



ILLUSTRATION FROM "GIL BLAS."

## THE FATHER OF MODERN ILLUSTRATION.

DANIEL VIERGE URRABIETA.



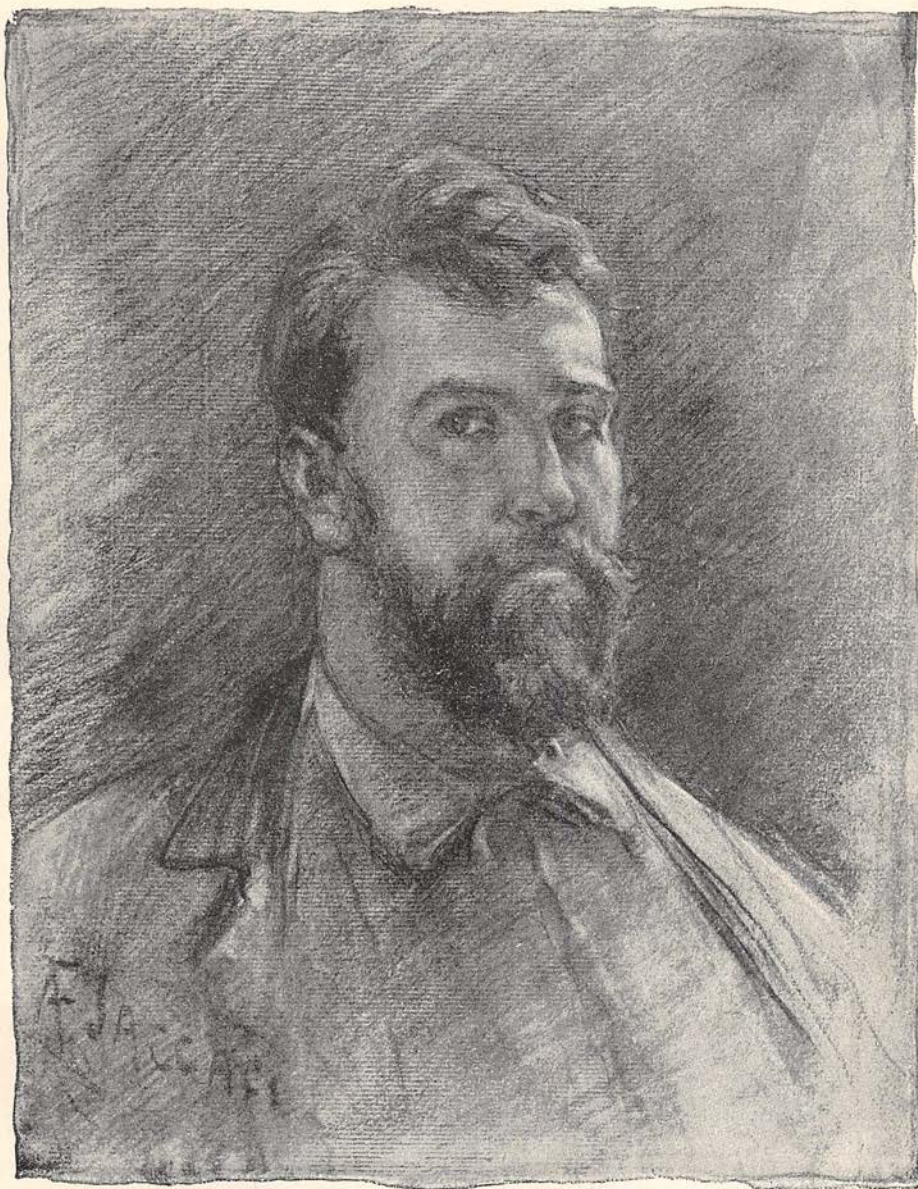
THE recent great development of the art of illustration has made it one of the typical features of our time. In the last thirty years the art has undergone a complete renovation, and, being transformed to fit new

necessities, it has branched out into many new channels more or less directly connected with journalism. The illustrated press, following in the wake of the newspaper, now stands beside and completes it, being, like it, the logical outcome of our universal craving for news.

In such periodicals as deal with subjects of timely interest to the people, the enormous demand for illustrations—that is, for graphic representations setting forth in a clear manner those aspects of scenes and incidents that no word-description, however elaborate, can give—has created a supply as great. But the demand is that of an age hurried and utilitarian, and the supply, taking on a corresponding form, impresses the observer by its

superficiality and cheapness, in place of substance and carefully wrought results involving more time and a finer quality of labor; by its sensationalism and its tawdriness, in place of artistic refinement. These pictures therefore not only portray events of the day, but are a significant evidence of the tendencies of an age which cares less to be touched by beauty and sincerity than to be tickled by novelty, and by a sort of ready-made prettiness.

Though hinted at in early days, and followed during centuries, illustration may justly be called a modern art. It is a province of the kingdom Beautiful which we have made ours by right of conquest; where our advance has been untrammelled by tradition, and unhampered by the crushing achievements of the old masters—those stumbling-blocks to modern architects, sculptors, and painters. Here we have experimented in our own way, confronted by obstacles and problems new and to be solved according to our intuitions and original ideas. Whatever result has been achieved is ours, in so far as all new forms of human pro-



DRAWN BY A. F. JACCACI.

DANIEL VIERGE URRABIETA.

gress are necessarily evolved from the previous efforts and achievements of mankind. And it is most gratifying to note that despite its rapid growth, and its adaptation to the tastes of a multitude which, while it certainly has a yearning for art, yet lacks artistic instinct, latter-day illustration evinces a vigorous progress. Less than half a century ago, illustrations were concocted like drugs by industrial workers who had learned the trade of making pictures to suit purely mercantile requirements, and such work in such hands had no pretense to art. Considering what has since been done, it seems

reasonable to suppose that even in those days a master would have made clear the possibilities of the highest class of illustration—that of books. Not so, however; since Meissonier's drawings for the "Contes Rémois" show that, instead of trying to lift the debased profession, he had sunk to its level, curtailing his talent within the narrow limitations that cramped the illustrators of the days before the seventies. As artistic expressions, these drawings are leagues behind the refined, exquisitely elegant if mannered productions of the eighteenth-century "Little Masters." They are still further

removed from the works out of which our modern art of illustration has been slowly evolved—those early woodcuts whose hard formulas, long since grown obsolete, nevertheless express admirably all the power, sentiment, thoughts, fancies, and genius of a Dürer or a Holbein. Since its obscure birth, while stumbling on through elementary stages and incessant transformations, illustration has been raised to its legitimate place in art when treated by men like these, who felt and thought for themselves, and ever tried to express their individuality. Meissonier, in giving us little figures, cold, posed, inexpressive of anything save of the correctness of a good *praticien*, that cold-blooded quality which a writer has called “in-sufferable negative goodness,” and ignoring all the higher possibilities of his task, left the art of illustration just where he found it—on the level of a trade.

