

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.—From a painting by G. F. Watts.

A PRE-RAPHAELITE MANSION.

BY THEODORE CHILD.

THE house which we propose to visit is not a masterpiece of architecture. It is not one of those red brick mansions in the style of Queen Anne, with ample windows and capricious gables, such as have transformed the appearance of western London within the past twenty years; it is simply one of the commodious, rectilinear London residences of the pre-æsthetic period, whole rows and streets of which may be seen in the immediate neighborhood of Prince's Gate, where it is situated. The outside of the building offers no interest; the inside has been transformed by

the architects Norman Shaw and Jeckyll, aided by a man of exquisite taste, Mr. Murray Marks, into a dwelling of perfect harmony, where nothing offends the eye and everything charms it, and where, surrounded by a most choice collection of pictures by the primitive Italians, and by the so-called English pre-Raphaelites, the inspirer and owner of the mansion, Mr. F. R. Leyland, realizes his dream of living the life of an old Venetian merchant in modern London.*

The first thing that strikes you when you enter the vast entrance hall, lighted by ample windows in the daytime and by electric lamps, distributed over the ceiling, at night, is the staircase, with its fine balustrade of gilt bronze, which once adorned Northumberland House, before that building was demolished to make room for the avenue that now bears its name. This balustrade, of admirable design, was made at the end of the eighteenth century, at prosaic Birmingham, in the days when taste had not yet utterly abandoned that industrious town. The pillar from which the hand-rail starts is surmounted by two crowned female figures, one of which waves a long oriflamme. This group of gilt wood in all probability adorned originally the prow of a Venetian galley, and Sansavino may have designed it. The tonality of the hall and of the staircase, from the foot to the top of the house, is green. The whole is panelled in shades of willow. The dado of the darker shades is enriched with panels imitating aventurine lacquer, decorated with delicate sprigs of pale rose and white flowers in the Japanese taste. These panels are the work of no less a master than Mr. James McNeill Whistler. On the walls of the staircase are hung Burne-Jones's "Circe," Rossetti's "Loving-Cup," Alphonse Legros's "Rehearsal," while on the walls of the hall itself are placed the "Sea Spell," the "Dis Manibus," and "La Pia," by Rossetti; "Cupid reviving Psyche," by Burne-Jones; and a portrait of Rossetti by G. F. Watts, which give the key-note of Mr. Leyland's tastes. The place of honor in this house we shall find is divided between Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Sandro Botticelli.

The furniture of the hall is effective and

discreetly rich. The mosaic floor is partly covered with Oriental rugs, and dotted here and there with gigantic vases of cloisonné enamel. In the centre is a circular divan, and around the walls gilt Venetian seventeenth-century chairs.

To the right of the entrance hall is the morning-room, and to the left the dining-room. The morning-room is exceedingly cozy and comfortable, and at the same time every object in it is in good taste. The walls and ceiling are panelled with oak, inlaid with black and white woods in a simple geometrical design. The walls above the dado are covered with three large and six smaller pieces of Beauvais tapestry, with Teniers subjects, in perfect preservation and freshness of color. On the floor is a bright Oriental carpet. The cabinets are of Indian, Tyrolese, and Italian work, beautifully inlaid. The bibelots and ornaments are all choice, but discreetly arranged, without that crowding and ostentation which make a room look like a museum. For the wood-work and general arrangement of the walls, ceiling, and chimney-piece, Mr. Norman Shaw is responsible.

The dining-room is famous in the art world under the name of the "Peacock Room." This appellation it owes to the decoration with which Mr. Whistler has enriched the walls. To be appreciated properly this room must be seen by artificial light, with the shutters of the three windows closed, and forming each a splendid decorative panel. The general scheme of the room is turquoise blue and gold, and the only ornaments are pieces of blue and white china, displayed on shelves of carved and gilt wood designed by Jeckyll, who was the architect of the room, with its fine panelled ceiling and pendentives terminating in gas lamps, to which have now been added stars of electric lights. The room, as it was originally conceived by Jeckyll, was hung with Spanish leather, and it was by a mere accident that Mr. Whistler came to decorate it. The story is this: Mr. Leyland having bought a picture by Mr. Whistler, representing a woman in a Japanese robe, hung it over the fireplace, where it still remains. The master, having inspected the arrangement, complained that the red flowers scattered over the gold ground of the Spanish leather hurt the harmony of his picture, and proposed to paint them out. Mr. Leyland had paid a thousand pounds sterling for

* The writer desires to acknowledge the ample and generous courtesy of Mr. Leyland in connection with all the details necessary to the preparation of this paper.



ENTRANCE HALL.

his Spanish leather, but he nevertheless allowed the master to have his way; whereupon Mr. Whistler went on painting and painting until the Spanish leather disappeared entirely, and a new and absolutely unique decorative scheme of blue and gold, in which the chief *motif* was peacocks and their feathers, appeared in its place. Walls, wood-work, and ceiling are entirely covered with these compositions in the Japanese taste. The framework is lacquered and clouded, or treated like aventurine, and the panels are filled in with imbrications of peacocks' feathers of exquisite invention. Over the buffet, at the end of the room opposite the fireplace, is an oblong panel sixteen feet long, where Mr. Whistler has depicted two peacocks in aggressive attitudes, designed in gold on a blue ground. One peacock, of extreme and unruffled elegance, is supposed by some subtle interlinear readers to represent the artist, and the other peacock, with disordered plumage and irate mien, standing on a pile of shekels, is identified with the artist's patron. The background is dotted with flying feathers

and masses of gold, and the whole composition has reference, we are told, to a difference that arose between Mr. Whistler and Mr. Leyland with respect to the price of the work. This cryptic panel was the painter's vengeance, but its hidden meaning is so discreetly concealed that it would remain forever lost in the spirited charm of the whole, had not anecdotic memories treasured up the souvenir of the artist's wrath and of its ingenious manifestation.

