

CONTEMPORARY FRENCH SCULPTURE.

CHAPU — DUBOIS.



GREEK sculpture has perished so completely that it sometimes seems to live only in its legend. It is quite supplanted by the sculpture of the Renaissance. And this is not unreasonable. The Renaissance sculpture is modern; its masters did finely and perfectly what since their time has been done imperfectly, but essentially its artistic spirit is the modern artistic spirit, full of personality, full of expression, careless of the type. Nowadays we patronize a little the ideal. You may hear very intelligent critics in Paris—who in Paris is not an intelligent critic?—speak disparagingly of the Greek want of expression; of the lack of passion, of vivid interest, of significance in a word, in Greek sculpture of the Periclean epoch. The conception of absolute beauty having been discovered to be an abstraction, the tradition of the purely ideal has gone with it. The caryatids of the Erechtheum, the horsemen of the Parthenon frieze, the reliefs of the Nike Apteros balustrade are admired certainly; but they are hardly sympathetically admired; there is a tendency to relegate them to the limbo of subjects for æsthetic lectures. And yet no one can have carefully examined the brilliant productions of French sculpture without being struck by this apparent paradox: that, whereas all its canons are drawn from a study of the Renaissance, its chief characteristic is, at bottom, a lack of expression, a carefulness for the type. The explanation is this: in the course of time, which “at last makes all things even,” the individuality, the romanticism of the Renaissance has itself become the type, is now itself become “classical,” and the modern attitude towards it, however sympathetic compared with the modern attitude towards the antique, is to a noteworthy degree factitious and artificial. And in art everything depends upon the attitude of mind. It is this which prevents Ingres from being truly Raphaellesque and Pradier from being really classical. If, therefore, it can justly be said of modern French sculpture that its sympathy for the Renaissance sculpture obscures its vision of the ideal, it is clearly to be charged with the same absence of individual significance with which its thick-and-thin partisans

reproach the antique. The circumstance that, like the Renaissance sculpture, it deals far more largely in pictorial expression than the antique does, is, if it deals in them after the Renaissance fashion and not after a fashion of its own, quite beside the essential fact. There is really nothing in common between a French sculptor of the present day and an Italian one of the fifteenth century except the possession of what is called the modern spirit. But the modern spirit manifests itself in an enormous gamut, and the differences of its manifestations are as great in their way, and so far as our interest in them is concerned, as the difference between their inspiration and the mediæval or the antique inspiration.

M. Chapu is perhaps the only eminent sculptor of the time whose inspiration is clearly the antique, and when I add that his work appears to me for this reason none the less original, it will be immediately perceived that I share imperfectly the French objection to the antique. Indeed, nowadays to have the antique inspiration is to be original *ex vi termini*; nothing is further removed from contemporary conventions. But this is true in a much more integral sense. The preëminent fact of Greek sculpture, for example, is, from one point of view, the directness with which it concerns itself with the ideal—the slight temporary or personal element with which it is alloyed. When one calls an artist or a work Greek, this is what is really meant; it is the sense in which Raphael is Greek, or (to associate lesser things with great, and if I may say so without being misunderstood) the work of Mr. Whistler. M. Chapu is Greek in this way, and thus individualized among his contemporaries, not only by having a different inspiration from them, but by depending for his interest on no convention fixed or fleeting and on no indirect support of accentuated personal characteristics. Perhaps the antiquary of a thousand years from now, to whom the traits which to us distinguish so clearly the work of certain sculptors who seem to have nothing in common will betray only their common inspiration, will be even less at a loss than ourselves to find traces of a common origin in such apparently different works as M. Chapu’s “Mercury” and his “Jeunesse” of the Regnault monument. He will by no means confound these with the classical productions of M. Millet or



MILITARY COURAGE. (ENGRAVED BY H. WOLF, AFTER THE STATUE BY DUBOIS AT THE TOMB OF LAMORICIÈRE, NANTES.)

M. Cavellier, we may be sure. And this, I repeat, because their purely Greek spirit, the subordination in their conception and execution of the personal element, the direct way in which the sculptor looks at the ideal, the type, not only distinguish them among contemporary works, which are so largely personal expressions, but give them an eminent individuality as well. Like the Greek sculpture, they are plainly the production of culture, which in restraining willfulness, however happily inspired, and imposing measure and poise, nevertheless acutely stimulates and develops the faculties themselves. The skeptic who may very plausibly inquire the distinction between that vague entity, "the ideal," and the personal idea of the artist concerned with it, can be shown this distinction better than it can be expressed in words. He will appreciate it very readily, to return to M. Chapu, by contrasting the Jeanne d'Arc at the Luxembourg gallery with such different treatment of the same theme as M. Bastien-Lepage's picture, as well known in America as in Paris, illustrates. Contrary to his almost invariable practice of neglecting even design in favor of impersonal natural representation, M. Bastien-Lepage's "Jeanne d'Arc" is the creature of willful originality, a sort of embodied protest against conventionalism in historical painting; she is the illustration of a theory, she is this and that systematically and not spontaneously; the predominance of the painter's personality is plain in every detail of his creation. M. Chapu's "Maid" is the ideal, more or less perfectly expressed. She is everybody's "Maid," more or less adequately embodied. The statue is the antipodes of the conventional; it suggests no competition with that at Versailles or the many other characterless conceptions which abound. It is full of expression — arrested just before it ceases to be suggestive; of individuality restrained on the hither side of peculiarity. The "Maid" is hearing her "voices" as distinctly as M. Bastien-Lepage's figure is, but the fact is not forced upon the sense, but is rather disclosed to the mind with great delicacy and the dignity becoming sculpture. No one could, of course, mistake this work for an antique, — an error that might possibly be made, supposing the conditions favorable, in the case of M. Chapu's "Mercury"; but it presents, nevertheless, an excellent illustration of a modern working naturally and freely in the antique spirit. It is as affecting, as full of direct appeal, as a modern work essays to be; but its appeal is to the sense of beauty, to the imagination, and its effect is wrought in virtue of its art and not of its reality. No, individuality is no more inconsistent with the antique spirit than it is with

