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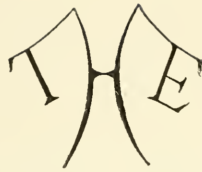

PORTFOLIO

AN ARTISTIC PERIODICAL.

EDITED BY

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON.

With Numerous Illustrations.

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. . . It is easy to criticise the art of M. Hébert; he may be reproached with a somewhat livid face here and there, with ground wanting in solidity and homogeneity, but nevertheless he is duly appreciated.'

M. Hébert has been for many years Director of the Académie de France at Rome, of which he was formerly laureate. According to the ideas which had hitherto decided the nomination of a Director for the French School at Rome, his appointment was a real revolution; for although strengthened by classical studies, M. Hébert is not an academic painter in the French sense of the word. As painter he is a colourist, as artist a dreamer, but at the same time a seeker after reality. His genre pictures, always directly inspired by nature, have little relation to the traditions of great historical painting. He is strongly imbued with modern ideas, and the friendship which unites him to our great landscape-painter, Jules Dupré, has singularly modified the teaching he received at the École des Beaux-Arts, and enlarged the circle of his ideas. He has no wish to conceal the fact, as he writes to me, in a letter dated the 20th of February, 1875: 'You may say that my intercourse with Jules Dupré, on my return from Rome, has revealed to me an unknown region of academic painting, and that I am happy to give public expression to my gratitude.'

Contemporaries often deliver verdicts which are not confirmed by posterity. Fashions change, tastes alter, and ideas are modified; some reputations grow with time, whilst others, after having shone with an ephemeral lustre, gradually fade, until they disappear entirely. We venture to think, however, that M. Hébert's pictures will in the future keep the high rank now assigned to them by public opinion, because the charm found in them is due to two causes which may stand the test of time—earnest study and a serious originality.

RENÉ MÉNARD.

AN AUTUMN EFFECT.

'Nous ne décrivons jamais mieux la nature que lorsque nous nous efforçons d'exprimer sobrement et simplement l'impression que nous en avons reçue.'—M. ANDRÉ THEURIET, 'L'Automne dans les bois,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1st October, 1874, p. 562.*

A COUNTRY rapidly passed through under favourable auspices, may leave upon us a unity of impression that would only be disturbed and dissipated if we stayed longer. Clear vision goes with the quick foot. Things fall for us into a sort of natural perspective, when we see them for a moment in going by; we generalise boldly and simply, and are gone before the sun is overcast, before the rain falls, before the season can steal like a dial hand from his figure, before the lights and shadows, shifting round towards nightfall, can show us the other sides of things, and belie what they showed us in the morning. We expose our mind to the landscape (as we would expose the prepared plate in the camera) for the moment only during which the effect endures; and we are away before the effect can change. Hence we shall have in our memories a long scroll of continuous wayside pictures, all imbued already with the prevailing sentiment of the season, the weather, and the landscape, and certain to be unified more and more, as time goes on, by the unconscious processes of thought. So that we who have only looked at a country over our shoulder, so to speak, as we went by, will have a conception of it far more memorable and articulate, than a man who has lived there all his life from a child upwards, and had his impression of to-day modified by that of to-morrow, and belied by that of the day after, till at length the stable characteristics of the country are all blotted out from him behind the confusion of variable effect.

* I had nearly finished the transcription of the following pages, when I saw on a friend's table the number containing the piece from which this sentence is extracted, and, struck with a similarity of title, took it home with me and read it with indescribable satisfaction. I do not know whether I more envy M. Theuriet the pleasure of having written this delightful article, or the reader the pleasure, which I hope he has still before him, of reading it once and again, and lingering over the passages that please him most.

That is one remark I desired to make before beginning to describe my little pilgrimage; because, from such a point of view, this pilgrimage was especially fortunate: the effect was simple and continuous throughout. One more remark, however, I desire to make; and it is one on which I lay great stress. I have spoken in a previous essay of how 'we saw places through our humours as through differently coloured glasses,' and just indicated some of the subjective conditions that modify the sight we have of scenery. This is not the place to develope the theory of the matter; and it will be enough to say that there goes to the building up of any general idea of a country, besides the question of good or bad temper, an infinity of infinitesimal conditions; that no man knows what these conditions are, or which of them at any moment is effective; and hence, if I want to communicate to others the very complex impression given to me by a tract of variegated country as I went over it for three days in succession, I shall do best if I follow instinct simply, and chronicle, in good faith, all that I vividly remember. Observe, it is not the aspect of the country, but the impression only, that I can hope to reproduce; and there went to the making of this impression many things that I should certainly omit if I were trying to describe the country, myself abstracted, but which I must as certainly preserve and accentuate, if I am to try this humbler and wiser task of reproducing the impression. The action and reaction of our own moods upon scenery, and the scenery upon our moods, is so constant and subtle that no man can follow it out intelligently to an end; and we cannot tell where the influence of our surroundings ceases, or which of our thoughts is not, in some deepest sense, suggested from without.

