, unsolicited and unexpected as it is, I have most joyfully accepted, as a very high honour—and I feel, both as successor to Sir Henry Ræburn, and in the manner of my appointment, that I am greatly honoured indeed.

"Being a man in office, and under the Crown, I shall now be considered a placeman, a pensioner, a non-resident, and a sinecurist. These are, however, not altogether without their reward; for unequivocal proofs show that there are emoluments in the case. All Edinburgh was in a ferment, the moment the office was known to be vacant; and I could tell you some odd stories about some of our great friends there, by whom wheel within wheel was set in motion to get it for artists who were friends, and also for gentlemen friends, who were not artists. This ferment extended even to some wise friends of ours in London, who have fairly acknowledged to me that, though no one was more fit for the situation than I, yet they never thought of me till they heard I had got it. It has even been hinted to me, as an objection, that I am not a resident in Scotland, and that I am unfit, from not being a portrait-painter. To the first of these I would plead guilty, if duty was to be done in Scotland,—the latter, that of not being a portrait-painter, is what, in my estimation, gives me the greatest claim to it; and, until they can convince me that limner and portrait-painter are synonymous—which they cannot—I shall remain of the same opinion.

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* Wilkie had been considerably rallied by his friend on the resplendent effect of the above important part of his preparations for the journey to Edinburgh.

"It will be evident to you now, that we have both made something of our Scottish visit. However, I will not put what I have gained in comparison with what you have gained by it. Mrs. Collins will agree with me in this; for, in respect to the improvement to your condition, I am as much behind you as ever. No lady has yet taken compassion upon me—court dress and all together; and, as the time (that is, the protracted time) of twelve months is now at hand, when Mrs. Collins and you are to make out a certificate, to warrant the married as an improved state of existence, I must request—as I have no doubt of the certificate being most satisfactory—that you and Mrs. Collins would give me the best advice, not only upon the sort of person to be chosen, but also to inform me by what means such a person as I am may induce a well-chosen lady to hearken unto reason.

"I saw your mother and brother yesterday; they told me what a delightful time you are now passing at Hampstead, in a beautiful cottage at North End. I saw two studies you had made, and rejoiced to see the dark-brown, vigorous shadows, with the fat surface you have got upon them.* This augurs well; you have, in landscape, the ball at your foot, and, in this rich line, an open and unoccupied field before you—do go on!

"Give my best and kindest regards to Mrs. Collins, in which my brother and sister most heartily join me; and

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Your very faithful and obedient Servant,

"DAVID WILKIE."

About this time was established the Royal Academy Club—one of those old-fashioned institutions, founded, like the Literary Club in Doctor Johnson's time, for the purpose of promoting occasional intel-

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[*] Wilkie was, at this period, very urgent in recommending his friend to use plenty of oil as a "vehicle" in painting, and not, as he expressed it, to "starve his pictures." Thin, pale, flimsy colouring, he always despised.

lectual and social intercourse between men exclusively devoted to the same pursuit. Sir Thomas Lawrence was its chief promoter, and Sir Richard Westmacott, Mr. Alfred Chalon, Mr. Collins, and a few others, were the members. They met once a month, to talk of Art, and to dine together at the Freemasons' Tavern. On the death of Sir Thomas Lawrence, the Association began, however, to languish; and, soon afterwards, it came to an end.

While occupied with the social meetings of artists, it may not be unamusing to the general reader—as instancing the almost boyish delight in his pursuit which is part of the character of a great painter—to mention that, in the summer of this year, Sir George Beaumont, Sir David Wilkie, and Mr. Collins, in setting out to spend a day at Greenwich, mutually agreed to make it a condition of their excursion, that the whole day should be occupied in talking of nothing but Art. The engagement was not more curious than the performance of it was complete. Not one of the party broke the conditions of the journey, from the morning of the departure to the evening of the return.

In July, the painter paid a visit to Mr. Higgins, of Turvey Abbey, and to Mr. T. C. Higgins, of Turvey House. Besides the attractions presented to the pencil by the natural beauties of this neighbourhood, its vicinity to Olney—the favourite residence of the poet Cowper—gave it, to all lovers of poetry, a local and peculiar charm. Conspicuous among its inhabitants, at the time when my father visited it, was "Old Odell," frequently mentioned by Cowper as the favourite messenger who carried his letters and parcels. The extreme picturesqueness and genuine rustic dignity of this old man's appearance made him an admirable subject for pictorial study. Portraits of him, in water-colours and oils, were accordingly made by my father, who introduced him into three of his pictures, to which reference will be made hereafter. The donkey on which he had for years ridden to-and-fro with letters, was as carefully depicted by the painter as his rider. On visiting "Old Odell" a year or two afterwards, Mr. Collins observed a strange-looking object hanging against his kitchen-wall, and inquired what it was: "Oh, Sir," replied the old man sorrowfully, "that is the skin of my poor donkey! he died of old age, and I did not like to part with him altogether, so I had his skin dried and hung up there!" Tears came into his eyes as he spoke of the old companion of all his village pilgrimages. The incident might have formed a continuation of Sterne's exquisite episode in the "Sentimental Journey."

Visits, during the remainder of the year, to the country-seats of Lord Liverpool, Lord Essex, Sir Charles Long, and Mr. Wells, enabled the painter to make some valuable additions to his collection of landscape studies; a privilege of particular advantage to him this season, as his pictures for the next Exhibition comprised (in consequence of the terms of the commissions on which they were painted) no examples of his wonted coast scenes, but were all, more or less, to be described under the appellation of inland subjects. These pictures of 1824 were entitled: "Stirling Castle;" "The Cherry-Seller,—a Scene at Turvey, Bedfordshire;" "Buckland, on the River Dart;" and "Portraits of the Children of Henry Rice, Esq." In "Stirling Castle," (painted for Mr. C. Cope,) the view of the grand old fortress was brightly and tenderly touched, the atmosphere being divested of all national gloom and mist, and suffusing in a clear and delicate light the wide-spread objects of the northern scene. "The Cherry-Seller," painted for Mr. T. C. Higgins, was a large picture; the figure of the fruit-vendor himself being a careful study of "Old Odell." His donkey stands beside him at the cottage gate, bearing the cherry-laden panniers, from which he is weighing out part of his stock in trade to a girl who waits, dish in hand, ready to receive it. The other principal figures are, a child crawling under the donkey to pick up a cherry that has dropped, and a boy who is holding the animal's head. The back-ground of the picture is formed by the picturesque and irregular village street. A perfectly simple and national air pervades the whole composition; its minutest technicalities, as well as its most important objects, are laboured to an extraordinary degree of finish. The tone of colour in the picture is bright, pure, and truthful, and perfectly suggestive of the clear English sunshine that is glittering over the rustic scene. "Buckland on the

Dart," painted for Mr. Bastard, M.P., was full of the characteristics of a Devonshire view,—the dashing, joyous, rocky stream; the wooded hills and quarries in the back-ground; and the fresh, cool, cloudy sky overhead. The figures in the picture were represented by some woodmen, occupied in a corner of the foreground in felling a tree. The "Portraits of the Children of H. Rice, Esq.," a valued and intimate friend of the painter, comprised a branch of the Art, which my father, except in the earlier parts of his career, rarely undertook but at the request of those with whom he was intimately acquainted. His portraits produced under these circumstances were few in number, and were almost invariably treated as pictures. In painting children, on this and other occasions to be hereafter mentioned, he pourtrayed no infant cherubs, fitted with speckless frocks, seated on aristocratic gilt stools, and leering ravishingly at the spectator, under a sky wreathed inconceivably with clouds of red curtain, and before a back-ground spotted profusely with Elysian flowers, vapoury trees, and distant temples of immeasurable magnitude. Under his pencil, children retained their play-ground clothes, preserved their play-ground occupations, and were connected visibly and pleasingly with the surrounding landscape. Accordingly, in the portraits of Mr. Rice's children, a boy and girl are simply represented as feeding their pet rabbits; the back-ground of the picture being a transcript of the farm scenery of a house of their father's at Oxgate, where the painter was staying at the time when the portraits were produced. So complete was this work as a *picture* alone, that it was afterwards engraved and sold under the title of "Feeding the Rabbits."

In noticing "The Cherry-Seller," it should have been mentioned that the original study of the figures of "Old Odell" and his donkey, as introduced in that picture, was purchased by Sir Robert Peel, and afterwards repeated for Mr. Marshall. The work belonging to the first-named of these gentlemen was one among the pictures exhibited at the British Institution after the painter's death. It may also be observed that, in addition to the works above enumerated, my father produced this year two small sea-pieces, not exhibited.

On the birth of his first son, at the beginning of this year, the painter requested Sir David Wilkie to become one of the sponsors for his child. The great artist's first criticism on his future godson is worth recording, from its originality. Sir David, whose studies of human nature extended to everything but *infant* human nature, had evidently been refreshing his faculties for the occasion, by taxing his boyish recollections of puppies and kittens; for, after looking intently into the child's eyes, as it was held up for his inspection, he exclaimed to the father, with serious astonishment and satisfaction, "He *sees!*"

A gratifying occurrence of my father's professional life was this year presented by the receipt of a commission from His Majesty, George the Fourth, for another picture by his hand. The subject chosen for the King was a Hastings Coast Scene; and the wish to give the picture the most immediate and particular study, was one of the main reasons that induced the painter soon afterwards to fix his summer residence at Hastings. The work itself will be noticed at the period of its completion,—the year 1825.

On his return from Hastings, Mr. Collins wrote thus to his wife, during a second visit to his friends at Turvey Abbey:

"To Mrs. William Collins.

"Turvey Abbey, Aug. 27th, 1824.

"Your letter gave me the greatest pleasure, and I write as you desire, in order that you may receive my communication to-morrow. You will be surprised (I am disposed to believe agreeably so) to hear that I purpose returning to London from this place; and that I have given up the idea of visiting Leamington. You will think me a whimsical fellow, but you know odd people do odd things. * * * My friends are very desirous to prolong my stay here beyond the original engagement, but I think I shall carry my point and reach New Cavendish-street on Monday next. * * * You desired me to be idle during my stay at Turvey. I can assure you I have been so, and heartily tired I am of the *employment*. You know, as well as myself, that it is much more difficult to be idle than busy; and that accounts, I suppose, for your having set me the task. * * * I shall bring some Turvey lace with me; and I have an apple for my mother, gathered from a tree planted by Cowper in the garden of the house he lived in here. * * *

"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

In the autumn of this year my father again visited the late Mr. Wells, at Redleaf. On the attractions of his sojourn there, in a house filled with fine pictures, standing in lovely grounds, and surrounded by picturesque scenery, the painter thus expresses himself in a letter to his wife:

"The place and the figures and my most excellent host are all, everything I could wish. I cannot be in better hands than in Mr. Wells's, whose readiness to get me subjects, and whose kindness in every way, has much impressed me in his favour. To the poor he is a most invaluable friend."

It was during one of these visits to Mr. Wells that Mr. Collins wrote the subjoined epigram, which, as the production of a painter, may perhaps claim insertion among the curiosities of Art. One of his host's gamekeepers, named Martin, was confined to his bed in the shooting season by an accident. The disappointment of the man at his untimely confinement was extreme; and Mr. Wells, with his usual good-nature, proposed to the painter to pay him a visit of condolence. On being interrogated as to the state of his spirits and health, Martin replied that he got through his nights pretty well, as he had then "a knack at sleeping:" but complained that his "days were wretchedly black." When Mr. Wells and Mr. Collins returned from their expedition, the latter thus versified Martin's answer in his own words:

> "Says Martin,—'My life seems so drear,
> My days appear *wretchedly black*,
> It is not the nights that I fear,
> As *at sleeping I then have a knack*.'
> Oh, Martin, how silly is all that you say!
> Of science how much you must lack!
> Is it strange that an union of *Martin* and *Day*
> Should a mixture produce that is *black?*"

Next in difficulty, perhaps, to making a proper selection of pictures for the Academy Exhibition, is the task of managing a good choice of the guests who are invited to the private annual dinner to patrons of Art and remarkable men which precedes it. In both cases, as numbers are necessarily limited, there is danger that a good picture, or an important guest, may in the confusion of the moment be inadvertently excluded: for, in arranging the invitations for the dinner, after the royal dukes, the cabinet ministers, men of high rank or fame, patrons of great celebrity, and others obviously eligible have been invited, there still remains a large list to canvas, whose claims, though not perhaps equally conspicuous, are yet often equally just. Of some of these difficulties, and of the methods of meeting them, an idea may be gathered from the following letter from Mr. Collins to Sir William Elford,—an amateur artist and patron himself, and an early friend of the painter's:

"To Sir William Elford, Bart.

"London, 1824.

"Dear Sir,—I shall feel great pleasure in receiving your picture for the Exhibition as usual. With respect to the other subject, I perfectly recollect that at the time you had the misfortune to break your arm, the Council, concluding you could not attend the dinner of that season, and finding, as they always do, the greatest difficulty in accommodating all those who have claims upon the attention of the Royal Academy, took that opportunity of passing over your name for that year; the Council not having the power to make any second issue of tickets, to fill the places of those who, being already invited, may send excuses.

"As I was not upon the Council last year, and as ballotting for invitations is a part of their business with which the body at large never interferes, I can only suppose that, as new patrons increase the difficulties become greater, and some must be left out for a time. Chantrey has not been on the Council for three or four years, and consequently has no more power than any other member out of office.

"As I had with regret missed you at the dinner of last year, I had, before I received your letter, resolved to see Sir Thomas Lawrence upon the subject; and, as I hope to meet him on Wednesday, I shall not fail to do as I had purposed. As the invitations will not be issued for at least six weeks, I shall be able to write to you again.

"Yours obediently and faithfully,

"William Collins."

A curious instance of misapprehension of the motives that guide the Royal Academy in issuing the invitations to their dinner occurred some years since. A certain Lord Mayor, who, as Lord Mayor only, had been one of the guests, found himself, of course, on the recurrence of the next year's dinner, unincluded in the list of invitations. Accordingly he wrote an angry letter of remonstrance to the Royal Academy, desiring to know the reason of his exclusion. For some time everybody was puzzled to discover who Alderman —— was, and how he could possibly have attended the last year's dinner. At length, one of the Council suggested that their quondam guest might be the deposed Lord Mayor. His hypothesis was discovered to be correct, and the Secretary was charged with the disagreeable duty of informing the reclaimant that he had only been asked as first representative of the City of London, and that now that he had relapsed into plain *Alderman*, the invitation had necessarily been forwarded to his successor in the civic throne.

Besides the commission from His Majesty, my father was engaged to paint two more sea-pieces this year—one for the Duke of Bedford, and one for Sir Robert Peel. A visit in November to Lord Liverpool, at Walmer Castle, enabled him to continue those studies for his next year's efforts, which he had already begun in the summer, at Hastings.

CHAPTER IV.

1824—1827.

Pictures of 1825—Practice in etching—Death of Owen, the portrait-painter—Letter from Mr. Collins to Lord Liverpool, on the establishment of the National Gallery—Summer residence and studies at Hendon—Parties at Coleridge's—Edward Irving, &c.—Liberal commission from Sir Robert Peel—Completion of His Majesty's picture—Description of the work, and reference to the Painter's interview with the King—Sir Jeffery Wyattville—Letters from and to Wilkie—Pictures of 1826—Removal of residence to Hampstead—Researches with friends amid the scenery of his new abode—Extract from Diary, and from letter to a friend—Anecdote connected with the progress of Sir Robert Peel's new picture—Letter to Mrs. William Collins.

THE Exhibition of 1825 contained a landscape and two sea-pieces by my father: they were, "Kitley, Devon," (painted for Mr. Bastard, M.P.,)—a quiet, green, park-like view, treated with a pastoral serenity and repose; "Fishermen getting out their Nets," (Sir R. Peel's picture,)—a work of great originality and simplicity of incident, cool in tone, and pearly and delicate in colour; and "Buying Fish on the Beach,"—the largest of the three, painted for the Duke of Bedford. This picture is remarkable for the boldness and success with which a transient atmospheric effect is produced on the canvas: it is a hazy morning, but the sun is breaking through the mist with a delicate, aërial, golden light, which gives the tone to the rest of the scene. Every touch of colour is laid on with reference to every variety of light and shade that can proceed from the influence of the soft morning sky. The fishing-boats on the fore-ground, the figures bargaining on the beach, the smooth sea in the middle distance, are relatively shadowed by the mist, or brightened by the warm, gentle light, with consummate skill. It is a work that betrays immediately, that from its origin Nature has presided, at every point, over its treatment by Art.