Of the causes that have prepared the way for the contemporary advance, three are pre-eminent. First, the steady perfecting of mechanical appliances and the invention of more perfect methods of reproduction. Second, the raising to a higher plane of the serious and thorough qualities of painting and sculpture, especially in France, which in turn compelled a higher degree of excellence in all branches

of artistic production. The third cause is the influence of a few illustrators belonging to that rare and providential class of men who, when needed, suddenly blossom forth to do the work of the day. The first two causes have aided more particularly in the line of technical advance, while the work of these great illustrators has been of such wide range, has touched in such a vivifying manner the possibilities of the art, that it seems as if they were the prime factors in the new departure.

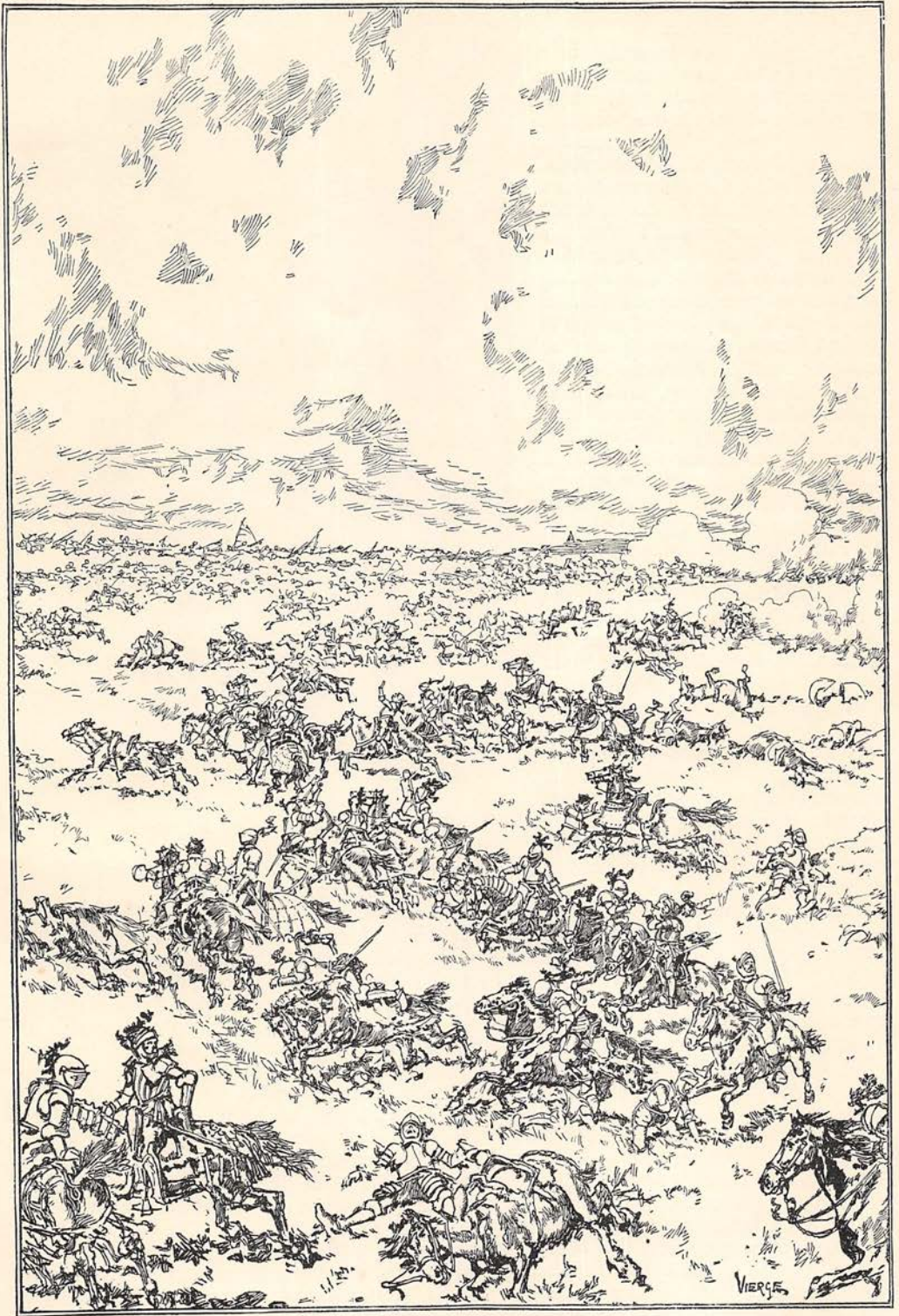
Among these few, but towering above them, stands Viege. All illustrators have felt his influence, too many have been his servile imitators; but for the best he has enlarged the horizon, opening hitherto unsuspected fields of activity, and showing by his example what can and what ought to be done. For twenty years all artists have received every produc-



FIRST DRAWING MADE BY VIERGE WITH HIS RIGHT HAND SINCE HIS ILLNESS.



ILLUSTRATION FROM "DON PABLO DE SEGOVIA."



VIERGE

ILLUSTRATION FROM MICHELET'S "HISTOIRE DE FRANCE."

tion of this admirable draftsman as the lesson of a master.

The public must have felt in a vague way the intense sincerity which emanates from Vierge's work, but one may doubt whether it has been converted to the originality of manner, to the bold effects of black and white, the study of "values," the striving for character, type, and local color, which stamp every drawing of Vierge. Indeed, in glancing over most illustrated periodicals, which, after all, are business ventures managed with an eye to profit, there is good reason to believe that the masses still prefer the common stuff of mechanical craftsmen, probably because, having long been used to it, they understand it at a glance, and though it fails to start their thoughts into new channels, at least it neither puzzles nor irritates them. It is a story repeated in all times how real worth, if original and for that reason running counter to the prevailing taste, is decried, and how it always ends by entering into the common inheritance. Gustave Flaubert beautifully compares the man of genius to a powerful horse tortured by the cruel bit and spur of routine and ignorance, who nevertheless forges forward, bearing along with him his reluctant rider—humanity.

Vierge has been rarely fortunate in seeing during his lifetime, and under the impulse he had given, the advance of even the inferior productions of the craft. They try now to masquerade in the new costume, to assume some character and invention, and they possess at least a semblance of verity, heretofore ignored. What mattered a subject to the earlier illustrators? Day and night effects, gay and sad events, scenes of savage or civilized life, peasants and aristocrats, were cast by them in the same artificial, expressionless mold. As on the walls of an Egyptian temple there defiles a monotonous procession of hieratic figures, endlessly repeating one profile, gesture, costume, expression, so the old pictorial newspapers presented a repetition of wooden types and conventional elements arranged in the same stereotyped manner. Comparing the Paris "L'Illustration" or "Le Monde Illustré" of twenty-five years ago with that of to-day, one cannot but be struck by the definiteness and suggestiveness of the present pictures. The best among them give not only scenes snatched from reality, living people in living attitudes, but they render the very atmosphere, the am-



DRAWN BY VIERGE.

ILLUSTRATION FROM "SPANISH TALES."

bient of reality, and with black and white go so far as to suggest color.