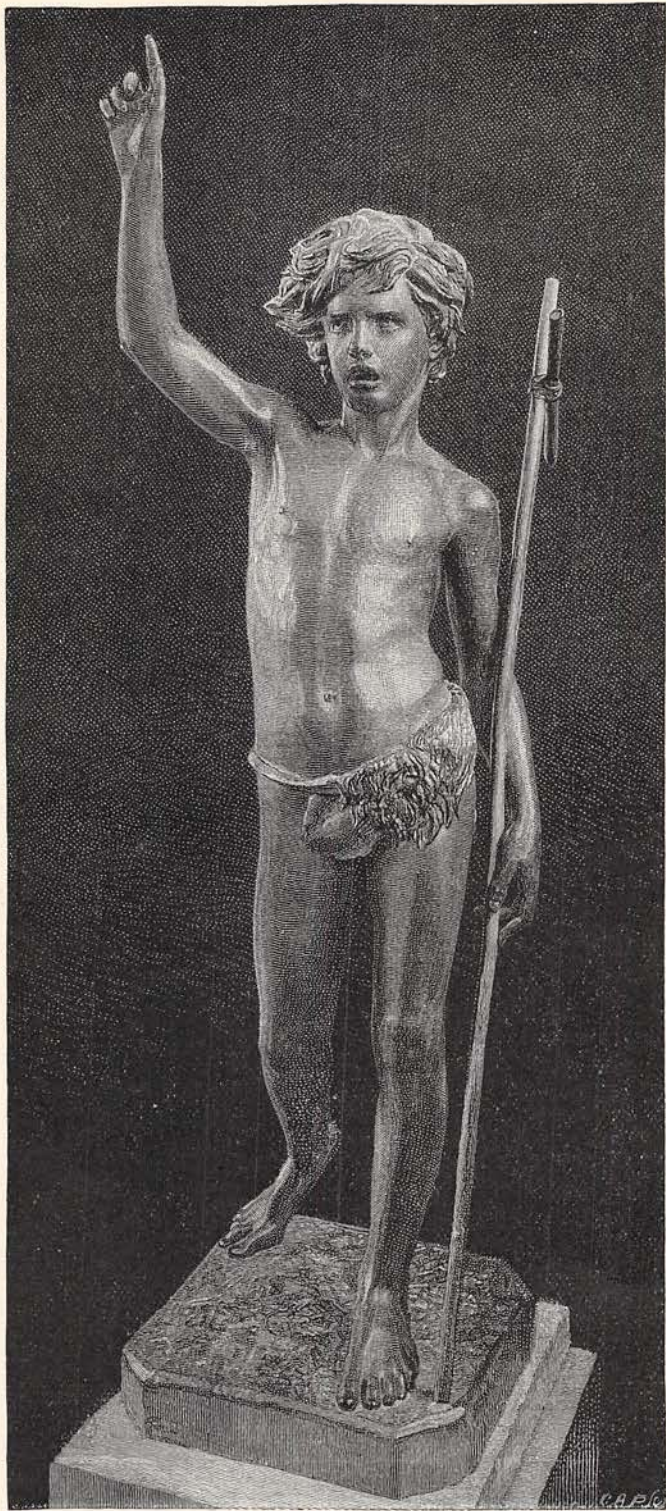
eccentricity, with the extravagances of personal expression. Is there more individuality in a thirteenth-century grotesque than in the Faun of the Capitol? For sculpture especially, art is eminently, as it has been termed, "the discipline of genius," and it is only after the sculptor's genius has submitted to the discipline of culture that it evinces an individuality which really counts, which is really thrown out in relief on the background of crude personality. And if there be no question of perfection, but only of the artist's attitude, one has but to ask himself the real meaning of the epithet Shaksperian to be assured of the harmony between individuality and the most impersonal practice.

Nevertheless, this attitude and this perfection, characteristic as they are of M. Chapu's work, have their peril. When the quickening impulse, of whose expression they are after all but conditions, fails, they suddenly appear so misplaced as to render insignificant what would otherwise have seemed "respectable" enough work. Everywhere else of great distinction, — even in the execution of so perfunctory a task as a commission for a figure of "Mechanical Art" in the Tribunal de Commerce, at the great Triennial Exposition of 1883, — M. Chapu was simply insignificant. There was never a more striking illustration of the necessity of constant renewal of inspiration, of the constant danger of lapse into the perfunctory and the hackneyed, which threatens an artist of precisely M. Chapu's qualities. Another of equal eminence escapes this peril; there is not the same interdependence of form and "content" to be disturbed by failure in the latter; or, better still, the merits of form are not so distinguished as to require imperatively a corresponding excellence of intention. In fact, it is for the exceptional position that he occupies in deriving from the antique, instead of showing the academic devotion to Renaissance romanticism which characterizes the general movement of modern French sculpture, that in any consideration of this sculpture M. Chapu's work makes a more vivid impression than that of his contemporaries, and thus naturally takes a foremost place.

M. Paul Dubois, for example, is as unmistakably "arrived," as the phrase is, as M. Chapu, to whom, in the characteristics just treated of, he presents the greatest possible contrast; but he will never, we may be sure, give us a work that could be called insignificant. His work will always express himself, and his is a personality of very positive idiosyncrasies. M. Dubois, indeed, is probably the strongest of the Academic group of French sculptors of the day. The tomb of General Lamoricière at Nantes has remained until recently probably the finest achievement



LA JEUNESSE. (ENGRAVED BY J. H. E. WHITNEY, AFTER THE REGNAULT MONUMENT BY CHAPU IN THE BEAUX-ARTS.)



THE INFANT JOHN. (ENGRAVED BY C. A. POWELL, AFTER THE STATUE BY DUBOIS IN THE LUXEMBOURG.)

of sculpture in modern times. There is in effect nothing markedly superior in the Cathedral of St. Denis, which is a great deal to say—much more, indeed, than the glories of the Italian Renaissance, which lead us out of mere momentum to forget the French, permit one to appreciate. Indeed, the sculpture of M. Dubois seems positively to have but one defect, a defect which from one point of view is certainly a quality, the defect of impeccability. It is at any rate impeccable; to seek in it a blemish, or, within its own limitations, a distinct shortcoming, is to lose one's pains. As workmanship, and workmanship of the subtler kind, in which every detail of surface and structure is perceived to have been intelligently felt (though rarely enthusiastically rendered), it is not merely satisfactory, but visibly and beautifully perfect. But in the category in which M. Dubois is to be placed that is very little; it is always delightful, but it is not especially complimentary to M. Dubois, to occupy one's self with it. On the other hand, by impeccability is certainly not here meant the mere success of expressing what one has to express—the impeccability of Canova and his successors, for example. The difficulty is with M. Dubois's ideal, with what he so perfectly expresses. At the last analysis this is not his ideal more than ours. And this, indeed, is what makes his work so flawless in our eyes, so impeccable. It seems as if of what he attempts he attains the type itself; every one must recognize its justness.