The tall panels formed by the closed shutters of the casement windows are exceedingly fine in design. The panels to the right and left represent peacocks with their tails spread fanwise, advancing in perspective toward the spectator, one behind the other, the peacocks in gold and the ground in blue. On the middle panel are perched two peacocks with pendent tails sweeping down to the ground, and presenting an arrangement of lines and masses of blue and gold of singular splendor. The remaining wall space is occupied by the smaller panelling already described, and the shelves and cages in which the blue china is displayed. The

fireplace is panelled with turquoise blue mosaic. The andirons are gilt-bronze sunflowers. The carpet is turquoise blue. Thus the whole room forms a completely harmonious arrangement in turquoise blue and virgin gold. The shelves and cages, designed by Jeckyll, are worthy of notice for the distinction and originality of their construction and the exquisiteness of their decorative carving.

It is a curious fact that besides estranging Mr. Whistler and Mr. Leyland, this "Peacock Room" had a more tragic consequence. Jeckyll, the decorative artist who had designed and completely executed the room when Mr. Whistler entered upon the scene, had already suffered several disappointments, owing to accident having deprived him of the credit of his work, and his hopes were then all centred upon his efforts in Mr. Leyland's house. Alas! when he saw the Spanish leather disappear and the peacock harmony in blue and gold become the talk of the town, he went home and began to paint the floor of his bedroom gold, and in a few weeks he died mad in a private lunatic asylum.

From the entrance hall, down a few steps, we notice *en passant* a fine head by Rembrandt, and then find ourselves in the merchant's sanctum, a long room panelled with American walnut and hung above the dado with old-gold Spanish leather, with a soft floral design interspersed between bold red-brown arabesques. In the centre is a marquetry table in the Louis XIII. style, dating from the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV., incrustated with floral designs, and enriched with finely chiselled bronzes. On the end panel will be noticed four white jasmine blossoms, which are supposed by experts to be the signature of the maker, Jasmin. Whether this conjecture be exact or not, the fact remains that this floral signature is found on many of the finest pieces of marquetry work of this style and epoch. The furniture of the room is completed by inlaid cabinets of German and Italian origin, Chippendale chairs, modern easy-chairs, a grand piano, a Louis XVI. bureau, and an Italian *cassone*, or marriage coffer, which was made for some noble Florentine family. The pictures on the walls are of the choicest. Over the *cassone* hangs a fresco by Luca Signorelli (1441-1523), representing an episode in the history of Coriolanus. This fresco has been detached from the

wall on which it was painted, and transferred on a panel. It forms one of a series of four subjects, of which two remain at Siena, while the other is in the National Gallery at London. The original sketch of a part of this fresco, covered with pinholes, is in the British Museum in the collection of drawings. Over the cabinet, to the left of the *cassone*, is a Madonna by the Florentine Pesellino (1422-1457), with, on one side, a boy Bacchus by Giovanni Bellini (1428-1516), and on the other a portrait of a man by Giorgione (1477-1511), which is a masterpiece of character and of color. Over the piano hangs a splendid Madonna, with the infant Christ and Saint John, by Sandro Botticelli (1446-1510), with, on one side, a Saint George and the Dragon, and on the other a Saint Peter and Saint Paul, both by Crivelli (1430-1493). This Madonna ranks with Botticelli's tenderest and most perfect treatments of the subject.

We now go up stairs to the first floor, where the landing is adorned by three delicate figures of ideal women, by Albert Moore. The whole of this floor is occupied by three salons communicating with each other, and capable of being converted into one vast rectangular room, which would be square were it not for the block that is reserved for the staircase and landing. One salon fronts on Prince's Gate, the other on the garden, while the intermediate salon has a glass roof and a large alcove built out over the vestibule. The general scheme of decoration in these three rooms is the same. The ceilings are identical in design, also the wainscoting, the wall hangings, and all the details of the wood-work and fixed drapery. Let us enter first of all the intermediate room. The furniture is composed of divans, chairs, inlaid Indo-Portuguese cabinets, and a harpsichord by Ruckers, with a finely painted and lacquered case. On the walls, as usual, are some notable pictures—Sir John Millais' "Saint Agnes' Eve," Rossetti's "Salutation," Ford Madox Brown's "Burial of Christ," Burne-Jones's six panels representing Day, Night, and the four Seasons, and the same painter's exquisite picture called "Venus's Mirror."

The salon fronting toward Prince's Gate is the shrine of some of the most completely beautiful productions of modern English art. The furniture consists of modern upholstered stairs, a grand piano, incrustated Boule cabinets, an elegant chest



PEACOCK ROOM.

of drawers by Riesener, and a variety of tasteful pieces. On the walls are hung, on the right and left of the fireplace, "Lady Lilith" and "Veronica Veronese," by Rossetti; over the piano the same master's "Blessed Damosel," with, on one side, his "Proserpina," and on the other his "Mnemosyne"; and at the opposite end of the room Burne-Jones's "Merlin and Viviane" and "Phyllis and Demophon." Our illustration shows a corner of this room, with the screen and curtains of cherry red Genoa velvet on cloth of gold. This screen, designed by Mr. Norman Shaw, was suggested by the rood-loft of the cathedral of Bar-le-Duc, which was sold by Mr. Murray Marks to the South Kensington Museum, where it now stands. Mr. Shaw's screen is composed of a frame of panelled and carved walnut, with bars of burnished brass, and it is so arranged that it can be entirely removed when it is desired to open the two salons and the intermediate room and to form

one grand reception salon. The idea of this division is very felicitous; the screen adds greatly to the variety of aspect of the room, and the combination of carved wood, brass grating, and splendid draperies possesses a richness, lightness, and elegance which no door, however ornate and monumental, could ever rival. Below Burne-Jones's "Merlin and Viviane" will be noticed a very handsome Venetian commode of marquetry and bronze, with feet formed by a complete bull's leg, surmounted by the head, which makes the console on which rests the slab of verd-antique. The bronze ornaments on this piece of furniture are apparently the work of the Caffieri family, perhaps of Philip Caffieri, who subsequently went to France to work on the decoration of the royal châteaux under Le Brun.