In the face of such progress, it is remarkable how little recognition other than material illustration receives. The world at large, while enjoying it, is wont to consider it a branch of utilitarian, and therefore not of pure or of high, art; not reflecting, apparently, that art is art wherever it be found, and, moreover, that much of the greatest art of the world was born to serve practical ends.

As the Bible has been saddled with explanations and commentaries that have not made a whit clearer its original text,—nay, have obscured it,—in like manner has art suffered. Zealous friends and critics have taken infinite pains to explain and qualify, divide and subdivide, it into all sorts of degrees and classes which, however interesting they may prove to scholars and connoisseurs, almost inevitably result in misleading the crowd—the great throng of people who, because they fear mistakes in using their own judgment, follow blindly a



WEIGHING THE JOCKEY.

ENGRAVED BY C. A. POWELL.

leader, and, never taking his views *cum grano salis*, become rabid upholders of the letter, not of the spirit, of his law. Hence the pitiful spectacle, so familiar, of the ignorant Philistine turning his back on what he terms inferior art, to worship ostentatiously before the "Masters." What he disdains, being near him, has an intelligible message for him which would naturally become the sound foundation of his personal judgment of things artistic. What he adores is usually beyond his comprehension, but in adoring it he feels secure, for he follows the leaders of the day. While his authorities change with the fashion, he remains always correct, for when his authorities are found after a time to have been wrong, as they are perennially, it is their fault, not his. He does not think; they do his thinking for him.

One of the vulgar traits of human nature is to consider as a sign of refinement, a proof of good taste and superior knowledge, the belonging to a circle of worthies who adore in super-refined language the only true god, one whose chief trait is to be beyond the reach of commonplace mortals. There is a multitude of such sects, a multitude of unique gods, and these idols succeed one another in the worship of the crowd, a procession of short-lived fads. At one time, not so long ago, Mr. Ruskin's ideas on art were sound and right, the best the world had heard. It is stating it mildly to say that while his literary gift is highly valued now-

adays, his opinions of art have been found wanting. Again, the same Claude Monet who was thought a practical joker or a crank in 1875, is to-day idolized. Neither he nor Mr. Ruskin has changed. The only thing changed is the opinion of those who professed to know.

In the study of art broad-mindedness, catholicity, sympathy with the multiple forms of expression, are absolute requisites, as each artist has a perfect right to play his own melody in his own way, and on the instrument best suited to him. Criticism has too often been used as a weapon by men of one idea, who want everybody to see just as they see and just what they see. It was no more absurd for certain Parisian critics, influential makers of opinion in their day, to request Jean François Millet to paint nymphs and Cupids instead of peasants, than for Mr. Ruskin to ask every artist to Venetianize or Turnerize, or for the present self-appointed drum-beaters of the impressionist school to see salvation only in that one road. Claude Monet, leaving exaggeration to the rank and file, touched the great truth which should be the vital spark of all criticism as of all study of art when he said to a would-be pupil: "What could I teach you? To do what I am doing? Then you would become a little Monet, perhaps—a bad Monet, surely. If it is in you to be an artist, go and look at nature, and do what you see and feel. An artist must render impressions personally received, ideas person-

ally formed; he must extract from his consciousness an individual interpretation of the eternal subject-matter of art—nature. Why should he fashion himself on another's pattern, however perfect? Why substitute another head, heart, or instrument for his own?"

Above all is it wrong to narrow art to an

its message to all, is essentially democratic, and consequently in absolute harmony with the tendencies of the age. And it is not the less good because it descends to the masses.

Art is the little flower that finds substance on which to grow and blossom even in the barren desert. Scorning theories, it seizes every occasion to assert itself, and to lend its charm and dignity, its ennobling influence, to things we judge the least worthy of them. Why should not we recognize its ability to adapt itself to the special needs of our civilization, when the relics from Pompeian homes gathered in the Naples Museum afford only one of the many examples history gives us of how art has been yoked to utility, and made a familiar in the home, not alone a divinity in the temple?

Why, then, should we undervalue illustration, that vine which, climbing over the prosaic masonry of the printed matter, enriches and beautifies it? When carelessly fingering the pages of current periodicals, why dismiss with a light word all the images thereon? The medium counts for little, the result is everything. Certain of Raphael's drawings, of Rembrandt's etchings, are purer works of art than many of their paintings, and the quantity and quality of that indescribable something which constitutes genius are as evident in their scratchy monochromes as in their elaborate pictures. So seldom are we treated to art at all, that when we are, what matters it in which special



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abstract esthetic convention, and to deny to it its most important function as a refining social influence, an educator of all times and of all people, not merely a preacher for the benefit of the elect. Illustration, in its dealing with subjects in which all take a lively interest, in the fact of its being scattered broadcast over the land, available to high and low, conveying

way it is expressed? Moreover, it is in the very nature of illustrations to set in evidence some of the most precious qualities an artist can show. As they need of necessity to be quickly done, the original idea of their authors is carried out in its freshness, in telling strokes pregnant with suggestiveness. Because of those qualities, too often lost in their big works, we