The reader will say at once here that I am caviling at M. Dubois for what I praised in M. Chapu. But let us distinguish. The two artists belong to wholly different categories. M. Chapu's inspiration is the antique spirit. M. Dubois is, like all French sculptors except M. Chapu indeed, absolutely and integrally a romanticist, completely enamored of the Renaissance. The two are so distinct as to be contradictory. The moment M. Dubois gives us the *type* in a "Florentine Minstrel," to the exclusion of the personal and the particular, he fails in imaginativeness and falls back on the conventional. The *type* of a "Florentine Minstrel" is infallibly a convention. M. Dubois, not being occupied directly with the ideal, is bound to carry his subject and its idiosyncrasies much farther than the observer could have foreseen. To rest content with expressing gracefully and powerfully the notion common to all connoisseurs is to fall short of what one justly expects of the romantic artist. Indeed, in exchange for this one would accept very faulty work in this category with resignation. Whatever we may say or think, however we may admire or approve, in romantic art the quality that charms, that fascinates, is not adequacy but unexpectedness. In addition to the under-

standing, the instinct demands satisfaction. The virtues of Charity and Faith and the ideas of Military Courage and Meditation could not be more adequately illustrated than by the figures which guard the solemn dignity of General Lamoricière's sleep. There is a certain force, a breadth of view, in the general conception, something in the way in which the sculptor has taken his task, quite as nearly allied to real grandeur as anything of the sort in contemporary art. Even in painting, I think of nothing so justly to be called grand since Delacroix. The confident and even careless dependence upon the unaided value of its motive, making hardly any appeal to the fancy on the one hand and seeking no poignant effect on the other, endues the work with the poise and purity of superb strength. It conveys to the mind a clear impression of manliness, of qualities morally refreshing.

But such work educates us so inexorably, teaches us to be so exacting! After enjoying it to its and our utmost, we demand still something else, something more moving, more stirring, something more directly appealing to our impulse and instinct. Even in his free and charming little "St. John Baptist" of the Luxembourg and his admirable bust of Baudry one feels like asking for more freedom still, for more "swing." Dubois certainly is the last artist who needs to be on his guard against "letting himself go." Why is it that in varying so agreeably Renaissance themes—compare the "Military Courage" and Michael Angelo's "Pensiero," or the "Charity" and the same group in Della Quercia's fountain at Siena,—it is restraint, rather than audacity, that governs him? Is it caution or perversity? In a word, imaginativeness is what permanently interests and attaches, the imaginativeness to which in sculpture the ordinary conventions of form are mere conditions, and the ordinary conventions of idea mere material. One can hardly apply generalities of the kind to M. Dubois without saying too much, but it is nevertheless true that one may illustrate the grand style and yet fail of being intimately and acutely sympathetic; and M. Dubois, to whose largeness of treatment and nobility of conception no one will deny the grand style, does thus fail. It is not that he does not possess charm, and charm in no mean proportion to his largeness and nobility, but for the elevation of these into the realm of magic, into the upper air of spontaneous spiritual activity, his imagination has, for the romantic imagination which it is, a trifle too much self-possession,—too much sanity, if one chooses. He has the ambitions, the faculties, of a lyric poet, and he gives us too frequently recitative.

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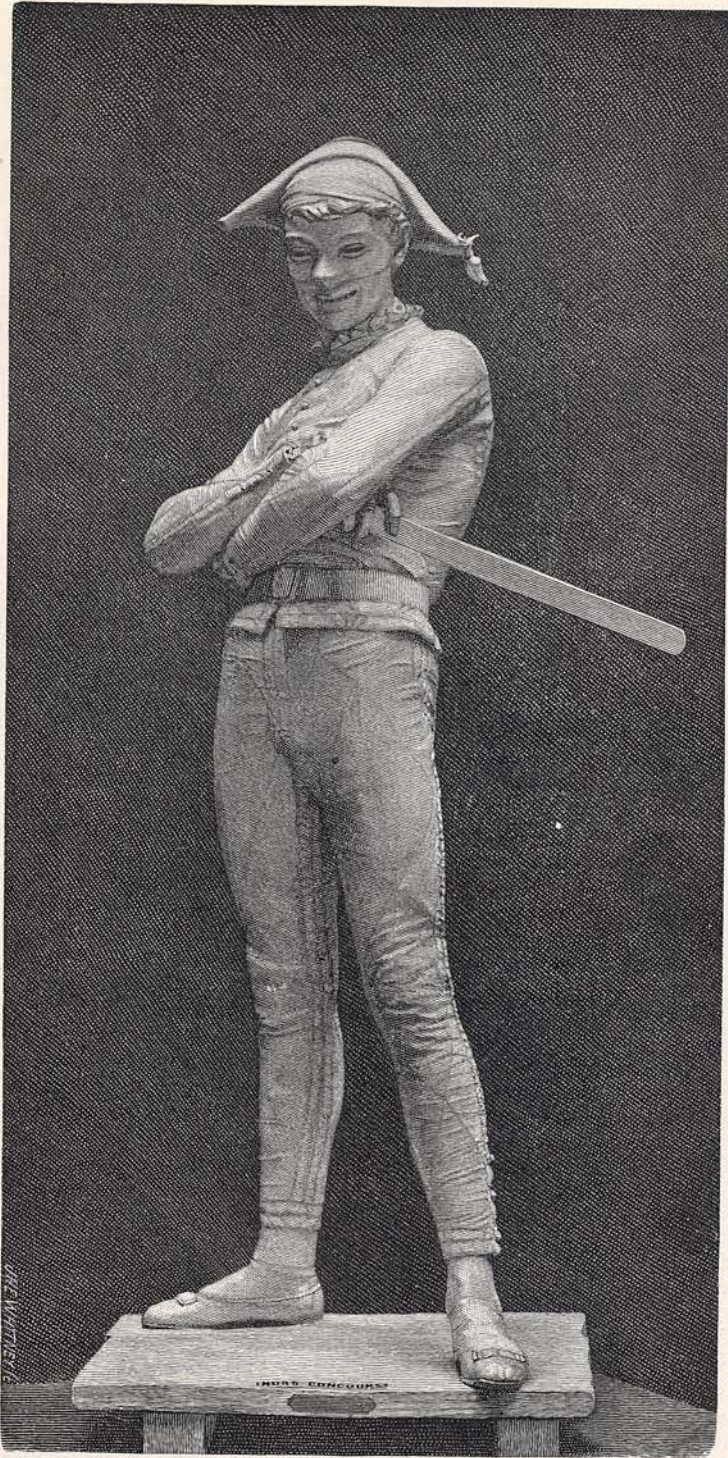
IT is agreeable in many ways to turn from the rounded and complete impeccability of M. Dubois to the fancy of M. Saint-Marceaux. More than any of his rivals, M. Saint-Marceaux possesses the charm of unexpectedness. He is not perhaps to be called an original genius, and his work will probably leave French sculpture very nearly where it found it. Indeed one readily perceives that he is not free from the trammels of contemporary convention. But how easily he wears them, and if no "severe pains and birth-throes" accompany the evolution of his conceptions, how graceful these conceptions are! They are perhaps of the Canova family; the "Harlequin," for instance, which has had such a prodigious success, is essentially Milanese sculpture; essentially even the "Genius Guarding the Secret of the Tomb" is a fantastic rather than an original work. But how the manner, the treatment, triumphs over the Canova insipidity! It is not only Milanese sculpture better done, the execution beautifully sapient and truthful instead of cheaply imitative, the idea broadly enforced by the details instead of frittered away among them; it is Milanese sculpture essentially elevated and dignified. Loosely speaking, the mere *article de vertu* becomes a true work of art. And this transformation, or rather this development of a germ of not too great intrinsic importance, is brought about in the work of Saint-Marceaux by the presence of an element utterly foreign to the Canova sculpture and its succession — the element of character. If to the clever workmanship of the Italians he merely opposed workmanship

