A LADIES' STUDIO—PARIS.

THE studio I take for my sketch is the Atelier Colarossi of the Avenue Victor Hugo, where Alice Havers worked during her residence in Paris. Large, lofty, and well-lighted, it gives ample room for the workers, and is one of the healthiest amongst the overheated studios of this city. The hours are from eight to twelve in the morning, from one to five in the afternoon. And as you approach the dressing-room on a Monday morning you may hear a perfect babel of voices—English, French, German, American, Russian, Swedish, and Italian—as the students arrive to fill up this ante-room with their fur cloaks, rubbers, luncheon-baskets, etc., and commence the week's work. Opening a door, with the request, "Shut the door" chalked on its upper panel, and which some one has facetiously translated *Je t'adore*, one is immediately in the studio, fitted with wide couches, the usual platform for the model with a great stove behind it, a curtained-off dressing-room—also for the model—in one corner, a glass case filled with plaster casts of all descriptions in another, whilst mirrors, oil-paintings, and charcoal drawings by the students adorn the walls, and high stools, easels, and portfolios the floor. Monday is the day for the new models and the selection of places. And how many alarm clocks strike the half hour after six, or how many spirit-lamps are lit at the same moment throughout Paris to heat the students' breakfast of coffee or chocolate, it would be difficult to say. The student knows that unless she arrive early her chance of a good position in the studio is gone until the following week, and once hesitate—once, as Alice Havers used to say, begin on a cold morning to *think* of getting up—and you don't do it. The plunge has to be made at once into the dark. Therefore the courageous student makes it, though the English girl confesses that the hours are much earlier here than in London, and Swedes, Russians, and Americans find the cold infinitely more trying than in their own countries.

As a rule the Colarossi students are punctual. And this, of course, is at once a gain to the whole class, for nothing upsets the ideas or is so disturbing as the arrival of a student ten or twenty minutes after work has commenced.

"Posez!" is the immediate cry, when at eight o'clock the model appears upon the platform occupying the centre of the studio; and the command is instantly followed by a noisy rushing to and fro, a rapid inspection of the model from every position, and the clattering of easels as places are selected, each student choosing her own place at once, and marking the spot which her easel is to occupy with a piece of chalk. The first position of the model may be unsatisfactory, or some one, generally a new-comer who expects to make a picture of her study, petitions for a more elaborate pose—something with more action in it; and the same performance of rushing and clattering is rapidly executed; or the model, a practised hand at posing, understanding the new-comer's ambition as completely as if she had expressed herself in words, shrugs his shoulders and assumes an extravagant attitude impossible to be sustained more than a few minutes at a time. "Keep the first pose!" cries a more experienced student, and the model complacently relaxes into the more familiar, easier pose, and keeps it, but for an occasional slight vibration, like a statue. A few minutes of rustling of papers, questions and answers as to whether one student obstructs another's view, then work begins in earnest, and silence—so far as talk is concerned—reigns until *l'heure* is announced, when, the first hour's work over, the model rests for ten minutes, and the babel of many languages recommences. You may hear Germans conversing with Russians in bad French, English nervously attempting German, Swedes Italian, but you seldom hear the Frenchwoman conversing in any language but her own, though she makes grimaces enough whilst attempting to turn a deaf ear to the Germans' "*che*" (*je*) and "*ch'ai*." You hear also interesting discussions on Art matters, the Salon reforms, the probable reduction in the number of exhibits, or the latest work of the professors. Some one has been the round of their studios, and gives thrilling accounts of a Dagnan-Bouveret, a Courtois, a Rixens; or one of the three professors is known to have tickets to distribute for an exhibition—the Volney or the Boissy d'Anglars—and fears are entertained lest the distribution be forgotten.

Then the model mounts to the platform, and work is silently resumed.

In the afternoon a costumed model takes the place of the nude—a prêtre, a pretty Italian child with mischievous black eyes and hair parted on each side of her olive-tinted face, an Arab, or a handsome Frenchwoman flirting a fan.