The second salon is uniform in style and decoration with the first and intermediate drawing-rooms, inasmuch as when the dividing screens are removed, the three

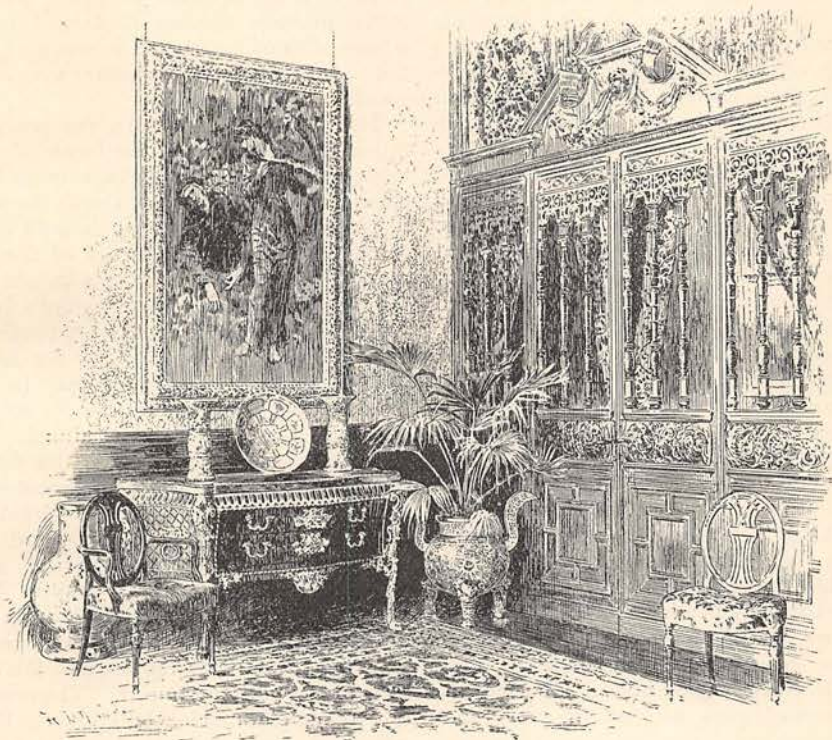
are intended to form one grand room seventy feet long, with a spacious wing at each end. The ceiling is therefore panelled in natural walnut, with caissons of gilt arabesque design. The walls above the dado of American walnut are hung with silk of old-gold tone; on the floor are laid immense Oriental carpets, leaving the waxed boards visible round the edges. The window curtains are cloth of gold, with a rich design in red velvet appliqué-work of Portuguese origin. The smaller undercurtains or blinds are of thin straw-color silk, and the wood-work of the windows is gilt. One side of this salon is taken up by the three casement windows, through which we see a characteristic landscape of aristocratic London, Prince's Gate garden, with its symmetrical lawns of intense green, the severe elliptical curves of yellow gravel-walks, the sturdy silhouettes of trees, whose blackened and intricately gnarled branches bear witness to a long and dismal struggle against uncongenial elements; and, described around this square of verdure and protecting railings, the great parallelogram of rectilinear houses with unimaginative façades and uniform porticos. Without is London, within is Italy, for both the furniture and the pictures which adorn the walls are Italian. On the panels between the windows are Venetian mirrors; the tables and cabinets are Milanese inlaid work of the seventeenth century; the chairs, with the exception of the modern upholstered seats which match the silk wall hangings, are of the same period. The bronzes scattered here and there are dainty specimens of fifteenth century *cire perdue* casting; the chimney-piece is a handsome remnant of an Italian Renaissance house, surmounted by a carved wood over-mantel, designed by Mr. Norman Shaw. The five niches of the over-mantel contain four black enamel Oriental vases of the Ming period, and, in the centre, a tall brown enamel vase of extreme rarity, the companion piece to which belongs to Mr. W. T. Walters, of Baltimore. Between the windows two fine cylindrical Chinese vases of the *famille verte* from the San Donato collection, and a gigantic old cloisonné enamel perfume burner, add a sharp note of Oriental splendor to the discreet richness of the harmony of brown and gold in which the pictures are displayed. All are admirably framed and advantageously hung, so that it is unmixed pleasure to look at them.

These pictures are of the Italian schools of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. All of them are choice, and several of them are pearls of the first quality. Over the chimney-piece is a "Mars and Venus" by the Venetian Palma Vecchio (1480-1528), with, on the left, a round picture of a Madonna by Botticelli, and on the right a round picture by Lippo Lippi (1406-1469) representing the "Adoration of the Magi." On the long wall to the right of the fireplace is a rare and beautiful portrait of a lady by Bernardino Luini (1475-1533?), the tender pupil of Leonardo, who combined the perfect skill of his master with something of that sweetness of temper and human simplicity which characterize the artistic vision of the Primitives. Those who have seen Luini's work at Milan, especially the frescoes in the Brera Gallery, will have realized the directness of presentation and the charming purity of his feminine figures. Next to the Luini portrait hangs a "Madonna and St. Joseph adoring the *Bambino*," by Lorenzo Costa (1460-1535), and then a curious variation of Leonardo's picture of "St. John" in the Louvre, doubtless by some pupil. On this same wall are hung two exquisite pictures by Lippo Lippi, "A Madonna and Child," and another "Madonna and Child" surrounded by cherubs against a background of blossom. On the panel beyond the door is a picture by Memling (1430?-1495), representing the Virgin and two female saints, clad in splendid robes ornamented with pearls and precious stones. Two angels hold a crown above the head of the Virgin, who sits enthroned against a background of architecture, flowers, and trailing vines, with landscape vistas to the right and left, showing a castle on a hill on one side, and on the other a town and port with shipping. On the end wall of the room the pearl is a votive picture by Giorgione, representing, as was the custom in those days, the portraits of the donor and his wife in the act of adoring the Holy Family. By a curious and fortunate coincidence, Mr. Leyland possesses a separate portrait by Giorgione of the donor depicted in the present composition, and both the votive picture and the portrait, so full of character and so admirable in tone, are perfect examples of the great colorist.