of a superior kind as well as quality — thoroughly artistic workmanship, that is to say — his sculpture would be far less interesting than it is. He does indeed noticeably do this; there is a felicity entirely delightful, almost magical, in every detail of his work. But when one compares it with the sculpture of M. Dubois, it is not of this that one thinks so much as of a certain individual character with which M. Saint-Marceaux always contrives to endue it. This is not always in its nature sculptural, it must be admitted, and it approaches perhaps too near the character of *genre* to have the enduring interest which purely sculptural qualities possess. But it is always individual, piquant, and charming, and in it consists M. Saint-Marceaux's claim upon us as an artist. No one else, even given his powers of workmanship, that is to say as perfectly equipped as he, could have treated so thoroughly conventional a *genre* subject as the "Harlequin" as he has treated it. The mask is certainly one of the stock properties of the subject, but notice how it is used to confer upon the whole work a character of mysterious witchery. It is as a whole, if you choose, an *article de Paris*, with the distinction of being seriously treated; the modeling and the movement admirable as far as they go, but well within the bounds of that anatomically artistic expression which is the *raison d'être* of sculpture and its choice of the human form as its material. But the character saves it from this category; what one may almost call its psychological interest redeems its superficial triviality. M. Saint-Marceaux is always successful in this way. One has only to look at the eyes of his figures to be convinced how subtle is his art of expressing character. Here he swings quite clear of all convention and manifests his genius positively and directly. The unfathomable secret of the tomb is in the spiritual expression

of the guarding genius, and the elaborately complex movement concentrated upon the urn and directly inspired by the Ephebes of the Sistine ceiling is a mere blind. The same is true of the portrait heads which within his range M. Saint-Marceaux does better than almost any one. M. Renan's "Confessions" hardly convey as distinct a notion of character as his bust exhibited at the Triennial. Several heads displayed at one of the exhibitions of the Société Internationale were hardly less remarkable. Long after the sharp edge of one's interest in the striking pose of his "Harlequin" and the fine movement and bizarre features of his "Genius" has worn away, their curious spiritual interest, the individual *cachet* of their character, will sustain them. And so integrally true is this of all the productions of M. Saint-Marceaux's talent, that it is quite as perceptible in works where it is not accentuated and emphasized as it is in those of which we have been speaking; it is a quality that will bear refining, that is even better indeed in its more subtle manifestations. The figure of the Luxembourg gallery, the young Dante reading Virgil, is an example; a girl's head, the forehead swathed in a turban, of the Société Internationale's Exhibition just referred to, is another. The charm of these is more penetrating, though they are by no means either as popular or as "important" works as the "Genius of the Tomb" or the "Harlequin." In the time to come M. Saint-Marceaux will probably rely more and more on their quality of grave and yet alert distinction, and less on striking and eccentric variations of themes from Michael Angelo like the "Genius," and illustrations like the "Harlequin" of the artistic potentialities of the Canova sculpture.

With considerably less force than M. Dubois and decidedly less piquancy than M. Saint-Marceaux, M. Antonin Mercié has perhaps greater refinement than either. His outline is a trifle softer, his sentiment more gracious, more suave. His work is difficult to characterize satisfactorily, and the fact may of course proceed from its lack of force, as well as from the well-understood difficulty of translating into epithets anything so essentially elusive as suavity and grace of form. At one epoch in any examination of contemporary French sculpture that of M. Mercié seems the most interesting; it is so free from exaggeration of any kind on the one hand, it realizes its idea so satisfactorily on the other, and this idea is so agreeable, so refined, and at the same time so dignified. The "David" here engraved is an early work now in the Luxembourg gallery, and the reader may judge how well it justifies these remarks. Being an early

work, one cannot perhaps insist on its originality; in France a young sculptor must be original at his peril; his education is so complete, he must have known and studied the beauties of classic sculpture so thoroughly, that not to be impressed by them so profoundly as to display his appreciativeness in his first work is apt to argue a certain insensitiveness. And every one cannot have creative genius. What a number of admirable works we should be compelled to forego if creative genius were demanded of an artist of the present day when the best minds of the time are occupied with other things than art! One is apt to forget that in our day the minds that correspond with the artistic miracles of the Renaissance are absorbed in quite different departments of effort. M. Mercié's "David" would perhaps never have existed but for Donatello's. As far as plastic motive is concerned, it may without injustice be called a variant of that admirable creation, and from every point of view except that of dramatic grace it is markedly inferior to its inspiration; as an embodiment of triumphant youth, of the divine ease with which mere force is overcome, it has only a superficial resemblance to the original. But if with M. Mercié "David" was simply a classic theme to be treated, which is exactly what it of course was not with Donatello, it is undeniable that he has expressed himself very distinctly in his treatment. A less sensitive artist would have vulgarized instead of merely varying the conception, whereas one can easily see in M. Mercié's handling of it the ease, science, and felicitous movement which have since expressed themselves more markedly, more positively, but hardly more unmistakably, in the sculptor's maturer works. Of these the chief is perhaps the "Gloria Victis," which now decorates the Square Montholon; and its identity of authorship with the "David" is apparent in spite of its structural complexity and its far greater importance both in subject and execution. Its subject is the most inspiring that a French sculptor since the events of 1870-71 (so lightly considered by those who only see the theatric side of French character) could treat. Its general interest, too, is hardly inferior; there is something generally ennobling in the celebration of the virtues of the brave defeated which surpasses the commonplace of pæans. M. Mercié was, in this sense, more fortunate than the sculptor to whom the Berlineses owe the bronze commemoration of their victory. Perhaps to call his treatment entirely worthy of the theme, is to forget the import of such works as the tombs of the Medici Chapel at Florence. There is a region into whose precincts the dramatic quality penetrates only to play



