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PRACTICE AND PATRONAGE OF FRENCH ART.

MUCH has been said about the mission of art and the artist. Art has no mission; it is only one form by which the ideas of a race or a nation find expression at certain stages of intellectual progress. That has in all ages been the truest art which has best expressed the ideas, the life, manners, and beliefs of the time, as felt by the artist whom they inspired; and he has been the truest artist who has simply used subjects and forms of expression most familiar and most in harmony with his natural sympathies as implanted by birth or education.

Art has always been developed in this spontaneous manner, and has proceeded in a certain order so uniform as to assume the form almost of an organic law. Architecture is the first of the arts to reach perfection, and at the outset it has invariably been employed as a means of expressing the innate ideas of man's relation to his Creator. Sculpture, as another form of expressing religious yearnings, has followed close after architecture, often intimately associated with it, although not always developed to the same degree, while, as a rule, the arts of design, including painting, have come later, and have often scarcely progressed beyond the elementary stages. The art of several great empires has been entirely confined to architecture and reliefs.

The art of no race better illustrates this truth than that of France. That country is actually divided into Paris and France; up to the time of Louis XI. it was France and Paris. Brittany, Normandy, Burgundy, Gascony, Navarre, and the other provinces, were so many states yielding only a nominal allegiance to the king who reigned at Paris, and who controlled them rather by taking advantage of their internal discords than by any supreme authority the great feudal lords were willing to delegate to the throne. Those, too, were the days when the sway of the church over the conscience or the state was less a question of policy than of actual belief. At the same time every province of the kingdom was full of nascent vigor and activity, which only required the control of men like Louis XI., Henry IV., and Richelieu, to weld the whole into a united and powerful nation. This religious fervor, this national activity, demanded artistic expression, and straightway cathedrals and oratories, cloisters and convents of extraordinary beauty arose on the hill-tops and in the valleys, and gave a central point of effect to the clustering gables and pointed turrets of many a mediæval town. But after the power of the feudal lords was broken, not only political but intellectual influence became centralized at Paris, which has since then exercised a controlling voice

in the destinies of the country, and has laid down the law in art and letters for all Frenchmen, and at some periods for Christendom itself.

Brought into sympathy, through the expeditions of Charles VIII., with the Renaissance movement, which raised the arts to such a pitch in Italy and the Netherlands, France took a new interest in architecture and sculpture, and magnificent palaces were reared, of an order suggesting that of Bernini, yet essentially original and national. But the arts of design still lagged. Italian and Flemish masters, however, were employed to decorate the abodes of royalty with their incomparable colors, affording masterpieces whose contemplation should in time result in a race of painters, the first colorists of these later ages. Francis I. built the Louvre, destined to be a gallery furnishing for the study of the nation the finest works of the great masters of the Classic and Renaissance periods. Louis XIV. founded the *École des Beaux Arts*. French art of the nineteenth century is the sequel to a systematic course of royal patronage and education, fostered by the constant study of the best models the world could afford. And architecture and sculpture having reached a high degree of culture in the kingdom, the arts of design and color succeeded in turn, and are now at their zenith in France.

At the best period of the Renaissance, Rome, Venice, and the Netherlands were the centres of art, with important rivals in Nuremberg and Madrid. At the present day we see Rome, Munich, London, and Brussels, each a focus, but Paris takes precedence of them all, owing to the greater facilities she offers for the study and practice of art. It is only fair to add that the art of London and Belgium is often very fine, and that German art has within a few years taken a new turn, and, accompanying the vast energies of the new empire, promises ere long to equal and perhaps surpass the best contemporary French work. In these observations the arts of design are generally understood, for this is essentially an age of painting. The archi-

tectural period has passed in all these countries, and it is doubtful if the world ever sees anything in the future, either in architecture or in sculpture, equal to the original and almost perfect conceptions we find in the monuments of antiquity. Russia seems to show in the Kremlin that she also has passed her period of original national architecture; while the young republics of the New World, being offshoots from races which had already produced distinctive schools of architecture, begin their national existence at a point too advanced to found distinctive styles of their own.

Everything in the appearance of Paris indicates its character as an art emporium, where works of art are not only produced and sold, but also exercise a powerful influence over the public taste. The streets are laid out with consummate perspective effect. The squares and gardens leave little to be desired. The Place de la Concorde is the central spot of a combination of architectural effects probably unsurpassed at the present day. The eye for effect and color natural to the people is apparent in the shop-windows, where various shades of drapery and other stuffs may often be seen arranged in a harmony so exquisite as to move one like a concord of sweet sounds. The jewelry shops, as for example those in the Palais Royal, present an array of splendor as often artistic as dazzling. The very meat-stalls are indications of that sensuous love of beauty for its own sake which inspired the Athenian of old, and is with the Parisian of to-day a more powerful motor than either moral or political principle. The various meats are hung in a certain order, adorned with flowers and paper cut into elaborate patterns, and the back of a hog or a sheep is figured with designs made by cutting away the inner skin and leaving the red flesh exposed. At *Mardi Gras* the butchers' stalls are objects of general attraction for the more than ordinary ingenuity and taste displayed in the adornment of the sheep and beeves hung whole from the ceiling in holiday attire of greens, ribbons, and tinsel. The public galleries at the

Louvre and the Luxembourg are crowded, especially on Sunday and fête days, not so much by foreign visitors as by the populace of all classes and conditions. The same is the case with the exhibitions of the clubs. When the masterpieces concentrated in the square room of the Louvre alone are considered, the influence for good or evil thus exerted must be incalculable.