To have hanging on the walls of one's drawing-room specimens of the work of Lippo Lippi, Memling, Giorgione, Luini, is no small privilege, the more so when

those specimens are not merely adequate but of rare excellence. As for Botticelli, the idol and inspirer of so many contemporary English painters, but whom the critics and the public alike neglected twenty years ago, Mr. Leyland was one of the first connoisseurs in England to seek his works and to give them places of honor in the intimacy of his æsthetic life. We have left for the last the four compositions

the middle of the present century, when they were bought by the English collector Mr. Barker, at whose sale, some twenty years ago, they passed into the hands of Mr. Leyland, in a state of perfect freshness and absolute authenticity. As we find amongst the accessories depicted in these compositions the united arms of the Pucci and Bini families, we are perhaps justified in the hypothesis that the pictures



SALON FRONTING PRINCE'S GATE, WITH SCREEN AND BURNE-JONES'S "MERLIN AND VIVIANE."

by Botticelli, which are the chief ornament of this drawing-room. The subject is the touching and miraculous story of Nastagio degli Onesti, related by Boccaccio in the eighth tale of the Fifth Day of the *Decameron*. In his biography of the artist, Vasari tells us that Botticelli painted four pictures with small figures from this tale. "*Similmente in casa Pucci fece di figure piccole la novella del Boccaccio di Nastagio degli Onesti in quattro quadri di pittura molto vaga e bella.*" The four pictures were placed in the Pucci Palace at Florence, we may suppose, about the year 1487, and remained there until

were painted on the occasion of a marriage, probably that of Pier Francesco di Giovanni Bini and Lucrezia Pucci, which was celebrated in the year 1487. We may even carry our conjectures still further and reconstitute a whole love romance, in which we may imagine that Lucrezia had at first disdained the suit of Pier Francesco Bini, and that Boccaccio's story of the punishment of heartless and disdainful maidens may have had some peculiar appropriateness to her case. Boccaccio's tale, the reader may be reminded, is that of a very rich gentleman of Ravenna, Nastagio degli Onesti, who fell madly in love with

a lady of nobler family than himself, but who was so stupidly proud of her birth that the more assiduously he courted her the more cruelly she disdained him. In despair, Nastagio retired with some friends to a country estate near Ravenna, where he had tents pitched magnificently, and spent the time in feasting and joyous company, seeking to forget his grief. But one Friday, being alone and thinking still of the cruelty of his mistress, Nastagio wandered into the neighboring pine forest. Suddenly he was startled from his reverie by piercing cries, and saw, to his horror, a young and beautiful woman pursued by hounds and followed by a man on horseback. Nastagio attempted to intervene, but in vain. The hounds threw the woman, the horseman dismounted, killed her with his lance, cut out her heart, and flung it to be devoured by the dogs. Meanwhile he explained to Nastagio that he was violently in love with this woman, who treated him so cruelly that he killed himself, and was condemned to hell-fire. The woman did not long survive the pleasure which his death gave her. She died soon after, and, not having repented, she too was damned. The punishment imposed upon the unhappy pair was that she should flee before her disdained lover, and that he should pursue her as if she were his greatest enemy for as many years as she made him suffer months. Each time he caught her he pierced her with his lance, tore out her heart, and threw it to his dogs, who devoured it, whereupon the woman immediately resuscitated, and the terrible chase began anew. Incessantly the pursuit goes on, and in every spot where the cruel mistress had done anything to thwart the knight's love, his hounds throw her, and the knight tears out the heart that was always so hard toward himself. Every Friday, the knight informs Nastagio, the chase ends at this point of the forest, only to begin again immediately.

Nastagio at this spectacle was divided between horror and compassion, but reflecting upon what the knight had told him, he conceived a plan whereby the adventure might prove useful to himself. He sent messengers to his parents at Ravenna, telling them that he was ready to follow their advice and give up all thoughts of changing the cruel heart of his disdainful mistress if they would grant him a last favor, namely, to induce

the lady, her parents, and their friends to go to dine with him in his woodland solitude the following Friday. This request was granted readily; Nastagio had his tents pitched and the table spread in the pine forest at the place where he had witnessed the terrible scene; and the following Friday the guests were horrified by the repetition of the spectacle in the midst of the banquet. The young lady in particular was so struck by the application of the adventure to her own case that she made amends to her disdained lover, whose offer of marriage she accepted, and the pair lived happily together ever afterward.

The first of Botticelli's compositions represents Nastagio in the forest of pine-trees, attempting to save the woman from the hounds. The second shows the same forest, with the knight, clad in gold niello armor, tearing out the heart of the woman. In the foreground, the knight, dismounted, flays open the woman's back, while his horse stands watching the scene; to the right, the dogs devour the heart; to the left, Nastagio turns away in horror; and in the background we see the sea-shore and the chase resumed. The third composition represents the dinner party in the pine forest interrupted by the fearful spectacle of the pursuit of the woman by the knight and his hounds. The above compositions seem to have been painted by pupils from Botticelli's designs, for we do not find in the drawing, in the gestures, or in the painting the skill, the grace, and the delicacy of the master himself. The conception of the pictures is wholly due to Botticelli, but, as was the custom in those days, the execution was evidently intrusted by him to other hands working under his supervision. As regards the fourth composition, however, representing the wedding feast of Nastagio, there can be no doubt; it is entirely by the master's own hand, and one of the daintiest of his works.

The whole picture is a completely beautiful vision of life. In a green meadow, constellated with flowers and bathed in soft and warm gray light, such as Botticelli excels in shedding over his fresh and fragrant landscapes, the feast is taking place under the shelter of a splendid arcade supported by twelve Corinthian pillars of blue marble with gilt capitals, five along each side and one at each end. In the background is a triumphal arch adorn-



SECOND SALON.

ed with statues and bass-reliefs; and beyond the arch, in the distance, water, hills, and the monuments of a town. The three pillars in the foreground are decorated with rings, torch-holders, and branches of laurel, and above the capitals are placed the enwreathed escutcheons of the Bini and Pucci families. Two tables are laid, one on each side, parallel with the columns. In the centre of the composition, and in the immediate foreground, is a dresser laden with rich plate and vessels of gold and silver, such as Benvenuto Cellini wrought; and behind the tables are hung, head high, screens of beautiful brocade, fringed with garlands of verdure, which form a sumptuous background to set off the figures. At the table to the right are seated eleven men, on one side of the table only, and at the table on the left, eight maidens, likewise along one side only, while Nastagio alone sits opposite the bride, in an arm-chair of gilt foliated scroll-work. The ladies are clad in robes

of rose, blue, yellow, green, lilac, purple, rose and green, and other delicate combinations, and their sweet and serious faces are turned toward each other in the act of conversation. The men, too, seem absorbed in talking, but at neither table does laughter distort the features of the guests nor unseemly frivolity mar the reposeful dignity of their attitudes or gestures. But conversation is not the sole joy of the feast; the fringed white cloth is strewn with fruits and sweetmeats, which Nastagio offers to the bride in a shallow, blue, gold-rimmed bowl of fine faience, and which the guests eat with knives and forks; to the left and right, too, the servitors, slender and elegant youths, dressed in bright-colored costumes, advance with rhythmic tread and gracefully undulating movements of the body, each one holding aloft a dish wound round with a long scarf-like napkin that streams over his shoulder and floats in the breeze. How charming and precious

in every detail is this representation of a Florentine feast! How minutely refined must this Florentine civilization have been, we may imagine from the notes that are to be found in contemporary memoirs and documents, and more particularly from certain chapters of Francesco Colonna's *Hyperotomachia*, where the curious may read a description of a feast given by Queen Eleutherilda—a literary companion piece to Botticelli's picture.