ENGRAVED BY J. H. E. WHITNEY, AFTER THE STATUE BY SAINT-MARCEAUX.

HARLEQUIN.

an insufficient part. But in modern art to do more than merely to keep such truths in mind, to insist on satisfactory plastic illustrations of them, is not only to prepare disappointment for one's self, but to risk misjudging admirable and elevated effort; and to regret the fact that France had only M. Mercié and not Michael Angelo to celebrate her "*Gloria Victis*" is to commit both of these errors. After all, the subjects are different, and the events of 1870-71 had compensations for France which the downfall of Florentine liberty was without; so that, indeed, a note of unmixed melancholy, however lofty its strain, would have been a discord which M. Mercié has certainly avoided. He has avoided it in rather a marked way, it is true. His monument is rather dramatic and stirring than inwardly moving. It is rhetorical rather than truly poetic; and the admirable quality of its rhetoric, its complete freedom from vulgar or sentimental alloy,—its immense superiority to Anglo-Saxon rhetoric, in fine,—does not conceal the truth that it is rhetoric, that it is prose and not poetry after all. Mercié's "*Gloria Victis*" is very fine; I know nothing so fine in modern sculpture outside of France. But then there is not very much that is fine at all in modern sculpture outside of France; and modern French sculpture, and M. Mercié along with it as one of its most eminent ornaments, have made it impossible to speak of them in a relative way. The antique and the Renaissance sculpture alone furnish their fit association, and like the Renaissance and the antique sculpture they demand a positive and absolute, and not a comparative criticism.

Well, then, speaking thus absolutely and positively, the cardinal defect of French sculpture—and the refined and distinguished work of M. Mercié better perhaps than almost any other assists us to see this—is its over-carefulness for style. This is indeed the explanation of what I mentioned at the outset as the chief characteristic of this sculpture, the academic inelasticity, namely, with which it essays to reproduce the Renaissance romanticism. But for the fondness for style integral to the French mind and character, it would perceive the contradiction between this romanticism and any canons except such as are purely intuitive and undefinable. "Style," says Buffon (speaking of literary style, to be sure, but his definition is equally applicable to style in general), "style is nothing other than the order and movement which we put into our thoughts." In comparison with the Renaissance sculptors, the French sculptors of the present day are certainly too exclusive devotees of this order and movement, and too little occupied with the thought itself—too little in-

dividual. In comparison with the antique, this is less apparent, but I fancy not less real. We are so accustomed to think of the antique as the pure and simple embodiment of style, as a sublimation, so to speak, of the individual into style itself, that in this respect we are scarcely fair judges of the antique. In any case we know very little of it; we can hardly speak of it except by periods. But it is plain that the Greek is so superior to any subsequent sculpture in this one respect of style, that we rarely think of its other qualities. Our judgment is inevitably a comparative one, and inevitably a comparative judgment fixes our attention on the Greek supremacy of style. Indeed, in looking at the antique the thought itself is often alien to us, and the order and movement, being more nearly universal perhaps, are all that occupy us. A family tombstone lying in the cemetery at Athens, and half buried in the dust which blows from the Piræus roadway, has more style than M. Mercié's "*Quand-Même*" group for Belfort, which has been the subject of innumerable encomiums, and which has only style and no individuality whatever to commend it. And the Athenian tombstone was probably furnished to order by the marble-cutting artist of the period, corresponding to those whose signs one sees at the entrances of our own large cemeteries. Still we may be sure that the ordinary Athenian citizen who adjudged prizes between Æschylus and Sophocles, and to whom Pericles addressed the oration which only exceptional culture nowadays thoroughly appreciates, found plenty of individuality in the decoration of the Parthenon, and was perfectly conscious of the difference between Phidias and his pupils. Even now, if one takes the pains to think of it, the difference between such works as the so-called "*Genius*" of the Vatican and the Athenian marbles, or between the Niobe group at Florence and the Venus torso at Naples, for example, seems markedly individual enough, though the element of style is still to our eyes the most prominent quality in each. Indeed, if one really reflects upon the subject, it will not seem exaggeration to say that to any one who has studied both with any thoroughness it would be more difficult to individualize the mass of modern French sculpture than even that of the best Greek epoch—the epoch when style was most perfect, when its reign was, as it sometimes appears to us, most absolute. And if we consider the Renaissance sculpture, its complexity is so great, its individuality is so pronounced, that one is apt to lose sight of the important part which style really plays in it. In a work by Donatello we see first of all his thought; in a Madonna of Mino's it is the idea



A. MERCIÉ.

DAVID.

