

## PROFESSOR HERKOMER AND HIS STUDENTS.



HAD taken my ticket to Bushey Station and sat me down in a corner of the railway carriage, awaiting the departure of the train. Just as we were on the point of starting, a young girl entered the compartment I occupied, and took a seat facing me. Her portmanteau was labelled "Bushey," she carried a large—nay, formidable—flat oaken box in her hand, and wore a dreamy far-off look in her sky-blue eyes. These circumstances, "taking one consideration with another," led me to divine her profession or calling. She was evidently one of Professor Herkomer's acolytes, and the very girl of all others whom it would benefit me to chat with.

"How can I enter into conversation with her?" I wondered to myself. "Will she consider it an impertinence on my part to address her thus without any preliminary formality?"

I am not, strictly speaking, an English woman, since most of my life has been spent on the Continent, and the stringent rules of etiquette in England appear to me at times as being somewhat severe.

"However," I thought, "I will risk it, as she will be sure to be in a position to give me just the information I want."

And here it is necessary for me to explain the reasons for my almost frenzied desire to talk with an utterly strange and casual young lady. I was bent on a—to me—very important errand: namely, that of interviewing Professor Herkomer. I had never met him before, and did not know how he would receive my proposal for an interview, since I had heard, to my consternation, that this gifted man, like all distinguished people, abhorred the notion of being "cross-examined"; for he had only consented to entertain me for this purpose through the intervention of a very dear and mutual friend.

My young *vis-à-vis* was looking me full in the face, and I boldly seized the opportunity to remark, without further ado—

"Do you know Professor Herkomer?"

This question elicited a bright smile from the young lady, and she answered, with evident pleasure—

"Oh, yes—I am one of his students at Bushey."

Re-assured and comfortable in my mind, I replied—

"Then tell me what sort of a man he is, for I am just going to interview him, and feel somewhat nervous about the task."

"You will find him most delightful to talk to—a man who will put you at your ease at once. He is awfully kind to us students—we all adore him, though he *is* strict sometimes, but—" here my *vis-à-vis*

stopped short, and hesitated to proceed—"perhaps I ought not to be so frank with you," she faltered.

"Pray continue," I urged; "you are rendering me a great service. I want to hear the professor spoken of by one of his own flock. Do not dwell upon the versatility of his many talents and extraordinary genius—that is a matter of renown; tell me rather of the love you young people feel for him—of his popularity among his disciples."

And here my charming companion blossomed forth into a veritable encyclopædia of enthusiasm.

Said she, *entre autres*—

"The professor takes such pains with us all *individually*, and inspires us with real zest, because he is so earnest himself; he does such a lot of good in the neighbourhood, too, and his charity is boundless. Why, the very village is flourishing through his advent in Bushey, because so many people have settled down here on account of the school. Fancy, the professor keeps a nurse at a salary of one hundred a year merely to look after the sick and ailing! The old folks no longer able to work for themselves are utilised and paid to pose as models, and little children get sixpence an hour, and are fed, too, for serving the same purpose.

"One of our students, a young fellow, is ill just now, and the professor has taken his absence greatly to heart."

There is a celebrated painting by Herkomer himself, called "Our Village," and those who carry the memory of the delightful scene of calm serene country life in their mind's-eye can picture to themselves the approach to the professor's house along the pleasant country roads, for the artist took the village of Bushey for the subject of his painting.

"Dyreham" is small and of unpretentious appearance, and none who enter Professor Herkomer's hospitable home for the first time suspect that they will presently see one of the most remarkable structures of modern times; for the beauty of "Lululaund," the professor's new home, which he has designed, decorated, and practically built, is a marvel of architectural and decorative perfection.

On my arrival, I was received by Mrs. Herkomer, who carried her little infant daughter in her arms, and who accorded me a truly hospitable greeting. Tea was awaiting us in the professor's former studio (for now he works in the new one, at "Lululaund"). And the old one, to quote Mrs. Herkomer's words, added to a graceful apology, has since the completion of the new studio been "turned into a play-room for the dear children."