Art dealers' shops of course abound, and one is sure to see two or three good paintings in the windows of every leading thoroughfare. These shops are generally small, and the best they contain is to be seen from the street; but this is of little consequence, so vast is the field elsewhere. The exhibition of gold and silver wares, marbles, and bronzes in the windows on the Boulevards is also astonishing.

Some idea of the value of the art in Paris may be inferred from the fact that the sales of paintings alone average forty millions of francs per annum, equal, by reason of the difference in values, to nearly twice that sum in the United States. The number of artists in the city is over eight thousand. When we take into consideration the persons dependent upon these eight thousand artists, the army of art students, French and foreign, residing here, and the many thousands engaged in the sale of works of art, including the production and sale of frames, colors, engravings, bronzes, or statuary, we find that art is, on the whole, the business engrossing the attention of a larger number and employing perhaps more capital than any other legitimate business in Paris, unless we except that of hotels and restaurants.

It should not be kept out of sight that the government is behind all this machinery, and maintains a directing hand in the chief institutions. There is a Minister of the Fine Arts, who exercises a supervision general and particular over all the national galleries, the public monuments, the exhibitions at the Salon, and art education in the schools. The first institution under its care is the Académie des Beaux Arts,

corresponding to the Academy of Letters. It consists of forty members, selected from medalists in the four departments of art. They hold sessions weekly, and a grand session once a year. The institution next in rank, and of equal importance, under government supervision is the École des Beaux Arts in the Rue Bonaparte. The building it now occupies was erected only in 1837. One enters from the street into a quadrangular court, whose walls are frescoed in Pompeiian style and inclose fac-similes of celebrated antiques of various schools. Two other courts are beyond, the one open and musical with the song of birds nestling in the shrubbery, the other covered with glass and containing large architectural models and colossal statues after the antique. On the ground floor are galleries of statuary most carefully copied from the best Greek and Roman marbles, including the Elgin reliefs. On the second floor are open corridors or cloisters decorated with frescoes after Raphael, leading to the rooms of the committee, where are hung the portraits of all who have taught in the Academy from its foundation. Connected with these rooms is the semicircular hall devoted to lectures on art, which are now read twice a week by M. Taine. On the walls of the amphitheatre is painted the celebrated Hémicycle des Beaux Arts of Paul Delaroche, representing the great artists of the various Renaissance schools conversing in groups. Farther on are the ateliers of the students, where Cabanel, Gérôme, Pils, and André give instruction, and the gallery in which the prize exhibitions are held. This is a spacious hall enriched by admirable copies of the best works of Raphael, Titian, Velasquez, and other masters. In addition to this gallery are the rooms where the works which have obtained the first prize or the medals are preserved. The first prize sends the winner to Rome for three years. Few of the winners have afterwards acquired celebrity. It is with art students as with valedictorians; those who are best able to work by rule are not strong enough to achieve origi-

nal triumphs when left to their own resources, while genius, when once emancipated from the tutors of its youth, toils according to laws of its own, and only thus arrives at the highest results. By being true to itself it best wins the end in view. It is considerations like these, doubtless, — suggested perhaps by the poor results shown by those who have won the first prize, together with the fact that artistic conditions in France have greatly altered since the French Revolution and the days when royal patronage was essential to the fostering of art, — which now lead to the agitation of the question of not only changing the character of the prize, so as to leave it more at the option of the winner, but also of entirely remodeling the system of government patronage.

In the *École des Beaux Arts*, drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, and engraving are taught. Pupils are admitted between the ages of fifteen and thirty, without distinction as to race, the requisites being an introduction by some French artist in good repute, a passport or a register of birth and parentage, and a drawing from life done in twelve hours and considered satisfactory evidence of capacity for the pursuit of art. As foreigners are ineligible to the prizes, they are admitted when over thirty years old. By the rules of the institution women are excluded from the advantages offered by this school, which, when everything is taken into consideration is, on the whole, a salutary regulation. In the other schools where opportunity for drawing from the life is afforded, it is common to see both sexes drawing from the model at the same time. The slight covering about the middle used by the models in German art schools is entirely discarded in Paris. It is greatly to be deplored that the sexes should be associated in medical studies, although strong reasons may be urged in its favor. But it may be very seriously questioned whether artistic knowledge gained at such cost to feminine delicacy is not too dearly purchased.

In addition to the *École des Beaux Arts* the government has also quite re-

cently established a school and manufactory for the production of mosaic pictures. The beauty of the mosaics in the new opera house, which were made by Italian artists, has stimulated the emulation of the French.