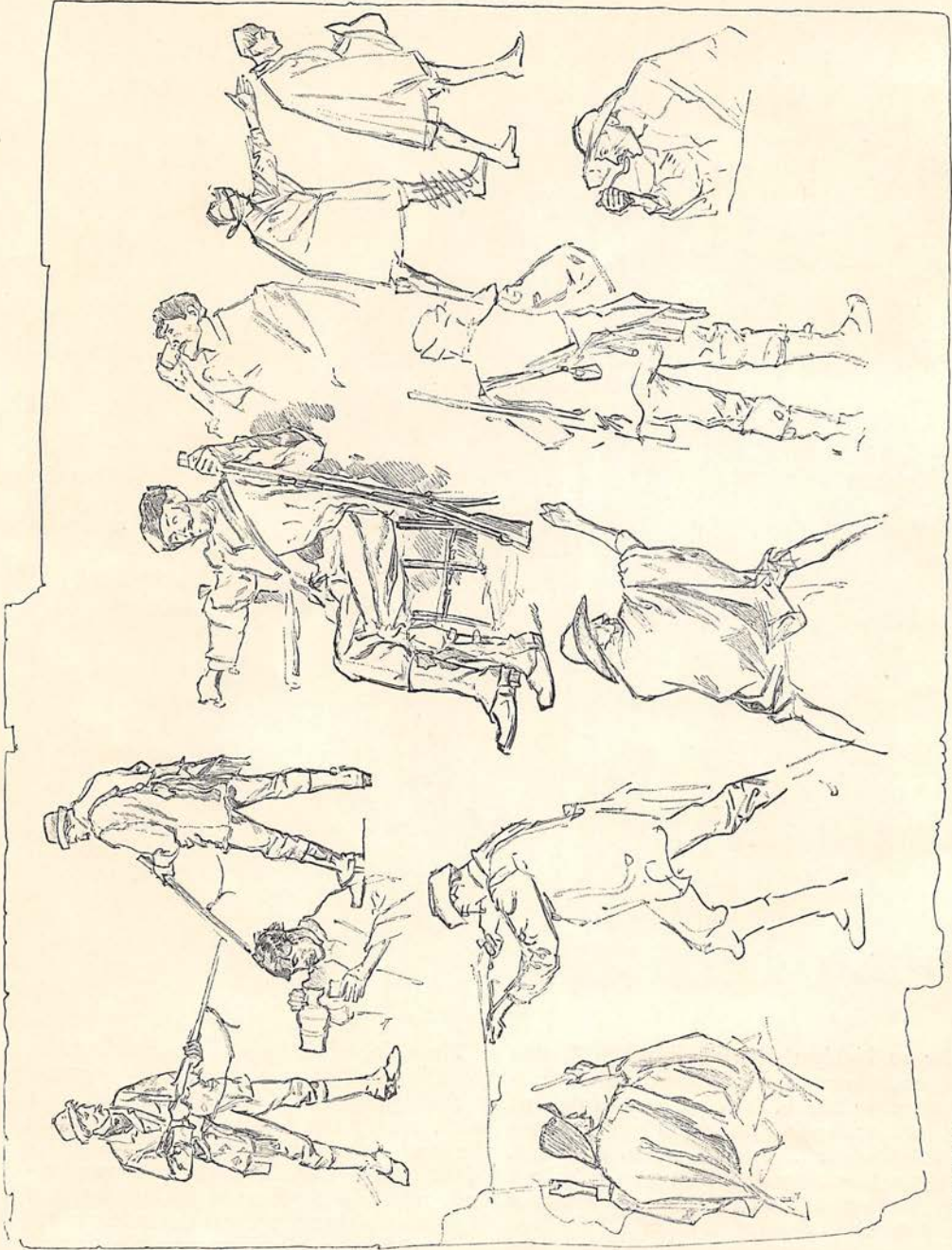


STUDY BY VIERGE.

prize so highly the rough sketches of great masters, where we see the creative and imaginative faculties in the white heat of the first expression: the goal those men had in view is there plainly visible; each touch, each line, seems to tremble with the emotion they have felt. Not one of the least important results of the entering of illustration into the daily lives of the masses has been to familiarize them with the abbreviated, the spiritual, writing of the artist's mind—the few lines that give all the idea and do no more than hint at those parts of minor importance, the rosettes and buckles which have had the privilege to hold the exclusive attention of the ignorant.

The value of the preceding considerations is not lessened because of their applying only to the highest class of illustrations, as the best work, equally rare in any art or profession, is the one basis whereon to build the possibilities of the future. Daniel Vierge has shown pre-eminently how modern, varied, serious, and high an art-illustration could be made. It was his good fortune to be born amid the circumstances most favorable for the development of his talent. His father, Vincente Urrabieta Ortiz, the best-known illustrator of Spain in his day, though only an artisan, was at heart an artist, passionately devoted to the work to which he gave the best of his thoughts and all

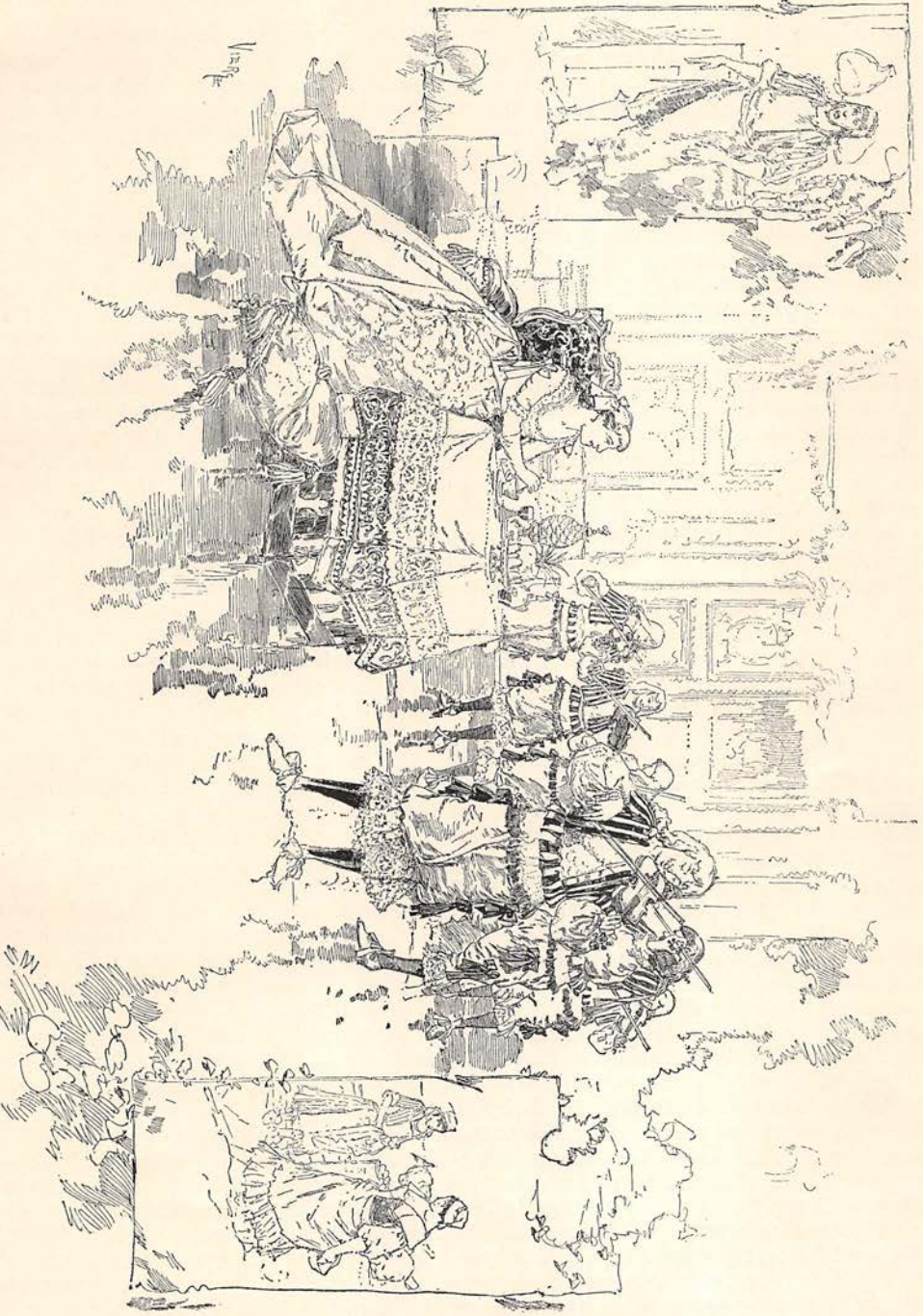




DRAWN BY VERGE.

PENCIL STUDIES.

ENGRAVED BY O. MAYLOR.