The professor took me by the hand cordially, and said quickly—

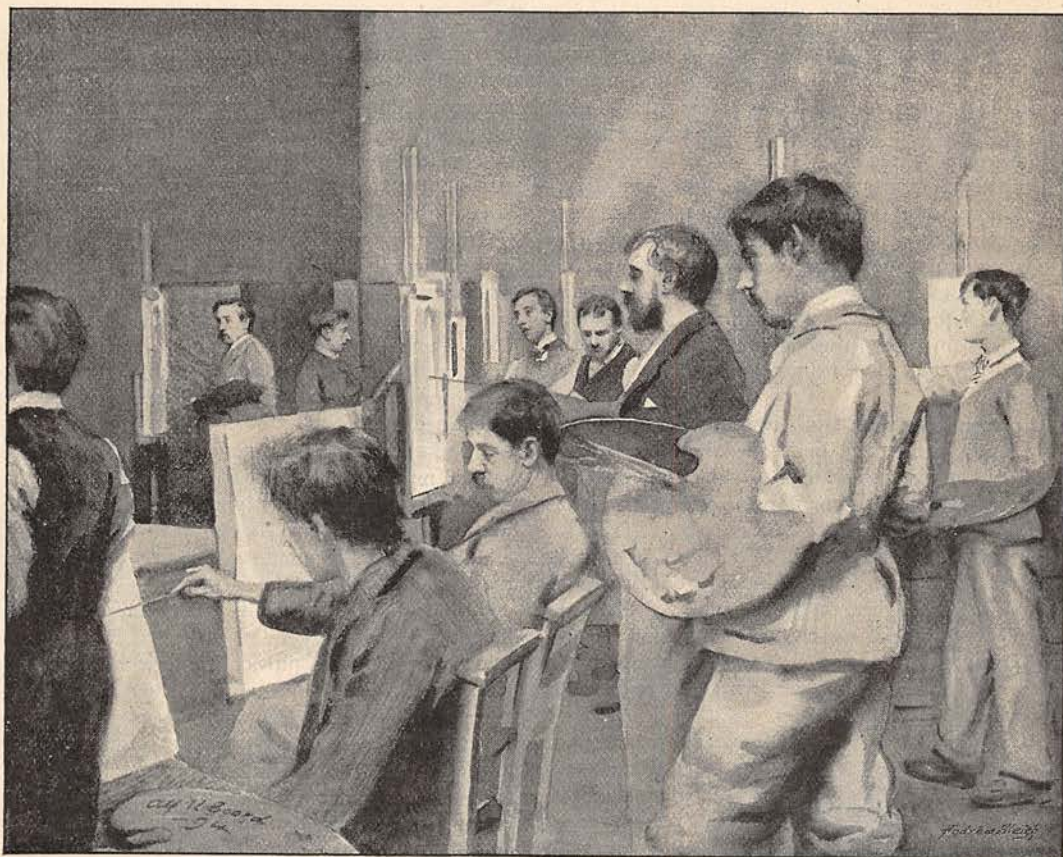
"Don't look round *this* room—it is a mere shed; but I espied, nevertheless, some wondrous specimens of wood carving and twisted and chiselled iron-work,

executed by Professor Herkomer, that would have done honour to the industry of Quentin Matsys or Peter Vischer.

There are some curious designs in Gothic woodpanelling, and queer unexpected recesses in this old-fashioned room, behind which the professor keeps some of his favourite books for handy and occasional reading; here and there are hung rough powerful sketches, representing his children at different periods

been an artist instead of a mere scribbler, I should have delighted in committing to canvas such an interesting subject as that of the artist and his infant son.

Professor Herkomer's face is full of emotional self-reliant individuality and harmonious sweetness; the dark expressive eyes, now serious, then gleeful, seem to search for sympathetic feeling in the face of the person whom he addresses, and the mobile mouth, often breaking into a very charming smile, immedi-



MEN'S LIFE-CLASS AT BUSHEY.

of their ages—taken at odd moments, perhaps, when a pose or attitude particularly struck the master as suggestive of a striking interpretation. I also came across a brilliant etching taken from the professor's original oil painting of his father.