The *Hôtel Drouôt* is another establishment owned and controlled by the government. Although not exclusively devoted to art, it should be mentioned as an art centre. It is a building on the Rue Drouôt, containing eight large, lofty rooms on the ground floor and as many in the story above, besides ample corridors and lobbies. Each of these halls is an auction-room; the goods to be sold are on exhibition for several days previous to the sale; they are arranged with taste and opened to the public every afternoon. Sales occur in several of the rooms daily, and the building is always crowded. On Sundays the throng is almost impassable. The sales are conducted in a very systematic manner. Steps are arranged in the back part of the room, to enable the audience better to see the goods, and seats are placed around the auctioneers' desks, where those who hold long purses and propose to buy are so seated that they can confer with the auctioneer, who has several assistants. Attendants in addition carry the articles, when possible, about the room for examination, and the bidding is often very interesting. It is common for a sale to last several days. All the art sales of Paris are held in the *Hôtel Drouôt*, and during the season many choice collections may be seen there, including not only paintings and statuary, ancient and modern, but valuable tapestries, *objets de luxe* of the reign of Louis Quatorze, rare mediæval armor, Oriental collections, valuable manuscripts, and the like; as an instance of this may be mentioned the sale of the collection of M. Sauchan, at which one sword alone, of peculiar and exquisite workmanship, picked up at Constantinople for two hundred and fifty francs, was bid off at fifty thousand francs to Baron Rothschild, over an American who ran it up to forty - nine thousand francs.

The direction of the government is also seen in the annual exhibition of the Salon, held in May and June in the Palais d'Industrie, at the Champs Élysées. This is the great artistic event of the year, to which all artists, native and foreign, are invited to contribute. The judgment is sufficiently strict to cause the rejection of three fourths of the contributions, which only enhances the honor of admission and the value of the medals awarded. These are of several grades. The grand medal is granted but once, but he who has received it can henceforth exhibit any work he chooses to contribute, without regard to its merit; and, owing to the weakness of human nature, the privilege has sometimes been abused. There is much complaint made by artists whose contributions have been refused admittance, or been badly hung. Great injustice has undoubtedly been done sometimes. A notable instance of prejudice was the constant rejection of the works of Chintreuil, whose merits were discovered only a short time before his death. The works he left unsold brought one hundred and thirty-six thousand francs, and a painting which was refused admission to the Salon sold for ten thousand francs. Another instance of prejudice is the difficulty with which the works of foreign artists gain admission.

American artists have occasionally gained admittance for their paintings and obtained a medal, but it is generally under the influence of some great French painter. Although producing some very excellent work here, they can sell nothing in Paris except to American and English buyers. "Frenchmen care nothing for American artists," reply the dealers, "even when their paintings are better than French works of the same grade." For this reason our artists in Paris are more and more sending their best works to London for exhibition, where they are well shown and sold to better advantage. The fact is, notwithstanding the buncombe we have been treated to for a century about the traditional fraternity of the two nations, the French regard Americans and the

United States with indifference, and often with positive hate and contempt.

What is the French opinion of the value of the annual exhibitions of the Salon may be gathered from the remarks of the art critic of the *Journal Officiel*, one of the most intelligent and respectable papers published in Paris. "Fame," says this genuine Frenchman, "may be acquired in other pursuits than that of art as well elsewhere as in France. But fame in art can only be acquired in Paris, and only then by exhibiting at the Salon. Without this one may perhaps sell pictures and acquire reputation, but fame never." The writer was alluding to Fortuny, who from timidity had refrained from ever submitting anything for admission there. After reading this one feels deep sympathy for those great artists who were not born in France.

Beside the facilities afforded by the government, there are a number of private academies presided over by some eminent artist like Bonnât, who comes in at certain hours and criticises the drawing of the students. These French art students are often a very rough class among themselves, bringing to the atelier manners and conversation savoring too much of the barricades and the bar-room. What is remarkable is that they are merciless in their criticisms on every artist except their master. Him they treat with profound veneration. Their quiet and respectful demeanor when he enters the studio is quite amusing, in contrast with their manners out of his presence.

There are also three art clubs in Paris sustained by artists and connoisseurs, not in any sense rival societies, but intended for the encouragement of art and for the sale of paintings in the annual exhibitions. The *Cercle de l'Union Artistique* numbers six hundred members. It holds its exhibitions and lectures in a spacious hall, No. 18 Place Vendôme, in February and March. The exhibitions are choice, and present a very fair idea of the mark reached by contemporary art in France from year to year. Admission is free to visitors on applica-