We need not penetrate into the privacy of the bedchambers of the Leyland house, which are furnished in the English style of the eighteenth century, and, it is needless to add, with the same good taste that characterizes the whole dwelling. Mr. Leyland's own chamber and dressing-room are full of original drawings by Rossetti, whose faithful friend and admirer he was. Indeed, it is the work of Rossetti and Burne-Jones which gives to Mr. Leyland's house its peculiar interest. The Italian pictures are of the choicest, and the like can only be found in the great museums of Europe; but nowhere else, whether in museums or private houses, can you see a collection of the work of Rossetti and Burne-Jones such as Mr. Leyland possesses. On the walls of his rooms hang the masterpieces of both these artists, whose fame is so great and whose works are so little known.

The explanation of this phenomenon is simple. With the exception of his first oil-painting, "The Girlhood of the Virgin," executed in 1849, and three water-colors shown at Liverpool in 1852, Rossetti never exhibited his pictures, nor made any attempt to impose himself upon the public, but lived within a chosen circle of friends and admirers, exercising a sort of occult royalty over a considerable part of the intellectual *élite* of his country. Once only did he again enter the lists, in 1870, when he published his *Poems*, which were a signal for the renewal of the whole so-called pre-Raphaelite question, and for the furious polemics of Swinburne, William Morris, and Buchanan about the "Fleshly School of Poetry." In 1881 Rossetti published another volume of *Poems and Ballads*, which were accepted without protestation; and in 1882 he died, at the age of fifty-four. Burne-Jones, in the same way, shrank from exhibiting in promiscuous company, and the public never saw his work until the Grosvenor Gallery was founded and became the

scene of the final triumph of his master Rossetti and of himself.

In speaking of Rossetti and Burne-Jones we are obliged to refer to the word pre-Raphaelite, which has obtained a hold on the public mind in connection with these men. In reality it would be desirable to blot this word out of our memories, and to consider each man as an individuality, without endeavoring to attach him to an artificial group or school of any kind. Pre-Raphaelitism was a literary rather than an artistic movement. It was an echo of the influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge, of the Tractarian movement, and of the Gothic revival. It was a manifestation of certain moral and philosophical preoccupations that have little in common with the permanent acceptance of art. We might even go further and say that Rossetti and Burne-Jones are great artists not because they were pre-Raphaelites, but in spite of pre-Raphaelitism.

In future years, when we walk through the rooms devoted to the English painters in the National Gallery, we shall sum up the history of the art of the century in a few broad sentences. We shall find that the mass of the English painters have relied simply upon nature, and persistently contented themselves with portraiture, the sentimental drama of daily life, and the patient transcription of the phenomena of sea, sky, and landscape. At the beginning of the century we shall notice that some painters named Barry, Fuseli, West, and Haydon were haunted by poetic ambition, and imagined that it was possible to begin where Raphael and Michaelangelo had left off, and so continue to interest mankind by the rearrangement of lifeless formulæ and worn-out conventions. The productions of these men remain, however, mere historical curiosities. Then we shall observe a change in the current ideals of art and the appropriation of new stores of poetry and romance, of national legend and universal myth. But amidst the leading exponents of the new ideals we shall not distinguish common qualities other than evidences of wide literary culture, a tendency to dreaminess, symbolism, and definiteness of sensible imagery, and a *parti pris* of imitative admiration of the works of the intense and complicated artists of the fifteenth century, like Botticelli, Mantegna, and Memling.

Amongst the artists of this category two



THE BLESSED DAMOZEL.



will be found to stand out with all the force of their poetical and ultra-refined personalities, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones, the former the more original of the two, and the latter the more assimilative, being content in much of his work with variations upon or studies from the masters of the fifteenth century above mentioned.

Rossetti is not a preacher, a symbolist, a moralist, an ascetic, and fervent expounder of abstractions, like Holman Hunt, but he is, nevertheless, equally spiritualist, mystic, and full of personal and recondite meaning. He is the strangest mixture which chance has yet produced of the Latin and the Northern spirit. Of Italian origin, born in England, but having very little English blood in his veins, Rossetti, like the Italian painters of the Renaissance, devoted himself to painting man in preference to nature, but at the same time what attracted him was not the physical man, the human animal, but the inner man.

Therefore he disdains the fine forms of the body, and seeks only expression and that kind of facial beauty which renders expression most manifest. He is mystic in the sense that he seems to have lived in an uninterrupted state of ecstasy, comparable somewhat to that mental attitude of Dante which suppresses the difference between the real and the imaginary, and permits the poet to dwell in "the sphere of the infinite images of the soul." Hence all Rossetti's pictures seem to be dreams full of silence and solemnity. Like his sonnets and ballads, his paintings are visions—visions that are often so personal to himself, so esoteric, that the painting is not completely intelligible without the intervention of the poet's exegesis. Take, for instance, "The Blessed Damozel," with its predella and exquisite frame designed by Rossetti himself. This is, in the first place, a beautiful and impressive object to look upon, suggestive, so far as color is concerned, of the splendor of Giorgione and the Venetian masters, although wholly lacking their technical *maëstria*. As to the subject of the picture, whether we have read the poem or not, we seize the idea of a beautiful young woman who has died in the pride of youth, and who awaits in paradise the coming of her lover, who still dwells upon earth, and whom we see in the predella reclining under a tree and yearning for the lost one as she yearns for

him. Nevertheless, we appreciate the picture more fully when we have read the artist's lyric:

"The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

* * * * *

"And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm,
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm."