And so it should first be noticed that I began my little pilgrimage in the most enviable of all humours: that in which a person, with a sufficiency of money and a knapsack, turns his back on a town and walks forward into a country of which he knows only by the vague report of others. Such an one has not surrendered his will and contracted for the next hundred miles, like a man on a railway. He may change his mind at every finger-post, and where ways meet, follow vague preferences freely and go the low road or the high, choose the shadow or the sunshine, suffer himself to be tempted by the lane that turns immediately into the woods, or the broad road that lies open before him a long way into the blue distance, and shows him the far-off spires of some great city, or a range of faint mountain-tops, or a rim of sea, perhaps, along the low horizon. In short, he may gratify his every whim and fancy, without a pang of reproving conscience, or the least jostle to his self-respect. It is true, however, that most men do not possess the faculty of free action, the priceless gift of being able to live for the moment only; and as they begin to go forward on their journey, they will find that they have made for themselves new fetters. Slight projects they may have entertained for a moment, half in jest, become iron laws to them, they know not why. They will be led by the nose by these vague reports of which I spoke above; and the mere fact that their informant mentioned one village and not another, will compel their footsteps with inexplicable power. And yet a little while, yet a few days of this fictitious liberty, and they will begin to hear imperious voices calling on them to return; and some passion, some duty, some worthy or unworthy expectation, will set its hand upon their shoulder and lead them back into the old paths. Once and again, we have all made the experiment. We know the end of it right well. And yet if we make it for the hundredth time to-morrow, it will have the same charm as ever; our heart will beat and our eyes will be bright, as we leave the town behind us, and we shall feel once again (as we have felt before so often) that we are cutting ourselves loose for ever from our whole past life, with all its sins and follies and circumscriptions, and go forward as a new creature into a new world.

It was well, perhaps, that I had this first enthusiasm to encourage me up the long hill above High Wycombe; for the day was a bad day for walking at best, and now began to draw towards afternoon, dull, heavy, and lifeless. A pall of grey cloud covered the sky, and its colour

reacted on the colour of the landscape. Near at hand, indeed, the hedgerow trees were still fairly green, shot through with bright autumnal yellows, bright as sunshine. But a little way off, the solid bricks of woodland that lay squarely on slope and hilltop were not green, but russet and grey, and ever less russet and more grey as they drew off into the distance. As they drew off into the distance, also, the woods seemed to mass themselves together, and lay thin and straight, like clouds, upon the limit of one's view. Not that this massing was complete, or gave the idea of any extent of forest, for every here and there the trees would break up and go down into a valley in open order, or stand in long Indian file along the horizon, tree after tree relieved, foolishly enough, against the sky. I say foolishly enough, although I have seen the effect employed cleverly in art, and such long line of single trees thrown out against the customary sunset of a Japanese picture with a certain fantastic effect that was not to be despised; but this was over water and level land, where it did not jar, as here, with the soft contour of hills and valleys. The whole scene had an indefinable look of being painted, the colour was so abstract and correct, and there was something so sketchy and merely impressional about these distant single trees on the horizon that one was forced to think of it all as of a clever French landscape. For it is rather in nature that we see resemblances to art, than in art to nature; and we say a hundred times, 'How like a picture!' for once that we say, 'How like the truth!' The forms in which we learn to think of landscape are forms that we have got from painted canvas. Any man can see and understand a picture; it is reserved for the few to separate anything out of the confusion of nature, and see that distinctly and with intelligence. Thus, I know one who has a magical faculty of understanding, and reproducing in words, the gestures of people within picture-frames, or hung on the wall in tapestry; and yet ask him to describe the action of the live man who has just passed him in the street, and he cannot — he has not seen it, it has been nothing to him, and is gone for ever. So that most of us, when they look abroad over a landscape, go merely peeping for what they have already seen reproduced in pictures.

The sun came out before I had been long on my way; and as I had got, by that time, to the top of the ascent, and was now threading a labyrinth of confined bye-roads, my whole view brightened considerably in colour; for it was the distance only that was grey and cold, and the distance I could see no longer. Overhead, there was a wonderful carolling of larks, which seemed to follow me as I went. Indeed, during all the time I was in that country the larks did not desert me; the air was alive with them from High Wycombe to Tring; and as, day after day, their 'shrill delight' fell upon me out of the vacant sky, they began to take snch a prominence over other conditions, and form so integral a part of my conception of the country, that I could have baptized it 'The Country of Larks.' This, of course, might just as well have been in early spring; but everything else was deeply imbued with the sentiment of the later year. There was no stir of insects in the grass. The sunshine was more golden, and gave less heat than summer sunshine: and the shadows under the hedge were somewhat blue and misty. It was only in autumn that you could have seen the mingled green and yellow of the elm foliage; and the fallen leaves that lay about the road, and covered the surface of wayside pools so thickly that the sun was reflected only here and there from little joints and pinholes in that brown coat of proof; or that your ear would have been troubled, as you went forward, by the occasional report of fowling-pieces from all directions and all degrees of distance.

For a long time this dropping fire was the one sign of human activity that came to disturb me as I walked. The lanes were profoundly still. They would have been sad but for the sunshine and the singing of the larks. And as it was, there came over me at times a feeling of isolation that was not disagreeable, and yet was enough to make me quicken my steps eagerly when I saw some one before me on the road. This fellow-voyager proved to be no less a person than the parish-constable. It had occurred to me that in a district which was so little populous and so well wooded, a criminal of any intelligence might play hide-and-seek with the authorities for months; and this idea was strengthened by the aspect of the portly constable,

as he walked by my side with deliberate dignity and turned-out toes. But a few minutes' converse set my heart at rest. These rural criminals were very tame birds, it appeared. If my informant did not immediately lay his hand on an offender, he was content to wait: some evening after nightfall there would come a tap at his door; and the outlaw, weary of outlawry, would give himself quietly up to undergo sentence, and resume his position in the life of the country-side. Married men caused him no disquietude whatever; he had them fast by the foot; sooner or later they would come back to see their wives, a peeping neighbour would pass the word, and my portly constable would walk quietly over and take the bird sitting. And if there were a few who had no particular ties in the neighbourhood and preferred to shift into another county when they fell into trouble, their departure moved the placid constable in no degree. He was of Dogberry's opinion; and if a man would not stand in the Prince's name he took no note of him, but let him go, and thanked God he was rid of a knave. And surely the crime and the law were in admirable keeping: rustic constable was well met with rustic offender; the officer sitting at home over a bit of fire until the criminal came to visit him, and the criminal coming—it was a fair match. One felt as if this must have been the order in that delightful seaboard Bohemia, where Florizel and Perdita courted in such sweet accents, and the Puritan sang psalms to horn-pipes, and the four-and-twenty shearers danced with nosegays in their bosoms and chanted their three songs apiece at the old shepherd's festival; and one could not help picturing to oneself what havoc among good people's purses, and tribulation for benignant constable, might be worked here by the arrival, over stile and footpath, of a new Autolycus.