The professors attend twice a week, and though receiving no remuneration for their work, take a genuine interest in their pupils, even where there is not a great deal of natural talent. Earnestness, and a ready submission to their authority, secure their interest at once. The student is there to study, the professor to teach; and if half the students who come abroad with the intention of getting themselves a name would bear *this* in mind, they would have some really good work as a result of their six or twelve months' sojourn in Paris, instead of—as too often happens—disappointing their parents, and wasting their money in an effort to paint very questionable "pictures."

When a professor insists upon a pupil laying aside her paint brush for her charcoal, she may be sure it is to her own advantage to do so, and worse than folly to take up her brush again directly his back is turned. For the professor is not—as girls frequently imagine—keeping her back, but actually helping her forward. No amount of paint will conceal bad drawing; and the professor's first duty towards his pupil is to teach her to draw correctly.

Too much, I think, cannot be said against the influx of beginners in Art to the studios here. As a matter of fact the Paris studio is not intended for beginners. A student who cannot draw a *morceau*, a head, hand, or foot well, is ordered to draw from the cast for a time: like the student who is advised to draw instead of paint, she weeps, or is angry; and a very little forethought or enquiry would have saved her from this, to her, humiliating position.. The student who intends merely to study painting abroad should prepare herself for instruction in this branch of her art by being able, before she starts for Paris, to draw thoroughly. The reason for the daily exclamation, "I can't afford to spend my time drawing when I am here only for six months!" would then cease to be. American students, as a rule, make much more rapid progress in the Paris studios than the English; and the reason of this is easily explained, the American girl obtains information before leaving home, and comes prepared for her battle, whereas the English girl, equally talented—often more so—comes unprepared. The glory of studying in Paris seems to have excluded all other thoughts; she has no decided goal in view: she only knows that she is crossing the Channel to study, and "supposes," if she have two or three sisters, that upon her return she "will have to teach;" whereas the American girl—perhaps because she has farther to come, and her expenses are greater—has made her decision. She is either preparing herself to become a teacher of drawing, an illustrator, a decorative artist, or an artist in the generally accepted sense—that is, a picture-painter. Every girl wishes to paint if she can draw, and every girl believes herself capable of colouring in oils if she can colour at all. Marie Bashkirtseff believed she could paint, and was angry when the Salon jury, instead of awarding her Honourable Mention for her oil portrait, awarded it for her pastel drawing. As a matter of fact, Marie had studied drawing more or less all her life, and her collected works show that she had not a remarkable eye for colour: but so it is with hundreds of students; in their feverish impatience to paint they modify or wholly destroy their talent. As one of the Colarossi professors is fond of remarking, "They expect to accomplish in six months what took us six years to arrive at." Alice Havers too, talented herself, and ever generously ready to acknowledge and delight in the talent of others, used often to grieve over the wasted talent to be met with here. Advanced as she was she worked up to her professors' directions, and worked hard too, whilst many who might have followed her example with advantage fell into a sort of dilettanteism, and tried various studios, in the afternoon, for a month

at a time, in the vain hope of finding a professor who would ignore their inferior drawing and teach them to paint well in a short time. But the short way of studying art is, like the short way home, invariably the longest in the end. The training of the Paris studios is thorough from start to finish; but in order to profit from her studies from the moment of her entry there, and so save time, the student should know, and keep constantly in mind, the three things that will be always required of her by her French professors—She must be able to draw a *morceau* well from life before she will be permitted to attempt the *ensemble;* she must keep her drawing as simple as possible, *never* attempt to laboriously shade it up to make it *pretty* or picturesque, and must know how to get her proportions exact and the character true. These are the things she is taught here. These are the things she must know if she wishes to commence painting at once.

ALISON RAE.

THE SPIRIT OF FUN IN LITERATURE AND ART;

OR,

THE WORKS OF THOSE WHO HAVE MADE THE WORLD LAUGH.

By JAMES MASON.

CHAPTER IV.

