



## LORD RONALD GOWER.

*SCULPTOR, AUTHOR, AND DILETTANTE.*

LORD RONALD GOWER is one of the few latter-day celebrities whose works, artistic and literary, are better known than are their personalities to the great public, grateful to them for much. Though he takes rank at home and abroad with the best sculptors of our time, biographical dictionaries know him not, and he has, apparently, always lacked the ambition to become a Man of the Time.

Yet even an hour spent in the treasure-house where Lord Ronald has during the last few years taken up his abode shows what a part your host has taken in the social life of the last half-century, and also what privileges have fallen to his share. He has been everywhere, from Tokio to St. Petersburg, and has known everyone worth knowing, from Garibaldi and Longfellow to the Empress Eugénie. He has also found time to write and publish several delightful contributions to art-literature, three historical studies of importance, and two volumes of profoundly interesting and unaffected personal reminiscences of men and things as seen by him up to the age of thirty-five. If it be added that Lord Ronald was seven years in Parliament, and has enriched the world with some splendid sculpture, it must be admitted that he has deserved well of his country.

The youngest son of the second Duke of Sutherland, Lord Ronald Gower is

descended, through his mother, from "Belted Will," the Lord William Howard sung by Sir Walter Scott—"Bauld Willie," the terror of the Border. Probably more to his taste would have been another of his ancestors, Thomas Gower, "Sergeant Painter" to Queen Elizabeth, a worthy devoted to what he styled his "pensils trade," and whose device, which showed his coat-of-arms in a pair of scales far outweighed by a compass, has been adapted to the book-plate of his descendant.

Lord Ronald need not go back so far to find traces of rare artistic talent: his own grandmother, the famous Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland, who brought Dunrobin Castle to the Gower family, was an admirable water-colourist, and still remains the artist who has best done justice to her native county, beautiful Sutherland.

Lord Ronald was born in Stafford House, and is but a few days older than his nephew, the Marquis of Lorne. His childhood was spent at Trentham, Cliveden, and Dunrobin. Small wonder then that, living amid so many art-treasures, and being the favourite child of his mother, "the beautiful Duchess," who truly delighted in all that was lovely and of good report, the boy grew up with an intense love of both pictorial and literary art. All those who were distinguished in art, science, philanthropy,

and politics visited Stafford House. It was there that Mr. Gladstone first met Garibaldi, being greeted by him with the words "Hail, Precursor!" And on another occasion, the Queen, calling on her Mistress of the Robes, observed, smiling: "I have come from my house to your palace."

After a childhood spent in such an atmosphere it can easily be understood

slipped by before he discovered where lay his true artistic vocation, he published a work on the Lenoir Collection of portraits (now the property of the Duc d'Aumale), and himself reproduced by a peculiar process three hundred of the Clouet portraits at Castle Howard.

During those early years of political life Lord Ronald saw a great deal of society. His links with the royal family are close



*Photo by Russell, Baker Street.*

LORD RONALD GOWER'S STUDY.

that Eton did not prove congenial; and, after a year's schooling, Lord Ronald came home again a sadder but not, according to his own account, a wiser boy. Trinity College, Cambridge, proved wholly delightful, and both the subject of my sketch and Lord Lorne retain grateful recollections of their Master, the famous Dr. Whewell, known to the irreverent undergraduates of thirty years ago as "Billy Whistle"! Shortly after leaving the 'Varsity Lord Ronald took his seat in the House of Commons as Liberal member for Sutherland; but though some years

and many. One of the most interesting drawings in his house is a spirited little pen-and-ink sketch done by the Queen of one of her bridesmaids, and given by her to the Duchess of Sutherland. And, while in the midst of the Franco-German War, he came back for a brief interval to act as "supporter," or best man, to his nephew at the latter's marriage to Princess Louise.

Most of Lord Ronald's artistic work has been done in Paris, where he owned for some years a studio on the Boulevard Montparnasse. As a sculptor he has given the world



Photo by Russell, Baker Street.

CHIMNEYPiece IN THE STUDY.



Photo by Russell, Baker Street.

## FIRST FLOOR SITTING-ROOM.

what is probably the finest and most impressive counterfeit presentment of Marie Antoinette. The statue is now in the hall of Grosvenor House, and represents Louis the Sixteenth's Queen, on the morning of her execution, passing through the courtyard of the Conciergerie on her way to the cart or tumbril. There is an air of indescribable dignity and power about the wasted figure and well-poised head of "*l'Autrichienne*." One of the sculptor's friends, whose slender hands were admirably suited to become models for those of the Queen, allowed them to be tied behind her back and a cast to be taken in plaster, in order that an exact representation might be made of what took place on that terrible October morning in 1793.