In this year, animated by the example of the great painters who had gone before him,—of Rembrandt and Hogarth especially,—Mr. Collins turned his attention to that all-powerful engine of pictorial fame—the graver. The branch of engraving he selected was "etching:" a process which, consisting of a combination of bold and delicate lines, traced on copper or steel,—at once superficial yet suggestive, free yet correct,—is the most flexible medium in the painter's hands for conveying and multiplying a graceful and striking summary of his own ideas. Of Mr. Collins's diligence and success in this new Art, the public had a testimony in the publication, many years afterwards, towards the latter part of his life, of a series of etchings executed by him from his pictures, which obtained the critical approbation of the press, and which would have been continued but for the obstacles presented by the long and severe illness which at length terminated in his death.

It was at this period, also, that he suffered the loss of an early and attached friend—one to whose taste and kindness he had been equally indebted in early life—Mr. Owen, R.A., the celebrated portrait-painter, who died under peculiarly distressing circumstances. In the plenitude of fame and patronage, when fortune and success opened simultaneously before him, this graceful and accomplished artist had been seized with an affection of the spine, which obliged him to resign the practice of his profession entirely. After a period of protracted suffering and compelled indolence, his medical attendants at length gave him hopes of a progress towards recovery. On the evening before his death, he took, as usual, a draught of composing drops—observing, however, at the time, that its taste was different from that of his usual mixture. About midnight, the servant entered his room, and was alarmed at hearing that his master was breathing with unusual heaviness and difficulty. Assistance was immediately sent for, but it was too late—a fatal mistake had been committed in labelling the mixture he was accustomed to take, and the unfortunate man had drunk, unconsciously, a whole bottle full of *laudanum.*

Under the Earl of Liverpool's administration, the foundation of the National Gallery was begun in this year, by the purchase of Mr. Angerstein's pictures, to form the nucleus of a collection. Such an opportunity of endeavouring, as far as lay in his own power, to procure the honourable advancement of his profession, and a liberal attention to the just claims of modern Art, was not to be lost by one so devoted to every interest and exigence of his pursuit as the subject of this Biography. Accordingly, he addressed to the Earl of Liverpool a private letter, which, written at the time of the establishment of an institution whose arrangements have since been the subject of so much angry discussion, and advocating by the strongest arguments the employment of practical artists in all the offices of a National Gallery, must be perused with curiosity and interest at least, if not with conviction and applause. In subjoining Mr. Collins's letter, it is worthy of remark, that a principal part of his claims for his profession, therein advanced, has been ultimately recognised by Government in the successive appointment of two Royal Academicians (Mr. Eastlake, R.A., and, on his resignation, Mr. Uwins, R.A.,) to a chief position in the responsible superintendence of The National Gallery.

Mr. Collins's letter is expressed as follows:

"To the Right Honourable the Earl of Liverpool, etc., etc., etc.

"London, 1825.

"My Lord,—The great object of the foundation of a National Gallery having been achieved, and your lordship having taken an active part in its furtherance and plan, I hope I shall not be considered as taking too great a liberty in respectfully venturing to offer a few remarks upon the opportunity, now in the hands of His Majesty's Government, of hastening the fulfilment of the prediction of Richardson—that, 'if ever the Art should again be brought to perfection, it will be in England.'

"The plan I would propose confers a great benefit on the employed, at a very moderate expense to the employer. It is simply, my Lord, to bestow on artists of acknowledged talent those situations connected with the Institution for which, I venture to assert, they are the best qualified, and which legitimately belong to them. My plan by no means proposes the entire support of such artists in indolence, or any emolument that would not leave them still to exercise great exertion for their maintenance. Nor, however desirable such aid might be to the young student, or artists in the decline of power, would it be my object to see it conferred on either.

"The propriety of the constant attendance of respectable and responsible persons, in whose custody the national pictures might be left, would no doubt be highly satisfactory to the public; and artists are best calculated for the situations proposed, because, to them, such attendance would afford an opportunity of pursuing their studies with the greatest possible advantage to their profession; they would also, for that reason, be satisfied with a salary very considerably below what must be given, for the like attendance, to equally responsible persons in any other class of life.

"The consequences of immediate contact with such works as would belong to a National Gallery would not lead the matured artist blindly to copy merely the efforts before him, but would stimulate to the investigation and adoption of those principles which, in their result, have so constantly charmed the world—principles which, added to the intellectual choice of subject admitted to characterise the designs of our modern artists, would most assuredly add fresh influence, in a moral point of view, to the powers of Art.

"In our own times, no better instance of the success of a patient investigation of the works of the old masters can be adduced than that of our countryman, Sir Joshua Reynolds, who, with the most glorious success, added to their technical excellences a sentiment, character, and grace, not always to be found in their works.

"If it be essential, also, to the competency of the person filling the situation already proposed, that he possess judgment to decide on the merits of works of Art, the artist (imitations of whose works are constantly passed by picture-dealers on each other for genuine productions) will be the least likely to mistake copies for originals, in any new purchase His Majesty's Government may think proper to make.

"Literary men, as your Lordship knows, and not booksellers, are employed as officers at the British Museum, as well as in the public libraries abroad,—and why should not painters be the fittest persons for the surveyorship of public collections of pictures? It cannot be doubted that they who are most alive to the perception of the beauties and delicacies of fine workmanship, will be the most likely to keep a watchful eye over excellences which are so constantly sacrificed by the injudicious operations of those who are ignorant of the means by which such beauties are generally produced.

"It may be objected, I am aware, to a plan for the furtherance of Art by the study of the ancient masters, that those means have been already afforded with so little success in a neighbouring country; but it must not be forgotten, that *their* failure is entirely to be attributed to a want of the due appreciation of the high qualities of their predecessors, and a consequent rejection of the mode of using a National Gallery which I have ventured to urge. It is an acknowledged fact, that artists of the lowest rank have always been found most ready and eager to disparage the works of the old masters.

"It would, my Lord, on my part, be absurd to deny having, what may be deemed, a selfish view in this appeal to your Lordship; and that it is the interests of my brethren and myself, as well as of the Art, which I may seem anxious to advocate. But, when I know that an annual expense of one thousand pounds would be sufficient to satisfy at least three artists, in the vigour of their professional career, I cannot possibly let this opportunity pass of most earnestly and respectfully entreating the kind consideration of a nobleman who has so constantly evinced the warmest desire to uphold the interests of Modern Art.

"With every sentiment of respect,

"I have the honour to be, my Lord,

"Your Lordship's most obliged and obedient Servant,

"WILLIAM COLLINS."

During this summer the painter fixed his residence at the little village of Hendon, taking with him the important pictures for Lord Northwicke, Sir Abraham Hume, and Mr. Morrison, M.P., on which he was then engaged. To the brooks, the meadows, and the woods, surrounding this thoroughly English retirement, his happiest leisure hours were devoted. Sometimes an old friend, a fellow-student, or a patron, visited him; sometimes he repaired to the abode of Mr. Gillman, at Highgate, where its illustrious inmate, Coleridge, then assembled around him the most gifted and remarkable men of the age. Here he first met that original and extraordinary character, Edward Irving, whose preaching was at that time drawing its greatest multitude of hearers, and whose religious opinions had not then assumed the marked and startling form in which they afterwards appeared. From the discussions upon matters of worship constantly occurring between Coleridge and Irving, Mr. Collins, and others of the poet's guests, gathered such fresh information, and acquired such new ideas, as they never afterwards forgot. Eloquent as he was upon all other subjects, neither in his conversation nor in his writings did the powerful and profound mind of Coleridge ever so thoroughly expose its secret treasures as when he spoke, or wrote, of religion. It was especially in his conversation on this subject that his brilliancy flashed out in all the blaze of inspiration—a brilliancy which wanted but a more popular direction, to shine before the world as widely and enduringly as the brightest poetic reputations kindled even in *his* glorious age.

Having been thus employed during the summer, the painter occupied himself, as usual in the autumn, in visiting his friends. After a sojourn with Mr. Wells, he proceeded to Dover Castle, the residence of his excellent friend, Mr. Jenkinson, a nephew of Lord Liverpool's, to whom he had been introduced in the present year. From this place, he writes as follows:

"TO MRS. WILLIAM COLLINS.

"Dover Castle, October 7th, 1825.

"* * * I received your letter soon after my arrival at this place, and a great comfort I found it. You cannot tell me too much of your dear self and the sweet child. It really seems a year since we parted; and, notwithstanding the longing desire I feel to return, I fear I cannot accomplish the pleasing task until Thursday, or Friday, in the next week. Mr. Jenkinson will not hear of my leaving, and I have engaged to go to Walmer Castle for a day or two.

"This place affords so many hints for future subjects, and is so far from London, that I feel anxious to take advantage, now, of all it affords. Almost all my time is spent out of doors; and I think I derive much benefit from the sea air, and the delightful situation of this romantic Castle. The view from the living-rooms is magnificent, and the attentions of my host extremely gratifying.

"Yesterday, I dined at the house of the Archbishop of Canterbury—who has seven daughters, all unmarried—and a very pleasant party we had. This evening I have returned from dining with Mr. Hutchins, with whom Miss Wilkie has journeyed to Dover; and, I am happy to say, she gives a very good account of her brother, who is at Genoa. * * *

"* * * Before I left Mr. Wells, he wished me to put a price on my picture, which I improved much while at his house; having spent all the time not devoted to exercise upon it. I proposed one hundred and twenty-five guineas as the price; which Mr. Wells thought too little, and offered a cheque for a hundred, in addition to the forty-five already received; which I would not take: and so the matter rests. * * *

"* * * I am glad to find my mother has been with you, and I hope you will let her know my plans: tell her I would write to her, did I not know she would hear as much from you as I could put into a letter to her. Surely Hendon must be beautiful, if you have such weather now as we have at Dover. * * *

"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

During this autumn, the painter received, at Sir Robert Peel's table, the first intimation of that gentleman's wish to possess a new work by his hand which should be the most important that he had ever painted. The size of the picture, the subject, and amount of remuneration were left entirely to the painter's discretion. Of the manner in which this liberal and flattering commission was executed, and of the circumstances attending its completion, due notice will be taken, at the period when the picture was publicly exhibited—the year 1827.

The Coast Scene, ordered for His Majesty, in 1824, was now completed: it was entitled "Prawn Fishers at Hastings," and was never exhibited. A boy with a little child on his back, and a girl, holding up her apron to receive the Prawns which one of the "Fishers," is giving to her, occupy the beach in the left-hand foreground. Further out, in the middle distance, and finely relieved against the sky, are three other Prawn Fishers, pursuing their occupation among the pools of "tide-water." The flat rocks covered with sea-weed, on which these figures are standing, extend down to the right-hand foreground, and are painted with amazing power, finish, and fidelity to Nature. High cliffs rise in the left distance; while the calm ocean occupies the right. The sky, with its various combinations of light, large, and streaky clouds, blown about by the wind into different directions, and exquisite forms, is treated with an airy grace and delicacy, which the artist never, perhaps, surpassed in any of his efforts of this class. The figures in the picture are forcible and natural—the tone of colour is pure and masterly, throughout: it is, in every respect, worthy of the place in the noble collection of works of Art at Windsor Castle, which it still occupies.

After having received the congratulations of every one who saw this work during its progress, Mr. Collins had the final satisfaction of hearing its Royal possessor express his satisfaction at his new acquisition, in a personal interview, at Windsor; whither the painter had been summoned, to superintend the hanging of his picture in the proper light. The notorious ease and affability of the King's manners, when he was brought into contact with men of genius of any class, was as apparent in his frank and kind reception of Mr. Collins, as in all other instances. His shrewd and sensible remarks on painting; the warmth and interest with which he spoke of the prospects of national Art; and the hearty and discriminating praise he bestowed upon his new picture, were occurrences of the interview, to which the painter ever afterwards reverted, with equal gratitude and delight. But once did the King make a mistake in the course of the conversation on Art; and that was in relation to the precise bearing of the Coast, as represented in the picture. Mr. Collins ventured to set him right on this point; and the propriety of the correction was acknowledged with the most perfect good-humour. Indeed, the constant anxiety of this cultivated and high-spirited monarch, to profit on matters connected with Literature and the Arts, by the advice and opinions of professors of each science, was an interesting and remarkable trait in his character. On some occasions his patience was put to the test, in this manner of acquiring knowledge; and on none more frequently than when consulting on matters of Art, with his architect, Sir Jeffrey Wyattville; whose odd bluntness and hastiness, contrasted amusingly with the polish and temper of his Royal master. At the time when alterations were taking place in the Tower at Windsor the King gave some directions, not at all in harmony with Sir Jeffrey's taste: accordingly he put the King's plan on paper, but coolly followed his own, in reducing it to execution. When the work was completed His Majesty saw it, and immediately expressed his pleasure at seeing that his directions had been so well followed. Most men would have let the matter rest here: but Sir Jeffrey was determined not to hide his light under a bushel; and taking up the Royal plan that he had rejected, observed triumphantly as he showed it to the King; "If I had done as your Majesty desired, this would have been the effect!" The King smiled at his architect's determination to keep to his own opinions and to gain all the credit for them; and quietly replied, as he laid down his despised plan:—"Well, Wyattville, I suppose I must acknowledge that you know best!"

The following letter, addressed to Mr. Collins, from Rome, by Sir David Wilkie, and the reply to it, mark the commencement of a correspondence, which was continued during Wilkie's progress through Spain, as well as during my father's residence on the Continent some years afterwards; and which will be found to contain, as it proceeds, an interesting account, recorded by each painter in turn, of his first impressions of the marvellous achievements of southern Art:

To W. Collins, Esq., R.A.

"Rome, Dec. 3rd, 1825.

"Dear Collins,—After hearing, as you no doubt must have done, that I was laid up under the doctor's hands at Paris, where no good was gained by it; and after hearing, also, that I had been taken ill at Parma, where I have never been, you may be surprised to find that I am still in the land of the living. Of health, however, I have no wish to boast: nor do I wish to complain of the anxiety of friends. Glad should I have been to have seen the wonders of this

Eternal City with greater powers of benefiting by the sight: but the journey of a thousand miles, while it has amused and diverted me, has at least done no harm; and, after its fatigues, I am quite as able-bodied as at starting; and if still unable for serious study and occupation, have the satisfaction of being more equal than I was to the effort of communicating my ideas and impressions to my distant friends.

"My first project of travelling with Phillips and Hilton being thwarted by my detention in Paris, we entered Italy at different times; and while they took the road to Venice, Parma, and Bologna, I, with my cousin Lister, took the western road from Milan by Genoa and Pisa; and arrived at Florence, our place of rendezvous, three days before them. Among us three, or rather between them and myself, when in this cradle of the revival of Art, there was naturally a collision of opinion; but in one thing we had formed the same conclusion, and that too from objects seen on our different routes, and before we met—namely, that the only Art pure and unsophisticated, and that is worth study and consideration by an artist, or that has the true object of Art in view, is to be found in the works of those masters who revived and improved the Art, and those who ultimately brought it to perfection. These seem alone, whatever their talent was, to have addressed themselves to the common sense of mankind. From Giotto to Michael Angelo, expression and sentiment seem the first thing thought of: while those that followed, seem to have allowed technicalities to get the better of them, until simplicity giving way to intricacy, they appear to have painted more for the artist and the connoisseur than for the untutored apprehensions of ordinary men.

"Such, I think, must be the impression of a stranger. The multitude of works pressed upon him at all hands would be distraction itself, but for the selection you have to make of the best; and everything commonplace, affected, or academical you reject by a kind of instinct; but in doing so, many a mighty name is, I assure you, thrust in the background, and many unknown and unscientific names brought into view. But this is a classification upon which all progress in Art must depend, inasmuch as a new power over the mind or feelings of man, added to the Art, is of more value than all the changes that can be rung, however dexterously, upon that which has been already invented.

"After viewing with extreme interest, at Pisa and at Florence, the series of Art from Cimabue and Giotto down to P. Perugino and Fra Bartolomeo, I was all expectation to see, on coming to Rome, the works of Raphael and Michael Angelo. The Vatican and Sistine Chapel were, therefore, my first objects of attention. On entering, the grayness of the frescoes first struck me, and some time elapsed before this wore off. The Raphaels resemble much the Cartoons; they are less finished, and a little more damaged than I expected, but in colour they are admirable, and lose nothing from being so. They have, indeed, this high quality, that the subject is uppermost, and they have more excellences addressed to the unlearned observers than any works I know of. When in the freshness of their first existence, they must have been most attractive to the common people, which, I doubt, is more than could have been said for Titian or Rubens.