Bidding good-morning to my fellow-traveller, I left the road and struck across country. It was rather a revelation to pass from between the hedgerows and find quite a bustle on the other side, a great coming and going of school-children upon bye-paths, and, in every second field, lusty horses and stout country folk a-ploughing. The way I followed took me through many fields thus occupied, and through many strips of plantation, and then over a little space of smooth turf, very pleasant to the feet, set with tall fir-trees and clamorous with rooks making ready for the winter, and so back again into the quiet road. I was now not far from the end of my day's journey. A few hundred yards farther, and, passing through a gap in the hedge, I began to go down hill through a pretty extensive tract of young beeches. I was soon in shadow myself, but the afternoon sun still coloured the upmost boughs of the wood, and made a fire over my head in the autumnal foliage. A little faint vapour lay among the slim tree stems in the bottom of the hollow; and from farther up I heard from time to time an outburst of gross laughter, as though clowns were making merry in the bush. There was something about the atmosphere that brought all sights and sounds home to one with a singular purity; so that I felt as if my senses had been washed with water. After I had crossed the little zone of mist, the path began to remount the hill; and just as I, mounting along with it, had got back again, from the head downwards, into the thin golden sunshine, I saw in front of me a donkey tied to a tree. Now, I have a certain liking for donkeys, principally, I believe, because of the delightful things that Sterne has written of them. But this was not after the pattern of the ass at Lyons. He was of a white colour, that seemed to fit him rather for rare festal occasions than for constant drudgery. Besides, he was very small, and of the daintiest proportions you can imagine in a donkey. And so, sure enough, you had only to look at him to see he had never worked. There was something too roguish and wanton in his face, a look too like that of a schoolboy or a street Arab, to have survived much cudgelling. It was plain that these feet had kicked off sportive children oftener than they had plodded with a freight through miry lanes. He was altogether a fine-weather, holiday sort of donkey; and though he was just then somewhat solemnized and rueful, he still gave proof of the levity of his disposition by impudently wagging his ears at me as I drew near. I say he was somewhat solemnised just then; for with the admirable instinct of all men and animals under restraint, he had so wound and wound the halter about the tree, that he could go neither back nor forwards, nor so

much as put down his head to browse. There he stood, poor rogue, part puzzled, part angry, part, I believe, amused. He had not given up hope, and dully revolved the problem in his head, giving ever and again another jerk at the few inches of free rope that still remained unwound. A humorous sort of sympathy for the creature took hold upon me ; I went up, and, not without some trouble on my part and much distrust and resistance on the part of Neddy, got him forced backward until the whole length of the halter was set loose, and he was once more as free a donkey as I dared to make him. I was pleased (as people are) with this friendly action to a fellow-creature in tribulation ; and glanced back over my shoulder to see how he was profiting by his freedom. The brute was looking after me ; and, no sooner did he catch my eye, then he put up his long white face into the air, pulled an impudent mouth at me, and began to bray derisively. If ever any one person made a grimace at another, that donkey made a grimace at me. And the hardened ingratitude of his behaviour and the inimitable impertinence that inspired his whole face, as he curled up his lip, and showed his teeth, and began to bray, so tickled me, and was so much in keeping with what I had imagined to myself about his character, that I could not find it in my heart to be angry, and burst into a peal of hearty laughter. This seemed to strike the ass as a repartee ; so he brayed at me again, by way of rejoinder ; and we went on for awhile, braying and laughing, until I began to grow a-weary of it, and, shouting a derisive farewell, turned to pursue my way. In so doing—it was like going suddenly into cold water—I found myself face to face with a prim little old maid. She was all in a flutter, the poor old dear ! She had concluded beyond question that this must be a lunatic, who stood laughing aloud at a white donkey in the placid beech-woods. I was sure, by her face, that she had already recommended her spirit most religiously to Heaven, and prepared herself for the worst. And so, to reassure her, I uncovered and besought her, after a very staid fashion, to put me on my way to Great Missenden. Her voice trembled a little to be sure, but I think her mind was set really at rest ; and she told me, very explicitly, to follow the path until I came to the end of the wood, and then I should see the village below me in the bottom of the valley. And, with mutual courtesies, the little old maid and I went on our respective ways.

Nor had she misled me. Great Missenden was close at hand, lying, as she had said, in the trough of a gentle valley, with many great elms about it. The smoke from its chimneys went up pleasantly in the afternoon sunshine. The sleepy hum of a threshing-machine filled the neighbouring fields, and hung about the quaint street corners. A little above, the church sits well back on its haunches against the hill-side : an attitude for a church, you know, that makes it look as if it could be ever so much higher if it liked ; and the trees grew about it thickly, so as to make a density of shade in the churchyard. A very quiet place it looks ; and yet I saw many boards and posters about, threatening dire punishment against those who broke the church-windows or defaced the precinct, and offering rewards for the apprehension of those who had done the like already. It was fair-day in Great Missenden : there were three stalls set up *sub jove*, for the sale of pastry and cheap toys ; and a great number of holiday children thronged about the stalls, and noisily invaded every corner of the straggling village. They came round me by coveys, blowing simultaneously upon penny trumpets, as though they imagined I should fall to pieces like the battlements of Jericho. I noticed one among them who could make a wheel of himself like a London boy, and seemingly enjoyed a grave pre-eminence upon the strength of the accomplishment. By-and-by, however, the trumpets began to weary me, and I went indoors, leaving the fair, I fancy, at its height.