tion to the secretary or through members. The Société des Amis des Beaux Arts de Paris contains among its members such well-known connoisseurs as Baron Rothschild and Sir Richard Wallace. Its second exhibition was opened in February, 1875, and offers some very interesting works to the inspection of the public. An entrance fee of one franc is required. The Cercle Artistique et Littéraire has its headquarters at No. 29 Rue Chaussée d'Antin; as indicated by its name, it is partially literary. Its gallery is open daily, and contains a collection of paintings, sculptures, and engravings. The Société Générale des Arts is an association founded within a few months. It numbers among its directors many of the most prominent artists in Paris, and in its scope is the most considerable of the private organizations. The growth of the arts in Paris has attracted a vast number of buyers not only at home but from abroad, on whom the dealers frequently manage to palm off a large number of very inferior performances for something far better. The result is naturally to encourage fraud and the painting of poor pictures, to the ultimate prejudice of good art and the ruin of the well-deserved fame now enjoyed by France in painting. Accordingly this association was founded, in the form of a joint-stock company, with the avowed object of buying and selling only such works of art as are of incontestable merit, warranted as such by the highest authorities. The capital of the association amounts to a million and a half of francs, and the business of the society is confided to the charge of the well-known art firm of Durand-Ruel & Co. That the association will prove a pecuniary success there seems little reason to doubt, for capital invested in works of genuine art rapidly doubles in Paris, while to the large public of buyers the association must also be a substantial advantage.

The question of studios seems to be a weak point in the art system of Paris. There are a number of buildings constructed exclusively for that purpose, but they are far behind the demand. Al-

though many of the artists are clustered in the neighborhood of the Boulevard Clichy, yet, as a rule, one must run over the whole city to find them. When an artist desires a studio he is often obliged to hire a room poorly adapted to meet his wants, and make such alterations as it requires. Some, like Daubigny, have a studio added to their private dwellings. The villages of Écouen and Barbizon, the latter on the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau, may be fairly considered as quarters belonging to the art world of Paris. Numbers of artists and art students reside there, not always those who paint French landscapes or peasantry. Ziem lives at Barbizon, which is quite the reverse in its scenery to anything he ever puts on canvas, as in his appearance in a semi-military dress he is the opposite of his late neighbor Millet, who was always seen in rustic blouse and sabots. In passing, it may be added that the art supervision of the government is extended to the Forest of Fontainebleau, part of which is reserved from destruction when the *garde des forêts* goes around to mark out the trees to be cut down each year, in order that its venerable and picturesque old oaks may furnish subjects for the artists.

Such are the means and modes which Paris offers to the student who desires to acquire or practice the principles of art in its various branches, enabling him not only to learn the technical details of art, but also by comparing different schools, and observing the peculiar excellencies of each, and the particular truths aimed at, to gain mental breadth, catholicity of opinion, and impartiality in granting to each its proportional merit. Nothing, however, is more difficult than the attainment of this intellectual breadth and fairness of judgment in all matters relating to art, because on the artist's part the difficulties he may have overcome in achieving success by processes of his own lead him unconsciously to exaggerate the value of his own style and depreciate that of others. On the other hand, the large crowd of connoisseurs and critics either take the cue from some favorite artist, who often

exerts too boundless and therefore pernicious an influence over them, or, ignorant of their own mental processes, they judge a work according as it clashes or harmonizes with their own tastes or prejudices, instead of putting themselves in the artist's place; thinking all the time, poor souls, that they are entirely impartial in their condemnation or admiration. The artists brought up in Paris are striking illustrations of the truth of these remarks, for here, where of all places one would expect to see a fraternity of feeling, a fellow admiration and respect, judgments are exceptionally harsh, not so much among the leaders, who are often on very friendly terms, as between the imitators and admirers, who range themselves under the banner of one or the other and battle with a vigor not inferior in acrimony to the *odium theologicum*.

As to the quality of the art work produced in Paris, it is a serious mistake to suppose that it is all good. It is of all grades; there are degrees even in the works of the best artists; and given to each at the outset equal abilities, there are still two dangers to be encountered in the life of almost every artist, as with those who are engaged in the career of letters. The first, to which most succumb, is when the necessity of fighting adversity and earning a bare subsistence forces a choice between the natural bent of genius and the tastes of the buyer. The second danger, reached by few, comes when, after long struggles with poverty and neglect, success arrives at last. The temptation then is to hurry paintings off the easel into the market before they have received the careful, conscientious labor and the final touch. And French artists yield to this temptation as well as others. The greatest painters have dealers or admirers always looking over their shoulders, saying, "That will do as it is; no doubt that will sell at a good figure!" and the artist, contrary to his own convictions, will often allow a painting to leave his easel in a raw state. It is these unfinished daubs with great names attached to them which too often make their way to America. The

best Corôts one sees in Paris are more complete than those generally seen in our country, and every way superior to them.