"Michael Angelo's works I visited with greater apprehension, prepared almost for disappointment; but when the first impression of the grayness of fresco was over, they grew upon me with overpowering influence. The composition of the 'Last Judgment' and ceiling you know perfectly,—the colour, effect, and expression, therefore, is all that will be new to *you* as it was to *me*. As a colourist, people seem to apologize for him, but I assure you, quite unnecessarily; he is always appropriate, never offends, and in many parts is as fine as Titian or Correggio. Broken tints, with most agreeable arrangement and harmony, with all the suavity of richness and tone that we are accustomed to exact from the Venetians, seem quite familiar with him; and, high as his other qualities are for composition and mental intelligence, his colouring rather adds than detracts from them. And though Sir Joshua Reynolds seems to have overlooked this quality in Michael Angelo, where he says that severity and harshness are necessary to the grand style, I still give him credit for unaffected sincerity in his admiration of the great master, between whose works in the Sistine Chapel and his own we have been tracing many resemblances; not only in the high aim, the something unattainable, and the profound feeling for the indescribable thoughts of the inward man, but even in the more obvious qualities of light and shadow and colour. The wonders accomplished here in fresco suggest the question whether it should not be tried in England ? Damp climate is objected,—but Italy is damp too; and the difficulty of the work is stated,—but this vanishes, since we see the artists here doing it with perfect facility. Several Germans,—namely, Overbeck, Fight, Schadow, and Schnorr, have painted two palazzos in the early German manner, imitating not Raphael, but Raphael's masters, and with great cleverness and research; but they have not hit the mark,—their style wanting so much of modern embellishment cannot now be popular, and can neither be admired nor followed, as Pietro Perugino and Ghirlandaio were in their early day. This has given occasion to the wags to say, that Overbeck has overreached himself; that Fight is shy and timid; that Schadow has neither depth nor softness; and that Schnorr is without repose!!! With all this, however, in our country of novelty and experiment, why do those, whose aim in the higher walks is so cramped and confined by a measured canvas and a limited commission not try at once to revive the art of fresco?

"After the above crude thoughts, I now come to consider what your dear lady, (to whom I beg to be most kindly remembered,) and yourself, will see is the postscript; and therefore, the most important part of my communication, namely—whether you should not come, to see and study this land of promise. For my own part, I am thankful that I have seen it; and if I should recover my health and powers of application, shall bless the present affliction for having put this long-looked-for gratification within my reach, at a period that I hope is not too late for benefiting by it. So much do I think I gain by seeing Art, however different from mine, yet exerted with an aim, capable of being infused into any style. It is for you to judge, whether a similar advantage can be derived in *your* line—with this difference, that while I see pictures of figures, you can see no pictures of landscapes, in this country. From my leaving Paris, not one landscape has presented itself, good, bad, or indifferent, of the Italian school. The Art of Italy therefore, except by analogy, can be of no use to you; but, even in this way, it would enlarge your views; and, in respect to the country, as a new material to work upon, the country of Claude and the Poussins, what might it not furnish you! For, in spite of the scanty verdure, the stunted trees, and the muddy streams, still this is Italy; and, until you see this, and the mountains of Switzerland, you can have no proper idea of what Nature is capable of. Here, everything is seen clearer than in England—the sky is bluer, the light is brighter, the shadows stronger, and colours more vivid than with you; and, besides a change of effect in the pictures of an artist, in the course of a long professional career — which I hope you still have before you—may not a change of subject—as well to develope your own powers, as to keep alive the public interest—be a thing of consequence to you? Remember what Wilson and Turner have gained from Italy and Switzerland; and, though as a family man it will require a sacrifice, I think it well worth your deliberate consideration.

"In writing the above, let me not throw the apple of discord between you and your good lady. Her approval is necessary; but she has Mrs. Phillips as an heroic example; and it would be an advantage to your family, exactly in proportion as it would benefit yourself. Pray what would Sir George Beaumont, or Sir Charles Long, think of such a project? Mr. Higgins I saw at Florence; and I find he is now at Rome. He delivered your letter to Kirkup.

"Now, dear Collins, in answer to this monstrous long letter, which I can only write at intervals, to avoid fatigue, you must write to me, to give me a detail of all the news about London Art. We have heard of Allen's election; but this is almost the only thing we have heard of since we started—therefore, write me everything, and do not be long in setting about it—I have no other way of hearing about these matters, but through you; and, therefore, depend on your kindness in doing it.

"Here is quite a colony of English artists, and also many Scotch. Sculptors are very busy. Gibson has just finished a group of the Zephyrs bearing Pysche, for Sir George Beaumont. Joseph ought to come here; he will be lost in Edinburgh: Rome ought, of all places, to be seen by a sculptor: urge him to it. Phillips and Hilton desire to be kindly remembered. Having little time, they are most active, and purpose leaving for home, by way of Genoa and Mount Cenis, in a fortnight. Their visit was far too short, but must be useful to both. Eastlake has laid aside his banditti to paint an historical subject — Roman history — Poussin size. Lane's picture not yet visible to mortal eye.

"Give my best respects to Mrs. Collins, and to your brother; and with sincere esteem,

"I am, dear Sir,
"Yours very truly,
"DAVID WILKIE."

"P.S. Let me know what you are doing yourself."

"TO SIR DAVID WILKIE, R.A.

"11, New Cavendish-street,
December 22nd, 1825.

"Dear Wilkie—I received with the most heartfelt gratification the account, under your own hand, of your advance in health and spirits. Most sincerely do I trust your visit to Italy may be the means of effectually removing all traces of your late indisposition. If the earnest wishes of your numerous friends could aught avail you, you would be well indeed!

"The account you give of your feelings upon visiting the works of Raphael and Michael Angelo, although it does not altogether surprise me, yet, I must confess, it somewhat startles me. I have been so long in the habit of considering Titian a mighty man, that I cannot help feeling disappointed that you say so little about him; and I much fear that the excellences of the Venetian school are sinking rapidly in your estimation. As for the Dutch and Flemish heresies, I conclude it will be prudent, in their behalf, to hold my peace.

"I am much obliged to you for continuing to take an interest in my welfare, and were it practicable, I should have great satisfaction in joining you in Italy; but much as my wife admires the heroism of the lady you mention, she does not think I dare go alone, and so the 'scanty verdure, muddy streams, and stunted trees' must wait for a sitting until I have paid my just and lawful debts in my own country.

"You desire news of our proceedings here, and such as I can furnish you with you shall have. Our three gold medals were given to Wood, Dacre, and Basset for painting, sculpture, and architecture, and the usual number of silver medals; but I am sorry to say we had nothing particularly good in any department. The sculpture made the best appearance. The best picture, in consequence of the person who painted it (John Hayter, I believe,) not having attended as required by the laws, to make a sketch, was not allowed to compete. Mr. Peel has just purchased a very fine De Hooge, for twelve hundred guineas. Etty and Danby are busily engaged about large pictures for Somerset House; and I have been working hard for some months. During my stay at Hendon I painted a picture for Mr. Wells, and one for the King, which his Majesty desired me to take to the Lodge at Windsor, where I had the honour of an interview, (introduced by Sir Charles Long,) which was one of the most gratifying events of my life. Your two pictures were seen to great advantage, especially the 'Penny Wedding,' which is certainly one of your most beautiful works. I have been to the Kentish coast, where I saw your sister, and from whom, during my stay there, I heard favourable accounts of your health, which I transmitted to Mr. Wells and other of your friends, who had been, as well as myself, misled by the newspapers on that subject. Since my return, I have been employed upon a picture for Mr. Morrison; and although I remained at Hendon until the beginning of this month, my protracted stay there has not prevented my receiving some new and important commissions.

"London is at this moment unusually full, and the monied interest in a deplorable way. One really finds some advantage in being too poor to keep a banker.

Should you have it in your power to get some slight sketches made for you of the arrangement of the colours in the fine things you have before you, they might be useful.

"I have ventured to employ an engraver, who has just completed a small engraving from one of my pictures, and has begun one from Lord Liverpool's picture,* which will be a more expensive undertaking. I have engaged Hurst and Robinson to publish for me, and find I am to pay handsomely for everything they do. Callcott accompanied me to Mr. Wells's in the autumn, and a day or two since I took Mulready to Mr. Peel's. I find they think more highly of the pictures you and I (I fear I must only say *I* now) so much admire, than I could have expected.

"Regretting that I cannot send you a more entertaining letter, (for really there is little to be learned of what our artists are doing,) in return for one so full of novel information—and almost envying you the fine opportunities you have of holding daily converse with the founders of the great style,

"I am, with the greatest esteem,

"Your faithful and obliged friend,

"WILLIAM COLLINS.

"P.S.—Can I do anything for you? Do not scruple to employ me; and when you find yourself able to send a line, I shall be most happy to hear more about your health."

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* "Fishermen on the Look-Out."

Foremost among Mr. Collins's contributions to the Exhibition of 1826, was the celebrated picture of "The Fisherman's Departure." The success of this work—painted for Mr. Morrison, M.P.,—was most brilliant. Once he repeated it himself, for Mr. Chamberlayne, M.P., and twice it was repeated by others — in two line-engravings, large and small. Among all his productions, none had hitherto more powerfully vindicated his claim to be considered a figure-painter as well as a landscape-painter than this picture, which continued, during its exhibition, to be a centre of attraction to all classes of visitors within the Academy walls. It may be thus described:

It is night; the evening has closed in tranquilly, and the moon is slowly rising behind a mass of dark, thick cloud. Its beams already tremble on the still waters of the sea—dotted, here and there, with a few fishing-boats—and tip with a soft light the jagged edges of a range of cliffs, stretching on the right of the picture all through the scene, from the foreground to the horizon-line. On a small tract of table-land, halfway down the nearest of these cliffs, stands the cottage of the fisherman. At irregular intervals, the tops of its rude gable windows, the thatch of its little outhouse, the meshes of the nets hanging at its simple doorway, partake the radiance that is fast brightening to light the seaward view. Here the "Departure" is taking place; here the fisherman is on the point of quitting his family for a night of toil upon the waters. His tall, manly form, equipped in a thick jerkin, an impenetrable apron, and ponderous boots, is raised to its full stature, as he holds his infant child high in his arms to give it the parting kiss, which the little creature receives, half in terror, half in satisfaction, as he feels his unaccustomed elevation from the ground. By the fisherman's side stands his eldest boy, half-smothered beneath his father's heavy watch-coat, which he carries over his shoulder, and furnished with the lantern, the two extra candles, and the loaf of bread, indicating the length of time that must elapse ere the fisherman can return. On the right of the father and son, and a little removed from them, are the rest of the family. The grandfather, whose days of adventure on the deep are over, leans on a rail, occupied in conversation with a woman whose back is turned to the spectator, and whose arm rests on the shoulder of one of the fisherman's female children. Opposite to this group sits the fisherman's wife, holding a sleeping child on her lap, and fixing her eyes tenderly and anxiously on her husband. At the extreme left of the picture, a rude wooden flight of steps and rail conduct to the beach beneath. On the top of these, near a boat-hook lying ready across the rail, stands a large Newfoundland dog, looking round impatiently for his master's signal of departure; while, distant and beneath, is seen a glimpse of the quiet beach, with the fisherman's boat and companion on the shore awaiting his approach. Such are the objects depicted in this simple and original work. To gain an adequate idea of the extraordinary truth and nature of the figures, of the perfect absence of any artificial refinement on the one hand, or exaggerated coarseness on the other, in the different personages composing the fisherman's family, it will be necessary—in the numerous cases where a sight of the picture itself must be impossible—to examine the large and admirable line-engraving by Mr. Phelps, in which the pure tone and sentiment of the original work is preserved with a rare fidelity and success.

Besides this picture, my father contributed two others, this year, to the Royal Academy Exhibition: "Young Shrimp-catchers,"—a small, delicate, sea-piece, painted for Sir Abraham Hume; and "Hop-pickers"—a sunny, Kentish scene, rich and brilliant in tone, the background filled with tall hop-poles, through which the light breaks quaintly from a small patch of blue sky—the foreground occupied by a highly-finished group of girls, engaged in their labours on a space of cleared ground. This picture was painted for the late Mr. Wells, of Redleaf.

During the summer, my father's increasing anxiety to devote himself daily to the study and enjoyment of nature, induced him to quit London and fix his residence definitely at Hampstead. Here, while still within reach of the Great City, he could live surrounded by some of the prettiest and most varied inland scenery that this part of England presents,—scenery, the beauties and pictorial capabilities of which he never wearied of exploring, and was always anxious to communicate to others. Friends of all ranks and occupations, who came to visit him here, found in the painter, not only the warm partizan of the merits of Hampstead scenery, but the practical guide of their walks, and the ready tutor of their taste for Nature. Indeed, at every period of his life, an excursion with him in the country was a privilege thoroughly appreciated by all who knew him. He possessed the peculiar faculty of divesting his profession of all its mysteries and technicalities, and of enabling the most uneducated in his Art to look at Nature with *his* eyes, and enjoy Nature with *his* zest. People who possessed years of acquaintance with scenery to which he was a stranger, found themselves introduced by him to points of view which they had never before discovered, and enabled, for the first time, to separate through his teaching the valuable and the true from the common and the artificial, in landscapes among which from childhood their lives had been past.

I am here enabled, after a long absence of any such matter, to present a short extract from my father's Journal of this year. The dearth of material from his diaries in the more advanced passages of this work, has doubtless been already remarked. It is unfortunately the too faithful reflection of the aspect of the diaries themselves, which present, at this period of his life, nothing more than bare numerical entries of the days and hours devoted in succession to the production of his different pictures. But what the public may lose by this in his biography they have gained in his works; for the absence of extractable matter in his journals, during the maturity of his career, is to be attributed, in a great measure, to the continued increase of his devotion to his Art,—a devotion which made him jealous of every hour not directly occupied in the furtherance of his studies; and therefore careless of assigning to his personal affairs a place on paper, as memorials of the past, after they had ceased to hold a place in his attention as occurrences of the present.

JOURNAL OF 1826.

"March—Began Mr. Peel's 'Frost Scene.' Sir William Beechey called, and was astonished at the time I spent on my pictures: he said it was his opinion that Vandervelde painted Mr. Holdsworth's picture with ease, in two days. Although I do not agree with him in this opinion, I think Vandervelde, as well as many finished painters of the Dutch school, preserved the spirit of their work, by painting much faster than most people seem aware of; and I am persuaded that my own pictures would be better were they done with less timidity and anxiety; as nothing can replace the want of that vigour and freshness, which things done quickly (with a constant reference to Nature) necessarily possess. * * *

"Wednesday, 9th—Whilst supporting Shockley, the gardener, who was upon a high ladder gathering our pears, his knife fell from his hands, when he called, and I looked up; the knife fell into my face and cut the left side of my nose. That it did not strike my best eye, (which is my left,) that it did not penetrate my head, and that it struck where it did, and produced so little injury, I owe entirely to the great mercy of Almighty God. May this event open my eyes to the goodness of my Creator, and keeping alive the sense of humble gratitude that I feel, enable me to 'look to my stewardship' and 'redeem the time, through the might of Jesus Christ.'

"After the attendance of the surgeon, laid down and read. During the rest of the day, kept quiet and did no painting.

"* * * July 21st—Resolved to *work* five hours a day, keeping a debtor and creditor account; each day I spend out of my study, being entered on the debtor side.

"* * * Of spiritedly executed pictures, it is commonly said:—''Tis not intended for close inspection.'—The real lover of painting, derives the highest gratification from this very sort of execution. However highly finished a picture may be, the beauty of the execution is in fact lost, when (as some wiseacres say) 'it requires a magnifying-glass to enjoy such handling.' Denner, Vanderwerf, the younger Mieres, and those who are interested in the sale of such works, have to answer for this." * * *

The "Frost Scene," mentioned at the commencement of the foregoing extracts, as "begun," was the composition which the painter proposed to execute on the liberal terms of Sir Robert Peel's commission of the preceding autumn. To paint a large "snow-piece," combining full illustration in landscape with stirring incident in figures, had long been an object of his ambition; and he gladly seized the opportunity which the freedom of subject and size, now conceded to him, so pleasingly bestowed, to gratify his own wishes, as well as to deserve the honourable confidence that had been reposed in his genius. Through the autumn and winter of this year, the picture, begun under these circumstances, proceeded slowly, surely and anxiously, towards completion. The flattering terms of Sir Robert Peel's commission had already become widely talked of in London society; and the painter felt that the completion of his arduous and responsible undertaking was awaited with as much impatience by those who envied, as by those who rejoiced, in his successes. His accustomed anxiety to achieve the highest excellence in his works was doubled during the progress of this picture. As the winter advanced every "frost scene" that Nature presented to his eye was studied as elaborately as if, instead of one, a series of "snowpieces" had been expected from him. Among the figures introduced in his composition were a man and woman, mounted on a pillion. All Hampstead was ransacked without success for this old-fashioned article of travelling equipment; and the painter—determined, even in the minor accessories of his picture, to trust to nothing but Nature—had begun to despair of finishing his group, when a lady volunteered to hunt out a pillion for him, in the neighbourhood of Hackney, where she lived. Nor, when she had procured it, did she remain satisfied with simply obtaining the model. When the painter arrived to see it, he found her ready to illustrate its use. Her gardener hired an old horse, strapped on the pillion, and mounted it; while his mistress placed herself in the proper position, behind: the complete series of models, human, animal, and mechanical, remaining at the painter's disposal, until he had made a careful study of the whole. The group thus completed, was one of the most admired in the picture for its fidelity and nature; and the manner in which the requisite study for it was obtained, is here mentioned, in order to add one more to the numberless instances of the obligations of genius to the interference and enthusiasm of the gentler sex.