SCENE FROM AN OPERA BOUFFE. ("LE MONDE ILLUSTRE.")

of his time. Under his influence little Daniel knew how to draw before he could read, and when at thirteen he applied for admission at the Fine Arts Academy of Madrid, he was received with honors into the highest class. There he spent five busy years with classmates who have since won wide recognition in the world—Pradrilla Villegas, Rico, the younger Madrazo, Carbonero, etc. Notwithstanding a few inroads into the paternal field, he wanted to become a painter, and had been looking eagerly toward the time when he would go abroad to follow in the footsteps of that Fortuny whose fame was just beginning to dawn on the studios of Europe. Arrived in Paris, the Mecca which was to become his home, Vierge at once set about composing little pictures, which readily assured him the means necessary to pursue his studies. It would be interesting to trace in his work at this time the germs of the future master, but no one knows what has become of these first attempts. That they showed already the bent of his mind is evident from their subjects; turning away from consecrated paths, he chose these from the life about him, in streets and markets, popular fêtes and fairs.

There are on the walls of his studio some oil-sketches showing him as a colorist of superb frankness, and in his portfolios a few water-colors quite summarily treated, yet of a clearness, a force of tone, a vibration of light, and a boldness and refinement of color, absolutely remarkable. It is evident to those who have seen them that should Vierge abandon black and white for color, he would take place in the first rank of contemporary painters. Is it not better that he should stand as he does, the pioneer and supreme master of a decadent art which he has again made young, vigorous, full of possibilities—one that answers the most genuine and general demand of our time?

Vierge had hardly begun to realize his youthful ambition, when evil fortune, in the guise of the Franco-Prussian war, shattered his plans. Apparently his only alternative was to follow the frightened Muses in their flight before Mars to that poor native land of his, where the Muses, worshiped in florid Castilian periods, are nevertheless left to starve. Distressed and dispirited, he was packing to go, when an acquaintance and half-countryman, Charles Yriarte, the art writer, asked him to become a contributor to "*Le Monde Illustré*," the Parisian weekly, of which Yriarte was then director. Was Yriarte aware of the possibilities of Vierge's talent in the direction of illustration, or was the proposition made simply to help bridge over an embarrassing time? At all events, thus unexpectedly began a laborious career, which, in 1881, was violently ended by paralysis, resulting from overwork. If during that career the son has not produced a

million published drawings,—the number his father proudly acknowledged to have made,—it is for no other reason than because the days of those eleven short years had only twenty-four hours.

The feature of this extraordinarily abundant production is that it kept steadily growing in quality. It never entered Vierge's head to consider the purely business aspect of his relations with publishers—a fact the more noticeable because so rarely met with, and which alone shows the fine fiber of the man. With the facility acquired by practice, how easily he could have improvised dashing compositions that, with economy of time and effort, would have brought him more material reward. Being bountifully gifted, how he could have reveled in pot-boiling, and still have been by far the cleverest of his craft! But Vierge studied every one of these illustrations, ordered as hack-work and thrown to an unappreciative public, as conscientiously as though they were to be submitted to a jury of his peers. After all, the lives of great artists are peculiarly alike, woven in the same fashion on the same loom of commonplace circumstances such as befall the rest of mankind. Their key-note is the ability of these men to concentrate and unify their powers in the struggle for the realization of an ideal. Such lives are narrow in the sense that all in them is subservient to one purpose, and at that cost alone can they be made so effective. In all other senses they are deep and of wide range, as the faculties, unceasingly trained and sharpened, are constantly on the alert to further the one aim of those strong and useful lives. The precious lesson of Vierge's career is that his high accomplishment is the result of singleness of purpose and indefatigable study. In the family, at school, in Paris, as a boy and as a man, he worked with that truly southern enthusiasm which transfigures common drudgery, and makes a happiness of dull and dreary routine. All was food for his buoyant energy, and to all he brought a broad spirit of searching inquiry, a passionate desire to find what his individuality (his temperament, the French would say) could assimilate, and therewith strengthen itself.

No preconceived theory ever directed him; he simply followed that instinct which enables an artist to gather from all that comes in his way, from things sympathetic and antipathetic, the good and the bad, what he needs to enlarge, refine, and complete his talent. As a bird's nest is built, so a man's talent grows to a consistent whole, though composed of stray bits gathered here and there. Each individual organism is enabled to work out the problem of its salvation by a law of nature whose subtle workings cannot be traced—a law that baff-



FRIAR'S HEAD.

ENGRAVED BY H. WOLF.

fles our theories by showing that what is death to one man is the source of life to another. Most students would have been ruined by scattering their efforts in so many different fields, and essaying every conceivable medium of expression. Yet such a loose training has brought out the artist of whom Meissonier said that he and Menzel were the greatest draftsmen of the century. What would appear on the surface rambling and desultory labor, was for Vierge the best of preparation—the chrysalis from which, radiant and full-winged, his inspiration was to emerge.

The siege of Paris marks the ending of that period of apprenticeship. If until then he had

been, like a true Spaniard, partial to all that shines and details prettily, and inclined to insist upon preciousness of rendering, his shackles to mannerism fell as he worked in a whirlpool of splendid inspirations. Spurred on by spectacles which made a profound impression on him, his feelings found an expression spontaneous, yet sober, virile, and of surpassing individuality.

It has been said that to remain in the French capital during those troubled times was, for a foreigner with few acquaintances and little knowledge of the language, an act of courage. If it were, Vierge never realized it. For him it was that blessed opportunity to

show what he could do which every true artist seeks. As a man, he gave his earnings and the pity of his heart to sufferers about him; as an artist, he was elated, lifted high into pure regions which the miseries of this world cannot reach. The crazy enthusiasm of the populace in the days immediately following the declaration of war, its wild antics at the repeated news of disaster, the fall of the empire, the establishment of the republic, the nation in arms, the months of famine—these thousand scenes of a great drama found in him an infatigable and truthful interpreter.

With Vierge fatigue and hunger were despised; danger in many forms was ignored. One day when, draped in his national mantle, the *capa*, no doubt looking very odd even in the medley of queer, semi-civilian, semi-military costumes of the Parisians, he was sketching a street post of militiamen, his attention was attracted by growing rumors, "A Prussian spy! A Prussian spy!" Turning to see the spy, he found every flaming eye riveted upon him. The Prussian spy? It was he! Was he not sketching, and in broad daylight taking "plans" of a militia barrack, and portraits of the militiamen loafing in front of it? And for what other reason possible than to furnish the execrated Bismarck with precious data on the actual condition of the city's defenses? Upon so well-founded suspicions Vierge was put in jail, but when rescued by Yriarte, his collection was enriched with the portraits of the sentries who had kept guard over him—a fine lot of types he considered it a privilege to have been able to get at so slight a cost.

Here, there, everywhere, always on the alert and incessantly working, Vierge filled sketch-book after sketch-book with impressions, often simple, rough indications, yet so full of movement, of life, of such incisive accuracy, that they bring back the reality to those who have seen it, and to others they are revelations, not stamped with the cold and dead reality of the photograph, but alive with the very spirit of the things portrayed.