Night had fallen before I ventured forth again. It was pitch-dark in the village street, and the darkness seemed only the greater for a light here and there in an uncurtained window or from an open door. Into one such window I was rude enough to peep, and saw within a charming *genre* picture. In a room, all white wainscot and crimson wall-paper, a perfect gem of colour after the black empty darkness in which I had been groping, a pretty girl was telling a story, as well as I could make out, to an attentive child upon her knee, while

an old woman set placidly dozing over the fire. You may be sure I was not behindhand with a story for myself—a good old story, after the good old manner of G. P. R. James and the village melodramas, with a wicked squire, and poachers, and an attorney, and a very virtuous young man with a decided genius for mechanics, who should love, and protect, and ultimately marry the girl in the crimson room. Baudelaire has a few dainty sentences on the fancies that we are inspired with, when we look through a window into other people's lives; and I think Dickens has somewhere enlarged on the same text in his own wild, imaginative way: the subject, at least, is one that I am seldom weary of entertaining. I remember, night after night, at Brussels, watching a good family sup together, and make merry, and retire to rest; and night after night I waited to see the candles lit, and the salad made, and the last salutations dutifully exchanged, without any abatement of interest: night after night I found the scene rivet my attention and keep me awake in bed with all manner of quaint imaginations. Much of the pleasure of the 'Arabian Nights' hinges upon this Asmodean interest; and we are not weary of lifting other people's roofs, and going about behind the scenes of life with the Caliph and the serviceable Giaffar. It is a salutary exercise, besides: it is salutary to get out of ourselves, and see people living together in perfect unconsciousness of our existence, as they will live when we are gone. If to-morrow the blow falls, and the worst of our ill fears is realised, the girl will none the less tell stories to the child on her lap in the cottage at Great Missenden, nor the good Belgians light their candle, and mix their salad, and go orderly to bed. The foundations of the universe will not be shaken after all. It is but a storm in a teapot: in an hour this storm will have blown over, and the world will still be fair about our path, and people will meet us as before, with pleasant countenances and kind words; and with patience and courage, we may yet rebuild the ruined pleasure-house of fancy.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(*To be continued.*)

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI.*

ON first entering on this book, the writer must acknowledge feeling some irritation at the perceptible amount of rhetorical emptiness and unenthusiastic baldness of record which the narrative begins. But this feeling, long before the last page was turned, somewhat with changed, and he willingly acknowledges the propriety of style and the dispassionate character of this 'story' of the life of the most noble of Italian painters. Supplemented by the various addenda, forming half the volume, the life is an able performance from the author's unartistic point of view, and he may be sure that his 'expression of sincere (!) admiration will not be found to have degenerated into rhapsody.' Of this he may, indeed, be absolutely sure; but the question is, in regard to Mr. Black, or to any other gentleman who writes a whole book about Michelangelo, has he really penetrated to the presence of his hero, and become intelligibly conversant with the subject of his discourse,—we were going to say criticism, but Mr. Black does not criticise? Because Michelangelo's is a very difficult artistic nature, and unique in his personality, repelled by all the popular ideas and popular men of his time, and even enslaved by his own passion for the expression of power for its own sake, whether physical or intellectual. Even Christianity, while he was aiding its material aggrandisement, was not to him of paramount importance; and although there were 'pagan popes' and some authors then living of whom this might be much more freely said, it could not be said in the same way, seeing that Michelangelo was ascetic as a hermit, and by no means, or in any degree, a disbeliever, or even a sceptic. He accepted the faith as he accepted nature, and he united with it certain philosophic ideas with which he constitutionally

* 'Michael Angelo Buonarroti, Sculptor, Painter, Architect: The Story of his Life and Labours.' By C. C. Black, M.A. Macmillan & Co., London. 1875.

sympathised, the same as he followed his own instincts in expressing human form. The first time the visitor enters the Sistine he has a nightmarish impression, caused by the anthropomorphism and development of brute or muscular force, as the artistic analogue of mental or original power, even that employed in the creation of the world. But on other visits this perturbed atmosphere clears up, and a sense of justice to the body and the material world, as also to art, which is utterly above nature, arrives to the intelligent observer; and he begins to understand how it might be said of this sublime genius, even while in the flesh, morose and loving at once, '*Michel più che mortal, angiol divino*,' which Mr. Black has taken for a motto on his title-page; and how to this day, and perhaps to all time, Aretino's saying may be repeated, 'The world hath many things, but only one Michelangelo;' and even Dante becomes secondary, peevish, and eloquent, and Milton merely a first Klopstock in comparison.