A letter, written by Mr. Collins about this period, answering an application for advice upon the future direction to be given to the productions of a juvenile prodigy, whose efforts in the Art had been submitted to his judgment, contains, in a small compass, so many judicious hints upon the caution necessary to be observed in such cases, in discriminating between empty ambition and real capacity, as to make its insertion likely to prove useful to others who may be placed under the same serious responsibility, of deciding on the future career of some "infant phenomenon" in the world of Art. The letter was expressed as follows:

"To ———

"London, July, 1826.

"My dear Sir,—I have frequently thought your subject over, and am now not much nearer a decision than when I began; for, truly, it is a matter involving much of the boy's future happiness. That the drawings and picture are surprisingly clever for a child, every one must admit; but, whether the impulse under which they were produced, will be sufficient to carry him on—whether his constitution will support him under the fatigue of many years' study—and whether his love of painting will bear the trials of lack of encouragement, and the other ills to which a person is liable, by entering our profession, are questions which, at this very early period of the boy's experience, no one on earth can answer.

"Amid these difficulties, one piece of advice I *may* venture to give,—Let our little friend go on drawing, without being much encouraged or depressed; not allowing him to give up such other schoolboy employments as will be necessary and advantageous to him, whatever his future destination may be; and if, after a couple of years, his preference for drawing continue, and his works should improve, something may be determined upon. Any other course would be, in my opinion, highly imprudent; and if, either at the expiration of that time, or whenever you may choose, in the interim, you should think fit to send me any of his performances, I shall have the greatest pleasure in giving such advice as my knowledge will enable me honestly to offer.

"Faithfully yours,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

The succeeding letter was written during the painter's usual autumn visit to the country seat of the late Mr. Wells.

"TO MRS. WILLIAM COLLINS.

"Redleaf, Sept. 23, 1826.

"* * * Judging from my own anxiety to receive a letter from you, I write, although I have little to communicate. My time is passed in the most agreeable manner, and principally out of doors, until six in the evening. Mr. and Mrs. S—— are of our party, and as *she* is fond of conversation, and from the extensive connection she has with the great world, has a vast deal of amusing knowledge to impart—she keeps us quite alive. Mr. Wells, I need not tell you, is the same unpretending, sociable, hospitable host, and, if possible, more unlike the selfish creatures with whom this world seems to be peopled, than ever. I take especial care to follow your instructions respecting the easy, quiet method of spending my time, which you have thought so desirable in my case, and I trust you do not neglect my wishes, in all that pertains to your own comfort. * * * I have just returned from hearing Mr. Dodd, who gave us a most impressive sermon upon sincerity—Heaven grant I may profit by it: I need hardly say I wish you to do the same, for you possess that virtue in a high degree already—do not let it go from you; it is unfortunately but little sought after in what is called 'the world:' Mr. Wells has it in a rare degree. How is my dear mother? Does Frank see you often? These, and other matters, let me know about at your early convenience. * * *

"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

"P.S.—I open my letter again, to say that I have heard that the pipe of a key, pressed for a few minutes upon the sting of a wasp or bee, is a cure. Mr. Parke mentioned this to us, as you know; but Mrs. S—— tried it, and succeeded in removing a sting from her brother. Mention this where you think it may be of use."

CHAPTER V.

1827—1831.

Letter to Mr. Joseph—Exhibition of 1827—Malicious slander against the painter, on the subject of his "Frost Scene"—His refutation—Extracts from diary—Letters to and from Wilkie—Mutual opinions on the old masters, and on colour, and light and shade—Letter from the painter to his wife—Domestic events of 1828—Letters to and from Wilkie—Pictures of 1828—Desire of the King to possess one of them—Return of Wilkie to England—Visit of the painter to Holland and Belgium—Letters to Mrs. W. Collins from the Continent and from Leamington—Death of the Earl of Liverpool—Pictures of 1829—Sonnet to the painter, by Mr. Bernard Barton—Correspondence with the author—Anecdotes of criticism on Art—Contemplated change of residence—Visit to Boulogne—Studies there—Noble humanity of a French fisherman—Letter to Mr. Francis Collins—Return to Hampstead—Commencement of French sea-pieces—Death of Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.—Pictures of 1830—Letters to Sir Thomas Baring, Bart.—Removal to Bayswater—Extracts from diary—Lord Byron—Pictures of 1831—Commencement of "the Skittle Players."

To Mr. Joseph, the sculptor, who was at this time much interested in matters connected with the progress of the Royal Scottish Academy of Arts, and who had written to ask him for a contribution to the Annual Exhibition of that Institution, my father thus writes:

"To S. Joseph, Esq.

"Hampstead, January 22, 1827.

"My dear Joseph,—You will see by the above address that I am hermit enough to live away from London, even in the winter, and by what will follow, that whatever of the courtier might have formerly belonged to your friend's disposition, is now, in his old age, utterly cast off. In this, my new character, then, I find myself under the necessity of at once refusing your request, and, moreover, of offering a little advice. My reason for not acceding to your proposal is this, I have no time disengaged to paint a new picture for your Exhibition, and I am not willing to be judged in *foreign, barbarous* countries, by such works as those you mention. And now, my good friend, I must confess that I regret your present sacrifice of time and temper, in the vain endeavour to set matters right, where the patronage of our little understood and greatly undervalued Art is concerned. It is the nature of the world to neglect living merit; and as the pursuit of excellence brings its own reward, all attempt or longing after other good things, is just so much loss of time and power.

"Let me entreat you to leave all squabbling to those who love it—

> 'One science only can one genius fit;'

and, as all combinations to force real Art are miserable shackles to it, to depend upon your own unsophisticated study of Nature; to send the very best works you can execute to *our* Academy,—the least faulty of such institutions that ever has existed; bearing in mind that we have no sculptor on our Associate List, and that we have lost a most illustrious example from among our Academicians—determine to become one of us.

"I have, as you desired, made your request to such artists as I have seen since I received your letter, and purpose calling upon Etty in a day or two. Trusting you will not fail to send something excellent, and in time, to Somerset-house; and with my best wishes for your success, and sincere regards to Jane,

"I am, yours faithfully,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

The Exhibition of 1827 contained three pictures by Mr. Collins: "Buying Fish," painted for Lord Northwicke; "Searching the Net," painted for Sir Abraham Hume; and the "Frost Scene," painted for Sir Robert Peel,—about which so much had been conjectured during its progress, and in relation to which a false report was circulated, as contemptible in its nature as it was malicious in its design. Ere, however, the particulars of this affair are stated, it will be necessary to submit to the reader some description of the picture itself, not forgetting the other two works exhibited with it.

"Buying Fish" was a large, clear sea-piece, painted in the artist's most brilliant manner, with one of those serene, airy skies, studded with light fleecy clouds, for which his pictures of this class were so celebrated, and enlivened by a group of well-contrasted and characteristic figures, including the salesman, a cunning old fisherman—the purchaser, a perplexed and pretty young girl—and the spectator of the bargain, a little fair-haired, bare-headed child. A shrimp-boy and two children, examining the contents of his net, formed the subject of "Searching the Net," the engraving from which is widely-known, not only in England, but in America, where the print has been one of the most successful of modern English works. Great, however, as were the merits of these two productions, they did not rival the public attraction of the "Frost Scene;" which, as another effort by the painter in a new class of subject, and as a work, moreover, about which much useless gossip had been propagated while it was on the easel, aroused the general curiosity at the time in an unusual degree. Though a picture of large dimensions, it presented throughout an appearance of elaborate, and in some places of almost excessive finish. A wide river, frozen over, occupies the middle of the composition, from the foreground to the horizon. The ice in the distance is covered by an animated crowd, composed of skaters, sliders, spectators, and vendors of provisions. On the right-hand foreground is a large drinking-booth, at the entrance of which stands the merry old "Boniface" of the temporary ale-house, with a bottle in one hand and a glass in the other, exchanging a brisk fire of jokes with two travellers,—a man, and a handsome young girl mounted, pillion-fashion, behind him on an old clumsy white horse. The left bank of the river is occupied by groups in full activity,—some buying, some selling, some rushing triumphantly, skates in hand, to the frozen stream—others prostrate on the slippery ground which endangers its approach. In every part of the picture the drawing of the figures is vigorous and correct; while at the same time the bustling, animated character of the different groups, and the quaint contrasts of colour and form natural to the scene, are caught with extraordinary brilliancy and success. The heavy snow-clouds, brightened by the rich flashes of red cast on them by the approaching sunset—the glimpses of cold, pure blue sky behind them—the frosty stillness of the distant landscape, are all painted with a truth, finish, and nature, which attest the severe study bestowed upon the landscape, as well as the figures, in this fine picture. Forcibly, however, as it appealed to the approbation of all who beheld it, it failed to avert from the artist that worst consequence of success,—*the detraction of others.* On the close of the Exhibition, the following paragraph on the subject of the "Frost Scene" appeared in four of the London newspapers:

"We mentioned some time ago that Mr. Peel had given, or was to give, five hundred guineas for the snow-piece by Collins, in the late Exhibition. Such was, we believe, the understanding when the commission was given; but on the completion of the picture, no less a sum than seven hundred guineas was demanded; a sum which we are informed the right honourable gentleman declined to pay, as he considered it very much above the value of the picture. We can easily understand that the artist may have bestowed upon his work a great deal more labour than he originally intended to bestow, without rendering it at all more valuable to his patron; but it is of great importance to the body to which he belongs that the few noblemen and gentlemen who are just now manifesting so liberal a disposition towards modern artists should not be disgusted by even the appearance of a wish to take undue advantage of their generosity."

To this paltry attempt to injure his character Mr. Collins thus replied,—addressing his letter to one of the newspapers in which the false statement had appeared, and from which the refutation thus made public, was copied into several other journals:

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'STANDARD.'

"11, New Cavendish-street,
"July 30th.

"Sir,—My attention having been called to a paragraph copied into your paper, conveying an imputation upon my conduct, with reference to the commission which I have recently been honoured with from Mr. Peel, I rely upon your candour to insert from me this declaration, that the whole is a groundless fabrication, a mere invention; that no such price as seven hundred guineas was ever demanded; that the price asked was not declined to be paid, nor any the least hesitation expressed on the subject.*

"As regards the tendency of the paragraph to impute to me the sacrifice of the interests of the body to which I belong for my own pecuniary advantage, I repel it with the contempt the falsehood deserves.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient servant,
"WILLIAM COLLINS.

"P.S.—I trust that such journals as have given insertion to the above-mentioned paragraph, will do me the justice to publish also this contradiction.

"W. C."

The publication of the above letter produced the exposure of the worst peculiarity attaching to the fabrication which it was written to refute; one of the newspapers alleging, as a justification of their admission of the offensive paragraph, that it had appeared through the voluntary information of a member of the Royal Academy. Feeling that enough had been already done to justify his character, Mr. Collins only noticed the clue thus afforded to the discovery of his anonymous assailant, by communicating privately on the subject to the Council of the Academy, and leaving the matter to their discretion. Soon after this the affair terminated most triumphantly for him by the receipt of a new commission from Sir Robert Peel—from whom he had previously received a letter, contradicting in the most unqualified manner the newspaper report—for another large picture by his hand; an event as creditable to the taste and liberality of the patron as to the conduct and capacity of the painter.

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* The price paid for the picture will be found, by a reference to the list of my father's works at the end of this memoir, to have been five hundred guineas.

The following short extract from Mr. Collins's Journal for this year may be deemed not unworthy of insertion, as showing that his success in his profession had not subdued his habitual watchfulness over himself, both as a painter and as a man:

"Sept. 18th, 1827.—I see that in finishing my pictures I am too apt to introduce the darkest opaque shadows, and that consequently, to preserve that breadth which the dead colour has, I must in a great measure avoid using any dark colour lower than 'raw umber.' I must not use black or Vandyck brown until the last finishing touches; and then very thinly. Pictures may be too strong in the darks for private rooms, as well as for an Exhibition-room. Cuyp's and Wilson's pictures are entirely free from this blackness and have, I believe, consequently great breadth, glow, and power; and do not require absolutely, as mine certainly do, to be seen with a very strong light.

"Sept. 19th.—I have attained my fortieth year. May that Almighty Being, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is perfect, for Jesus Christ's sake, guide me through that remaining portion of my life which it may be his holy will that I should pass in this world, directing me in all things." * * *

In the subjoined letters will be found a continuation of the correspondence on Art between Sir David Wilkie and Mr. Collins, of which the commencement has appeared in the preceding chapter:

"To Sir David Wilkie.

"Hampstead, July 9th, 1827.

"Dear Wilkie,—I had promised myself the pleasure of writing to you upon the opening of the present Exhibition, intending to give you some account of the pictures, and more especially of the really kind things Lawrence said about you at the grand dinner; but of course some more punctual, though not more sincere admirer, has superseded me. An affair, however, of great importance to us all having taken place on Saturday, I write for the purpose of giving some details, which I doubt not will interest you.

"You may possibly know by this time that Lord de Tabley* died about the 20th of last month; but unless you have very recent intelligence of the circumstance, you will be as much surprised as most of the people here, upon finding that, notwithstanding the Parliament was up and the town getting very thin, his executors determined to sell by auction his collection of pictures in Hill-street. The artists in general, but more particularly those who had pictures in the sale, were more than bilious. Turner and Sir Thomas Lawrence did everything in their power to induce the executors to put it off; but they were bent upon turning the pictures into money immediately. I shall set down the prices at which the most prominent were sold."

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* Formerly Sir John Fleming Leicester, Bart.

(Here follows in the original a long list of the different pictures sold; the artists being in some instances, so unfavourable was the time chosen for the sale, the purchasers of their own or of their friends' works. Two pictures by Mr. Collins, disposed of to connoisseurs, are quoted at a hundred and eighty and two hundred guineas respectively. The letter then continues:)

"That these pictures should have sold so well, notwithstanding all the disadvantages under which they were presented to the public, is, in my opinion, a strong proof of the high estimation of modern Art; and when we consider the unsettled state of political matters, and the occupation of the public mind upon the great changes in high places, we must not complain. I have said so much about our Art, that I have little room for a thousand other things I purposed saying about ourselves. I long much to hear from you. Let me know how you go on in health; and do say you are coming back again amongst us shortly. We want you much, I assure you. Your absence, and poor Sir George Beaumont's death, have been taken advantage of, and an unusual supply of chalky pictures adorn the walls of the Academy, to the discomfort of the old school. Hilton, Etty, Lawrence, Mulready, and some others, have not fallen away, however. I am delighted to hear from your sister that you have painted some pictures. Let me know how I can be useful,—do not fear giving me trouble. What sort of news can I pick up for you? I am, as you see by the address of this letter, living at Hampstead; so short a distance from London that I can easily avail myself of its advantages, and miss its discomforts, and study in quiet. I have just painted a picture for Mr. Peel, at the highest price I have ever obtained—five hundred guineas; and am full of commissions. Poor Lord Liverpool has, within these few days, suffered another attack: our friend Jenkinson is with him continually at Coombe Wood. And now, my dear friend, may God bless you and send you home well again!

"I am, dear Wilkie,
"Yours obliged and faithfully,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

"P.S. Joseph has just arrived in London, and is making some capital busts; one he has nearly finished of the Duke of Sussex is excellent."

"TO WILLIAM COLLINS, ESQ., R.A.

"Geneva, 26th Aug., 1827.

"Dear Collins,—Your letter gave me great pleasure; filled as it was with news, and such news as I, of all others, sympathized the most in. The ordeal of the De Tabley sale you have all gone through has to me become quite familiar. I admit yours has been both severe and unfair; but you have had the more merit in sustaining it, and it appears to native residents here, as it does to myself, a most creditable display for British Art. Indeed, I wish our artists would think somewhat more of trials of this sort, that must be perpetual, and less of the short-lived triumphs of fresh paint at Somerset-house. We affect, at home, to despise the old masters; but by the same people and the same rules must we hereafter be judged; and our heavy gilt frames and central situations will avail us nothing.

"This is a subject upon which I claim the liberty (being able to do little else) to *talk*. I may call myself a sort of veteran in such contests; and thanks to one of my best friends at home, have come off upon a late occasion with most unexpected success, even before the eyes of a foreign people. The sale of my picture at Munich* made an impression at Rome among all descriptions of artists; and my ideas, known to be peculiar, began to be listened to even by my own countrymen, who began to suspect that what I have so often, as you well know, tried to din into the heads of some friends at home, might after all be right. And here let me assure you, that if the qualities of the picture of the 'Will' had any share in its advantageous destination, those of colour were quite the opposite to what would have fitted it for our Exhibition. The whites and some of the flesh tints were too bright, and it was the rich and low tones only that kept it in harmony with the choice Dutch pictures by which it was surrounded.