WITH the highest forms of poetry the spirit of fun has little or nothing to do; but our best poets have had a twinkle in the eye at times, and produced quite as laughable literature as many of their prose brethren.

To begin with Chaucer, the "Father of English Poetry," as he is called, and one of the brightest names in the whole realm of authorship, he had a fine vein of humour, and was a man full of jokes. In his works we find both gravity and mischief; he was not confined to one style, but could pass at will "from grave to gay, from lively to severe." "His comic genius," says Leigh Hunt, "is so perfect that it may be said to include prophetic intimations of all that followed it."

One obstacle to getting at the fun of Chaucer is that it requires some previous education in old English. His pages at first sight do not look attractive, and the spelling is enough to give one a fit of the fidgets. "Mr. Chaucer," says Artemus Ward, "had talent, but he could not spell; he is the worst speller I ever knew."

Another objection is that, as is the case with many of these old writers, Chaucer's humour is often coarse, and not to be recommended for present day perusal. This was a fault of his time as measured by our standard. The poet himself—and it is a warning to all who write without a constant sense of moral responsibility—repented late in life of some things he had given utterance to, and in his last hours would fain have blotted out of existence some too well-remembered lines.

"Woe is me, woe is me," he exclaimed, "that I cannot recall and annul those things which I have written; but alas, they are now continued from man to man, and I cannot do what I desire!"

But apart from this, the wit of the poet is of a thoroughly delightful sort, at once entertaining and good-natured. As an example let us take the opinion of the merchant in the *Canterbury Tales* on wives. It will be best given in the modernised prose version of Leigh Hunt. In the writings of Chaucer there is a good deal of "chaff" directed against women, from which some extra-knowing critics have inferred that the wife of the poet was a termagant. But his graceful and chivalrous compliments to them are just as frequent, so the inference is hardly a fair one. The following is an instance of his kindly mockery, making game of wives in a tone that hovers between jest and earnest.

"A wife," says the merchant, "is the gift of heaven—there's no doubt of it. Every other kind of gift, such as lands, rents, furniture, right of pasture or common—these are all mere gifts of fortune, that pass away like shadows on a wall; but you have to apprehend no such misfortune with a wife. Your wife will last longer perhaps even than you may desire.

"A wife? Why, upon my word, how can a man have any adversity that has a wife? Answer me that? Tongue cannot tell, nor heart think, of the felicity that is between a man and his wife. If he is poor, she helps him to work. She takes care of his money for him, and never wastes anything. She never says 'yes' when he says 'no.' 'Do this,' says he. 'Directly,' says she.

"O blessed institution! O precious wedlock! thou art so joyous, and at the same time so virtuous, and so recommended to us all, and so approved by us all, that every man who is worth a farthing should go down on his bare knees every day of his existence and thank heaven for having sent him a wife; or if he hasn't got one he ought to pray for one, and beg that she may last him to his life's end; for his life in that case is set in security. Nothing can deceive him.

"He has only to act by his wife's advice and he may hold up his head with the best. A wife is so true, so wise! Oh, ever while you live take your wife's advice if you would be thought a wise man."

And now we come to a still greater literary artist. It has been affirmed that there is no subject of which any poet ever wrote but one could produce it much better done in Shakspeare. Without subscribing to this thorough-going enthusiasm, we may go as far as to say that the wit and drollery of the great dramatist are equal to anything on record.

According to Dr. Johnson, Shakspeare's comedies are better than his tragedies, and he accounts for this by saying that he was more at home in the one than in the other. Hazlitt, the famous critic, however, combats this notion, holding that the tragedies should have the first place. "Shakspeare," he observes, "put his strength into his tragedies and played with comedy. He was greatest in what was greatest. . . . He was a greater poet than wit; his imagination was the leading and master quality of his mind, which was always ready to soar into its native element; the ludicrous was only secondary and subordinate."

The question is hardly worth disputing about. Whether we laugh over *Love's Labour Lost*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or weep over *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, it is all one; we feel we are under the spell of "an intellectual miracle," and that the mirth and the melancholy are the best of their kind.