In "Veronica Veronese" the mystic intentions are not immediately obvious, nor does any explanation seem necessary. Here is a beautiful blond maiden clad in olive-green velvet, with a white neckerchief and a reddish-purple girdle. She is seated on a dull red chair, and leaning over a table on which are some primroses and a daffodil. As she listens to a canary-bird singing, her fingers stray over the chords of a violin, and before her the paper lies ready to receive the record of the notes. The absolute originality of the composition, which separates the causes in opposite corners of the picture, and unites the effects in the intensely expressive face, at once strikes one. Such an arrangement as this has not been conceived before. No artist has painted hands in such a position. This is something strange, intimate, and at the same time dreamily beautiful, comparable with nothing that ancient or modern art has produced—something so refined, so harmonious in effect, and so complete and direct in expression that the charm is as instantaneous as it is lasting. But even in this case the artist has thought fit to accompany the picture by a few lines of explanation printed on the frame—a quotation from the fictitious letters of Girolama Ridolfi, describing how Veronica wrote the first notes of a composition on a clean sheet of paper; then she grasped her bow in order to realize her dream; but before taking down the instrument she remained an instant motionless, listening to the inspiring bird, while her left hand wandered over the strings seeking the *motif*. It was the marriage of the voices of nature and of the soul, "the dawn of a mystic creation."

We will describe one other picture by Rossetti, which shows him at his best as a

conceiver of beautiful visions, a master of arrangement and composition, a deviser of harmonious and charming completeness. This is a comparatively small work, called the "Loving-Cup," and bearing on the frame the salutation,

"Douce nuit et joyeux jour,
O chevalier de bel amour."

The subject represents a fair young lady advancing toward the spectator, holding in her right hand a golden loving-cup, and in her left the cover. She wears a red robe with long white sleeves. Fixed behind the head, with its brown wavy hair, is a green veil that falls around her neck over the right shoulder. On her neck and bosom are necklaces of coral and pearls. This beautiful blue-eyed maiden is painted against a white background diapered with blue and crossed by a shelf, on which is a row of brass plates, with, on the wall below, some trailing green ivy. This picture is so lovely that even in a simple black and white reproduction it can speak for itself, and dispense with the praise of halting prose.

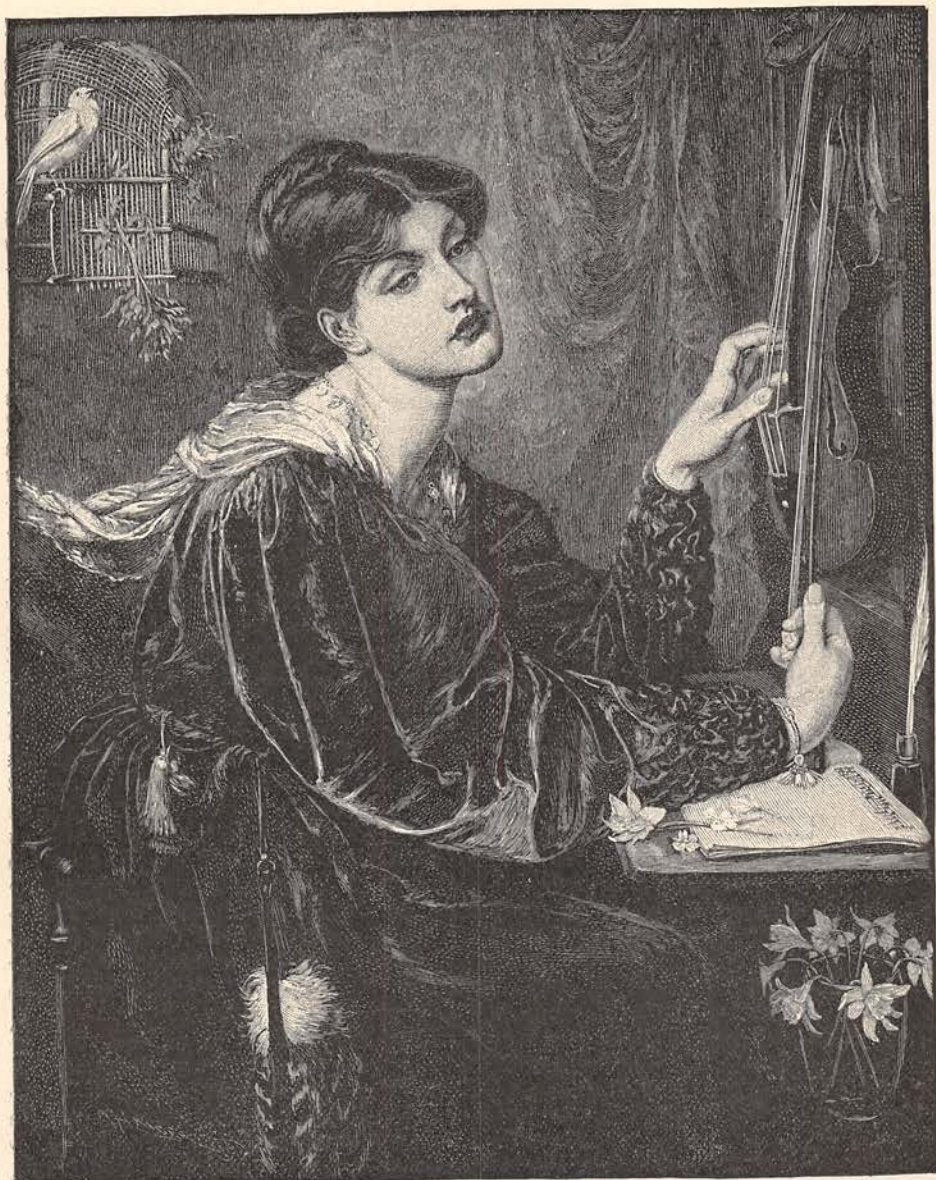
Other pictures by Rossetti are subjects suggested by Dante, by poems of Keats, Coleridge, Tennyson, Robert Browning, the Arthurian cycle, the Bible, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, or Goethe; and various allegorical works bearing sonorous Latin or Italian titles, such as "La Donna della Finestra," "La bella Mano," "Venus Astarte," "Le Ghirlandata," "Ligeia Siren," "Sibylla Palmifera," "La Bionda del Balcone," "Aspecta Medusa," "Hesterna Rosa," etc., all of them essentially literary in their inspiration, many of them virtually illustrations of some particular text, and unintelligible without the help of the precise words referred to, but at the same time remaining sufficiently instinct with purely pictorial genius to enable the spectator to enjoy and appreciate them without comprehending a tithe of the hermetic significations which instigated the artist in his composition.