When bombs began to fall in the outlying districts of the besieged city, he sought his inspiration in those dangerous precincts from which all others fled. On hearing that the cellars of the Panthéon were used as a refuge by the inhabitants of the rag-pickers' ghetto, the Quartier Mouffetard, he found his way there. In the large open space around the monument, while the missiles were dropping as "thick as hail," Vierge made some fine studies of the irrepressible street gamins chasing the hot fragments of exploded shells, as flying sparrows in a thunder-storm snatch at insects. Crossing the square, now at a run, again stretched flat on the pavements when

an ominous hissing announced the approach of danger, he came to the cellars filled with terrified women clutching their children, and men frenzied with rage. Laments and blasphemies, dolorous stories of mutilation, destruction, and death, echoed along the resounding vaults in a great wail, drowned as by magic when a door was opened and the thunderclaps of bursting bombs—those mighty throbs of the agonizing city—set a-trembling people, monuments, the very earth, and compelled an awful silence. There, amid the confusion, he brushed one of his most tragic compositions.

It was at the risk of his life, and under difficulties of all sorts, that during the Commune he made the collection of some twenty drawings which he ranks as his most precious notes from life. The originals, who never dreamed that they posed for him, are of the most characteristic type furnished by that tempestuous period, when from vile haunts and unknown crevices of beautiful Paris there crawled forth into the light of day creatures no imagination of romantic poet could create, stranger than fiction, more grotesque than Quasimodo, and full of the cunning and ferocity of brutes; all those sad and repulsive types of popular uprisings—selfish leaders, exalted utopists, loafers, criminals, and the great flock of bedraggled sheep. Vierge's portraits of Flourens and of cruel, cold-blooded Raoul Rigault have the value of historical documents, and so have his pictures of unfeminine *cantinières*, of brawlers in fantastic, truculent costumes, and of sailors with bushy beards, and short clay pipes between their teeth, bursting all over with impudent swagger. The capital piece of the series depicts an episode of the entrance of the regulars into Paris. Against a wall, half crouching, half erect, an old *pétroleuse*, disheveled, the breast nude, the low, depraved face distorted with rage, slobbers anathemas and infamous vituperations on the men who are about to shoot her. A few strokes of the pencil, and she is there so atrociously real that one hears her curses.

The test of Vierge's career came after this, when, finding himself thrown by the force of circumstances in the gearing of journalism, he had to enter the domain of the commonplace, and to seek his inspiration in the humdrum routine of nineteenth-century life. It was as if, after having been carried along by a strong current, he was left to push his way in a deadly calm. It was trying to come down from the subjects of the war, worthy indeed of a man of genius, to what was in comparison infinitely prosy and uninteresting. But as great writers find ever new ways of treating that hackneyed theme, the human heart, so Vierge, look-



DRAWN BY VIERGE.

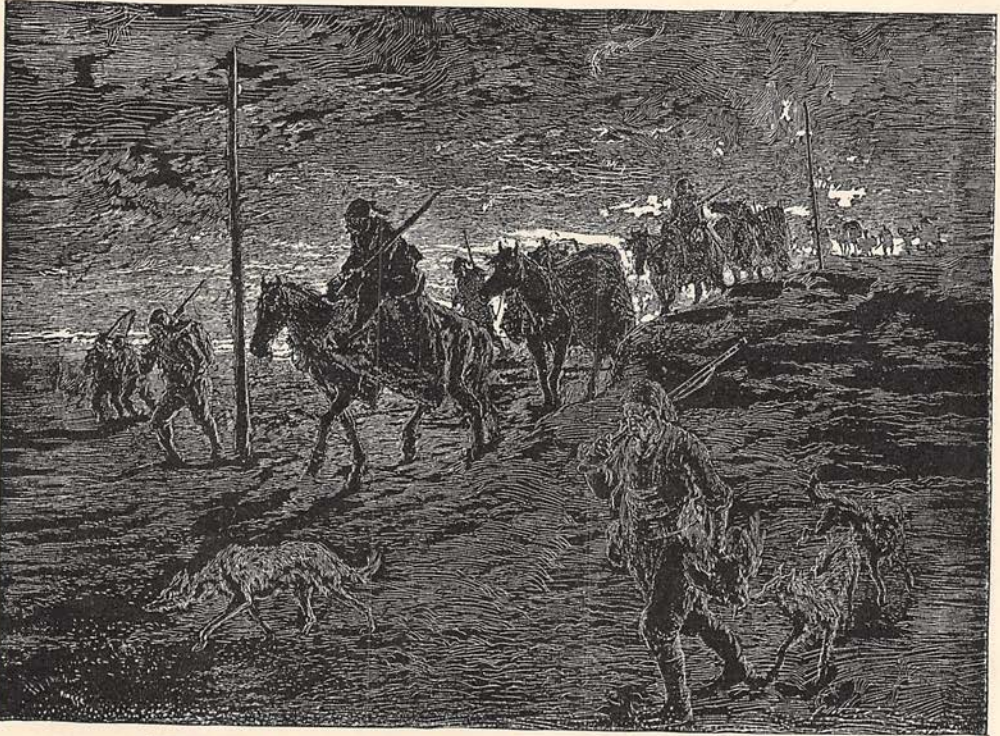
THE INFANTA. ("LE MONDE ILLUSTRE.")

ing at daily life in the same lofty manner with which he had looked upon great historical events, revealed to us a new significance in spectacles familiar, and new aspects of picturesqueness and beauty of which we were ignorant. The temptation was almost irresistible to let one's self become a mere technician, or a mirror that does no more than reflect unfeel-

ingly what stands before it. But putting his heart into the task confronting him, Vierge ennobled his subjects by his manner of treating them, making jewels of the trifles constituting that "actuality" which is the small change of history. He dealt with them not in the flip-pant manner of the reporter, but with the dignity of a sane and robust nature, whose acute-

ness of vision reaches through the external aspects to the essentials, whose large and active human sympathy at once puts him in touch with widely diverse subjects. Thereby Vierge has rendered, not only to illustrators, but to us all, an invaluable service in showing what a rich unexplored mine is that which lies directly under our daily observation. His drawings are to us the same kind of revelation as was a picture of Van Ostade to Goethe. The author of "Faust" had often looked with eyes that did

before it happens. His sketch-books testify eloquently to his scrupulous professional honesty, for in looking them over one finds all the elements of his published works. I know few things so captivatingly interesting as those innumerable sketch-books, which fill all the closets of his house. The history of French society, of its interests, fads, manners, habits, pastimes, is there written day by day, almost hour by hour. They make a unique monument of priceless value to future histori-



BASHI-BAZOUKS RETURNING FROM A RAIDING EXPEDITION. ("LE MONDE ILLUSTRE.")

not see at the little shoemaker's shop of his Dresden landlord, until he entered it one day after a visit to the museum where he had been studying an interior of Van Ostade. The suffused light which filled the humble place, bringing out the old cobbler at his last, made a scene the beauty of which for the first time dawned upon him. The Flemish painter had thus helped Goethe to discover the beauty of that which lay at his own door.