ENGRAVED BY H. WOLF.

which charms us; the Della Robbia frieze at Pistoja is pure *genre*. But modern French sculpture feels the weight of De Musset's handicap — it is born too late into a world too old. French art in general feels this, I think, and painting suffers from it equally with sculpture. Culture, the Institute, oppress individuality. But whereas Corot and Millet have triumphed over the Institute, there are hardly any Millets and Corots of sculpture whose triumph is as yet assured. The tendency, the weight of authority, the verdict of criticism, always conservative in France, are all the other way. At the *École des Beaux-Arts* one learns, negatively, not to be ridiculous. That is a great deal; it is more than can be learned anywhere else nowadays — witness German, Italian, above all English exhibitions. Positively one learns the importance of style; and if it were not for modern French sculpture, one would say that this was something the importance of which could not be exaggerated. But in modern French sculpture it is exaggerated, and, what is fatal, one learns to exaggerate it in the schools. The traditions of Houdon are noticeably forgotten. Not that Houdon's art is not eminently characterized by style; the "San Bruno" at Rome is in point of style an antique. But compare his "Voltaire" in the foyer of the *Comédie Française* with M. Chapu's "Berryer" of the Palais de Justice, to take one of the very finest portrait-statues of the present day. M. Chapu's statue is more than irreproachable, it is elevated and noble, it is in the grand style; but it is plain that its impressiveness is due to the fact that the subject is conceived as the Orator in general and handled with almost a single eye to style. The personal interest which accentuates every detail of the "Voltaire" — the physiognomy, the pose, the right hand, are marvelously characteristic — simply is not sought for in M. Chapu's work. Of this quality there is more in Houdon's bust of Molière, whom of course Houdon never saw and of whom no undisputed portrait exists, I believe, than in almost any production of the modern school. M. Chapu's works, and such exceptions as the heads of Baudry and Renan already mentioned, apart, one perceives that the modern school has made too many statues of the République, too many "Ledas" and "Susannahs" and "Quand-Mêmes" and "Gloria Victis." And its penchant for Renaissance canons only emphasizes the absolute commonplace of many of these.

On the other hand, if Houdon's felicitous harmony of style and individual force are forgotten, there is hardly any recognized succession to the imaginative freedom, the *verve*, the triumphant personal fertility of Rude and

Carpeaux. At least, such as there is has not preserved the dignity and in many instances scarcely the decorum of those splendid artists. Much of the sculpture which figures at the yearly Salons is, to be sure, the absolute negation of style; its main characteristic is indeed eccentricity; its main virtues, sincerity (which in art, of course, is only a very elementary virtue) and good modeling (which in sculpture is equally elementary). Occasionally in the midst of this display of fantasticality there is a work of promise or even of positive interest. The observer who has not a weak side for the graceful conceits, invariably daintily presented and beautifully modeled, of M. Moreau-Vauthier for example, must be hard to please; they are of the very essence of the *article de Paris*, and only abnormal primness can refuse to recognize the truth that the *article de Paris* has its art side. M. Moreau-Vauthier is not perhaps a modern Cellini; he has certainly never produced anything that could be classed with the "Perseus" of the Loggia de' Lanzi, or even with the Fontainebleau "Diana"; but he does more than any one else to keep alive the tradition of Florentine preciousness, and about everything he does there is something delightful.

Still the fantastic has not made much headway in the Institute, and it is so foreign to the French genius, which never tolerates it after it has ceased to be novel, that it probably never will. It is a great tribute to French "catholicity of mind and largeness of temper" that Carpeaux's "La Danse" remains in its position on the façade of the Grand Opéra. French sentiment regarding it was doubtless accurately expressed by the fanatic who tried to ink it indelibly after it was first exposed. This vandal was right from his point of view — the point of view of style. Almost the one work of absolute spontaneity among the hundreds which without and within decorate M. Garnier's edifice, it is thus a distinct jar in the general harmony; it distinctly mars the "order and movement" of M. Garnier's thought, which is fundamentally opposed to spontaneity. But imagine the devotion to style of a *milieu* in which a person who would throw ink on a confessedly fine work of art is actuated by an impersonal dislike of incongruity! Dislike of the incongruous is almost a French passion, and, like all qualities, it has its defect, the defect of tolerating the conventional. It is through this tolerance, for example, that one of the freest of French critics of art, a true Voltairean, Stendhal, was led actually to find Guido's ideal of beauty higher than Raphael's, and to miss entirely the grandeur of Tintoretto. Critical opinion in France has not changed radically since Stendhal's day.



A. FALGUIÈRE.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

ENGRAVED BY R. A. MULLER.

The French sculptor may draw his inspiration from the sources of originality itself, his audience will measure the result by conventions. It is this fact undoubtedly which is largely responsible for the over-carefulness for style already remarked. Hence the work of M. Aimée-Millet and of Professors Guillaume and Cavalier, and the fact that they are professors. Hence also the election of M. Falguière to succeed to the chair of the Beaux-Arts left vacant by the death of Jouffroy. All of these have done admirable work. Professor Guillaume's Gracchi group at the Luxembourg is alone enough to atone for a mass of productions of which the "Castalian Fount" of a recent Salon is the cold and correct representative. Cavalier's "Gluck," destined for the Opéra, is spirited even if a trifle galvanic. Millet's "Apollo," which crowns the main gable of the Opéra, stands out among its author's other works as a miracle of grace and rhythmic movement. M. Falguière's admirers, and they are numerous, will object to the association here made. Falguière's range has always been a wide one, and everything he has done has undoubtedly merited a portion of the prodigious encomiums it has invariably obtained. Yet, estimating it in any other way than by energy, variety and mass, it is impossible to praise it highly with precision. It is too plainly the work of an artist who can do one thing as well as another, and of which cleverness is, after all, the spiritual standard. Bartholdi, who also should not be forgotten in any sketch of French sculpture, would, I am sure, have acquitted himself more satisfactorily than Falguière has done in the colossal

groups of the Trocadéro and the Arc de l'Étoile. To acquit himself satisfactorily is Bartholdi's specialty. These two groups are the largest and most important that a sculptor can have to do. The crowning of the Arc de Triomphe at least was a splendid opportunity. Neither of them has any distinction of outline, of mass, of relation, or of idea. Both are conventional to the last degree. That on the Arc has even its ludicrous details, such as occur only from artistic absent-mindedness in a work conceived and executed in a fatigued and hackneyed spirit. The "Saint Vincent de Paul" of the Panthéon, which justly passes for the sculptor's *chef-d'œuvre*, is in idea a work of large humanity. M. Falguière is behind no one in ability to conceive a subject of this kind with propriety, and his subject here is inspiring if ever a subject was. The "Petit Martyr" of the Luxembourg has a real charm, but it too is content with too little, as one finds out in seeing it often; and it is in no sense a large work, scarcely larger than the tiresomely popular "Running Boy" of the same museum, which nevertheless in its day marked an epoch in modeling. Indeed, so slight is the spiritual hold that M. Falguière has on one, that it really seems as if he were at his best in such a frankly carnal production as his "Diana" of the Triennial Exposition. The idea is nothing or next to nothing, but the surface *faïte* is superb, and if Professor Falguière can communicate the secret of such modeling to his pupils at the Beaux-Arts, no one will regret the choice of so skillful a sculptor to succeed Jouffroy over candidates of greater artistic force.