As for the principle of art on which the present French school works, we should say that it differs little from that which has always ruled French, and in fact all true art, being the general principle laid down at the commencement of this article. French artists have first of all been Frenchmen, and artists secondly. Thus, according to the principles of art, French art is a mirror of French history, morals, and opinion. Poussin, Watteau, Boucher, Le Brun, Greuze, Prud'hon, and a host of artists of similar bent, indicate with excellent eye for color, if not always superior ability, the various transitions from the voluptuous days of Louis XIV. to the Reign of Terror. David and Géricault, Ingres and Horace Vernet, Müller and Couture, give a glimpse of the volcanic fury of the Revolution, the vast energies of the Napoleonic wars, and the pseudo-classic taste. Paul Delaroche, great in sentiment, Delacroix, a wonderful colorist, Ary Scheffer, and a multitude besides, reflect the Romantic period, when Walter Scott, Byron, and Goethe profoundly moved the heart of Europe, and were echoed back by the minor strains of Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and De Musset, and the sensuous Christianity of Chateaubriand. Then for a while French art was swayed by subjective or moral impulses, and sometimes, as with Scheffer and Delaroche, inclined to give expression to Christian ideas. Saints have always been scarce in French art as compared with the art of Italy, Germany, or Spain, unless one looks for them in the time-worn, weather-beaten statues which adorn the cathedrals, more quaint and picturesque than artistic. When France was religious or superstitious, neither painting nor sculpture progressed far in the land, and the former was chiefly employed to illuminate missals. After Paris took the lead, pleasure swayed France with equal power. Philip IV. of Spain preferred saints and *auto-da-fés*; so Velasquez painted saints, and doubtless

did full justice to most of them. The Louises were better pleased with Leda and Swans, and shepherdesses in limited satin; Watteau and Boucher were equal to the occasion. Physical beauty, for itself alone, without regard to its moral relations, is the highest end the modern French artist is required to hold before him. The leading art critic, M. Taine, enunciates this as the great art principle, and urges it against the English and the Germans that they allow themselves to be biased in the choice of subject by the strong moral feeling of the Germanic races, which the French do not hesitate among themselves to sneer at as hypocrisy. Each kind has merits entirely its own, however, and to condemn one because it is not the other is manifestly absurd. The greatest school of art would naturally be that which combined both; the world has seen some masters who have nearly blended the two, but no *school*. However, the present Munich school gives promise of approaching this supreme end of art in time. As things are now, and always have been in the domain of art, M. Taine most probably is in the right up to a certain point. Art is in a greater degree than literature sensuous, a matter appertaining to sight, or to an eye for color and form, to mechanical processes, and sometimes to geometrical precision, and is therefore rather more a question of physical than of moral beauty. But if, as is the case too often now, French art gives us so many works whose moral tendency is corrupting, the artist is not more to blame than the great public which creates that system of influences and opinions which shapes his character. French art to-day is probably the first in the world as art; while it is just as true that it is first in paintings of lewd scenes, murders, and bloodshed. At the Luxembourg is a painting by Henri Regnault, a young artist killed at Buzenval, representing an execution at Tangier. There are but two figures in it, both life-size, — the executioner, and his victim who has just been decapitated. Like everything painted by Regnault, the scene is rendered with power and truth, and in order to do it

the artist undoubtedly had to be present at the awful moment, brush in hand. But while one does not know whether most to admire or to detest an enthusiasm so strong as to blunt in the artist the emotions which at such a time should stir in any human breast, there is no question as to the impropriety of admitting such a painting to a public national gallery, and the government is guilty of a very grave mistake in allowing it to remain there. Either it is bad as a work of art and should therefore be excluded, or it is good as a work of art and should therefore be forbidden, on exactly the same grounds that the public are guarded from the demoralizing influences of a public execution.

So far as a distinct school of French art is concerned, of which we hear so much at home, thus much may be said: in the palmy days of Italian and Spanish art the range of the artist was limited; he painted a Virgin or a Magdalene, and, to relieve his mind after such pious exertion, painted a Bacchus or a Satyr, the following week or month. It was from these two opposite classes of subjects that the artist of the Renaissance selected his compositions. But landscape, marine, and *genre* painting were reserved for other schools and chiefly for that of France, always excepting the Dutch school, to which in its range of subjects and treatment the modern French school bears a strong resemblance. It confines itself to no one class of subjects, allowing to each artist entire freedom in selecting such treatment and subjects as are suggested by his individual intuitions. There are as many French styles of art in Paris to-day as there are artists of original capacity, each of whom has a large following of imitators. There are the styles of Gérôme, of Meissonier, of Daubigny, of Corôt, of Ziem, all sufficiently unlike and independent. There surely is no resemblance in either subject or color between the cool, monotonous, monochromatic canvases of Corôt, and the superb Mediterranean effects of Ziem. But what, then, is the French school of which so much is said? There must be some distinctive trait which