This is a general and loose statement of a conviction, but if we descended to particulars it might be cleared and corroborated by exacter investigation. To take, for example, an experience of the writer. He remembers, on first examining the picture of the *Creation of Adam*, on the centre nearly of the ceiling of the Sistine, being troubled and mystified by the figure rising out from within the left arm of the Creator, which was manifestly not one of the supporting cherubim, or boy-angels, surrounding the Majesty: it had a feminine character, and was intently gazing on the figure of Adam rising up at the touch of the forefinger of the right arm of the Father. An inspection of the photograph by M. Braun convinced him that this was the representation of Eve before she existed, an antetypal Eve in the mind of the Everlasting Father, who saw effects in their causes; and this was confirmed by the large woodcut, contemporary with the picture, or nearly so, in the British Museum, in which the expression of the face and the fully developed mammæ leave no room for doubt. Were we in possession of the painter's drawings, necessary to the preparation of fresco works, we should see the development of this Platonic idea, which of late years has been scientifically formalised. The completest vertebrate creature existed prophetically in the simplest saurian, as Professor Owen has expressed, as surely as the fowl with all its feathers exists potentially in the egg. All this is expressed incidentally by the genius of Michelangelo, veiled a little, perhaps, for fear of heresy or imputed paganism, and it has remained unremarked till now, as far as we know. It was thus that Greek sculpture distanced all possible verbal expression, and in this way does the art of Michelangelo come out of its age like the act of a possessor of more than ordinary human faculties.

To return to Mr. Black's book (a reasonable and fair book in its way), the Appendix gives a few letters of the painter, a chronology of the principal events of his life, a catalogue of works, and other matters: all very useful. The illustrations, which we have not yet mentioned, are twenty photographs; indelible ones we hope, all of them invaluable, with one exception, that of the *Head of a Faun*, which we cannot help considering of doubtful authenticity. Before concluding, perhaps it may not be impertinent to ask Mr. Black why he divided the Christian names of the master. He certainly united them himself, and of late years, at least in England, they have been invariably written 'Michelangelo.'

One other division in the Appendix has not been mentioned, which we think might have been extended with advantage. This is that treating of the poetry of Michelangelo, which is here represented by the sonnets most generally known, having been translated by Wordsworth, Southey, and Hartley Coleridge. Nothing is said of a recension of the text of the poems by recent reference to original MSS. Here, as elsewhere, our author cannot be said to have taken pains with his task. He says, however, in the few words introductory to this section, 'Michael Angelo was something more than a mere rhymester!' It is very sure Mr. Black's 'admiration' will not be accused of 'having degenerated into rhapsody!'

The fourth centenary of the birth of Michelangelo is the 4th of March approaching,

everything?' 'I, for my part,' replied Donato, 'have had my share of dinner to-day; if thou must needs have thine, take it. But enough said: to thee it has been given to represent the Christ; to me, boors only.'

A library might be filled with the books written on the manner that art should adopt to represent Christ, but the artist's inspiration is wholly personal, and generally little influenced by theorists. The painter conveys his individuality into all his pictures, and if he does not always succeed in an equal degree, it is not because he spends less talent in one case than in another, but because his temperament is more or less adapted to his subject. Therefore we think that French criticism, which has been extremely severe upon the Christ of M. Bonnat, has gone too far in advising him to give up high art and confine himself to cabinet pictures. The *Saint Vincent de Paul* showed all the qualities required in a great picture, and M. Bonnat will succeed in the same manner whenever the subject is congenial to his mind, which leans more to earthly reality than it does towards religious mysticism. The charm of his small pictures is due to the facility with which he finds in nature elements appropriate to display to his skill in picturesque arrangement. His clever use of the brush has certainly a great deal to do with the result, but were it applied without discrimination it might become tiresome. This ingenious artist has the gift of exhibiting his skill in scenes which, if not very stirring, possess the singular merit of being always true without being repulsive.

René Ménard.

AN AUTUMN EFFECT.

(*Continued.*)

THE next morning was sunny overhead and damp underfoot, with a thrill in the air like a reminiscence of frost. I went up into the sloping garden behind the inn and smoked a pipe pleasantly enough, to the tune of my landlady's lamentations over sundry cabbages and cauliflowers that had been spoiled by caterpillars. She had been so much pleased in the summer time, she said, to see the garden all hovered over by white butterflies. And now, look at the end of it! She could nowise reconcile this with her moral sense. And, indeed, unless these butterflies are created with a side-look to the composition of improving apologues, it is not altogether easy, even for people who have read Hegel and Dr. M'Cosh, to decide intelligibly upon the issue raised. Then I fell into a long and abstruse calculation with my landlord; having for object to compare the distance driven by him during eight years' service on the box of the Wendover coach, with the girth of the round world itself. We tackled the question most conscientiously, made all necessary allowance for Sundays and leap years, and were just coming to a triumphant conclusion of our labours when we were stayed by a small lacuna in my information. I did not know the circumference of the earth. The landlord knew it, to be sure—plainly he had made the same calculation twice and once before,—but he wanted confidence in his own figures, and from the moment I showed myself so poor a second seemed to lose all interest in the result.

Wendover (which was my next stage) lies in the same valley with Great Missenden, but at the foot of it, where the hills trend off on either hand like a coast-line, and a great hemisphere of plain lies, like a sea, before one. I went up a chalky road, until I had a good outlook over the place. The vale, as it opened out into the plain, was shallow, and a little bare perhaps, but full of graceful convolutions. From the level to which I had now attained the fields were exposed before me like a map, and I could see all that bustle of autumn field-work which had been hid from me yesterday behind the hedge-rows, or shown to me only for a moment as I followed the foot-path. Wendover lay well down in the midst, with mountains of foliage about it. The great plain stretched away to the northward,

variegated near at hand with the quaint pattern of the fields, but growing even more and more indistinct, until it became a mere hurly-burly of trees and bright crescents of river and snatches of slanting road, and finally melted into the ambiguous cloudland over the horizon. The sky was an opal-gray, touched here and there with blue, and with certain faint russets that looked as if they were reflections of the colour of the autumnal woods below. I could hear the ploughmen shouting to their horses, the uninterrupted carol of larks innumerable overhead; and from a field where the shepherd was marshalling his flock, a sweet tumultuous tinkle of sheep-bells. All these noises came to me very thin and distinct in the clear air. There was a wonderful sentiment of distance and atmosphere about the day and the place.