Notwithstanding the exigencies of an enormous production with exacting limitations of time, Vierge would not consent to do anything without exact documents. On occasions the necessary indications came from eye-witnesses, but whenever possible he went to take them himself. In no case would he condescend to compound those magical fantasies peculiar to a large class of illustrators that depict an event

ans, one of the curiosities of the intellectual world. To an artist they present another element of interest, as only an artist can appreciate the courage there shown: how Vierge forgot the science he had at his fingers' ends, and voluntarily deprived himself of the resources of a consummate execution, to be born again for each new subject.

In that respect what a contrast, and how much superior, is Vierge to the craftsman who tries not so much to interpret what he sees, as to make something clever out of it! The one before nature is naive, humbly attentive; he has the almost religious respect of the student, all his efforts are concentrated in the attempt to render what he sees as he sees it, and with means born of the impression he receives. The other tries in some way to liken what he sees to what he has fallen into the habit of doing,

to adapt it to certain tricks of execution which he possesses; so that freshness, the bloom of truth, being brushed away, the conventional result is, perforce, unimportant. That superficial way of touching "de omni re scibili" may be amusing, but it is as shallow and profitless as small talk.

When trying to enter into the analysis of a man's talent, one is reminded of the saying of a French critic that in art even the finest descriptions are not equal to a hasty view of things. One is conscious, also, of seeing an artist in a partial and incomplete fashion, of dwelling at length upon sides understandable, and passing over others equally worthy of attention.

Fortunately the sketches which are the *raison d'être* of this article give Vierge the opportunity to speak for himself. It can be but a restricted opportunity,—the range of his work is too great to be given adequately, and the large compositions which form an important part of his productions cannot be reduced to the size of a magazine page,—yet these fragments do him better justice than any words could do.

Though generously revealing themselves in his work, how can one do more than hint at the characteristic traits of Vierge's talent; how analyze or describe that felicity of inspiration, subtle and evanescent, which asserts itself so joyfully in his drawings—his discrimination in selecting in each subject the aspect most worthy to be dwelt upon? Nature being always luxuriant and diffuse, with what artful taste he eliminates the superfluous! How intelligently he touches the accessories needful to the impression he wishes to convey, and assigns them to their just place, and gives them their relative importance!

In France he is called a *tachiste*, because he simplifies to be more forcible, to bring out more clearly the important features of his subjects. His wash-drawings, looked at closely, are a confused mass of blots and lines, but two feet away these rough elements, assuming their significance, melt and harmonize in a palpitating impression of light movement and life. Each brush-mark, however careless it may appear, is forceful, and lays bare the essence of whatever it touches; and it is as expressive of the refined, the delicate, as of the virile. In a few synthetic strokes, Vierge exhausts a type, an expression, an effect which would be dwelt upon to tiresomeness by the craftsmen who accumulate smart little details for want of something better to produce a skin-deep semblance of reality.

But to render sensations and impressions; to express the vision mental and physical of beings and things in the *milieu* and atmosphere to which they belong; to show movements,

attitudes, gestures, play of physiognomy, the thousand aspects of dress, of architecture, according to the dimness or exaltation of the light; to attempt effects considered impossible; to say so much that none had dared to say before—Vierge has had to manufacture for himself an instrument at the same time large and fine, firm and flexible, an incisive tool, a new language. Hence the great difficulty confronting him at the outset, and against which he has had constantly to contend—of finding engravers capable of being "translators and not traitors." In their bold revolutionary garb his audacious compositions were unintelligible to men who had become accustomed to a narrow routine. When Vierge began his career of illustrator, the wood-engravers were painstaking artisans who hugged with the same affection and lack of discrimination unimportant as well as important facts; they who labored to give the word for the word attached little importance to the meaning of the phrase. In not only inspiring, but in personally training his engravers, Vierge bears the same relation to contemporary wood-engraving that he does to contemporary illustration. He is the father of a school of engravers who, permeating their work with light, color, and refreshing unexpectedness of treatment, putting playfulness, and character, and feeling into it, have infused with vigorous life an art which had grown old, stiff, and mechanical.

Vierge is a realist in that he is a worshiper of truth; but realist is a misleading epithet, embracing as many sins as virtues. Far from the low realism of commonplaceness and nastiness is that realism of Vierge, which beautifies all it feeds upon, because it delights in dwelling on those elements of beauty and goodness existing latent or revealed in all things.

Perhaps the most personal, and thus the most strongly felt, trait of Vierge is his faculty of imparting a sort of heroic character—all his own—to his representations of reality. It seems as if there was more of the Moor than of the Spaniard in his nature, as if his work was a revelation of that fine race that knows how to drape itself in a rag, and on whose lips the honey of beautiful verses is born of a ray of sunlight. But his art is as naturally alert and joyous as it is dignified. One feels that the artist loves his work as a lover his mistress, that it is not work to him, but a constant delight.

VIERGE was making the illustrations for a French translation of Quevedo's "Don Pablo de Segovia," when, in the ripeness of his talent, still young, and with a glorious future before him, he was stricken by the thunderbolt of paralysis. His right side was as dead, his speech and part of his memory were annihilated, and



the athletic physique, the superb working-force to which an hour of idleness had been unknown, were wrecked in an instant.

Shy of society, and so continually busy that he was ever beyond reach of friends, his condition remained long unknown to those who would have hastened to help him. Only after six months, when his incomplete "Don Pablo de Segovia" was published, did the world and his friends learn of his trouble. After two years of living death, the resurrection of his energies and faculties began. Slowly he reacquired a few half-articulate sounds, which constitute all that he has now of human language, gradually the cloud over his memory lifted, and his right side woke again to life, until now the wrist and hand alone are helpless. His mental robustness and sanity have passed through the ordeal unscathed, and his motive in life remaining foremost within him, he has trained his left hand to draw, and returned to his beloved labor.

Naturally he now works very slowly, but with the crisis of his life there came something new and greater into his character, which is reflected in his work. If he has lost traits of pure virtuosity, his observation has grown graver, more impressive, his touch more severe. To his dramatic instinct, his verve, his fertility of invention, there is added that which makes certain artists and poets speak to more than their time and generation, because they depict not alone the surface aspects of humanity, but humanity itself.

As a draftsman with the pen, Vierge combines in a high degree the widely diverse qualities which distinguish the old painters in their occasional use of the pen, and the modern artists who have dedicated themselves to this branch of art. The old pen-drawings, simple notes from nature, studies of figures or compositions made in reference to future paintings, are emphatically expressive of the artist's idea. Not admitting of delicate minutiae, but large of treatment, as of conception, they show one of the sides of the man of many parts, and with slight means say well all they wish to say.