Edward Burne-Jones is more erudite though less intense than his master, Rossetti. He attaches higher importance to the material representation of a thought than to the thought itself; he is more pagan than Rossetti; he recurs to the myths of antiquity and the vague symbolism of the Middle Ages rather than to the Christian legend; he is greatly

preoccupied with beauty of form; and, unlike Rossetti, whose technical defects are too evident to need particularizing, Burne-Jones is at once a draughtsman and a colorist. On the other hand, his inspiration remains essentially literary and transcendental rather than picturesque; he never paints merely for the pleasure of painting. Burne-Jones has a palette of his own, composed of soft and tender tones that melt into gray harmonies of infinite delicacy, and contrast markedly with the hot colors à la Giorgione in which Rossetti delighted.

Our illustration represents one of Burne-Jones's most exquisite compositions, called "Venus's Mirror," a large picture two yards long, where we see Venus and nine nymphs, blondes or brunettes, grouped around a pool, some standing, some kneeling, and looking at their reflected faces. The scene is laid in an imaginary landscape of hills and mossy lawns, beneath a pale blue, luminous sky, the whole painted with the clearly defined and equal minuteness of Memling. Every cranny in the distant hills is drawn. Every petal of the forget-me-nots that grow around the pool, every vein of the lily leaves that float upon its surface, every sprig of the myrtle bush that Venus fingers as she stands erect in the azure splendor of her divine elegance, is depicted with the most scrupulous exactitude and the most inflexible respect for the minutiae of nature. Each figure is studied in the same patient way. The drapery, of azure, violet, red, purple, lilac, is painted with equal application. Nothing could be more unlike the pictures of the modern realists than this dreamy and highly imaginative rendering of poetic conceptions which seem to float in an atmosphere of beauty that fills the spectator with a sort of religious awe, and carries him away from coarse materialism into a region of tenderly ecstatic reverie.

In the picture of King Cophetua offering his crown to the beggar-maid, in the "Circe," so expressive in the feline attitude of the sorceress, in the "Seven Days of the Creation," "Laus Veneris," "Love in the Ruins," "Day and Night," and "Cupid reviving Psyche," in the Leyland collection, we are struck by the intensity of the artist's imaginative effort, by his marvellous gift of personification, and at the same time by his love of archaism, abstraction, and symbolism. Burne-



ROSSETTI'S "VERONICA VERONESE."

Jones has certainly a personality of his own, but he is as certainly a posthumous disciple of the erudite masters of the fifteenth century.

Were we to attempt to establish any comparison between Burne-Jones and Rossetti, we should note the fact that of all the imaginative painters that England has produced, the former is the only one

whose talents of composition, drawing, and color are sufficient for the adequate rendering of his poetical conceptions, whereas Rossetti's inspiration and intentions are always superior to his treatment. Yet we must not look for fine execution in the work of either of these masters, for they have no conception of painting as Velasquez, Rembrandt, or

Titian understood the art. Fine impasto, *la belle pâte*, the charm of mere material painting, is unknown to them. They have a different conception of art, which in their eyes is something far nobler than a more or less careful representation of nature. Their art is indeed rather literature than painting. Their inspiration, as we have seen, is almost exclusively literary. Rossetti in all his pictures remains a pure poet, a dreamer of visions of profound signification, which he expounds and annotates in poems and sonnets. The qualities of a painter that he has are an impressive and resplendent originality of composition, a delight in rich accessories, and a love of brilliant color in the Venetian taste. His drawing is continually at fault; his technical acquirements are obviously inadequate in all respects, except only in the representation of flowers, the profusion and beauty of which form always so charming a feature in his pictures. But in spite of these faults his pictures have an artistic as well as an incontestable poetical value; they fascinate and move us by the supreme intensity of the expression that he has given to his figures without having recourse to exaggerated gestures or violent movement. Burne-Jones, though more completely equipped than Rossetti as a mere painter, is less vigorous as a poet, and dwells by preference in an atmosphere of slightly monotonous, very delicate, and undoubtedly fascinating tenderness. Of the two, Rossetti is the original genius, and Burne-Jones the accomplished and erudite assimilator of the intellectual attitudes of old masters like Botticelli, Pollajuolo, and Mantegna, of whom he has made himself, so to speak, a spiritual contemporary by dint of a persistent moral and intellectual effort, aided by unerring scholarship and abundant fancy. On the other hand, Rossetti and Burne-Jones are equally admirable in their noble and disinterested conception of the dignity of their art, in their persistent contempt of all that is vulgar and mercantile, and in their faithfulness to an elevating and aristocratic ideal, whose only disadvantage is that it is incomprehensible except to the few.

The moment art rises above the commonplace imitation of reality, the estrangement between the artists and the multitude begins.

The art of Rossetti and Burne-Jones is

not to be judged by the purely material and exterior criticism which would be adequate in the case of a Bastien Lepage or a Dagnan-Bouveret. Any student fresh from the *École des Beaux-Arts* can scoff at the preternaturally swan-like necks, the enormous hands, and the countless physical deformations of Rossetti's ideal women; he may even lament that Burne-Jones does not base either his drawing or his color on a more strict observation of natural truth. But such criticism is vain. We are here in presence of two personal artists whose works either give us pleasure or do not give us pleasure; the record of our impressions will therefore be either an affirmation of joy or of disgust, and that joy or disgust we shall be able to analyze and account for with reference to our own temperaments or to chosen typical temperaments. This is really all we can say with safety. In presence of the variety of the productions of art and of the certain pleasures that we receive from the most diverse manifestations of artistic genius, we feel less and less inclined to pursue the chimeras of criticism based upon principles. Such principles as have hitherto been laid down by authoritative speculators are constantly proving to be inadequate. At one time it is some wholly recalcitrant element, like Japanese art, which at once claims attention and defies judgment upon accepted theories. At another time it is the increasing delicacy of the development of our organs of sight, which requires the entire reformation of all the tenets hitherto applied to the appreciation of landscape painting.