Space forbids my dwelling more than casually on the many quaint and original beauties that struck me so forcibly at Dyreham, but I cannot refrain from alluding to the evident happiness and great love existent in this charming household. We sat down to tea quite a cosy party, and Professor Herkomer had no sooner placed himself at the tea-table than his sturdy little son, familiarly called "Tutti," sprang upon his knee, and refused to be put aside on any consideration whatever. His stout brown arms were clasped tightly round his father's neck, and had I

ately impresses one with the idea that here any amount of youthful enthusiasm still lingers, eager to show itself, and that the wealth of honour so justly awarded to the great *artist* has not spoilt the *man*, but has rather taught him to be gentle, patient, and kind to all who aspire to imitate his talents, and who beg for a few crumbs from the table of his extraordinary versatility.

"My boy is the very image of what I was at his age," said the professor, looking lovingly at his little son; "and I think he intends to work hard and make a name for himself some day. I hope he will," continued the professor thoughtfully, "because my father and grandfather before me originated the feeling of the kind of life it has been my blessed lot to enjoy—that of an artist.

"I am a Bavarian, and was born in 1849, and am the only child of my parents. My father and I were united by the firmest bond of all—that of friendship; and I remember how deeply impressed I was when being told as a boy that at my birth my father had gazed at me with unspeakable love, and had uttered the words—

"This boy shall be my best friend—and a painter."

"Those who afterwards saw my father at Bushey will bear testimony that I was privileged to carry out the first part of this prediction.

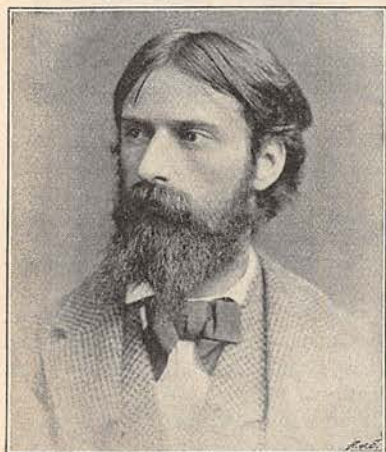
"Two years of my life were spent in Waal, and then my father, mother, and I emigrated to America, because Germany had not recovered from the ill effects of the war in '48, and it was almost considered unsafe to remain there.

"My dear mother gave pianoforte lessons in Cleveland; for we were very poor in those days, and my father, who had developed into a true disciple of artistic *virtuosi*, exercised a very great influence on the development of my career. He, in his early youth, was apprenticed to a joiner, and by reason of his studious industry was, in due course, able to establish himself in business, and call himself 'master.'

"At my grandfather's death my father pulled down the old family house, and built one simple in the extreme in its place. The house exists still in very fair condition, and I hope some day to restore it, for it is the self-same house in which I was born.

"During our stay in America I delighted in making clowns and toys of all descriptions, but when we were obliged, through necessity, to return to England (this was in 1857, and my eighth year) new faces and new surroundings suggested new occupations in Southampton, where my father decided to remain for some years.

"During this period I learnt to love music, and used



PROFESSOR HERKOMER, R.A., IN 1879.  
(From a photograph by Elliott & Fry.)

to listen to my dear mother's patient teaching of such pupils as she could gather around her. My father worked hard and continually at his bench, and I watched him with much eagerness as he progressed with his wonderful carving, and learnt to admire the

perseverance and assiduity with which he executed his admirable work.

"At the age of fourteen I was sent to a school of

art in connection with South Kensington, which I attended three times a week."

"You went to Munich, I believe?"

"Yes, in 1865, when my father was commissioned to carve six Evangelists in wood for America. I left my mother for the first time to accompany my father to Munich, and it was not without many a tearful scene, for my mother wanted me to abandon painting for music.

"I did not stay in Munich for long, however, because my health broke down, and I was sent back to England once more."

