

TOMBS OF ENGLISH ARTISTS.

No. 6.—SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, P.R.A.

Art in England owes much to "Sir Joshua;" he was ever consistent in enforcing its claims to due distinction; and when, with earnest labour, he had won for it an honourably recognised position, he, by his example, upheld the character of the artist, and in thought, word, and deed, was "a gentleman." Plympton may boast of his birth, but London has more reason to be proud of his residence.

The patient self-culture of the Devonshire lad in his somewhat dull home must be read in the pages of his biographers, and he has had many. The history shows, as usual, "that the child is father to the man," and how little comprehension parents sometimes have of their children's soul-struggles. His continuous sketching, and neglect of dull school-routine work, were considered as waste time by his father, when he wrote on the back of one of his drawings, "Done by Joshua, out of pure idleness." How frequently such earnest training has been thus stigmatised by parents who, not understanding the phrase, "As the twig is bent the tree inclines," imagine that they are to bend it as they will! Joshua was "fated" to be a painter—it was no evil fate for him; but it was no act of good fortune that gave him Hudson, the portrait manufacturer, for his master—a complete tradesman in Art, without enthusiasm or fancy; the young painter possessed both, and Hudson could not endure the success his heterodox disregard of mechanical rule evinced, so they parted, little pleased with each other. Reynolds went to Plymouth, practised there for some years, and at the age of twenty-three returned to London, and resided for a time in St. Martin's Lane. Cunningham thus speaks of his position:—"His growing fame and skill acquired and secured friends, and his graceful and unassuming manners were likely to forward his success; he was polite without meanness, and independent without arrogance."

Foreign travel expanded Reynolds's mind soon after this, and his remarks on the great continental galleries evince the judgment of a sound critic, combined with that knowledge of the practical part of Art which few who write on Art possess. He returned in October, 1752, and again established himself in St. Martin's Lane. J. T. Smith describes him as having once lived in the large house behind No. 104, in the lane: Sir James Thornhill, Hogarth's father-in-law, had previously resided in it, and painted the staircase with allegorical subjects; Van Nost, the sculptor, then inhabited it, and afterwards Francis Hayman, the great book-plate designer, and companion of Hogarth. Malone describes its situation "nearly opposite to May's Buildings." At this period the locality was a favourite one for artists, and in a court at the lower part of the lane was the first "joint-stock" Academy supported by English artists for their own use, and which led to the foundation of the Royal Academy on the 10th of December, 1768, with Reynolds as its president, knighted on the occasion.

Long before this event he had left St. Martin's Lane, to reside in the house, now No. 5, on the north side of Great Newport Street, from whence he removed, in 1761, to Leicester Square, inhabiting the house now used for the Western Literary Institution (No. 47, on the west side): here he kept "open house" for the best literary society—Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke, Garrick—all who made the era famous were welcome to his house. At that time the square was "aristocratic"—nay, pastoral, for it occasionally rejoiced in the name of "Leicester Fields," and was as much in the outskirts of London as Bayswater is in the present day. The square itself was a pleasant garden, and our sketch of the house was taken thirty years ago, when trees flourished there, and a statue of George II., in the centre, was opposite his windows, as if to remind the President of "the Royal" Academy that Art had triumphed over a sovereign who hated poets and painters.

His studio is described by Cunningham as "octagonal, some 20 feet long, 16 broad, and about 15 feet high. The window was small and square, and the sill 9 feet from the floor. His sitters' chair moved on castors, and stood above the floor a foot and a half; he held his palettes by a handle, and the sticks of his brushes were 18 inches long.

He wrought standing, and with great celerity. He rose early, breakfasted at nine, entered his study at ten, examined designs, or touched unfinished portraits, till eleven brought a sitter; painted till four, then dressed, and gave the evening to company." Then came "the rough abundance" of his dinners, and the noisy hilarity of his guests; "for," says Northcote, "as Sir Joshua's companions were chiefly men of genius, they were often disputatious and vehement in argument." But age came, and death

thinned the numbers of the talented friends who were once his frequent companions. Cunningham has a melancholy story of his last days, when a little bird he had tamed, and talked with as a friend, flew from an open window, and Reynolds roamed for hours about Leicester Square in a vain search for the feathered favourite, rendered doubly dear to the old man by his loneliness.

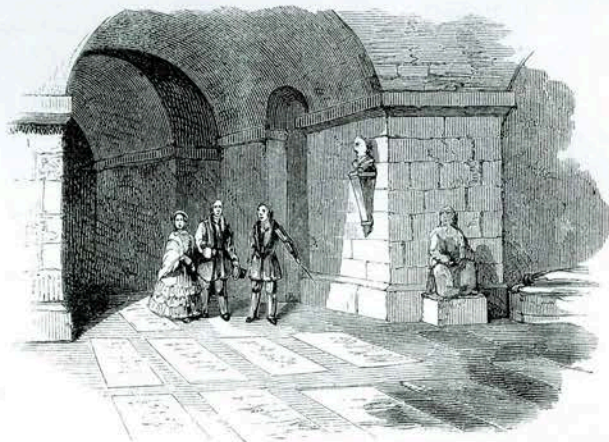
He died on the 23rd of February, 1792, and a long procession of ninety-two carriages followed the



REYNOLDS'S HOUSE, LEICESTER SQUARE.

hearse that conveyed his body from the house he had so long inhabited to the crypt of St. Paul's. There, among other great names in Art, the last resting-place of Reynolds may be noted. Our cut shows the grave-stones as they lie thickly in this spot. What names are upon them to call up pleasant memories of men who have made English Art famous! Lawrence, West, Dance, are on the upper stones; Turner, Barry, Reynolds, on the lower; Fuseli, Dawe, and Opie, beside them. It is sacred

ground, and no spot of "mother earth" can show an equal number of names, all noted in a great and ennobling profession, "at rest from their labours." Reynolds's tomb is the third from the spectators left in the front row of slabs. There is a solemn influence over the whole scene—the stronger perhaps for the solitude and gloom which the visitor experiences immediately after the turmoil of the busiest of London thoroughfares, which he has just left to descend into these vaults.



CRYPT OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

We bid adieu to the grave of our great countryman, remembering the noble epitome of his character pronounced by his eloquent friend, Edmund Burke—"In full influence of foreign and domestic fame, admired by the expert in Art, and by the learned in Science, courted by the great, caressed by sovereign powers, and celebrated by distinguished poets, his native humility, modesty, and candour, never forsook him, even on surprise or provocation; nor was the least degree of arrogance or assumption visible to the most scrutinizing eye in any part of his conduct or discourse."

A statue, by Flaxman, is placed in the corridor beneath the dome of St. Paul's. It represents Reynolds in his robes as president, with the volume of his lectures in his hand. He is the only artist so honoured there, and the simple propriety of the figure casts into shade the allegories, "and such branches of learning," which disfigure many other memorials in the sacred edifice. It is a honest statue of an Englishman, by a true artist, who, poetic in the highest sense, could also feel the beauty of simple truth where truth is chiefly valuable.

F. W. FAIRHOLT.