This incident gives, however, but a slight idea of the conscientious way in which Lord Ronald does his work. Having always had a special interest in Marie Antoinette, he for some years made it his chief business to visit those places consecrated by her presence. He travelled all over Europe

in search of documents and letters shedding light on her tragic story, and gathered together a unique collection of Marie Antoinette medals and relics. It should be explained that Lord Ronald's great interest in "the last Queen of France" is in a certain measure due to the fact that his grandmother, the famous Duchess-Countess, became, while English Ambassador at the Court of Louis the Sixteenth, a close friend of the beautiful Austrian princess. Lord Ronald's father and the Dauphin were exactly the same age, and many traced a resemblance between the Queen and the then Countess of Stafford. When the royal family were imprisoned in the Temple, Lady Stafford, then still in Paris, sent Marie Antoinette many articles of clothing, including some things out of her own little son's wardrobe for his former playmate, the Dauphin; and for all that is known to the contrary, the very coat worn by Louis the Seventeenth during his long agony may have been among those sent to his mother by the mistress of Dunrobin. It therefore is fitting that "The Last Days of Marie

Antoinette" should have found a faithful and earnest chronicler among the Gowers of our own day.

In the lovely drawing-room of Lord Ronald's London house is to be found an interesting and moving collection of his heroine's relics, including a quaint inlaid fan given by the girlish Dauphine to the spokeswomen of the first deputation of maidens who welcomed her as a bride on to French soil at Strasbourg, and presented to its present owner by the Princesse d'Henin. Here also is the Queen's ivory lorgnette, evoking by its dumb presence the tragi-comedies of Trianon and Versailles; and, among a number of Sèvres *biscuit* and Wedgwoods of Louis the Sixteenth and Marie Antoinette, a curious alabaster bust which was given to Lord Ronald by the Empress Eugénie, and which was one of the few little treasures she found time to gather together and take with her in her flight from the Tuileries on Sept. 4, 1871.

Among Lord Ronald's most valued possessions is a splendid collection of medals illustrating various events in the chequered life of the French Queen, and comprising both those struck in honour of the royal marriage; rare gold coins, having a silhouette of the Dauphine on one side, on the other allegorical figures of Hymen and Plenty; and the bronze medals which were struck towards the end of the last century, and which have on the reverse side to medallion portraits of Louis the Sixteenth, Marie Antoinette, and Madame Elizabeth, the dates of their executions. Many of the most valuable among these medals were designed and struck abroad—in Austria, England, and Germany—and are, therefore, of scant value as likenesses.

Close to the Marie Antoinette relics hangs a charming and, to anyone possessed of any historical imagination, suggestive, picture representing the Dauphine with Edmund Burke, who, it will be remembered, later constituted himself her



DINING-ROOM AND GENERAL LIVING-ROOM.  
BUST IN MIDDLE OF THE BROADLANDS "APHRODITE."

Photo by Russell, Baker Street.

champion and defender. Lord Ronald's statue of Marie Antoinette was exhibited in the Academy of 1878, and produced a great impression. A reduced bronze copy occupied till the Sage of Chelsea's death a place of honour on Thomas Carlyle's mantelpiece.

Another heroic feminine personality closely identified with the subject of my sketch is Joan of Arc; probably no man living knows as much of all that is to be known of the Maid of Orleans as does Lord Ronald Gower. Before writing his "Life" of her he visited every spot connected with her history, and it is interesting to know that he has reluctantly come to the conclusion that there is no authentic portrait of her.

Peculiar value will always be attached to the sculptor's statuettes of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield, for he was privileged to know both great statesmen with close intimacy. He has, perhaps intentionally, made a great contrast between the two men. Beaconsfield wears full Court dress, and is seated on a kind of throne-like seat, one arm of which is composed of a swan's head—a detail which once caused a wit to observe that the statuette was evidently meant to represent Leader and the Swan! Mr. Gladstone, in his shirt-sleeves, is seated on the stump of an oak-tree, his right hand grasping an axe. The attitude

was suggested by a photograph taken from life at Hawarden. The Beaconsfield statuette, which was done some time before that of Mr. Gladstone, so delighted the famous Tory leader that he wrote to the sculptor, "You have conferred on me a great favour. All my friends who have seen your beautiful work pronounce it the best likeness of your present correspondent";

and it has remained the Queen's favourite portrait of her one-time Prime Minister and faithful servant.