Here we must pass over the years of toil and labour through which the then struggling young artist persevered. Many disappointments came to him, and the proud, sensitive nature rebelled and fought bravely to conquer the depression that overtook him when strenuous efforts to succeed met with continual misadventure.

The professor contributed to *Fun*, the *Graphic*, and other illustrated papers, but his first picture, called "Gipsies on Wimbledon Common," was a great success, and brought him in several orders for work. Later came his grand painting of "Chelsea Pensioners in Church," which, although the subject first appeared as a drawing in the *Graphic*, made of Herkomer a celebrated man.

"The first money I managed to put by from the sale of my pictures," said Professor Herkomer later, "I devoted to a holiday trip with my parents, and we went to the Bavarian Highlands, where I tried my hand in oils; for, remember, my early works consisted mostly of drawings in water-colours."

"What master inspired you most strongly as a beginner?"

"I think that the spirit of Frederic Walker (who so greatly befriended me in my struggling days) was mainly embodied in my early works. 'The Toil of Day,' for instance, the first picture of mine accepted at the Royal Academy, although thoroughly Bavarian in character, had two strong points, which indicated how greatly Walker had influenced me in my progress, and how I had striven to denote Walker's warmth of colouring in the apple-trees and the geese."

To the great painter's subsequent *chefs d'œuvre*, such as "At Death's Door," "Eventide," "Sketches on the Bavarian Alps," and many other works which have since achieved world-wide celebrity, my pen is inadequate to render the homage due.

"Richard Wagner was the first important personage who sat for me," proceeded the professor, while we strolled through the grounds; "but I had such difficulty in getting him to sit quiet that I gave up the idea of painting him from life in despair; and, determining not to be balked, I resolved to paint Wagner as I saw him in my mind's eye. Well, that picture, when finished, gave the illustrious man much pleasure—for this he assured me—so much so that it hangs now in Wahnfried, Mrs. Wagner's house in Bayreuth.

"Tennyson, whom I painted later, was also horribly averse to sitting, and it was with much difficulty I persuaded him to overcome his prejudice."

To the list of celebrities who have sat for Professor Herkomer may be added the name of John Ruskin ; and the professor tells me he intends to bequeath his collection of notable personages to his children.

"During the winter of '84 and spring of '85 I painted my first important portrait of a lady ; and I chose the daughter of Mr. Owen Grant for my subject," said my host, showing me a lovely facsimile of the portrait in question. "You will have heard it described as the 'White Lady,' and its success first here, then in Berlin, and finally in Vienna and München, was wonderful."

This great painter's versatility extends beyond the limits of credence ; not only does he stand to the front amongst the foremost and finest painters of the century, but he also excels in many other spheres of art.

Etching and mezzo-tint engraving have taken up a great deal of the professor's time, though we are not to forget that he has written some remarkably clever plays, to which he composed his own music, besides carving in wood and beating out intricate designs in iron-work. Speaking of mezzo-tint engraving, Professor Herkomer expressed himself to the following effect :—

"The peculiar charm that belongs to the form of art we call etching cannot be adequately described in words—it must be *felt*. To feel it, one needs a peculiar gift of appreciation, but the gift for the right appreciation of this subtle art is only given to a few. It can be absent in the mind of a great painter, or it can be present in the mind of a person who has never touched brush or pencil. It can lie dormant for years, and suddenly burst into active life, but there it must be—a gift of Nature.

"The habits of artistic sight are vastly different in the wood-draughtsman and the etcher. The draughtsman has a totally different method of getting at form and tonality, even if he draws with lines. There is immediate finality in his touches, which he would have to unlearn as an etcher."

Regarding the quality of colour in etching, the professor said :—

"I lay the greatest stress upon this point with my pupils, for I know they will be as good draughtsmen as their natural gifts will enable them to be ; but unless watched by a patient master or by themselves, the delicate faculty of colour may wither before they know of its real existence, or it may never be properly brought into life.

"It is, therefore, the sense of colour that an etcher must possess quite as much as power of drawing. To be brief, the best etchers *suggest* tone and colour, and the worst etchers *make* tone, either by a multitude of tedious lines, or by undue or illegitimate 'dodging' in the printing.