makes the French school *par excellence*. The French school of contemporary art is, then, first of all, true to national characteristics. Another reason for its strength and for the repute it enjoys at present is, that to enormous work and conscientious study of nature as they see it, French artists add a natural eye for color superior to that of most German and English painters; who, on the other hand, are often equal to them, sometimes superior, in drawing and composition. But the final and most important cause of the high value set on French art of to-day is undoubtedly the *mode of treatment*, including what is purely mechanical in art. Breadth is a quality that is now found most prominent in French painting. Even the works of Meissonier, so minutely finished, possess this characteristic in a marked degree, a trait which rendered the paintings of Turner so original, and for a while so incomprehensible in England. A school of art in its early stages, or an artist when commencing his studies, needs to paint and draw with pre-Raphaelite fidelity of detail. It is thus that a masterful knowledge of nature is gained, which gradually enables genius combined with experience to discriminate what is valuable and what is of secondary importance in a given subject or for a given conception, and, seizing only the more salient and characteristic traits or colors, as they appear to him, to combine them in an effective and suggestive whole. But ages of laborious feeling over an obscure pathway must often precede the epoch when the art of a nation reaches the broad style of treatment; and years of patient, unremitting study of nature in all her details must first develop in the artist that power which enables him to express his thoughts in a handwriting of his own, to paint with that breadth in the rejection of the unimportant and the vivid delineation of the soul of things, which is the almost universal characteristic of contemporary French art. And these French artists work with intense application when in the *École des Beaux Arts*, or other art schools. A Frenchman is rarely indolent, although taking

life perhaps more luxuriously than we do, and the art students of Paris are the most diligent workers there. It is the lack of this severe, careful study which has thus far retarded American art, an evil which will work its own cure when the nation has developed its æsthetic instincts. At present the tendency is for art students at home to begin by intensely admiring some master and then copying his style, instead of studying the only model an artist has anything to do with—nature. They attempt to begin where their master leaves off in treatment, forgetting that the broad, effective handling they so admire is only the result of close study and patient analysis of the details of nature at the beginning of his career. The American artists and students now in Paris, it must be added, hold their own remarkably well; they study hard; many of them work in a style of their own, and promise much for the future of art in our country. It must be admitted, also, that while the distinguishing characteristic of French art to-day is breadth of treatment, like most reforms or reactions from a system which had gone too far, this treatment is often carried to an absurd excess, and is in danger of becoming conventional in its turn. Many French paintings are little more than rough sketches in oil. The worst things in this slovenly style are done by pupils or imitators, who generally seize on those very characteristics of the master which are most open to criticism. One extreme is as bad as the other, and of the two pre-Raphaelism is better than daubing; the one shows humility before nature, the other indicates presumption.

Thus far as to style. As regards excellence in various branches of painting, the French school is the weakest in marine painting. There are but few marine artists, and they are generally of inferior ability. Isabey is much the strongest in that line; some of his paintings are full of vigor and fine color, almost announcing genius—rather hard, but giving an idea of power, which is after all the chief impression made on the mind of one who knows the sea in all its

moods. Boudin occasionally gives us a quiet harbor scene; Jules Duprez exhibits some good feeling, with incomplete results. But even Isabey devotes most of his attention of late years to the depicting of the men of other days in costumes and groupings admirably rendered, and the French marine artists all show rather a preference for a good foothold on *terra firma*, than that passion for blue water and thousand-miles-from-land effects which courses in the blood of the Norseman and the Saxon, which floats three thousand yachts in English waters, inspired some of the finest strophes of Byron, and gave us Turner's *Slave Ship*, a drama of ocean as open to criticism as a play of Shakespeare, and yet as supremely a creation of consummate genius. But aside from the single exception of marine painting, there is nothing that is more remarkable in contemporary French art than the love of nature in her various aspects as exhibited by many artists, the foremost in this department of any the world has yet seen. In the painting of the figure, or the rendering of chromatic effects, modern art sometimes approaches—it never surpasses—the gigantic minds of the Renaissance. In landscape painting lies the true field of French poetry, the absence of which amid many vapid alexandrines is apparent to those who do not prefer with M. Taine the poems of De Musset to *In Memoriam* and *Guinevere*. Notwithstanding Claude and the Dutch painters of two centuries ago, landscape painting or genre with landscape is essentially a modern art, springing up in sympathy with the poetry of Bernardin de St. Pierre, Burns, and Wordsworth; and while across the Channel this sympathy with nature and humble life found its best expression in poetry of the most exquisite character, in France it has been interpreted by her landscape painters. Poets they truly are, purely and entirely devoted to nature, finding in her their greatest pleasure and reward. And this, both in their lives and works. Jacques, of sheep painters the first, and almost as great in landscape, leads us among the russet

hollows and the rude folds of Brittany, teaching us the poetry there is in humble things. Millet in his blouse and sabots always preferred his retreat at Barbizon. What wondrous sympathy with the various aspects of nature is evident in every canvas of Troyon, who seems the peer of the greatest, if not the first poet of rustic nature France has produced! Then there was Chintreuil, who began life as a bookseller's clerk in a provincial town, and stole away into an attic to make his first attempts in art. Here he was discovered by the son of his employer, who urged him to continue in the pursuit for which he was born. But youth passed by, manhood and middle age came and went, and still this real poet toiled on unrecognized except by his life-long friend, Desbrosses, who never lost faith in the genius and ultimate success of his master. At last, as this true hero, in unflinching devotion to nature and unswerving confidence in his own powers,—one of the infallible signs of greatness when combined with humility,—approached the grave, and his own lingering footsteps began to cast those long shadows he had so often delighted to paint, the world of art began to award him the fame he deserved and should have received thirty years earlier. Chintreuil has been called “the poet of the dews and the mists.” There was great inequality in his works, but in his best things he resembled Turner, although entirely original. He excelled in atmospheric effects. The solemn lights of twilight, the impressive glory of sunset, robing ranks of forest trees in regal splendor and throwing exquisite shadowy gloom over the foreground slopes, the breaking up and scattering of the vapors of early morning before the coming dawn, the sudden dash of rain with an angry gust over a gray sea,—in effects like these Chintreuil reveled, with Turner, and sometimes approached the excellences of that greatest of English painters. Corôt, too, must be considered the best known of French landscape painters, the Theocritus of France, who has recently passed away crowned with the honors of an ap-