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* "The Reading of a Will."

"After seeing all the fine pictures in France, Italy, and Germany, one must come to this conclusion, that colour, if not the first, is at least an essential quality in painting: no master has as yet maintained his ground beyond his own time without it. But in oil painting, it is richness and depth alone that can do justice to the material. Upon this subject, every prejudice with which I left home is, if anything, not only confirmed, but increased. What Sir Joshua Reynolds wrote, and what our friend Sir George Beaumont so often supported, was right; and after seeing what I have seen, I am not now to be *talked* out of it.

"With us, as you know, every young Exhibitor with pink, white, and blue, thinks himself a colourist like Titian; than whom perhaps no painter is more misrepresented and misunderstood. I saw myself at Florence his famous Venus, upon an easel, with Kirkup and Wallis by me. This picture, so often copied, and every copy a fresh mistake, is what I expected it to be; deep, yet brilliant, indescribable in its hues, yet simple beyond example in its execution and its colouring. Its flesh (oh, how our friends at home would stare!) was a simple, sober, mixed-up tint, and apparently, like your skies, completed while wet. No scratchings, no hatchings, no scumblings, no multiplicity of repetitions,—no ultramarine, lakes, nor vermillions, and not even a mark of the brush visible; all seemed melted into the fat and glowing mass, solid yet transparent, giving the nearest approach to life that the painter's art has yet reached.

"This picture is perhaps defective in its arrangement, but in its painting quite admirable. Now, can nothing like this ever be done again?—Is such toning really not to be reproduced? I wish to believe the *talent* exists, and am sure the *material* exists. But we have now got another system,—our criterion of judging is changed: we prefer a something else, or, what is still more blinding, there is a something else that we mistake for it.

"Another picture, with which I was greatly pleased, was 'The Assumption of the Virgin,' by Fra Bartolomeo, at Lucca. This picture, painted by a monk before the time of Raphael, and in the retirement of a convent, has, to the fine qualities of the period of Raphael, superadded all the inventions in colour and effect of Rubens and Rembrandt. This is a style for Hilton to follow: brightness and richness are here combined. West used to talk of this picture, and our friend Woodburn used to say he would place it beside the 'Transfiguration.'

"I perhaps say more of colour than I ought; that, as you know, being with some of our friends the disputable subject. Sir George Beaumont used to say that water-coloured drawings had tainted our Exhibitions. I have observed throughout my travels, this difference between the pictures of the present day and the old masters, that they are never found in the same room, and seldom in the same gallery—collectors never place them together, and artists are contented with the exclusion. The Duke of Bedford seems actuated by the same feeling; he has parted with his old pictures, intending to collect modern pictures in their place: he perhaps judges that they cannot be amalgamated together! this is a prejudice that painters themselves should get rid of. He once asked me to paint a companion to his Teniers—he had then no thoughts of parting with it.

"Your picture for Mr. Peel, I hope you have succeeded in to your mind. Yours is a most enviable style. You are sure now to get full employment; but, for future fame, compete with the old masters; beside whom, modern Art is generally poor in the lights, and opaque in the shadows. From what I have seen of letters and heard from eye-witnesses, I can form in my own mind the whole of the Exhibition—it remains quite unchanged. You mention some friends who *have not fallen off*. This is so far good for themselves, but what must it be for the Exhibition?

"If anything occurs worthy notice, write to me. You know the news perfectly that would interest an artist in exile. Give my kindest regards to Mrs.

Collins, who I hope is, with yourself, well, and enjoying with you the youthful society of your little boy. He is now old enough to learn that there is such a person as his godfather—he will be able to speak to me when I return. Give my remembrances to your brother, and should you see them, to Mr. and Mrs. Phillips. My brother will at any time tell you how to direct to me.

"With best regards, believe me, my dear Sir,

"Your very faithful servant,

"DAVID WILKIE."

From the perusal of these two letters, the reader will gather that the writers agreed in fixing their theoretical and practical principles of painting on the models of the old masters—a form of opinion which, fortunately for the prospects of modern Art, is less uncommon among their brethren now than it was at that time. Unanimous, however, as the two painters were in their convictions on this subject, they differed a little in their method of carrying them out. Wilkie's notion of acquiring much of the grand tone of the master colourists, by the excessive introduction of rich, deep browns, into all the darker parts of a picture, was not shared by his friend, who, entire as was his veneration for Sir David's judgment, and his concurrence in his general opinions, steadily declined —during their whole intercourse with each other— to load his pictures with any prevailing tone of shadow, however lustrous, which he had not seen in the Nature from which they were derived. From Nature he believed that the old masters had drawn the moving principle of those mighty combinations of their Art, of that rich surface, that sublime tone of colour, that magical harmony of individual hues, which he and his brother painter so heartily admired, and so sedulously emulated; and firmly convinced that Claude, Ruysdael, and all "the better brothers," had done so before him, he persisted in applying himself as attentively to the harmonies of Nature as to the triumphs of Art, for his guiding theory of *chiaroscuro* and colour, as well as for his highest ideas of beauty, proportion and form.

From the Isle of Wight, whither he had repaired in the autumn of this year to collect materials for a picture of Freshwater Bay, to be painted for the Duke of Norfolk, my father thus writes:

"To Mrs. William Collins.

"Ventnor, August 29th, 1827.

"My dear Harriet, not liking the appearance of Portsmouth, I stayed there somewhat less than half an hour; and, without my dinner, embarked in a steamer for Ryde, at six o'clock; arriving in time for an eight o'clock dinner at the latter place. I walked about, and made some slight sketches during Tuesday. It is a very pretty place—indeed, all I have hitherto seen is fine; but I have sketched so many features of coast scenery that I find little or nothing new. From Ryde, I went in a gig to St.

Helens, Brading, Sandown—the bay of which is magnificent—then to Shanklin Chine, and remained there about two hours with great pleasure. Arriving here about four, I walked till seven; and am now, just before going to bed, writing in a most romantic inn upon an enormously high cliff, backed by large hills, surrounded by woods, and with a beautiful view of the sea from my window. If you and Willy were with me, I might do well enough—saving and excepting the constant demands upon one's purse.

"To-morrow I purpose going on to Niton, about five miles from this place; where, if I have time before the post hour, I may add something more: but should that be out of the question, I expect my dear Harriet will write to me by return of post,—as a couple of days, at one place, seems quite sufficient for most, and too much for many, and more than enough for *money*. Tell Willy I have this day picked up two nice little scuttle-fish bones for him. Every day, nay almost every hour, how I have longed for you both!

"Thursday, August 30th.—I left Ventnor this morning after breakfast, walked to Niton, called upon Mr. Pine, who is now in London, dined at the inn, hired a gig, and went sixteen or seventeen miles over, for the most part, a wild country, averaging about two persons a mile. I am now at Freshwater Gate, where I find I cannot send you this letter before to-morrow morning. * * * Although I dare say I shall find where the Duke of Norfolk is staying when

I reach Cowes, still, that I may be certain, I wish Frank to call at his house in St. James'-square, for the purpose of knowing the fact. If you cannot however, without delaying your letter, obtain this information, do not mind; as I feel so very anxious to hear from you: and, as I have no doubt at all that I shall easily find the Duke, do not by any means put yourself to the smallest trouble on the subject.

"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

The opening of the year 1828, found the painter busily engaged, at his Hampstead residence, on four sea-pieces, and a large landscape—one of the former, being a repetition of the popular "Fisherman's Departure," for Mr. Chamberlayne, M.P. At the commencement of the year, his small family circle was widened by the birth of a second son. With a cordial remembrance of the old friend and fellow painter far away in America, and with a wish to strengthen, in spite of absence, the bond of their mutual regard, he made Mr. Allston one of the sponsors of his child, by proxy. Nor was the birth of another son the painter's only subject of personal congratulation at this period. Renovated in health, and prepared for new efforts, Wilkie was now soon to return, again to resume that wonted communion on Art that had been suspended between them personally, for three years. There were, however, professional events to be chronicled, and new ideas to be communicated, for which the time of meeting was to the painter, even yet, too far removed to be waited for; and once more they exchanged letters, ere they saw each other again, as characteristic and as cordial as any that had preceded them:

"To SIR DAVID WILKIE, R.A.

"Hampstead, April 17th, 1828.

"Dear Wilkie—I should have written to you long ago, but I have waited from day to day for matter sufficiently interesting; and now, in despite of the absence of any topic better than usual, I must just content myself with saying whatever comes uppermost; and this, in the hope of obtaining something from you, who live in such inexhaustible mines; acknowledging at once the scantiness of *my* material, dig as hard as I may. Your last letter came most opportunely; its authority was almost my only support, under my usual eclipse at Somerset-house.* What a wretched thing it is, to find that the more fit one may become for the society of the old masters, the more one suffers in the company of the new! Poor Sir George Beaumont, backed and supported by your practical skill, had certainly considerable effect in keeping under the tawdry tendency of our Exhibition. But, after his death, the opportunity afforded to our opponents by the possession of the field, they seemed resolved not to lose; and, by one great and combined effort (I must in justice, except here, the names of Hilton, Mulready, Lawrence, and Jackson,) to set the question respecting what will, and what will not do for the Exhibition, for ever at rest. So most assuredly they did; and, were it not now for the support afforded by a reference to the National Gallery, and the occasional Exhibitions of old pictures in this country, the manufacture of any colour deeper than *crome*, must have been abandoned.* Under all this opposition, however, it is matter of great consolation that a standard is now forming, if not already formed, by which all will be, even in *their own time*, tried and judged too. I take this to be a matter of certainty, not merely from what is said *outside the gates*, but from the more solid evidence of the great and increasing demand for the 'genuine article.'

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* It will be gathered from the context, as well as from some recent remarks, that the "eclipse" here spoken of, refers to the minority in which Mr. Collins was then placed, among some of his professional brethren, in discussions on Art, by his uncompromising opinions on the high station to be assigned to the works of the old masters.

"There are other circumstances, from which, I confess, I take great hope that all is not yet lost; and the principle of them, is the increased weight with which what you have to say on the subject will be received, after the great opportunities you have had of consolidating opinions, not new ones, but those with which, to use your own words, you 'left home.' Under the impression that you could be mainly instrumental in effecting great reformation in our body, and with a view to give you that authority which you so justly deserve, I have taken such legitimate opportunities as fell in my way, of reading such portions of your letters, (particularly your first) as appeared to me calculated to weigh with the reasonable and most valuable portion of our circle; and it gratifies me exceedingly to assure you, that Lawrence, Mulready, Callcott, Phillips, and others — more especially the three first—declared it to be their united conviction, 'that highly as they had already estimated your powers as an artist, and a man of intellect, they were bound to acknowledge that you had surpassed, in the clear and philosophical views of Art expressed in that letter, their highest hopes.' This, coming, as it did, so soon after you quitted us, was I trust highly advantageous in keeping up that high character you had left among us. Did I not feel perfectly satisfied that you would do justice to my motives, or had I anything to gain, beyond what I must be ungrateful indeed not to acknowledge—I mean your genuine and kind friendship for me—I should hesitate to say so much. But, being perfectly easy on this head, I conceive it to be my duty to speak the truth.

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* "*Crome*" is a bright vivid, yellow colour.

"In a note I have this morning received from your sister, I find that you purpose leaving Bordeaux about the 12th of May; and, as I trust you will arrive in time to see the Exhibition before its close, I shall not fatigue your attention any longer. I have however much to say when we meet. In the meantime you will be glad to hear that (notwithstanding some dirty work that has been attempted against me, of which it is possible some garbled account may have reached you)* I am, thanks to Heaven, enjoying the highest patronage. Your godson grows a strapping fellow, and has a little blue-eyed red-haired bonny bairn, as a brother, about three months old. I have now, for nearly two years, occupied a small house at this place, with I think no loss of advantage in my pursuits—enabled by the comparative retirement and consequent quiet, to keep down in a great measure that natural tendency to excitement, which I have always found so difficult a task; and, as the distance from the great City is only three miles, I have by no means given up useful contact with many of its most valuable contents.

" Hoping that, by the blessing of God, we may shortly meet, and trusting that when you have leisure you will let me have a few lines all about yourself—and with my wife's kind regards to you, as well as those of my mother, brother, and Mr. Rice; I am, with great esteem,

" Yours most sincerely,

" WILLIAM COLLINS."

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* This refers to the calumny (already related) respecting Sir Robert Peel's " Frost Scene."

"P.S.—I cherish the hope that you may, at some future day, feel disposed to visit Holland again, for the purpose of seeing how far the pictures there will be able to stand the test you are now able to try them by, and that I may have the pleasure and advantage of being with you on the occasion."

"To William Collins, Esq., R.A.

"Madrid, May 9, 1828.

"Dear Collins,—This I write on the eve of leaving the interesting capital of Spain, after a residence of six months; and as I find by your most kind letter, that you are far more disposed to *over* rather than *underrate* such reflections as have occurred to me on my journey, this at least encourages me to note down such as are immediately applicable to the subjects we are so often accustomed to discuss.

"Bayonne, May 14th.

"I need not detail to you what I have seen in Madrid, the Escurial, or Seville; it is general ideas alone I wish to advert to. Being the only member of our Academy who has seen Spain, perhaps it is to be regretted that I see it with an acknowledged bias or prejudice, in which, I fear, scarce any will participate. With some of my kindest friends, indeed, much of what I have seen, would produce between us an influence like the apple of discord; and if some of our youths with less matured minds than they—while I write this with one hand, fancy me covering my face with the other—should venture across the Biddasoa, what a conflict in testimony there would be! The spiritual Velasquez, whose principle and practice Sir Thomas Lawrence so justly calls 'the true philosophy of Art,' would be rendered with all the dash and splash that tongue, pen, or pencil is capable of; while the simple Murillo, perhaps despised like Goldsmith for his very excellence, would have his Correggio-like tones transposed into the flowery gaudiness of a coloured print. Even the glorious Titian, in this last stronghold, where his virgin surface will probably remain the longest untouched, might have his 'Apotheosis,' and his 'Last Supper' dressed up according to the newest version of blues, pinks, and yellows, adapted to the supposed taste of the picture-seeing public.

"But the system that we deprecate is, after all, not confined to our own school. Luca Giordano, and Tiepolo, have tried it with sufficient talent and *éclat* to prove that neither the one nor the other (the principle being wrong) can be a warrant for its success.

"There is just one test by which all artists returning from abroad should try themselves. You know the small head Sir Joshua Reynolds painted; the first after his return: it is in something like this, that is summed up to me all the law and the commandments.

"In viewing some of the finest works, I have been often reminded of Sir Joshua Reynolds, by their finest qualities. At Bayonne, in a parcel of prints, waiting there for me, are three from Sir Joshua; these, coming as I do from Velasquez and Titian, seem the work of a kindred spirit. With them are also some prints of my own; from which, as from my picture at Munich, I have learnt a useful lesson. They strengthen me in what I felt most doubtful, and weaken my confidence in what I felt most assured of. I feel the wisdom of Sir George Beaumont's advice to me, to reflect that *white is not light, and detail is not finish.*

"A casual remark in one of your own letters, though I have not before noticed it to you, has made a deep impression,—your observation on seeing the surface of 'the Penny Wedding,' in the Royal Cottage, Windsor. Your approval of the picture was unexpected, but has been lucky and useful to me; for I have since acted upon it as a *principle.* With *me* no starved surface now; no dread of oil; no 'perplexity for fear of change.' *Your* manner of painting a sky is now the manner in which I try to paint a whole picture.

"Much as I might learn from Spain and from her Art, you, as a landscape-painter, could learn but little, excepting only from some works of Velasquez, which are, even in landscape, so brilliant an exception to the rest of the school. Of him I saw a large landscape in Madrid, that for breadth and richness I have seldom seen equalled. Titian seemed his model; and if you could fancy what Sir Joshua Reynolds and our friend Sir George Beaumont would have approved as the beau ideal, it would be such a landscape. It was too abstract to have much detail, or imitation; but it was the very sunshine we see, and the air we breathe—the very soul and spirit of Nature.

"Spain herself is deficient in picturesque beauty. From Bayonne to Seville there is but little to interest—too much of the extended waste and sandy plain. The Sierra Morena, famous for the penance of Don Quixote, is however a true haunt for the imagination: it resembles much the *Trosachs,* which we both saw once, and I twice, under such unfavourable circumstances. They have been celebrated alike, as the retreat of beauty and chivalry, by the genius of Cervantes and of Scott; whose imitators in the Italian opera and the English melo-drama, have familiarised their rugged eminences to us, upon the stage.