"As a beginner, I took a keen delight in this new channel of interest, and soon acquired the knowledge of *etching* by first *doing it*, and then *finding out the way to do it*. Nobody was willing to give me lessons, either, and 'Hamerton's Guide' contained the only assistance available to me."

The professor told me much that is interesting about his art school at Bushey and the origin of its

foundation ; one fact among many struck me forcibly : to wit, that the professor devotes a very large portion of his time and teaching to the school without receiving the least remuneration, and generously strives, with a stout heart and a world of encouragement, to imbue his pupils with some of the artistic faculties of which he himself is so abundantly possessed.

"I like my pupils to see my work during its progress, for which purpose I invite them to my studio once a week," he remarked. "This is, I think, one good method of teaching."

During our conversation we had gradually drifted towards the lovely new house which is now in rapid course of construction, and which in its mediæval style will certainly prove to be a masterpiece of fine interiors. "Lululaund" is situated at the extreme end of the garden attached to "Dyreham," and it is easy to see that the master's love for his art has entered wholly into the building and decorating of this new domain.

The drawing-room, panelled in oak, is a stately, regal apartment, with a remarkably fine carved mantel-piece and inglenook, of which the designs of figures and tracery are so many *chefs d'œuvre*. The word "Lululaund," dear to the professor by reason of its bond to olden memories, seems to be woven in the carpets, carved in the oak—in fact, introduced in every imaginable dexterous fashion ; and the wonderful plush curtains with which the house is adorned in profusion are woven expressly for the professor by his uncle, a celebrated weaver, at his works in America.

Professor Herkomer intends to publish an illustrated volume concerning his new home, which will not fail to be of the greatest interest to the public. It is owing to this fact that the professor would not permit photographs or sketches to be taken of the exterior or interior of "Lululaund" just now, therefore I must leave the task of describing the wonderful workmanship and skill in decoration contained in this new palace of art to the able pen of the professor himself.

While passing through the grounds to inspect the complete set of workshops and machinery rooms which the professor has built, and where all the wood-carving, modelling in clay, and supply of electric light is super-



PROFESSOR HERKOMER, R.A., AT THE PRESENT DAY.

(From a photograph by Siegfried Herkomer.)

intended by himself, we passed a quaint old-fashioned bridge, situate in a rough, picturesquely unkempt garden, which bridge was designed and built by my host.

There is a theatre, too, at Bushey, to add to the many attractions the professor provides for his friends, and here many very excellent pieces, composed and written by Professor Herkomer, have been at different times produced.

As I have already mentioned, the professor's love for music, which gave vigorous signs of life already when he was at a very tender age, is still latent within him, and he has even scored and conducted his own works at Bushey during rehearsals.

Speaking of these performances, the professor, to quote his own words, was honoured by a visit from Hans Richter, who came to Bushey and conducted "An Idyll."

"Richter has an aversion to amateur productions," said he, "but I sent the score of my work to Vienna, and he seemed to be agreeably surprised with it, since he promised to conduct the piece at its production.

He came to Bushey, threw himself heart and soul into the scheme, rehearsing the choruses and solos with the warmest interest.

"Somehow I drifted into composing music because it came to me so naturally that I had faith in my inclination, although I well remember Richter's words on one occasion when he had stayed with us, and had been inspecting the various things that were going on in my home.

"'One thing, dear friend,' he said jestingly, 'I beg you won't attempt—it is composing music: leave that to us musicians.'"

Professor Herkomer's domestic life has perchance been tinged with a large share of sorrow and gloom: of this, naturally enough, he says as little as possible; to see him now, however, surrounded by loving faces, in the midst of the fruits of his mighty and successful efforts of the past, a colony of students gathered round him, all loving, revering, and obeying him, one must turn aside in mute acknowledgment of what he has accomplished and achieved, and of the intense happiness he has striven to attain, and has attained.

MARIE ANTOINETTE VON ZEDLITZ.



WOMEN'S LIFE-CLASS AT BUSHEY.