Close to the two statuettes Lord Ronald has hung a fine portrait of Beaconsfield framed in a wreath of peacock's feathers, picked up and given to him by his host one day on the lawn at Hughenden. Like most of those who knew Disraeli intimately, Lord Ronald in his "Reminiscences" denies that the latter ever evinced any special love for primroses, and points out how far more suitable an emblem

would have been a peacock's feather.

As I have said before, Lord Ronald Gower has cared to work, as it were, only under inspiration. Perhaps this is why each of his achievements in sculpture stands out clearly in the memory, as embodying not only a thing of beauty, but some heroic, noble, or striking idea. This is especially the case with two very different examples of his genius—his "Old Guard" and the Shakspeare monument at Stratford-on-Avon. "The Old Guard," a



*Photo by Valentine, Dundee.*

SHAKSPEARE MEMORIAL STATUE, STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

BY LORD RONALD GOWER.

figure which translated, according to Cardinal Manning, "The Dying Gladiator" into modern French, makes living the famous words uttered by General Baron Michel as he fell at Waterloo: "La Garde meurt, et ne se rend pas!" The subject was suggested by a small plaster figure of a soldier of the Old Imperial Guard presenting arms, seen one day by Lord Ronald during a stroll through the Palais Royal. The idea took shape in his mind; he went back to his studio, made a preliminary sketch, working out all the details of the figure, even to the gaiters, got a good model in a Crimean veteran, and, after some months of hard work, completed his task. The statue was cast in bronze and exhibited in the Academy of 1877. It is now in the possession of the Queen.

The Shakspeare memorial will probably remain Lord Ronald Gower's *magnum opus*. He spent altogether twelve years on this piece of work. Many who may not have seen it at Stratford-on-Avon may remember it at the Crystal Palace, where the memorial was shown for some time. When composing the design the sculptor chose as four representative Shaksperian characters, Lady Macbeth, Hamlet, Falstaff, and Prince Hal; Lord Ronald has chosen to show the last during the scene in the Jerusalem Chamber when he, then Prince of Wales, holds the crown above his head—a figure full of grace and lusty strength.

Lord Ronald Gower is one of the leading authorities on Shakspeare's portraits; he is a believer in the authenticity of the famous Kesselstadt mask of the dramatist, which is supposed to have been that taken after death, and which was brought to England by Dr. Becker. Lord Ronald, who has given much attention to the subject, and who was one of the first to investigate the matter, found his belief on the fact that the mask tallies to a remarkable degree, both as to likeness and size, with the bust over Shakspeare's grave at Stratford-on-Avon. Owing to his being a trustee of the National Portrait Gallery, he has had exceptional experience in such things, and his theory is of special value.

An hour spent with their owner among Lord Ronald's treasures is in itself an art education. Every picture, from the exquisite portrait of your host's grandmother, the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire when a young girl, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, to "The Poodle," by Landseer, has, if I may so express it, a *raison d'être* and history.

Not a few of the art-treasures in Lord Ronald Gower's possession have come to him by inheritance; others he has added to a collection which boasts of drawings by Vandyke, Giorgione, Hobbema, Rembrandt, Gainsborough, miniatures by Cosway, and last, not least, a set of eighteenth-century beauties by Downman, a pupil of Benjamin West, who is less known than he deserves to be, for the portraits are singularly refined and delicately true in drawing. Downman became a pupil of the Academy in 1769, and in the following year exhibited a portrait. Although he occasionally painted historical subjects, it is by his delicate and truthful portraits that he was chiefly known. Most of them were in profile, drawn with a pencil and lightly tinted. Those refined portraits in chalk, which are still preserved in the families of his sitters, ought to be considered among the most prized works of the latter half of the last century, and had he been a Frenchman, the details of his life and work would not have been permitted to pass into comparative oblivion.

Lord Ronald believes that all and sundry possess some artistic faculty which might, under favourable circumstances, be improved and developed. This theory has certainly been confirmed in the case of his Lordship's valet, Robert Tuffs, some of whose really fine copies of Old Masters have found their place in Lord Ronald's house beautiful. Perhaps it should be added that Lord Ronald considers that a deep red or dull green makes the best background for either oils or water-colours. Sir Edwin Landseer always maintained that pictures showed up best against a tint resembling as closely as possible the colour of a grouse's egg.

M. A. B.



LORD RONALD GOWER.

*From a Photograph taken by Sarony, New York, about twelve years ago.*