I mounted the hill yet farther by a rough staircase of chalky footholds cut in the turf. The hills about Wendover and, as far as I could see, all the hills in Buckinghamshire, wear a sort of hood of beech-plantation; but in this particular case the hood had been suffered to extend itself into something more like a cloak, and hung down about the shoulders of the hill in wide folds, instead of lying flatly along the summit. The trees grew so close and their boughs were so matted together, that the whole wood looked as dense as a bush of heather. The prevailing colour was a dull, smouldering red, touched here and there with vivid yellow. But the autumn had scarce advanced beyond the outworks; it was still almost summer in the heart of the wood; and as soon as I had scrambled through the hedge, I found myself in a dim green forest atmosphere under eaves of virgin foliage. In places where the wood had itself for a background and the trees were massed together thickly, the colour became intensified and almost gem-like: a perfect fire of green, that seemed none the less green for a few specks of autumn gold. None of the trees were of any considerable age or stature; but they grew well together, I have said; and as the road turned and wound among them, they fell into pleasant groupings and broke the light up pleasantly. Sometimes there would be a colonnade of slim, straight tree-stems, with the light running down them as down the shafts of pillars, that looked as if it ought to lead to something and led only to a corner of sombre and intricate jungle. Sometimes a spray of delicate foliage would be thrown out flat, the light lying flatly along the top of it, so that against a dark background it seemed almost luminous. There was a great hush over the thicket (for, indeed, it was more of a thicket than a wood); and the vague rumours that went among the tree-tops, and the occasional rustling of big birds or hares among the undergrowth, had in them a note of almost treacherous stealthiness, that put the imagination on its guard and made me walk warily on the russet carpeting of last year's leaves. The spirit of the place seemed to be all attention; the wood listened as I went, and held its breath to number my footfalls. One could not help feeling that there ought to be some reason for this stillness; whether, as the bright old legend goes, Pan lay somewhere near in a siesta, or whether perhaps the heaven was meditating rain and the first drops would soon come pattering through the leaves. It was not unpleasant, in such an humour, to catch sight, ever and anon, of large spaces of the open plain. This happened only where the path lay much upon the slope, and there was a flaw in the solid leafy thatch of the wood at some distance below the level at which I chanced myself to be walking; then, indeed, little scraps of foreshortened distance, miniature fields, and Liliputian houses and hedgerow-trees, would appear for a moment in the aperture, and grow larger and smaller, and change, and melt one into another, as I continued to go forward and so shift my point of view.

For ten minutes, perhaps, I had heard from somewhere before me in the wood a strange, continuous noise, as of clucking, cooing, and gobbling, now and again interrupted by a harsh scream. As I advanced towards this noise, it began to grow lighter about me, and I caught sight, through the trees, of sundry gables and enclosure walls, and something like the tops of a rickyard. And sure enough, a rickyard it proved to be, and a neat little farm-steading,

with the beech-woods growing almost to the door of it. Just before me, however, as I came up the path, the trees drew back and let in a wide flood of daylight on to a circular lawn. It was here that the noises had their origin. More than a score of peacocks (there are altogether thirty at the farm), a proper contingent of peahens, and a great multitude that I could not number of more ordinary barn-door fowls, were all feeding together on this little open lawn among the beeches. They fed in a dense crowd, which swayed to and fro and came hither and thither as by a sort of tide, and of which the surface was agitated like the surface of a sea as each bird guzzled his head along the ground after the scattered corn. The clucking, cooing noise that had led me thither, was formed by the blending together of countless expressions of individual contentment into one collective expression of contentment, or general grace during meat. Every now and again, a big peacock would separate himself from the mob and take a stately turn or two about the lawn, or perhaps mount for a moment upon the rail, and there shrilly publish to the world his satisfaction with himself and what he had to eat. It happened, for my sins, that none of these admirable birds had anything beyond the merest rudiment of a tail. Tails, it seemed, were out of season just then. But they had their necks for all that; and by their necks alone they do as much surpass all the other birds of our gray climate, as they fall in quality of song below the blackbird or the lark. Surely the peacock, with its incomparable parade of glorious colour and the scrannel voice of it issuing forth, as in mockery, from its painted throat, must, like my landlady's butterflies at Great Missenden, have been invented by some skilful fabulist for the consolation and support of homely virtue: or rather, perhaps, by a fabulist not quite so skilful, who made points for the moment without having a studious enough eye to the complete effect; for I thought these melting greens and blues so beautiful that afternoon, that I would have given them my vote just then before the sweetest pipe in all the spring woods. I spoke of greens and blues. Now the reader must recollect a time, and not so long ago, when he was told—nay, even believed, after a dim, uncertain fashion—that green and blue were colours altogether incompatible and discordant. Perhaps people in those days had a knack of choosing blues and greens to bear their theory out: but what I want to know is, whether none of us, during all those deluded years, ever looked by any chance upon a peacock's neck; and, if we did, how we contrived to reconcile this wonder of perfect colouring with our obnoxious preconceptions? For indeed there is no piece of colour of the same extent in nature, that will so flatter and satisfy the lust of a man's eyes; and to come upon so many of them after these acres of stone-coloured heavens and russet woods and gray-brown ploughlands and white roads, was like going three whole days' journey to the southward, or a month back into the summer.