"I return highly satisfied with my journey. The seven months and ten days passed in Spain, I may reckon as the best employed to me of my professional life—the only part of my residence abroad for which I may be fairly envied by my professional brethren. To be all eye, all ear, and all recollection, has been my object; yet after all I could note down, or bring away, much must still be trusted to the memory. Spain is the wild, unpoached, game-preserve of Europe, in which I have had some months' pursuit and sport, all to myself. In returning among you all again, I must guard myself against attributing to the merit of the teller, that interest which belongs exclusively to the story to be told.

"I hope to be with you before the close of the Exhibition. I know already how it looks. You have got some beautiful things in it—Sir Thomas has got all the ladies of fashion, and Turner is as violent as ever. I have some doubt if Danby will do often—quantity and multitude are not legitimate. I shall have to refresh my memory, however, in the extraordinary styles of the English school, and to know what disposition of Crome, Lake, and Ultramarine colour is the *go* for the next season among the Exhibitors.

"I am happy to hear good accounts of your thriving family. Give my best regards to Mrs. Collins; and for the young ones and yourself, accept my best wishes.

"I am, my dear Sir,
"Yours most faithfully,
"(*The homeward bound*) DAVID WILKIE."

At the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1828, Mr. Collins's pictures were four in number, and were thus entitled:—"Scene in Freshwater Bay" (painted for the Duke of Norfolk;) "Scene at Folkestone," (painted for Lord Charles Townshend;) "Doubtful Weather," (painted for Mr. T. C. Higgins;) and "Taking out a Thorn," (painted for Mr. J. Delafield.) "Freshwater Bay" was a small, light, delicate picture: the lustrous blue sea—the clear sunshine—the tranquil day-light sky, being all imbued with the same softness and purity. Near the foreground, a little girl, with a beautiful child by her side, sits with her arms clasping her knees, looking upward; while some younger children, paddling about the wet sands, diversify agreeably this principal group. The picture reflected from all its parts the same tender tranquillity, and was finely opposed by the Scene at Folkestone, whose broad, flat beach, far distant sea, brilliant sky, and animated group of fishermen and boys, gave it the different characteristics of simple vastness in the landscape, and stirring activity in the figures. In "Doubtful Weather," a boat lies close in the foreground; a boy in it, is occupied in preparing it for sea, while a fisherman stands near him, fronting the spectator, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking up steadfastly to a lowering cloud, immediately above him; through which a gleam of sunlight and blue sky is breaking quaintly. The atmosphere near the horizon is clear, while the ocean under it, in the background, tosses briskly beneath a fresh gale. The bold originality of the fisherman's position, and the striking contrasts of the whole landscape behind and above him, made this one of the most remarkable and powerful pictures of its class that the painter had exhibited. "Taking out a Thorn," was his only inland scene of the year. The locality of this picture is on Hampstead Heath; the point of view, the clump of fir-trees, near the inn called "The Spaniards," looking across towards "North End." On a bank sits an old furze-cutter, extracting a thorn from the finger of a chubby urchin, who rubs his eyes dolefully with the corner of his pinafore during the operation, which is compassionately and curiously observed by the unlucky patient's companions. The rich, soft colouring; the simple rustic incident; the vigorous truth and nature of this picture, rendered it immediately and widely popular. Among other connoisseurs, by whom the possession of it was desired, was the King; who expressed a wish, if it was not already sold, to add it to the two sea-pieces by the painter, which he already possessed. But the picture had been a commission; and its owner, very naturally, prized it too highly to be able to prevail on himself, under any circumstances, to forego his prior right to his valuable possession.

In the June of this year, Wilkie returned. The topics that had been but slightly touched in his letters to his friend, were now fully discussed; and the recollections and observations that had, as yet, been only casually noticed, were now carefully reviewed and circumstantially described. Throughout all these conversations on his past experiences, the anxiety of Sir David to set Mr. Collins forth on the journey to Italy, to urge him to gain the advantages of studying the works of the Italian school, and to fire him with the ambition to seek for new pictorial triumphs in Italian landscape, was ever uppermost. It was an opinion of Wilkie's, and—within certain restrictions—a true one, that variety of achievement is an essential ingredient in the success of all intellectual pursuits, and that the man, whether author or artist, who continues to turn the public channel of his labours in one direction, beyond a certain time, is risking the danger of the satiety of the public taste, or the degredation of indifference in the public attention. Believing sincerely in the various capabilities of his friend, Sir David was not easily wearied of disclosing to him all the temptations to attempt fresh successes presented by the land, from which Claude and Wilson had drawn their inspiration before him. But several reasons, connected with those family ties which were ever a moving principle in the painter's actions, then induced Mr. Collins—and, until eight more years had elapsed, continued to induce him—to decline following the advice thus given to him, and to remain satisfied with the subjects which the landscapes of his own country presented to his eye. To a less extended and important journey than that recommended by Wilkie, he was not however averse; and, in resigning for the present all prospect of communication with Italian Art, his long-cherished desire to study the works of the Dutch school, on the soil that had produced and still retained them, recurred with double energy. In a postscript to his latest letter to his friend, the reader may have observed an expression of his wish to see them in Wilkie's company. This plan, however, in consequence of Sir David's long previous absence, and many home engagements, was temporarily impracticable; and, giving up the pleasing idea of securing him for a companion, Mr. Collins, accompanied by another friend, took advantage of his spare time in the autumn of this year to pay the visit to Holland and Belgium, which he had so long proposed.

To the lover of the picturesque and the student of human nature, travelling in the country which Mr. Collins was now exploring, was a far more unalloyed pleasure then, than it is now. At that time the good old canal boats, with their spotless decks, glorious dinners, and discreetly Flemish rate of travelling, pursued their dreamy course, still unthreatened by the advent of the unadventurous railway. Then, the Dutchman with his mighty pipe, and the Belgian with his creamy beer, solemnly smoked and tippled the whole journey through; and the smart London shop-boy, out for a week's holiday on the Continent, was a jarring element unknown among the windings of the peaceful route. Then, when you took to land-carriage, you lumbered slowly, it is true, along the level roads; but, on the other hand, you passed *through* the quaint old towns on your journey, and not *outside* them—you stopped to change horses in the characteristic villages, instead of perching for one brief moment before the bars of a business-like "station." Then, it may be, that you met few waiters who could speak English, and were tempted not by the national apparition of "London stout;" but you had every chance, at the *table d'hote*, of sitting next to an unsophisticated denizen of the soil; you could see the courteous customs of the table, but little outraged by the barbarous exercise of foreign freedom. Privileges such as these—now alas to be imagined only!—were by a traveller of Mr. Collins's order, enjoyed with the highest zest. The horses, the wagons, the farming implements that he drew, seemed the very models from which Wouvermans had drawn before him; and the old houses, many of which are now pulled, or pulling, down, were then happily intact. Ostend, Bruges, Ghent, Brussels, and as far as Dinant inland—Antwerp, the Hague, and Rotterdam—were the principal points of his journey. All that he saw—the pictures, unrivalled by any foreign collections of the Dutch school; the flat, fertile country; the picturesque original people, delighted him. He was absent about six weeks. With *his* anxiety to see and to sketch everything, wherever he went, to register his opinions in a regular journal, or to describe his sensations in a series of letters, was unfortunately impracticable. Both with his family and his friends, the principal impressions of his journey were reserved for his fireside. Among his hasty letters to his wife during his absence, two however have been found of some general interest. They are subjoined:

"To Mrs. William Collins.

"Bruges, August 24th, 1828.

"My dear Harriet,—I write, as I promised, to let you know that our voyage thus far—for we came from Ostend by water—has been quite favourable.

The day on the sea was beautifully fine, and we reached Ostend about eleven at night. Before we could get beds (and *into* them) the clock had struck one. We were called again before four, to go on board the *trackschuyt*, a voyage of only three hours and a half; and to-morrow we hope to reach Ghent. After the bad nights I have had since Friday night, (I mean bad, because I was obliged to sleep in vile beds, and be called so unusually early,) I feel really worn out, and, having the prospect of a comfortable bed, and a great appetite for sleep, I propose retiring without loss of time.

"I find myself unable to tell you, respecting the features of this country, more than that they are charming. * * * We have been this morning to an English Protestant church, and happened afterwards to go into a Romish church, where we saw a figure, full-dressed, nearly as large as life, of the Virgin; which, after being bowed down to and worshipped, was carried in procession on men's shoulders through the church, accompanied by torches, bells, smoke, and other symbols of man's weakness. The expression of devotion on the parts of the congregation was deep, and worthy of better teaching. * * *

"Yours affectionately,

"WILLIAM COLLINS."

"TO THE SAME.

"Dinant, Sept. 2nd, 1828.

* * * "I trust you have received the letter I

wrote you on Sunday, after our arrival in Belgium; but, as I have not yet had the gratification of getting your answer, I write again. Not that I can ensure the receipt of your letters, from the irregularity of our proceedings, and what we should call in our own country the clumsiness of the postmasters and their modes of communication. The letter I suppose you to have written to Cologne, I have desired the postmaster there to forward to me at Namur, where I go this afternoon; but, as I fear I shall not get it there, I must have it sent after me to Rotterdam, where I wish you to direct your next letter. If you have not already written, and neither your communication there, nor the information you have now to give, is of great importance, do not write at all, as the chances are against my receiving your letter. You can easily imagine how much I feel this suspension of all intercourse between us. I pray God, however, who only can protect and prosper us, that all is well.

"We find the land-carriage in this country so slow, and we are so much delighted with the picturesqueness of the scenery, that, in order to do anything at all in the way of sketching, we must either abridge our route, (as at first proposed,) or delay our return to London greatly beyond our first intentions. We have determined upon the former plan, and have therefore given up the Rhine altogether, contenting ourselves with the best part of the Meuse, which is very fine as far as we have seen it, and the remainder of Holland.

"We have been blessed with the most delightful weather; and this, with the novelty of everything about us, has afforded us the greatest satisfaction. We find we must depend much upon our own researches for beautiful things; and this experience we have bought, of course, as in other matters of this sort must be the case, by commencing our route at four o'clock in the morning, being shaken over twenty miles of the worst road in the world, seeing—a trifle; getting a vile dinner, and bumping home again over the same road. All this, I expect, will be of great use to us; and '*très curieux!*' and '*charmante!*' and other notes of admiration from the guides, will lose some of their enchantment.

"And now, my dear Harriet, casting all my care upon Him who only and alone can help us and bless us,

"I am, your affectionate husband,
"William Collins."

Later in the autumn, the painter, on his return to England, again visited Mr. Higgins, of Turvey Abbey, and extended his short country tour to Leamington. From the latter place he wrote as follows:

"To Mrs. William Collins.

"Leamington, Oct. 2nd, 1828.

* * * "I fear you had much difficulty in making out the letter I sent you from Turvey; indeed it so happens that the epistles I send you are

generally, from the bustle in which I make my excursions and the desire I have to combine sketching with sight-seeing, fully deserving of the appellation of scrawls.

"I left Mr. Higgins on Monday, and arrived at this place on the same evening. During my stay at Turvey I saw many pretty things, and was much struck by Castle Ashby, a seat of the Marquis of Northampton, one of the most perfect dwellings, with endless drives through magnificent woods,—one, in particular, a green lane, or rather wide road, thirteen miles in extent, with the finest wood scenery I ever saw. Yet with all this beauty and splendour, the present owner deserts it for foreign fopperies! How utterly impossible it is to say in what happiness consists; in *things*, I am sure it does not. Ought we not, then, to cultivate inward peace, or rather those means by which it may be obtained from Him who alone can give it, and who, praised be his holy name, has promised it,—upon certain conditions, indeed; but his burden is light, and his yoke is easy.

"I cannot tell you, when I am alone, how I long for home. Why should we thus be parted I say continually, and my only consolation is that it is not for pleasure alone, (although, thank God, I relish the beauties of his creation more than ever,) but for the 'crumbs' I must take to my 'nest.' And what a 'nest' it is, after all! May we ever be grateful for so high a gift! I could go on for an hour describing our blessings; but your heart is not insensible to the merits of Providence, and when I return, we will thank our heavenly Father together.

"As the weather is broken, and the air too cold for sitting out to draw, I shall satisfy myself with *seeing* the beauties of this exquisite place, and I trust return to London by to-morrow's coach. Of this matter, however, I will write again.

"Affectionately yours,
"WILLIAM COLLINS."

The year 1828, closed with unusual gloom and melancholy for the painter. Late in the autumn, he suffered from a severe attack of illness; and early in the winter, occurred the death of his generous patron and sincere friend, the Earl of Liverpool.

But, notwithstanding these sources of trouble and regret, the beginning of the next year found my father more busily engaged than ever in the gradual completion of his new pictures, which were five in number at the Exhibition of 1829. They were entitled, "Morning after a Storm," (the large sea-piece, commissioned by Sir R. Peel, on the completion of his "Frost Scene:") "Summer Moonlight," (painted for the Rev. R. A. Thorpe;) "Prawn Fishing," (painted for Sir F. Freeling;) "A Scene in a Kentish Hop-garden," (sold to the Duke of Norfolk;) and "Fisher Children," (painted for the Hon. G. A. Ellis, the centre figure being a portrait of his son.)

The painter also exhibited at the British Institution this year; sending there a work executed for Mr. Wells, entitled "A Scène on the Coast of Kent."

"Morning after a Storm," was the largest of my father's works of the year. The incident of the picture is thus embodied:—A storm is supposed to have raged during the night, and is indicated by the wild broken clouds, rolling away before the morning sun, and by the vexed waters of the ocean, which are still in process of subsiding from their recent agitation. On a cliff, to the left hand of the scene, is seated a fisherman's wife, with a baby at her bosom, and another little child clinging to her. Her face, shaded by her hand, is turned towards the sea, on whose brilliant expanse her eyes are anxiously fixed, watching for the first sight of the fishing-boat, in which her husband has risked the dangers of the tempestuous night. A dog, still and watchful as herself, stands by her side; while near her a man with a telescope, (a repetition, by desire, of the figure in the "Fishermen on the Look-Out,") scans thoughtfully and deliberately the ocean view. The profound and simple sentiment of this picture; the homely natural pathos in the attitude and expression of the young wife, still painfully doubtful of her husband's safety; the powerful and beautiful contrast between the brilliant action of the elements, the fast-parting clouds, the warm conquering sunlight, the brightly tossing ocean, and the expressive stillness of anxiety and fear impressed upon the very positions of the living agents of the scene, are qualities, as little to be interpreted by any description, however minute, as the remoter technical excellences of singleness of treatment and brilliancy of colouring apparent to the critic in the painting of the work. In relation, also, to Mr. Collins' second picture, "Summer Moonlight," the same poverty of the resources of description cannot be less severely felt. The two boys, pushing a little fellow in a tub across one of the pools left by the sea on the beach, and the expanse of wet sand leading smoothly out to the distant ocean, are parts of the composition which it might be comparatively easy to render here; but the dreamy, mysterious softness of the atmosphere, neither twilight nor moonlight, but partaking of both, the poetic stillness of the light, as it rests gently over the fishing-boats on the distant waters, the luxurious repose of the whole scene of smooth shore beneath, and half-radiant clouds above, must be beheld on the canvas itself to be properly divined, and cannot be meddled with by the tedious pen. The picture of "Prawn Fishers" added one more brilliant example to the list of the painter's most attractive sea-pieces. It was engraved in the "Literary Souvenir" for 1835, and has continued from the time of its production to be a most popular work. In the "Scene in a Kentish Hop-garden," the background is aptly filled by rows of tall picturesque hop-poles, while the foreground is occupied by a busy group of cottagers. The curious Kentish "hop-cradle," formed of clumsy sticks covered with a red cloak, and used by the women to hold their children when they are at work, is introduced with capital effect into the foreground of the charming English country scene which this picture pourtrays. "Fisher Children,' a small delicate work, was engraved in the "Literary Souvenir." The portrait of the son of Mr. Agar Ellis, (for whom the picture was painted,) was introduced into the composition with the artist's usual felicity; the child being represented, dressed in homely garments, standing with a pan in his hand to receive some fish, which a boy and a girl are engaged in washing at each side of him. A remarkable tenderness in colour and delicacy in execution distinguished this picture.

In presenting the subjoined letters, exchanged during the summer of this year between Mr. Collins and Mr. Bernard Barton, the poet, the explanation of the circumstances connected with them cannot be better prefaced than by the insertion of a Sonnet, written by the latter gentleman, expressive of that admiration for the painter's works, from which the following correspondence first dated its commencement:

SONNET

TO WILLIAM COLLINS, R.A.

PAINTER! each British bard who loves the sea,
With all the scenery of its winding shore,
In sunshine's calm, or tempest's wild uproar,
Should hymn a song of grateful praise to thee!

For there thy genius seems at home to be,
  And on thy living canvas we explore
  Beauties which longer studied please us more,—
Bulwarks which found us, and that leave us, *free!*
  While, by the dwellers on our sea girt Isle,
  Its billowy borders are with pride beheld,
So long shall bloom the wreath thou hast compell'd
  Fame to entwine thee; and, with partial smile,
  Shall England's voice in exultation style
COLLINS his native country's Vandervelde!
BERNARD BARTON.