Finally we discover that all our serried battalions of principles are an embarrassment, and our tendency becomes more and more to trust less to dogma than to impressions, for we can be sure of our impressions, but we can never be sure of so-called aesthetic principles. "I know nothing about art, but I know what I like." This remark, so commonly heard, is worthy of respect. It is the obscure cry of the natural man who yearns and craves for sincerity.

To criticise according to given principles is easy. Such is the method of the pedant, of the college essay, and of the docile and malleable citizen who is sincere in a sort of non-personal way, and takes his stand upon a creed, upon authority, and upon that tradition which



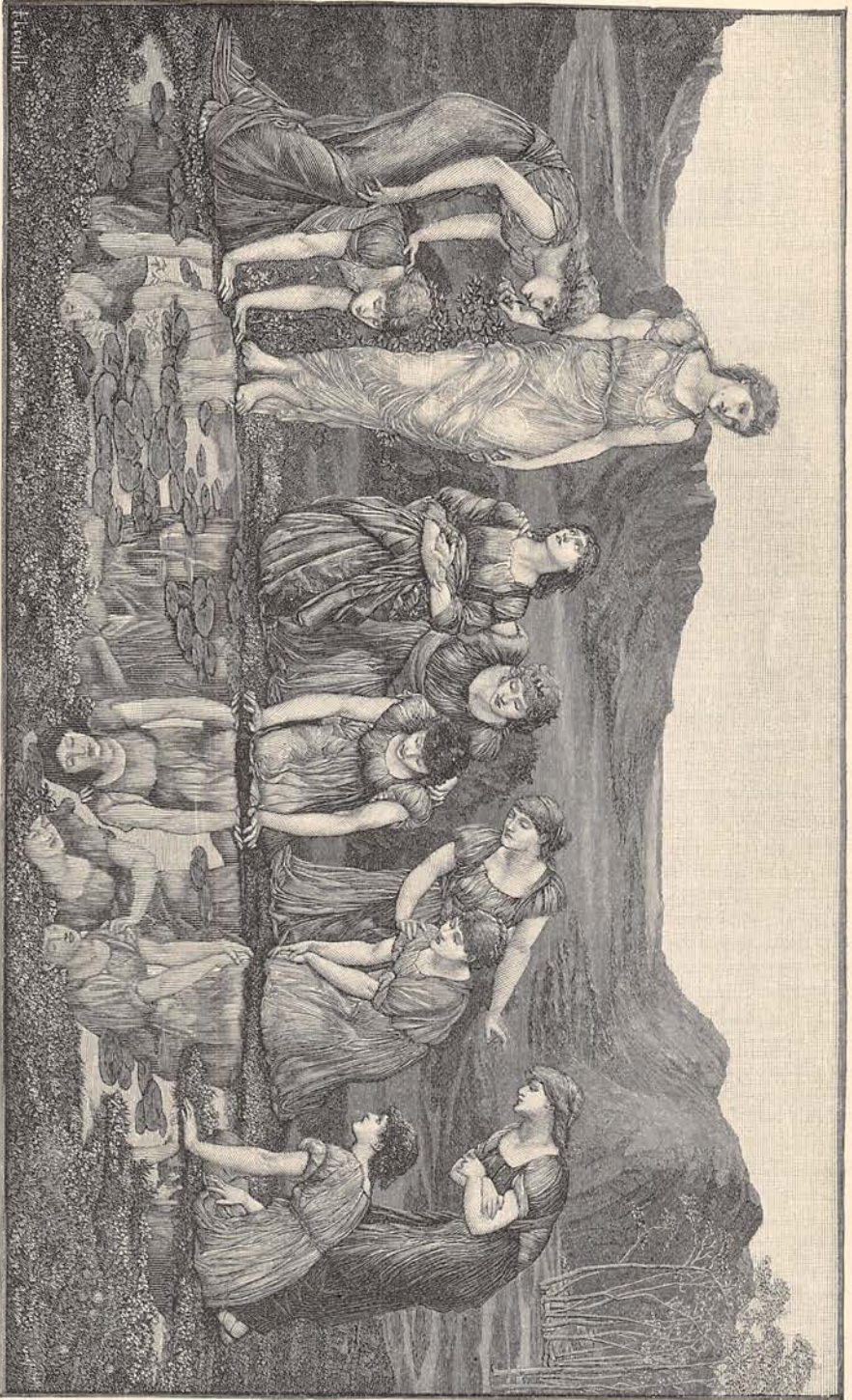
ROSSETTI'S "LOVING-CUP."



BURNE-JONES'S "CIRCE."

requires a bench to be placed for the accommodation of tourists in front of Paul Potter's bull. But, surely, to assimilate and live by cut and dried principles and conventions is a poor occupation for an intelligent man or woman in this our complex and aspiring age. Criticism, like art and literature itself, must follow the movements of the ever-changing spirit of the times, of that *Zeitgeist* which is continually modifying our manners, our thoughts, and our pleasures. What is really valuable and interesting is the record of a sincere impression, and the analysis and explanation of that impression which will render it intelligible to a sympathetic mind. The fact that the people of the past century pronounced Raphael to be divine, and obtained a sum of pleasure from the contemplation of his work, has a retrospective interest. The sincere impressions of a typical and characteristic modern man in presence of Raphael have an immediate interest. The art of Raphael remains the same, but the eyes and the minds of the men of the nineteenth century are widely different from the eyes and minds of the men of the sixteenth century, or even of the men of twenty years ago. That is the rea-

son why effective, didactic, and dictatorial art criticism is a vain illusion. The aim of the critic should be disinterested; he should not say, "This is good," or, "That is bad," or, "This should be admired and that detested," but rather, "These are the impressions which such and such a work produce in my mind, and these are the concomitant circumstances and more or less complete explanations of the æsthetic phenomena which I experience." To such a record of sincere impressions the reader would attach importance according to the sympathetic emotions which they might provoke in him, and according to the esteem in which he might hold the intellectual personality of the writer who emitted them. As Mr. Walter Pater has admirably said in a recent volume, in all questions of the discrimination of schools, whether of art or of literature, and in all controversies between tradition and innovation, whether we are concerned with production or with criticism, "the legitimate contention is not of one age or school of art against another, but of all successive schools alike against the stupidity which is dead to the substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form."



BURNE-JONES'S "VENUS'S MIRROR."