I was sorry to leave *Peacock Farm*—for so the place is called, after the name of its splendid pensioners—and go forward again in the quiet woods. It began to grow both damp and dusk under the beeches; and as the day declined the colour faded out of the foliage; and shadow, without form and void, took the place of all the fine tracery of leaves and delicate gradations of living green that had before accompanied my walk. I had been sorry to leave *Peacock Farm*, but I was not sorry to find myself once more in the open road under a pale and somewhat troubled-looking evening sky, and put my best foot foremost for the inn at Wendover.

Wendover, in itself, is a straggling, purposeless sort of place. Everybody seems to have had his own opinion as to how the street should go; or rather, every now and then a man seems to have arisen with a new idea on the subject, and led away a little sect of neighbours to join him in his heresy. It would have somewhat the look of an abortive watering-place, such as we may now see them here and there along the coast, but for the age of the houses, the comely quiet design of some of them, and the look of long habitation, of a life that is settled and rooted, and makes it worth while to train flowers about the windows and otherwise shape the dwelling to the humour of the inhabitant. The church, which might perhaps have

served as rallying-point for these loose houses and pulled the township into something like intelligible unity, stands some distance off among great trees ; but the inn (to take the public buildings in order of importance) is in what I understand to be the principal street : a pleasant old house, with bay windows, and three peaked gables, and many swallows' nests plastered about the eaves.

The interior of the inn was answerable to the outside : indeed I never saw any room much more to be admired than the low wainscoated parlour in which I spent the remainder of the evening. It was a short oblong in shape, save that the fire-place was built across one of the angles so as to cut it partially off, and the opposite angle was similarly truncated by a corner cupboard. The wainscoat was white; and there was a Turkey carpet on the floor, so old that it might have been imported by Walter Shandy before he retired, worn almost through in some places, but in others making a good show of blues and oranges, none the less harmonious for being somewhat faded. The corner cupboard was agreeable in design ; and there were just the right things upon the shelves—decanters and tumblers, and blue plates, and one red rose in a glass of water. The furniture was old-fashioned and stiff. Everything was in keeping down to the ponderous leaden inkstand on the round table. And you may fancy how pleasant it looked, all flushed and flickered over by the light of a brisk companionable fire, and seen, in a strange, tilted sort of perspective, in the three compartments of the old mirror above the chimney. As I sat reading in the great arm-chair, I kept looking round with the tail of my eye at the quaint bright picture that was about me, and could not help some pleasure and a certain childish pride in forming part of it. The book I read was about Italy in the early Renaissance, the pageantries and the light loves of princes, the passion of men for learning and poetry and art ; but it was written, by good luck, after a solid prosaic fashion, that suited the room infinitely more nearly than the matter ; and the result was, that I thought less, perhaps, of Lippo Lippi, or Lorenzo, or Politian, than of the good Englishman who had written in that volume what he knew of them, and taken so much pleasure in his solemn polysyllables.

I was not left without society. My landlord had a very pretty little daughter, whom we shall call Lizzie. If I had made any notes at the time, I might be able to tell you something definite of her appearance. But faces have a trick of growing more and more spiritualised and abstract in the memory, until nothing remains of them but a look, a haunting expression ; just that secret quality in a face that is apt to slip out somehow under the cunningest painter's touch, and leave the portrait dead for the lack of it. And if it is hard to catch with the finest of camel's-hair pencils, you may think how hopeless it must be to pursue after it with clumsy words. If I say, for instance, that this look, which I remember as Lizzie, was something wistful that seemed partly to come of slyness and in part of simplicity, and that I am inclined to imagine it had something to do with the daintiest suspicion of a cast in one of her large eyes, I shall have said all that I can, and the reader will not be much advanced towards comprehension. I had struck up an acquaintance with this little damsel in the morning, and professed much interest in her dolls and an impatient eagerness to see the large one which was kept locked away somewhere for great occasions. And so, I had not been very long in the parlour before the door opened, and in came Miss Lizzie with two dolls tucked clumsily under her arm. She was followed by her brother John, a year or so younger than herself, not simply to play propriety at our interview, but to show his own two whips in emulation of his sister's dolls. I did my best to make myself agreeable to my visitors ; showing much admiration for the dolls and the dolls' dresses, and, with a very serious demeanour, asking many questions about their age and character. I do not think that Lizzie distrusted my sincerity, but it was evident that she was both bewildered and a little contemptuous. Although she was ready herself to treat her dolls as if they were alive, she seemed to think rather poorly of any grown person who could fall heartily into the spirit of the fiction. Sometimes she would look at me with gravity and a sort of disquietude, as though she really feared I

must be out of my wits. Sometimes, as when I inquired too particularly into the question of their names, she laughed at me so long and heartily that I began to feel almost embarrassed. But when, in an evil moment, I asked to be allowed to kiss one of them, she could keep herself no longer to herself. Clambering down from the chair on which she sat perched to show me, Cornelia-like, her jewels, she ran straight out of the room and into the bar—it was just across the passage—and I could hear her telling her mother in loud tones, but apparently more in sorrow than in merriment, that *the gentleman in the parlour wanted to kiss Dolly.* I fancy she was determined to save me from this humiliating action even in spite of myself, for she never gave me the desired permission. She reminded me of an old dog I once knew, who would never suffer the master of the house to dance, out of an exaggerated sense of the dignity of that master's place and carriage.

After the young people were gone there was but one more incident ere I went to bed. I heard a party of children go up and down the dark street for a while, singing together sweetly. And the mystery of this little incident was so pleasant to me that I purposely refrained from asking who they were and wherefore they went singing at so late an hour. One can rarely be in a pleasant place without meeting with some pleasant accident. I have a conviction that these children would not have gone singing before the inn, unless the inn-parlour had been the delightful place it was. At least, if I had been in the customary public-room of the modern hotel, with all its disproportions and discomforts, my ears would have been dull, and there would have been some ugly temper or other uppermost in my spirit, and so they would have wasted their sweet songs upon an unworthy hearer.