preciative country. The life of Corôt was almost the life of the ideal artist. It has been said that he was poor and neglected for many years. This is only measurably true. He was born in affluent circumstances and was destined to carry on his father's business. But the irresistible impulses of his genius led him to painting instead, and his father then reduced the artist's income to one thousand francs, equal, at least, to twice that sum now. But on his father's death Corôt inherited a fortune with an income very considerable in France. It is true that for twenty years the fact that a new genius in landscape painting had appeared was recognized by but few. But thirty years of succeeding triumph amply atoned for early neglect, and rendered his life on the whole as perfect as an artist can expect, with the exception of domestic happiness, for which he seems not to have cared. His income for many years averaged two hundred thousand francs from his profession alone, and as he never was married and was a man of warm and generous instincts, he gave much away: many a poor artist or artist's family has occasion to bless the memory of Père Corôt. He was twice decorated, first as chevalier, then as commander of the Legion of Honor, but he never was able to wrest the grand medal from the jurors of the annual exhibition. However, a splendid gold medal was presented to him by friends, a short time before his death. He was by birth a Parisian, and his tastes were for nature as she presents herself to those who wander into the suburbs in the early morning or towards eventide. And this was one secret of his success; he painted scenes with which his audience were most familiar, the quiet, russet, monotonous, oft-recurring bits of landscape in the north of France, and especially around Paris. Simple they seem, but they are really simple only because his genius was in harmony with them; to others they might be difficult. Every artist must first of all be true to himself, whether his tastes are of the past or of the present, in sympathy with what the people like best or otherwise;

and nothing is more prejudicial to good and true art, or more cruel to individual minds, than the prescription of a limited class of subjects such as have been the choice of certain great masters. We find no limitation of this sort in French landscape art. The reason why the so-called "simple" French landscapes are painted so generally by Frenchmen is that they paint what they know and love best.

That there is great sameness in the canvases of Corôt it is idle to deny. Like Paganini, he played on an instrument with only one cord; but Paganini played many tunes on that one string, while Corôt played only one; still, he rendered that single tune sometimes with vibrations that thrilled the soul. He evoked, as only genius can, that eerie, mysterious feeling which many experience but cannot express, in observing the subtler effects of nature, and sometimes almost seemed to seize the "vagrant melodies" which quiver through the aspen boughs in the dawn of May, or speed the loitering march of the wandering clouds on a day in June. Only those of his admirers who belong to the servile class are ready to accept everything that Corôt painted as worthy of his reputation, or as qualified to advance art. Nowhere is this fact better recognized than in Paris itself. The following, from a French paper of good standing, only expresses the general opinion there, sometimes given in stronger terms. "Artiste, Corôt laisse une œuvre immense, dans laquelle il faut faire deux parts: les tableaux soignés, traités avec amour; les tableaux lachés, brossés à la hâte, ceux, en un mot, que l'on appelle les Corôts du commerce. Les amateurs mettent entre les deux catégories une énorme différence." It should be added that the market is flooded with spurious Corôts, which bear sufficient resemblance to his poorer works to deceive those who are not connoisseurs in art. During his last illness the price of his works went up rapidly, which gave rise to a *bon mot*. "Why," said one to an art dealer, "do you not buy the works of such a one as well? His reputation is rapidly increasing." "My

dear sir," answered the other, "he has a constitution that will survive us all!"

Our limits forbid more than an allusion to some of the other great names that represent this remarkable school of idyllic and bucolic poetry: Rosa Bonheur, Rousseau, Lambinet, César de Kock, Harpigny, vigorous in the treatment of the grander aspects of nature, Chaigneaux, Jules Bréton (one of the strongest of this school), Daubigny, a pupil of Corôt but working in a style entirely his own, and a host of others, little inferior to these. If you would seek for the purest poetry of France, corresponding with the great school of English descriptive poetry, look for it in the works of Claude, Millet, Corôt, Chintreuil, or Troyon. All these are the names of men who are with the dead; and in looking over the list of those who survive in this and the other departments of French art, the conviction is forced upon us that the greatest masters of modern French art are either dead or men who, still living, have already achieved fame, while few of equal promise seem to be arising to take their places. The conclusion is irresistible that the French art of the nineteenth century has culminated; what France may accomplish in future ages for art is of course not to be foretold, but this school has probably achieved its best. And the masters who still remain are pushing to an extreme the principles of art by which they have won their fame, a sure sign of decay.