W. C. Brownell.



A. FALGUIÈRE.

THE LITTLE MARTYR.

ENGRAVED BY R. A. MULLER.



E. BARRIAS.

ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

BERNARD PALISSY.

FRENCH SCULPTORS.

BARRIAS, DELAPLANCHE, LE FEUVRE, FRÉMIET.



BARRIAS, M. Delaplanche, and M. Le Feuvre have each of them quite as much spontaneity as M. Falguière, though the work of neither is as important in mass and variety. M. Delaplanche is always satisfactory, and beyond this there is something large about what he does that confers dignity even in the absence of quick interest. His proportions are simple, his outline flowing, and the agreeable ease of his compositions makes up to a degree for any lack of sympathetic sentiment or impressive significance: witness his excellent "Maternal Instruction" of the little park in front of Sainte Clothilde. M. Le Feuvre's qualities are very nearly the reverse of these: he has a fondness for integrity quite hostile in his case to simplicity. In his very frank appeal to one's susceptibility he is a little careless of sculptural considerations, which he is prone to sacrifice to pictorial ends. The result is a mannerism that in the end ceases to impress and even becomes disagreeable. As nearly as may be in a French sculptor it borders on sentimentality, and finally the swaying attitudes of his figures become limp, and the startled-fawn eyes of his maidens and youths appear less touching than lackadaisical. But his being himself too conscious of it should not obscure the fact that he has a way of his own. M. Barrias is an artist of considerably greater powers than either M. Le Feuvre or M. Delaplanche; but one has a vague perception that they are limited, and that to desire in his case what one so sincerely wishes in the case of M. Dubois, namely, that he would "let himself go," would be unwise. Happily, when he is at his best there is no temptation to form such a wish. The "Premières Funérailles" is a superb work—"the chef-d'œuvre of our modern sculpture," a French critic enthusiastically terms it. It is hardly that; it has hardly enough spiritual distinction—not quite enough of either elegance or elevation—to merit such sweeping praise. But it may be justly termed, I think, the most completely representative of the masterpieces of that sculpture. Its triumph over the prodigious difficulties of elaborate composition "in the round,"—difficulties to which M. Barrias succumbed in the "Spar-

tacus" of the Tuileries Gardens,—and its success in subordinating the details of a group to the end of enforcing a single motive, preserving the while their individual interest, are complete. Nothing superior in this respect has been done since John of Bologna's "Rape of the Sabines."

M. Emmanuel Frémiet occupies a place by himself. There have been but two modern sculptors who have shown a more pronounced genius for representing animals—namely, Barye and his clever but not great pupil Cain. Barye is well enough known to every one. The tigress in Central Park, perhaps the best bronze there (the competition is not exacting), and the best also of the many variations of the theme of which, at one time, the sculptor apparently could not tire, familiarizes Americans with the talent of Cain. In this association Rouillard, whose horse in the Trocadéro Gardens is an animated and elegant work, ought to be mentioned, but it is hardly as good as the neighboring elephant of Frémiet as mere animal representation (the *genre* exists and has excellences and defects of its own), while in more purely artistic worth it is quite eclipsed by its rival. Indeed, it is perhaps an injustice to M. Frémiet to find his superior in Cain, judging the two strictly within the limits of the Cain *genre*; some of Cain's works are incontestably inferior to anything of the sort which Frémiet has signed. But if *fauna* is interesting in and of itself, which no one who knows Barye's work would controvert, it is still more interesting when, to put it brutally, something is done with it. In his ambitious and colossal work at the Trocadéro, M. Frémiet does in fact use his *fauna* freely as artistic material, though at first sight it is its zoölogical interest which appears paramount. The same is true of the elephant near by, in which it seems as if he had designedly attacked the difficult problem of rendering embodied awkwardness decorative. Still more conspicuous of course is the artistic interest, the fancy, the humor, the sportive grace of his Luxembourg group of a young satyr feeding honey to a brace of bear's cubs, because he here concerns himself more directly with his idea and gives his genius freer play. But it is when he leaves this kind of thing entirely, and, wholly forgetful of his studies at the Jardin des Plantes, devotes himself to purely monumental work, that he is at his best. And in saying



A. LE FEUVRE.

REST.

ENGRAVED BY J. H. E. WHITNEY.



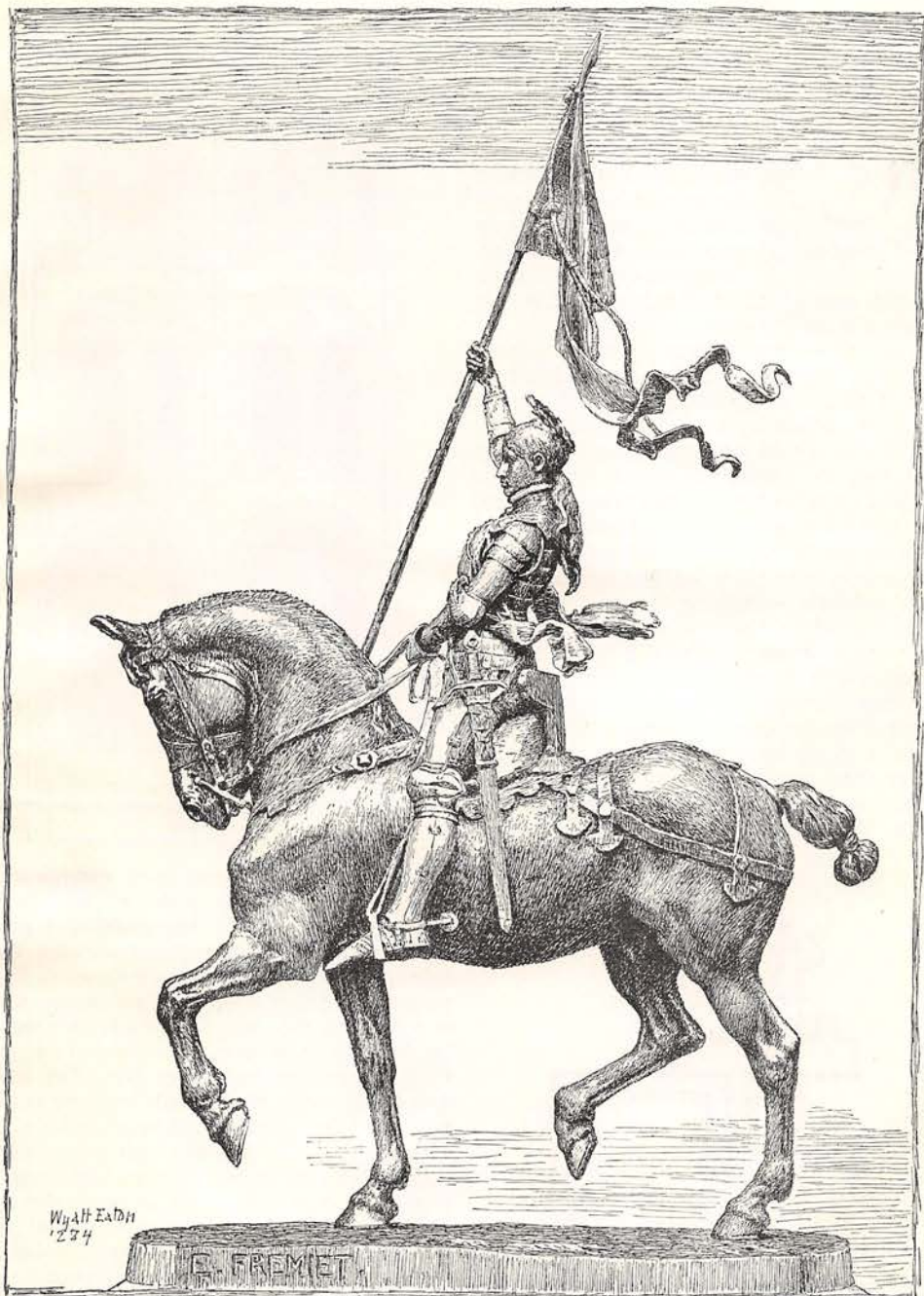
DELAPLANCHE.