Next morning early I went along to visit the church. It is a long-backed, red-and-white building, very much restored, and stands in a pleasant graveyard among those great trees of which I have spoken already. The sky was drowned in mist. Now and again pulses of cold wind went about the enclosure, and set the branches busy overhead, and the dead leaves scurrying into the angles of the church buttresses. Now and again, also, I could hear the dull sudden fall of a chestnut among the grass—the dog would bark before the Rectory door—or there would come a clinking of pails from the stable-yard behind. But in spite of these occasional interruptions, in spite, also, of the continuous autumn twittering that filled the trees, the chief impression somehow was one as of utter silence, insomuch that the little greenish bell that peeped out of a window in the tower disquieted me with a sense of some possible and more inharmonious disturbance. The grass was wet, as if with a hoar-frost that had just been melted. I do not know that ever I saw a morning more autumnal. As I went to and fro among the graves, I saw some flowers set reverently before a recently erected tomb, and, drawing near, was almost startled to find they lay on the grave of a man seventy-two years old when he died. We are accustomed to strew flowers only over the young, where love has been cut short untimely, and great possibilities have been restrained by death. We strew them there in token that these possibilities, in some deeper sense, shall yet be realised, and the touch of our dead loves remain with us and guide us to the end. And yet there was more significance, perhaps, and perhaps a greater consolation, in this little nosegay on the grave of one who had died old. We are apt to make so much of the tragedy of death, and think so little of the enduring tragedy of some men's lives, that we see more to lament for in a life cut off in the midst of usefulness and love, than in one that miserably survives all love and usefulness, and goes about the world the phantom of itself, without hope or joy or any consolation. These flowers seemed not so much the token of love that survived death, as of something yet more beautiful—of love that had lived a man's life out to an end with him, and been faithful and companionable, and not weary of loving, throughout all these years.

The morning cleared a little, and the sky was once more the old stone-coloured vault over the sallow meadows and the russet woods, as I set forth on a dog-cart from Wendover to Tring. The road lay for a good distance along the side of the hills, with the great plain below on one hand, and the beechwoods above upon the other. The fields

were busy with people ploughing and sowing: every here and there a jug of ale stood in the angle of the hedge, and I could see many a team wait smoking in the furrow as ploughman or sower stepped aside for a moment to take a draught. Over all the brown ploughlands, and under all the leafless hedgerows, there was a stout spirit of labour abroad, and, as it were a spirit of pic-nic. The horses smoked and the men laboured and shouted and drank in the sharp autumn morning; so that one had a strong effect of large, open-air existence. The fellow who drove me was something of a humourist; and his conversation was all in praise of an agricultural labourer's way of life. It was he who called my attention to these jugs of ale by the hedgerow; he could not sufficiently express the liberality of these men's wages; he told me how sharp an appetite was given by breaking up the earth in the morning air, whether with plough or spade, and cordially admired this provision of nature. He sang *O fortunatos agricolas!* indeed, in every possible key, and with many cunning inflections; till I began to wonder what was the use of such people as Mr. Arch, and to sing the same air myself in a more diffident manner.

Tring was reached, and then Tring railway station; for the two are not very near, the good people of Tring having held the railway, of old days, in extreme apprehension, lest some day it should break loose in the town and work mischief. I had a last walk, among russet beeches as usual, and the air filled, as usual, with the carolling of larks; I heard shots fired in the distance, and saw, as a new sign of the fulfilled autumn, two horsemen exercising a pack of fox-hounds. And then the train came and carried me back to London.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

LE PETIT MONDE.

M. LALAUZE has just published a set of ten etchings of children under the above title,* which are greatly superior to ordinary attempts in the same class of subject. Nothing is more difficult to deal with than the attitudes and expressions of a group of children, for nothing is at the same time so fugitive in nature, and so dependent upon the utmost delicacy and accuracy of drawing for its realisation in art. It may be doubted whether an artist could ever know all that is needed for the representation of the 'little world,' without being a papa himself, and so adding the insight of affection to the colder observation of the artist. We learn from the letter by M. Montrosier, which serves as preface or introduction to this little series, that M. Lalauze is really, as we should have suspected, a papa, and that these are his own children, who have posed before him hundreds or thousands of times without knowing it, when they came as intruders into his painting-room. Leslie used to call his own children 'trudies,' which was his abbreviation for intruders; but an artist can take vengeance on a trudy by simply drawing him, and so handing down his *faits et gestes* to the admiration of posterity. As a subject of study and observation child-life is infinite, and full of mysteries. To begin with, there are endless varieties of character amongst children, and then endless varieties of situation. 'Vous me demandez,' says M. Montrosier, 'd'introduire le public dans le "Petit Monde" de M. Lalauze. Hélas! Quel Christoph Colomb peut se vanter d'y avoir mis le pied et planté le drapeau des conquérants! Quand on croit avoir découvert sa latitude, pénétré ses secrets, relevé ses gisements, sondé ses abîmes, éparpillé ses trésors, encore et toujours il échappe aux investigations du savant et du philosophe, par quelque caprice, par quelque coup de tête, par quelque rébellion mutine qui déroutent les explorateurs les plus sagaces.'

These etchings before us do not pretend to exhaust an inexhaustible subject, but they give

* Le Petit Monde. 10 Eaux-fortes par A. Lalauze. Publié par A. Cadart, 56 Boulevard Haussmann, Paris. 1875.