No notice of contemporary art in Paris can be complete without allusion to Doré, a figure in the French world of art who forms a school entirely distinct, and beyond the ordinary rules of art criticism. With us he is better known as a designer on wood, an illustrator with an imagination grotesque and prolific beyond all precedent. But of late years he has given his attention to painting, and from time to time exhibits large landscapes, or figure-subjects of life-size. To criticise these paintings, to dissect them until nothing is left, to show that the drawing is often defective, the coloring often unnatural, would be an easy task. But it is not so easy to explain away

the profound impression they produce, or the conviction they give us that here is a mind standing alone in Paris, a mind Teutonic rather than French in its character, looking not so much on the surface of things as at what is hidden underneath, studying the moral of life; a French Albert Dürer, to whom existence is less a comedy than a tragedy. He seems to us in Paris like Jonah crying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," or like John Knox sternly admonishing Mary Queen of Scots and her licentious court of a retribution hereafter. Doré is the only man in Paris who selects subjects with a moral, as do the English and German artists. In the later phases of his genius he may be also called the Hogarth of France. Take for example two paintings he exhibited last February. What could be more like a satire of Juvenal written with a pen dipped in gall, than in Paris, where the fallen woman is publicly accepted by all as a companion and not rarely admitted to the best circles on a footing with virtue (as for example at the receptions of M. Arsène Houssaye, attended by the princes of the blood); the heroine, too, of the best literary productions of the day in France; anything but a poor, forlorn, desolate thing of shame, whose end no one should think of but with profound pity, — what could be more tremendous in its irony than here, in Paris, to paint a woman of that class, with sunken cheeks and forsaken, dying on a cold winter night on a stone bench, under the stars so far away and dim, with her chubby infant vainly seeking milk at her breast, and to call her *La Péchresse!* No wonder Charivari suggests that M. Doré is rather lugubrious in the choice of his subjects. The other painting represents some strolling players, a man and his wife and their little boy. The little boy has fallen from the ladder that was balanced on his father's chin, and lies motionless. We see the mother in her paper crown and tawdry robes, clasping the dying child to her bosom, and the tears coursing down her painted cheeks. The father, in his cap and bells, yellow tights and tinsel, shows

his despair through the chalk on his face, the genuine agony of a father's grief taking the place of the smirks that shook the audience with laughter but a moment ago. The dancing dogs in hats and jackets come to condole upon the tragic fate of their little master; one of them looks on with wonder mixed with pity, the other tenderly licks the feet of the little boy.

Such works as these of Doré oblige the critics of Paris reluctantly to ac-

knowledge that there may be two kinds of art, each great in its way, each occupying a field of its own: the art which like French art in general is strong in color and concerns itself only with external forms, and the art of the English and the German schools, whose motive is moral, — less strong in color than in suggesting the hidden springs which underlie human life and passions, and man's relations to the spiritual and the unseen.

S. G. W. Benjamin.

RODERICK HUDSON.

IX.

MARY GARLAND.

How it befell that Roderick had failed to be in Leghorn on his mother's arrival never clearly transpired; for he undertook to give no elaborate explanation of his fault. He never indulged in professions (touching personal conduct) as to the future, or in remorse as to the past, and as he would have asked no praise if he had traveled day and night to embrace his mother as she set foot on shore, he made (in Rowland's presence, at least) no apology for having left her to come in search of him. It was to be said that, thanks to an unprecedentedly fine season, the voyage of the two ladies had been surprisingly rapid, and that, according to common probabilities, if Roderick had left Rome on the morrow (as he declared that he had intended), he would have had a day or two of waiting at Leghorn. Rowland's silent inference was that Christina Light had beguiled him into letting the time slip, and it was accompanied with a silent inquiry whether she had done so unconsciously or maliciously. He had told her, presumably, that his mother and his cousin were about to arrive; and it was pertinent to remember hereupon that she was a young lady of mysterious impulses.

Rowland heard in due time the story of the adventures of the two ladies from Northampton. Miss Garland's wish, at Leghorn, on finding they were left at the mercy of circumstances, had been to telegraph to Roderick and await an answer; for she knew that their arrival was a trifle premature. But Mrs. Hudson's maternal heart had taken the alarm. Roderick's sending for them was, to her imagination, a confession of illness, and his not being at Leghorn, a proof of it; an hour's delay was therefore cruel both to herself and to him. She insisted on immediate departure; and, unskilled as they were in the mysteries of foreign (or even of domestic) travel, they had hurried in trembling eagerness to Rome. They had arrived late in the evening, and, knowing nothing of inns, had got into a cab and proceeded to Roderick's lodging. At the door, poor Mrs. Hudson's frightened anxiety had overcome her, and she had sat quaking and crying in the vehicle, too weak to move. Miss Garland had bravely gone in, groped her way up the dusky staircase, reached Roderick's door, and, with the assistance of such acquaintance with the Italian tongue as she had culled from a phrase-book during the calmer hours of the voyage, had learned from the old woman who had her cousin's household economy in