INSTRUCTION.

ENGRAVED BY JOHN P. DAVIS.

this I do not at all mean to insist on the superiority of monumental sculpture to the sculpture of *fauna*; it is superior, and Barye himself cannot make one content with the exclusive consecration of admirable talent to picturesque anatomy illustrating distinctly unintellectual passions. M. Frémiet in ecstasy over his picturesque anatomy at the Jardin des Plantes would scout this; but it is nevertheless true that in such works as his "Louis d'Orleans," in the quadrangle of the restored Château de Pierrefonds; his "Jeanne d'Arc," in the Place des Pyramides; and his "Torch-bearer" of the Middle Ages, destined for the new Hotel de Ville of Paris, not only is his subject a subject of loftier and more enduring interest than his elephants and deer and bears, but his own genius finds a more congenial medium of expression. In other words, any one who has seen his "Torch-bearer" or his "Louis d'Orleans" must conclude that M. Frémiet is losing his time at the Jardin des Plantes. In monumental works of the sort he displays a commanding dignity that borders closely upon the grand style itself. The "Jeanne d'Arc" is indeed criticised for lack of style. The horse is fine, as always with M. Frémiet; the action of both horse and rider is noble; and the homogeneity of the two, so to speak, is admirably achieved. But the character of the Maid is not perfectly satisfactory to *a priori* critics, to critics who have more or less hard and fast notions about the immiscibility of the heroic and the familiar. The "Jeanne d'Arc" is of course a heroic statue, illustrating one of the most puissant of profane legends; and it is unquestionably familiar and, if one chooses, defiantly unpretentious. Perhaps the Maid as M. Frémiet represents her could never have accomplished legend-producing deeds. Certainly she is the Maid neither of M. Chapu, nor of M. Bastien Lepage, nor of the current convention. She is rather pretty, childishly sympathetic, *mignonne*; but M. Frémiet's conception is an original and a gracious one, and even the critic addicted to formulæ has only to forget its title to become thoroughly in love with it; beside this merit *a priori* shortcomings count very little. But the other two works just mentioned are open to no objection of this kind or of any other, and in the category to which they belong they are splendid works. Since Donatello and Verrocchio there has been nothing done which surpasses them; and it is only M. Frémiet's fancy for animals, and his fondness for exercising his lighter fancy in comparatively trivial *objets de vertu*, that obscure in any degree his fine talent for illustrating the grand style with natural ease and large simplicity.

I have already mentioned the most representative among those who have "arrived" of the school of French sculpture as it exists today. There is no looseness in characterizing this as a "school"; it has its own qualities and its corresponding defects. It stands by itself — apart from the Greek sculpture and its inspiration, from the Renaissance, and from the more recent traditions of Houdon, or of Rude and Carpeaux. It is a thoroughly legitimate and unaffected expression of national thought and feeling at the present time, at once splendid and simple. The moment of triumph in any intellectual movement is, however, always a dangerous one. A slack-water period of intellectual slothfulness nearly always ensues. Ideas which have previously been struggling to get a hearing have become accepted ideas that have almost the force of axioms; no one thinks of their justification, of their basis in real truth and fact; they take their place in the great category of conventions. The mind feels no longer the exhilaration of discovery, the stimulus of fresh perception; the sense becomes jaded, enthusiasm impossible. Dealing with the same material and guided by the same principles, its production becomes inevitably hackneyed, artificial, lifeless; the *Zeit-Geist* is really a kind of Sisyphus, and the essence of life is movement. This law of perpetual renewal, of the periodical quickening of the human spirit, explains the barrenness of the inheritance of the greatest men; shows why originality is a necessary element of perfection; why Phidias, Praxiteles, Donatello, Michael Angelo (not to go outside of our subject), had no successors. Once a thing is done it is done for all time, and the study of perfection itself avails only as a stimulus to perfection in other combinations. In fact, the more nearly perfect the model the greater the necessity for an absolute break with it in order to secure anything like an equivalent in living force; in *its* direction at least everything vital has been done. So its lack of original force, its over-carefulness for style, its inevitable sensitiveness to the criticism which is based on convention, make the weak side of the French sculpture of the present day, fine and triumphant as it is. That the national thought and feeling are not a little conventional, and have the academic rather than a spontaneous inspiration, is, however, just now beginning to be distinctly felt as a misfortune and a limitation by a few sculptors whose work may be called the beginnings of a new movement out of which, whatever may be its own limitations, nothing but good can come to French sculpture, but of which any adequate account merits a paper by itself.



Wyatt Eaton
'234

E. FRÉMIET.

E. FRÉMIET.

JOAN OF ARC.

DRAWN BY WYATT EATON.



JEANNE D'ARC. (AFTER THE STATUE BY CHAPU IN THE LUXEMBOURG.)