Sentiments of approval as cordial as these, and excited, it should be observed in the case of Mr. Bernard Barton, by the only acquaintance with the painter's works that his country residence had permitted him—general report, and the notices of the press; formed great part of the first letter that he wrote to Mr. Collins. The remainder contained an expression of his anxiety to possess some small memorial of the painter's skill, which might be valueless to the giver, but which should not only be a treasured possession to the receiver, but a future inspiration to his muse. Feeling that the praise of a poet was not of ordinary importance, and that the kindred pursuit of a poet rendered superfluous the apologies with which his correspondent had closed his request, Mr. Collins answered his application by the offering mentioned in the following letter:

"TO BERNARD BARTON, ESQ.

"Hampstead Green, July 7th, 1829.

"My dear Sir—I have to offer you my most sincere thanks for the flattering view you have been pleased to take of my reputation as a painter; and I have only to hope that should you ever see any of those works by which, such as it is, it has been obtained, you will not feel obliged to change your present favourable opinions.

"I have delayed answering your kind letter, until I could get from the printer an impression of a plate that is not yet published; and I regret much that this, and those that accompany it, are all I can have the pleasure of presenting to you—for I have no picture by me, that would not provoke, even from your kind feeling, '*a wreath*' which it would not please *you* 'to weave'—particularly as you propose 'a *fitting* one'—or *me* to wear. In truth, all those which I do paint, are demanded to supply a table, where so many mouths are daily open, that even '*the crumbs*' you ask for, by a sort of enchantment, immediately disappear.*

"Should any circumstance arise to induce you to visit this neighbourhood, believe me it would afford me very great pleasure to introduce you to our scenery; which, notwithstanding its proximity to the 'great Babel,' is acknowledged to have many and peculiar beauties, and where you would at least find a hearty welcome.

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* The above sentence, refers to a passage in Mr. Bernard Barton's letter, where he had humorously compared his application to the painter, to the plea of the poor beggar in the parable, for "the crumbs from the rich man's table."

"Trusting that an acquaintance begun so oddly, may not finish abruptly,

"I am, my dear Sir,
"Your obliged and faithful servant,
"William Collins."

The reply of Mr. Bernard Barton to the above letter, expresses with so much frankness and clearness his motives for making his request to Mr. Collins, and contains so many just observations on the characteristics of men of intellect, as to render its publication as much a matter of interest to the reader, as of justice to the writer. It runs as follows:

"To William Collins, Esq., R.A.

"Woodbridge, Suffolk, 7th Month, 9th, 1829.

"My dear Friend—When I sent the letter and sonnet, which thy favour of the 7th instant has acknowledged, in a manner equally honourable to thy courtesy and kindness, I trusted for its indulgent reception to that liberal feeling which I believe to be the invariable accompaniment of true genius, in either a painter or poet. I never had been either deceived or disappointed in my reliance on this principle; for I never risked such an intrusion, without first having good grounds for believing that the party addressed would understand and appreciate my motives and feelings. There is a sort of *esprit de corps*, an union as mysterious almost as that of freemasonry, existing among the votaries of the sister Arts of painting and poetry, which is felt and understood in a moment, where the attachment of both to their favourite pursuit is genuine and generous. Had I seen an account, in the papers, of a goldsmith, silversmith, or jeweller, who had invented a new and elegant sort of snuff-box—though I am both a snuff-taker and a snuff-box fancier—I should no more have dreamt of winning a specimen of the man's craft, by addressing a Sonnet to him, than of obtaining the Chancellor's Seals, by an Ode to His Majesty. Archimedes is said to have declared he could move the universe, give him but whereon to rest his lever. The poet can do more than the mathematician, where *mind* is to be worked on; but he can only appeal to minds, native to the same element in which he lives and breathes. By *them*, he need not fear being repulsed with coldness or scorn; because their own love of all that is beautiful in Nature will lead them instinctively to sympathize with, and enter into, his thoughts and feelings, and to give him credit for better motives than those of cold, calculating, sordid selfishness.

"There now!—I think I have given my good and philosophical reasons for my intrusion on thee, and for thy frank, generous, and friendly reception of my unauthorised introduction of myself to thee. I am not however the less grateful for, and gratified by, thy kindness. Though I have said so much to prove the ground of my reliance on it, I have done it rather to prove that I did not lightly, much less impertinently, venture to intrude on an R.A. The simple fact was, I had wished for years to see some performance of thine, however slight; whether a mere sketch in oil, or water-colours, or even in pencil, that might give me some idea of a master, of whom I had heard so much, and I wrote my letter and Sonnet, under the impression of that wish and feeling, considering that its existence did not discredit my own taste, and was the highest compliment I could pay to thy genius. For the manner in which my application has been met, I can only gratefully assure thee it has led me to join to admiration of the artist, cordial affection for the man,—a stronger, and yet more natural, feeling; for the first exists only from report, while the last is founded on experience. I shall therefore most thankfully receive thy prints, which will at least enable me to judge for myself of thy subjects and composition; and I doubt not that even from these, I shall cull materials for my Muse, which I shall have pleasure in sending thee.

"Thy obliged and affectionate friend,

"BERNARD BARTON."

"P.S. I certainly should not have come to town, without making an effort to obtain a sight of a painting of thine—I should now try hard to see Hampstead and its artist."

Applications for presents of sketches, from persons neither enjoying the peculiar privileges of Mr. Bernard Barton's position, nor entertaining his correct ideas of the value of works of Art, form one of the prominent social misfortunes of a successful painter's life. The system of intellectual extortion practised under the protection of that all-devouring dragon of pictorial offspring—a lady's album—is not the only trial of his professional patience which the artist must endure. Nothing is more common than to hear some of his well-meaning but uninitiated friends making a polite demand, on visiting his painting-room, for "a little sketch;" which generally means some study they observe hanging upon his walls, that they have not the most distant notion can be of any particular use or value to him, and that they imagine he can give away—especially if he has once used it in a picture—with as little loss to himself, as his old painting coat, after he has worn it out at elbows, or his spirits of turpentine, when he has washed his brushes in them. It is often in vain that the unfortunate object of their passion for the Fine Arts, endeavours to explain to them the importance of his sketch to himself; if they are not very easy and good-natured people, they go away with a firm persuasion that his refusal to oblige them arises from an absence of generosity, or from a mercenary objection to part with a single stroke of his pencil, for which he may chance to obtain money at some future time. There is probably no department of intellectual Art which is so incautiously approached by those who have never studied it, as painting. The immense increase, in the present age, of interest in Art, among classes or individuals who formerly paid no attention to such a source of attraction, has made it unpleasantly singular for anybody to be without a criticism of his own, for whatever pictures he may see—no matter how few have been his opportunities of acquainting himself with the subject. People, who, in music, will silently submit to the infliction of a modern symphony, because they suppose that their professional friends, who assure them that it is "full of tune," must know better than they do; or, who toil boldly through a volume of metaphysical poetry, because a learned acquaintance has described it (in the literary slang now in vogue) as "earnest," or "hopeful," or "subjective," or "esthetic," are, in many cases, the very people who, in matters of Art, scorn all guidance, and decide, *ex cathedra*, upon everything pictorial, over the last sip of a cup of coffee, or during a passing salutation in the crowd of an Exhibition-room. Part of this evil must, unfortunately, be always an inherent consequence of the peculiar nature of painting, which, unlike literature or music, appeals at once in all its parts to the judgment; and must, therefore, appear to the careless or uninformed as a comparatively superficial study, to be attained by tact and confidence, rather than by long devotion and anxious inquiry. Those who think themselves thus easily privileged to decide, without knowledge, on one of the most abstruse of sciences, are not unfrequently the critics who, on seeing a picture the day before it is exhibited, observe complacently that it will be "beautiful when it is finished," and who exceed all belief, in producing at a moment's notice, the most elaborately erroneous interpretations of incident and story, in beholding the clearest subject that can be placed before their eyes. Even in regard to the pecuniary value of works of Art, the absence of knowledge has often as little share in repressing the ambition to criticise, as in the higher matters of judgment. Of misapprehensions of this sort (oftener, it must be observed, ludicrous than offensive) an amusing instance occurred to Mr. Collins. His fondness for obtaining unsophisticated criticisms on the nature and value of his works, has been already noticed. It once induced him, on the conclusion of a large and elaborate sea-piece, to ask one of his servants, a north-country girl, what she thought ought to be the value, in money, of the picture she beheld. The "neat-handed Phillis," evidently imagining that her opinion was of some consequence to her master, examined his production with great seriousness and care, and then exclaimed in a broad Northumbrian accent, and with the self-satisfied air of having "touched the estimate" at its highest possible rate: "Well, sir, may be a *sovereign!*"

Another of the painter's favourite methods of procuring for himself the doubtful satisfaction of impartial criticism, was to join the groups of visitors to the Exhibition, who were looking at his pictures, and listen to their remarks. This rather perilous pastime he indulged in for many years, with tolerable impunity; but he was fated, at last, to suffer for his boldness. Having observed two gentlemen at the Exhibition displaying those decided symptoms of critical power over Art, which consist in shrugging the shoulders, waving the hand, throwing back the head, and marking the catalogue, before all the principal pictures, he was tempted to listen to their remarks, when they arrived opposite to one of his own works. "What's this?" cried the great man of the two, severely—"Sea-piece, by Collins? Oh, pooh, pooh! D——d tea-boardy thing!" The painter had not enough of the Roman in him to hear more. The incident so effectually cured him for some time of his predilection for sincere criticism, that when, shortly afterwards, he happened to be sitting next to Sir Henry Halford, at dinner, and was asked by that gentleman (who did not then know him personally), what he thought of "Collins's pictures;" he replied, with unwonted caution, "I think I am rather too much interested on that subject, to give an opinion, —I painted them myself." "Oh, you need not have feared my criticism!" returned Sir Henry, laughing, "I was about to tell you how much I have been delighted by their extreme beauty!"

In this year the painter contemplated another change of residence. The birth of his second child, and his determination, in consequence of her failing health, to take his mother under his own roof, where her infirmities might receive the most unremitting attention, were the chief causes which made a larger abode than that he at present occupied, an absolute necessity to him. His first project was to build a house for himself at Hampstead; and measures were taken for the purchase of the necessary ground. During the legal delays that ensued—delays, lengthened by a difficulty as to the validity of the landholder's title—Mr. Collins resolved to employ the interval of technical deliberation, in which he could take no part, in a visit, with his family, to the Coast of France—the place he fixed on being Boulogne, which was then less unfortunately Anglicised than it is now. On hearing of this design, Wilkie again recurred to his old project, and urged his friend to make Boulogne but his starting-point to Italy. But as the painter's family party included his mother—one of the objects of his visit being to try the effect upon her constitution of change of air and scene—the "Continental tour" was more than ever impracticable; and, adhering to his first purpose, he fixed the sojourn of himself and his family, at Boulogne. The house he occupied stood in the market-place; and he had but to look from his window to find, in the picturesque dresses, curious gestures, and bustling employments of the agricultural peasantry, that ample occupation for his sketch-book, which was a requisite of his happiness wherever he went. His attention, however, was principally turned to the scenery and inhabitants of the sea-shore. For the former, he carefully explored the Coast, for many miles, on each side of Boulogne; and, in the latter, the differences in physiognomy, manners and habits, between the French fishermen whom he was then studying, and the English fishermen whom he had formerly studied, afforded constant employment for his observation and his pencil. These men, with their wives and families, formed the subjects of many of the most highly finished water-colour drawings that he ever executed. The women, young and old, in their bridal dresses, and their working-day garments—the men under every aspect, in their animated quarrels, and their regular occupations, were, each and all, delighting and absorbing studies, for one who saw fresh materials for his Art, and new incentives to the ambition of pictorial excellence, even in the humblest natural object that he beheld. Among the heterogeneous group of models—all more or less "characters," in their different departments—which he soon collected about him, was one fisherman, whose handsome, benevolent face, and fine athletic figure, particularly attracted his attention. On inquiry, the history of this man was found to embrace one of those noble acts of philanthropy, which it is more a pleasure than a duty to record. He was present at a shipwreck on a lonely part of the coast near Boulogne, where all the crew were cast on shore dead, with the exception of a poor negro, who still showed faint signs of life. But the Quarantine Laws (to which the wrecked ship was liable) were then in such force, that no dwelling-house was permitted to receive the half-drowned man. No one attempted to approach, or succour him, but the fisherman; who, in defiance of all danger and objection, carried the poor wretch to a straw-hut on the beach; and, taking off his own clothes, laid down by him the whole night long, endeavouring to restore the dying negro by the vital warmth of his own body. This sublime act of humanity was however unavailing—when morning dawned, the negro was dead! The Boulogne authorities, greatly—as he expressed it—to his own surprise, rewarded the fisherman for a violation of the quarantine, which moved the admiration of all who heard of it, and which is too glorious an addition to the records of human virtue to be easily forgotten or frequently paralleled. Mr. Collins' sketch of the "Good Samaritan," was an admirable and characteristic likeness; and is now in the possession of Lord Monteagle, who purchased it at the sale of the painter's works, after his death.

The following letter, from Mr. Collins to his brother, glances at his landscape and figure studies at Boulogne:

"To Francis Collins, Esq.,

"Boulogne, August 10th, 1829.

"My dear Frank—We had great pleasure in receiving, yesterday, your letter of the 5th, and we are rejoiced to find you are so comfortably and hospitably entertained. Although we may not meet here, I trust we shall at Dover; whither it is likely we shall go in about a month, and remain until some arrangement can be made about winter-quarters.

"The weather here has been very changeable: I have, however, made some sketches both of the place and the people; and in my excursions have derived considerable advantage, from the local information of Lieutenant King—an amateur painter of merit, whose wife, too, has been of great use to Harriet; she is a most ladylike person, a sister of Sir Nicholas Tindal's.

"With respect to the information you require for Lord Sheffield, my own opinion of the neighbourhood of Torquay, as well as of Torquay itself, is in the highest degree favourable. Buryhead, Babicombe Bay, and in that direction on to Teignmouth, are quite beautiful; and, in the opposite direction, Dartmouth, Start Bay, and on to Prawle Point, where the coast is more wild, and equally interesting. The inland scenery too, particularly the banks of the Dart, about Ashburton, Buckland, Holne Chase, etc., etc., is universally admired. The climate, in fine weather, is quite perfect—I say however in *fine* weather, for the greatest admirers of Devonshire are constrained to admit that, with them, 'the rain it raineth every day.'

"As Harriet claims some portion of my paper, and as she is a more methodical correspondent than I can pretend to be, I shall give her the remaining space.

"Your affectionate brother,

"WILLIAM COLLINS."

About the middle of September, the painter returned with his family by way of Dover, proceeding from that place to Ramsgate, where—still unsettled about a permanent abode—he made a stay of a few weeks. "We have taken a house here, for a fortnight"—he writes to his brother; "sincerely hoping that, during this time, we may at last hear of an abode at Hampstead. Should you be able to put matters there in train, we see no reason why you should not spend at least a week with us, in the delightful air of this place,—Willy has plenty of room in his bed for you, and seconds the invitation with all his heart. I have not yet been to Broadstairs; which has more picturesque beauty, I believe, than any other place in this neighbourhood! There is nothing worth a straw at Ramsgate, except the sea; so I shall have plenty of idle time to go about with you."

Ultimately, on his return to Hampstead, Mr. Collins temporarily engaged a larger house than he had before occupied, near the Heath; intending it to serve the purpose of enabling him, by a short delay, to settle his plans judiciously, for a place of permanent residence. The difficulties attaching to the purchase of land, (which still continued) and the anxiety of Wilkie, who then lived at Kensington, that his friend should take a house nearer to him, had already raised doubts in the painter's mind, whether he should do well to settle himself at Hampstead at all. While these were being resolved, he found full occupation in his temporary abode in beginning those pictures for the next Exhibition which he had determined were to illustrate the peculiarities of the French Coast and its population, on the principles which he had so successfully adopted, in his wonted representations of the same subjects on his native shores.