Unlike the old painters, the modern specialists, regarding the pen as fully adapted to the interpretation of nature and the rendering of their own creations, have achieved excellence in the line in which we usually reach excellence nowadays—in the line of technic. Speaking generally, therefore, one might say that they depend upon the execution, while their predecessors depended upon the idea. In Vierge's pen-and-ink drawings these two contending elements are united. They are clever beyond any one's cleverness, and in the most varied manner. Mr. Pennell well says that if any professional thinks he has invented some new

mode of rendering, he has only to look at Vierge's sketches to find himself mistaken. No one has reached such mastery in any of the different styles, simple or complicated, of pen-work. No matter how made, his sketches always compose a sort of dainty filigree: pure blacks, pearl-gray tints, isolated lines forming exquisite combinations which, irrespective of subject, fascinate the eye. That these lines are few, admirably chosen, expressive of character, form, and texture, becomes evident only after one is struck by the first seductive impression of the ensemble. In looking more attentively, it seems impossible that simple black lines on white paper should be made to tell so much: the strong relief of the foreground, the airy indistinctness of distance, the differences in materials, the sheen or dullness of stuffs, the very substance of flesh and bone. And to express it all in so subtle a way that it baffles analysis! But they do this admirably, and what they cannot say aloud they seem to suggest.

However, Vierge's technic, extraordinarily fine though it is, is of secondary importance. Like the old painters, he uses it as a means to an end. His medium, infinitely finer, more complicated, and more resourceful than theirs, is, like theirs, a costume that, becoming the living figure, would lose all beauty if thrown over a puppet. What distinctly separates Vierge from the purely picturesque school, over which master rendering holds tyrannical sway, is the versatility and the grandeur of his ideas and inventions. That is what, with his worship of truth, his broad human sympathy, his sensibility, and his sense of measure, he gives expression to in a form exquisitely wrought, but not mannered, and what prevents the richness and abundance of his picturesque instinct from asserting themselves unduly.

A drawing full of relief, extraordinarily good and true; the choice of the best effect, of the typical gesture, the sobriety of details, the great art to sacrifice and let a few necessary accents sing out from the ensemble—all combine to make his creations what they are, and it is after a careful process of choosing and pruning, after many preliminary studies, that those superbly free pen-and-ink drawings which seem improvised are finally made. Much of their charms come, no doubt, from their admirable freshness and crispness, their unequalled grace of rendering, but their value lies far beyond and deeper than external qualities.

The artist's triumph over difficulties is the greater that, in the cramped sphere of an art full of limitations, he has treated so many different subjects. During the twelve years of his collaboration with "Le Monde Illustré," he has pictured with the pen the principal

scenes of new plays produced in Parisian theaters: the drama, the comedy, the pageantry of opera, and the pretty foolery of opera bouffe—each intensified in its character, each telling its story plainly, completely, and with the emphasis, the glittering artificiality, of the stage. The civil wars of Spain, the conflict in the East, have also given him the opportunity to relate many an unusually picturesque or dramatic incident. But the subjects he was best qualified to treat, because all the instincts of his nature were in sympathy with them, and had been at that early age when things make an indelible impression on the receptive brain, are the subjects of his native land. Refractory to the influences of his second home, Vierge has remained as typical a Spaniard as if he had never left Madrid, and his dearest pleasure has been to make scenes of Spanish life familiar to the French public. Amid such a production as his has been, it is difficult to select and particularize, but surely his Spanish scenes with the pen or the brush count among the most brilliant of his performances on the illustrated press. His masterpiece as a pen-and-ink artist is an illustration of a classic of old Spanish literature. The "Tacaño" of Quevedo, one of many fine picturesque novels half philosophical, half satiric, preceding "Don Quixote," probably inspired Cervantes. The "Tacaño" (bad boy, sharper), otherwise known as "Don Pablo de Segovia," is the story of a barber's son, vitiated in body and soul by bad company, an excess of misery, and the example of a society corrupt and hypocritical. *Pablo* passes through a series of hyperbolic adventures, struggling like a demon with alguazils and robbers, beaten and beating, here cutpurse, there cutthroat, and ever inconceivably full of audacity, of nerve, and of wit. Wily *Figaro* is a holy personage compared with this wild ancestor of his, who, unbridling throughout Spain his extravagant tricks, skips between the clutched fingers of the Inquisition, flouts the nobility, shears the good wool of the rich bourgeois, affiliates himself to every band of scoundrels, and is ever ready to stake his life for a piece of cake. What a pic-

ture of the Spain of the sixteenth century! What morals, and what a society! Brawlers, duennas, poets, mendicants, pilferers, hangmen, amorous nuns, filibusters, gamblers—all these swarm, swaggering with life, through that fantastic book. Its pages are filled with thefts and fights, embraces and murders, done with rosary in hand and with profound reverences which make the hat-feathers trail in the dust. Nothing is of importance but to have a fine supper, nothing sacred but a full stomach. Loaded dice and marked cards are more necessary than clean linen, and sword-thrusts are ever ready for those who too keenly notice the game. When the conscience squeaks, two candles at the Virgin's altar, a present to the beadle, and all goes on as nicely as may be under the guardianship of his majesty the king, whom God preserve!

In such strange *milieux* Vierge has roamed, handling his pen like a rapier. Evidently these rascals amused him, and he was interested in them. His drawing has the color, the furious wit, of Quevedo's style. He has made of *Don Pablo* as entertaining and extraordinary a figure in graphic art as he is in literature, and interpreted him as only a Spaniard can interpret a Spaniard. He has depicted his antics with a buoyant humor savoring of the soil and full of the perfume of the air of Spain. He said that while doing these illustrations, he would often leave his work-table, pick up his guitar, and inspire his pictures to the accompaniment of the twanging string. Indeed, they evoke the very raspings of guitar and castanet, the nasal cadences of seguidillas, the bursting "Olé, olé" of Spanish students.

In "Don Pablo" inspiration and rendering unite to form an ideal masterpiece. So far it is the artist's book. He is still young,—barely forty-two years,—so we may confidently look forward to worthy successors of "Don Pablo"; but should his career end to-morrow, that one work will make all lovers of art eager to acquaint themselves with the wonderfully solid and beautiful monument he has erected on the sands of ephemeral journalism.

August F. Jaccaci.

In calling Vierge the Father of Modern Illustration, the writer does not mean that of the two artists Menzel and Vierge, who stand in a position of unique eminence in relation to the modern development of illustration, the art of the latter is superior to the art of the former. The epithet is simply a recognition of the fact that Vierge is essentially an illustrator, while Menzel is a draftsman. (Menzel the painter, it is needless to say, had no more to do with the development of illustration than all other great modern painters.) The difference between the two is radical, for whereas the draftsman's object is accomplished when he has carried out his idea in a drawing the size, medium, and manner of which are of his own choice, the illustrator

has to make a drawing the size, medium, and manner of which are imposed, and one that will produce its full and best effect, not as an original, but in the reproduction. Laboring exclusively within the restricted field of illustration, Vierge has had on contemporary illustrators the specific influence of a specialist on specialists. Both men are master draftsmen, but the drawings of Vierge have one side that the drawings of Menzel have not. They were composed and executed, just like the paintings of a decorator, in view of certain definite conditions. Hence, without comparing the two men as artists, the epithet of Father of Modern Illustration belongs to Vierge, and to Vierge alone.