Throughout the remainder of the autumn my father's attention was closely devoted to his new works; no interruption of sufficient importance to be narrated in these pages happening, to divert his attention from his professional labours, until the commencement of the new year—when an event occurred, which was not only personally distressing to him, but which cast universal gloom over the world of Art. This was the sudden death, on the 8th of January, of his intimate and admirable friend, Sir Thomas Lawrence, the President of the Royal Academy; with whom he had for many years associated in happy social, and intellectual intercourse, and to whom he was attached by the highest admiration for the endowments of his genius, and the most pleasing experience of the virtues of his character. On the last day of the old year, they had dined together; had conversed even more cheerfully and cordially than was their wont; and had parted in the highest spirits—Sir Thomas observing jestingly to his friend, as he wrapped himself up more carefully than was his custom, that he had "a slight cold," and must take care of himself upon the principle of the old adage, that "good folks were scarce!" Mr. Collins had then seen him, alive, for the last time. During the next two or three days, the "slight cold" increased alarmingly; and the medical attendant called in, fearful of inflammation, bled his patient largely. On the day of his death, Sir Thomas appeared better, and was capable of listening to a book which was read to him by a relative. He had just been laughing heartily at some humorous passage in the work, when he was seized with a sudden faintness. "I am dying," he whispered to his servant, who was attempting to relieve him. Medical help was called in, but it was useless,—he never spoke again; and on the same day he breathed his last. His funeral, it will be remembered, was public,—on a bitterly cold day, the members of the Royal Academy committed the remains of their honoured President to the grave, in St. Paul's Cathedral. The agitation produced by the burial ceremony, and the exposure to the inclement weather which was a necessary consequence of it, severely affected Mr. Collins: for some time afterwards he suffered from an attack of illness, which temporarily suspended his usual labours in the Art, at this period of the year.

On the opening of the Exhibition of 1830, three Sea-pieces, on French subjects, appeared from my father's pencil. They were entitled, "Les Causeuses," —painted for Mr. Tunno; "Waiting the Arrival of Fishing-boats—Coast of France;" painted for

Mr. J. P. Ord; and "Muscle-gatherers—Coast of France"—painted for Sir Thomas Baring, Bart.

"Les Causeuses," presented the simplest of subjects—two French fish-women engaged in eager conversation, at one end of a pier overlooking the sea. In ordinary hands such an incident as this, when produced on the canvas, must have resulted in much that was conventional and little that was attractive; but under Mr. Collins's treatment, this apparently unprofitable fund of material produced the freshest and richest of effects—grace and novelty in the attitudes; national character in the physiognomy, gestures and expression of the figures; with brightness, truth, and harmony of colour in every part of the picture, from the dresses of the women to the hues of the tranquil sea and sky, being the successful means of producing this brilliant and original work. In "Waiting the Arrival of Fishing-boats," the same qualities of concentration of interest and grasp of effect were apparent, under different arrangements of colour and varied masses of composition. The figures in this picture were two women—one seated, the other standing by her, with a little child in an old basket slung at her back—and a boy placed near them, with a load of fish. "Muscle-gatherers," was the largest picture of the three. The landscape portion of the scene was a distant view of the Pier at Boulogne; the figures in the foreground were fishwomen, talking, gesticulating, and packing muscles, with that genuine French confusion and excitement, which is at once so perplexing and amusing to an English eye. This picture was magnificently toned, and painted throughout with extraordinary freedom, brilliancy, and vigour.

In noticing among the characteristics of these works, their originality of design, their brilliant colour, and their faithful reflection of the peculiarities of the people and the scenery which they were intended to represent, a few remarks on the progress that had now been made for many years by the painter, in that important branch of the science of Art which is termed "execution," may be permitted in this place; inasmuch as that progress was exhibited in his pictures of the present year in a remarkable degree. "Execution"—or the process of applying the tints on the canvas, and elaborating the whole surface of a picture—is, to a painter, what style is to a writer, a characterizing mark of his genius, which no imitation can ever completely copy. It gives individuality to the slightest, as to the most important, objects in pictorial composition; its value is never underrated by a great painter; and its excellence is always apparent as a remarkable component part in the beauties of his works. In Mr. Collins's pictures, the gradual formation of his powers of "execution" is interestingly developed. Those of early dates, exhibit him as commencing his practice of this part of his education in Art, by the most resolute labouring and relabouring of the different objects in his compositions, until they presented the requisite finish, purity, and completeness of surface. Subsequently, his works would be found to display —could they be viewed consecutively—his anxiety to add to these primary qualities, variety of texture, and brilliancy of effect; while, still later, his increasing capacity to accomplish successfully the objects of that anxiety, might be traced, year after year, as his new efforts succeeded each other, up to the time of his attainment of that firm mastery over the manipulation of the brush, which was presented by his pictures painted about the period of his career now under review. It is in his sea-pieces on French subjects especially, that the extraordinary vigour and freedom of "execution" which he had now acquired may be remarked. Bold carelessness, or timid finish of "handling," are alike avoided in them. Each object receives its due amount of manual attention, in proportion as it is necessary that it should recede from, or advance to, the eye. The firm shaping and reiterated application of the tints used to produce the solidity and roundness of the foreground masses, gives way to the light single sweep of the brush, where the line of the evanescent cloud, or the haze of the distant horizon, is to be expressed. And thus, harmonized throughout by texture and surface, pictures painted on these principles present nothing that is accidentally abrupt to the eye, but true in the balance of their individual parts, preserve the lasting attraction of variety and completeness in their general effect.

Additional remarks on this subject will be rendered necessary in other passages of the present Memoir; it is therefore inexpedient to continue them here. As new modes of study opened to Mr. Collins's mind, new stores of knowledge must be noticed as added to his previous acquisitions; for in painting, however much may have been attained, there is still ever something to be learnt. It is the privilege of the longest life, the firmest patience, the highest genius in Art, to make the discovery that the paths which lead to its sanctuary are as endless as the delights which accompany its pursuit.

In relation to the picture of "Muscle-gatherers," it may be mentioned that, while it was in course of completion, its possessor, Sir Thomas Baring, having seen one of the painter's sketches of a French fisherman, was so struck with it, that he became anxious that the figure should be introduced among the other groups in the work which was preparing for him. The two following letters, referring to this desired alteration, are so characteristic of two main qualities in their writer's disposition—his anxiety to oblige others, and his determination to do justice to himself—as to be worthy of perusal, notwithstanding their brevity:

"To Sir Thomas Baring, Bart.

"27th February, 1830.

"Sir,—As I feel exceedingly desirous that my present picture should be the best I have ever painted, and especially anxious to give you satisfaction, I purpose making the experiment of introducing the figure of the fisherman,—fearing, however, that the present principal figure will not bear so formidable a rival.

"I shall however this morning faithfully endeavour to effect the purpose you desire, and will have the pleasure of communicating the result to you by the next post.

"Your obliged and obedient servant,

"William Collins."

To the Same.

"28th February, 1830.

"Sir,—I have not only tried the figure in a standing position, but have also painted him sitting; and in both cases found him a great intruder. The picture had already so much matter, that it became crowded with the addition, and suffered so great a loss in the most essential of all qualities,—*breadth*, that I found it quite necessary, in justice to your interests and to my own reputation as a painter, to restore it to its former state.

"Trusting you will believe that, under other circumstances, it would have afforded me the greatest pleasure to have adopted your suggestion,

"I remain, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"William Collins."

Decided as was the tone of the second of Mr. Collins's letters, the alteration therein referred to did ultimately take place. So ready to be advised, and so perfectly free from professional obstinacy was the painter, that when, some time afterwards, Sir Thomas Baring and another gentleman of taste requested him to make a second experiment of the introduction of the fisherman's figure, he again attempted to produce the desired change. On this occasion, however, he was more fertile in his resources than on the last; and succeeded in making the required adjunct to his composition, upon the only condition on which (yielding as he was in all other directions) he would have permitted the change to remain on the canvas,—its non-interference with the pictorial value of the original groups. Indeed, so fully satisfied was he that the alteration as now effected was a decided improvement to his picture, that he refused all remuneration for the additional labour he had bestowed upon it.

During the summer of this year the painter again changed his place of residence. The inconvenience of his distance from London and London friends, combined with many disadvantages attaching to the accommodations of the house he had occupied since his return from Boulogne, had inclined him for some time past to resign all ideas of settling definitely at Hampstead, and to contemplate removing, as his friend Wilkie had recommended him to do, nearer to Kensington and to the metropolis. This project he accordingly executed, by taking a house at Bayswater; where he obtained a more commodious painting-room than he had occupied in his former abode, and where he found himself situated at a convenient distance from "London streets," and placed within half an hour's walk of the residence of his friend Wilkie.

About this period, also, occurred the death of Mr. Collins's most illustrious patron, His Majesty George the Fourth. The painter's Diary for the year contains some notice of this event, and presents also a short memorial of a conversation with the late Sir William Knighton, (to whom he had been recently introduced by Sir David Wilkie,) which must be perused with interest, as embodying some results of Sir William's experience of the personal character of the greatest poet of the age—Lord Byron.

"Diary of 1830.

"July 15th.—The King is to be buried to-day. I owe him much. The firing of minute-guns and the tolling of the church bells was truly melancholy. 16th.—To-day the new reign may be said to have commenced; Seguier says our new sovereign has great views respecting the Arts. To-night the Academy has called a council, to prepare the address to his Majesty. 20th.—The new King and Queen, with the other branches of the Royal family, accompanied by Sir Robert Peel, Lord Farnborough, etc., etc., visited our Exhibition. They were received by the

President, Keeper, Secretary, and Council. The party remained about one hour and a half, and expressed themselves highly gratified. The King, in passing from the Model Academy through the hall, stated that he should on the following day, at the levée, knight our President. After the departure of our visitors, we drank Martin Archer Shee, *Esquire's*, good health. His kind, excellent heart, made him feel this deeply. The address was signed to-day, and prepared for presentation. * * *

"* * * In a conversation with Sir William Knighton, I heard from him the following anecdotes of Lord Byron. He attended his lordship, medically, for nine months, while he was writing the 'Corsair,' and other poems. During all his visits, he never heard him use an offensive word, either on religion or on any other subject. Lord Byron told him (Sir William Knighton,) that he once drank seventy pints of brandy, with Douglas Kinnaird, in as many days, to enable him to undergo the fatigue of writing. When the separation took place between Lord Byron and his wife, he allowed Sir William (who told him everybody was talking against him as regarded the subject, and that he wished for something to say in his defence) to state, that whatever offence he gave Lady Byron was in the way of omission rather than commission, that he never allowed himself to scold her, and only once showed temper in her presence,—when he threw his watch into the fire." * * *

After a visit in September to Brighton—which was always associated, through all changes of external appearance, with his dearest childish recollections, as the place where he had first seen and attempted to draw coast scenery—the painter returned to his permanent labours over his next year's pictures, in his new painting-room. Here he continued to work—with many social meetings with the illustrious men of the day, and many a pleasant evening's debate on Art with Wilkie, to diversify the daily regularity of his studies; but with little of outward incident, or change of life, until the opening of the Exhibition of 1831, to which he sent three pictures: "The Venturesome Robin;" "Shrimpers,—evening;" and "The Morning Bath." Two other works by him appeared also at the British Institution this year, and were entitled, "The Old Boatbuilder," and "A Nutting Party."

A woody lane, bounded by a cottage on each side, and giving others to view in the distance, forms the scene of action in "The Venturesome Robin." On one side, near a high old stone well, is a young girl in a kneeling position, with two beautiful children clasped in her arms. On the other are two boys, the younger of whom holds a salt-box, from which his companion is extracting a pinch of salt, to be placed at the right moment, (in accordance with a well-known but rather superstitious method of bird-catching,) on the tail of a robin, who stands irresolute in the middle of the foreground, hard by the plate of crumbs which has tempted his venturesome approach. The quaint simplicity of this incident is admirably brought out in the action and position of the different figures; the quiet, smiling attention of the girl and the children being admirably contrasted by the intense slyness in the countenances, and the breathless anxiety in the attitudes of the two boys with the salt-box; who evidently believe devoutly in the efficacy of their ornithological receipt. The same minute and dramatic attention to Nature, apparent in the figures, is discernible in the landscape, which is so arranged as to present no artificial limits to the eye—the shadows of palings which are not seen in the picture, falling on the foreground; and the distant trees, leading out of the composition, past the sides of the old well. It was in every respect a thoroughly successful work; was painted for Mr. J. P. Ord, and was well engraved, in the line manner, in "The Amulet" for 1834. The figures in "The Shrimpers," (painted for Mr. Vernon,) are large in size and highly finished,—they are grouped under a large cliff, arranging their fishing nets. A magnificent sunset sky, full of grand, aërial composition, and lustrous colouring, forms the most remarkable landscape object in this picture. "The Morning Bath," united the painter's domestic and sea-coast subjects. The waves fill the left-hand corner of the picture, to the foreground. In the shallow water stands a bathing-woman, restoring a baby whom she has just "dipped" to a nurse, on the beach at the right hand, who holds a warm blanket ready to receive her dripping little charge. Near her another attendant is dressing an elder child, who is shivering to the very fingers' ends. The clear, sunshiny sky, the buoyant, transparent waves, the characteristic action and varied expression in the figures, make this a most attractive and inspiriting picture. It was purchased by Mr. Henry M'Connell, of Manchester; and was engraved in "The Literary Souvenir." A beautiful water-colour drawing from the work exists by the artist's hand, and was bought at the sale of his works, after his death, by Mr. Russell Gurney.

Of the pictures at the British Institution, the largest was "The Nutting Party," painted for the Rev. R. A. Thorpe; a rustic, inland scene, with a fine group of children in the foreground. The second, "The Old Boatbuilder," was painted for General Phipps, and represented an old fisherman making a model of a boat for a pretty little child, who watches his progress, leaning on his knees. It was a small picture, painted with great care and delicacy, and was one of the artist's works exhibited at the British Institution after his death. It may be seen engraved in "The Amulet" for 1835.

Those momentous public occurrences, the outbreak of the cholera, and the Reform Bill agitation, of which England was the scene during this year, produced that long and serious depression in the patronage and appreciation of Art which social and political convulsions must necessarily exercise on the intellectual luxuries of the age. The noble and the wealthy, finding their lives endangered by a mysterious pestilence, and believing that their possessions were threatened by a popular revolution, which was to sink the rights of station and property in a general deluge of republican equality, had little time, while engrossed in watching the perilous events of the day, to attend to the remoter importance of the progress of national Art. As in other callings and societies, there were not wanting many to predict, from the aspect of the times, the downfall of all honourable and useful pursuits, the end of the aristocracy, and even the end of the world,—so in painting there were found men of dismal mind, who foreboded the unhallowed arrival of a new series of "dark ages" for the perdition of the Arts. At such a time, to attempt any new experiments or superior achievements in painting would have appeared to those of this opinion as hopeless a waste of labour and anxiety as could well be undertaken. Yet more sanguine than some of his brethren, it was in this year that Mr. Collins began to put into execution a project which he had long entertained, of painting a large picture of some national English sport, in which, casting aside his wonted landscape attractions, he should depend entirely on the composition and character of his figures for success. The subject he fixed on was "Skittle-playing." Out of the few friends that heard of his design, many discouraged it. The subject, they thought, had been too often treated by the great Dutch masters, to be susceptible of originality; and to deprive himself—especially at such a time of comparative indifference towards the Art—of the "witchery" of his airy skies and sea-coast, or inland prospects, was, they urged, to risk failure with the public, from the dangerous novelty of the attempt. Wilkie, however, who best knew his friend's capacities, was delighted with his project, and warmly urged him to realize it without delay. At that time, the old Bayswater house of entertainment, called "The Wales Tea-gardens," stood unenvironed by the smart rustic villas, whose Gothic towers, of the height of a large sentry-box, and whose Arcadian gardens, of the size of a farm-house cabbage-bed, now spread their suburban fascinations to the citizen's view. Past one side of it flowed the stream, or rather large ditch of muddy water, (now built over,) from which Bayswater is supposed to have derived its name. To the more enterprising and inquisitive of the students of Art this place was not unknown. It presented good views of old wooden outhouses, nicely broken bits of bank on each side of the ditch, a passably rustic wooden bridge over it, prettily shaped trees around it, and now and then—*rara avis in terrâ*—a real countryman, caught from Uxbridge, or Ealing, and but slightly tainted with "London life." One great characteristic however of this house of call for artists as well as beer-drinkers, was its large skittle-ground; and here Mr. Collins now attended, sketch-book in hand, to gather materials for his picture. The greatest skittle-player amongst them took not more interest in "a good throw," than he. He learnt the rules of the game and the art of the play. He made studies, unobserved, of the individual character, the momentary position, and the accidental arrangement of figures in the time that would have been occupied by some fastidious sketchers in cutting their pencils and inspecting the surface of their paper. He bought skittles, and set them up in his garden. He risked turning his gardener,—a great skittle-player, and the model for one of his figures,—into a permanent Colossus of Rhodes, by keeping him striding in the action of bowling with all his might, as long as his legs would uphold him. In short, he persevered in a course of preparatory study of such a description as this, with a determination that would have astonished those gentlemen of the "poetical brush" who paint "at home at ease:" and the result was, the production of a picture which, in the opinion of Wilkie—who watched it through every part of its progress—would go down to posterity as one of the standard works of the English school. It will be fully described at the period of its exhibition, the year 1832.

Such was Mr. Collins's industry in the practice of a branch of painting already familiar to him; and such will it be found in the narrative that is yet to come of his studies in the new field of Art presented to his contemplation, by the people and the scenery of a distant land.

END OF VOL. I.

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