



BY FREDERIC LEES.

AMONG those who visited the Royal Academy Exhibition of three years ago there must be quite a number who (interested in the revival of what has erroneously been called a lost art—the art of miniature-painting) noticed with delight two or three portraits with yellow backgrounds, which far surpassed all other miniatures on view, both for delicacy of colouring and perfection of workmanship. Whatever those particular portraits expressed to the majority

of people, they were a revelation, I know, to some who looked into that case of miniatures in the water-colour-room. There was work which exactly accorded with one's preconceived ideas of a good miniature: no servilely stippled copy of the work of the old school of miniature-painters, like the rest on view without exception, but painting done as we understand large pictures are painted, and with a fluency which is observable only in what is best in art. The lady artist, Madame

Debillemont-Chardon, who sent those miniatures to the Academy, was quite unknown in England at the time, although she had for years been known in Paris as a miniaturist of very great talent. Since then competent judges, both on this side of the Channel and on the other, have not hesitated to say that she is without doubt the cleverest of all those who make a speciality of miniature-painting.

Frenchwomen have made enormous strides in art of recent years, and the last Exposition de Femmes Peintres held in Paris was as good a pledge for work of great merit in the future as could be desired. The interiors of Mesdemoiselles E. G. Cohen, Madeleine Fleury, Nina Gallay; the landscapes of Madame Marie Duhem and Mademoiselle Florence Esté; the pictures of still life of Madame Louise Desbordes; and the portraits of Madame Camille Métra;—are all excellent in their way; and when to those names one adds those of Madame Rosa



PORTRAIT OF AN OLD LADY.

Bonheur, Mademoiselle Louise Abbéma, Madame Debillemont-Chardon has succeeded to such a degree in the most difficult branch of art which she has elected to practise. There can be no doubt about miniature-painting being one of the most difficult

branches of art: it is useless to attempt to do really first-class work unless one is endowed with "an infinite capacity for taking pains"; useless, too, unless one's drawing is irreproachable.

artists are endowed with originality, indicates at any rate their capacity for much solid, persevering work on the old lines. As a matter of fact, women will be found, generally speaking, to succeed quite as well, as if not sometimes better than, men in work requiring infinite patience and care of manipulation. This, in all probability, is the reason why



A SYMPHONY IN WHITE.

“To revive the art of miniature-painting,” said the subject of this article to me recently, “you must infuse new blood into it.” As a matter of fact, there is little use

in copying the methods of the old miniaturists, —J. B. Isabey *père*, Augustin, Saint, Mansion, Maxime David, or Cosway, among men, and Madame de Mirbel, Madame Herbelin, or Madame Avriane, among women,—for that will result in little more than tinted photographs, or at most pictures remarkable only for their mechanical finish. Quite different are the methods employed by Madame Debillemont-Chardon, who, whilst prizing the work of the old masters on account of its rarity, considers that too much value is often placed upon it as miniature work. In order to avoid the monotonous effect resulting from stippling, she paints a miniature exactly as she paints a picture, putting on the colour in small washes, without using the point of the brush under any circumstances. Upon consideration, this is the only sensible way of doing a miniature. Naturally the hair wants a different treatment from the face, the dress a different treatment from the background, and so on, otherwise the result would be monotonous in the extreme. One thing will be observed from Madame Debillemont-Chardon's miniatures, some choice reproductions of which accompany this article: they are not "loaded" with colour—that is, the artist has endeavoured to preserve the quality of the ivory (one of the choicest substances you can have to paint upon) as much as possible, as regards both texture and colour. This is particularly noticeable in such examples as "Portrait of a Young Lady," "The Grandmother," and "Darby and Joan." Another thing will be seen in her work: she does more than paint mere portraits. In "Ready for the Ball" is a lamp-light study which, though painted on only a few square inches of ivory, is as complete a picture as though it were a life-size oil-painting. This also applies to the "Symphony in Green," a carefully thought out piece of work, in which there is quite as much breadth as in many a large Academy picture, and at the same time all the detail which one looks for in these portraits in little.

In regard to drawing, Madame

Debillemont-Chardon believes with Harpignies that only by perfect accuracy can you attain *le beau dans le vrai*. Bad drawing shows much more in a miniature than in a large picture. Success depends so much on beauty of line that this French lady artist does not mind what trouble she takes so long as the drawing is scrupulously accurate. Thus she draws many of her subject miniatures four or five times as large as she intends to paint them, afterwards reducing them down to the required size, and at each reduction correcting or removing unnecessary lines.

The reputation which Madame Debillemont-Chardon has won for herself in the world of art has not been the work of a few short years. Her position has been gained only after many years of patient toil, and although she took lessons in her early days from the Marquis de Pommeyrac, who was miniature-painter to Napoleon III., as well as from others, she may practically be said to be self-taught.

The Debillemonts are an old Bourguignon family, noted for their musical taste. M.



A SYMPHONY IN GREEN.

Debillemont, the father of Madame Debillemont-Chardon, was indeed a composer of great talent. He was at one time *chef d'orchestre* at the Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre, and several works of his were successfully produced at the old Théâtre-Lyrique in Paris. One of his daughters, Jane, was received at the Conservatoire de Musique; the other, Gabrielle, who was born at Dijon, showed a taste for painting, which was encouraged by her parents even before they left the provinces for the capital. Madame

Debillemont-Chardon relates that her first drawing-master was a modest railway employé, for whose talent she had a most profound admiration in the days of her youth. Later, when she saw the *chefs-d'œuvre des chefs-d'œuvre* of her master, she was seized with fits of uncontrollable laughter at their primitive grotesqueness. It was at the age of fourteen that she commenced to take lessons from the Marquis de Pommeyrac. This miniature-painter was a man of strange character; he was undoubtedly possessed of talent,



PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

but he was jealous at the success of his pupils, as witness his annoyance when Mademoiselle Debillemont had four portraits received at the Salon. "C'est étonnant comme cette année on reçoit des cochonneries au Salon," was his amiable remark upon hearing of the young girl's success! A little later she took lessons from another artist, Emile Lévy, a former Prix de Rome, whose delicate talent suited admirably the special kind of work which she had taken up. The rising young miniaturist took her first prize at the competition of the subventioned schools of the Ville de Paris, and soon afterwards, at a remarkably early age, secured her professor's certificate.

Madame Debillemont-Chardon has, I believe, exhibited at the Salon des Champs-Élysées, at the Union des Femmes Peintres, at the Royal Academy, at the Grafton Gallery, and at the exhibitions of the London Society of Miniature-Painters. She sent five portraits in 1890 to the Salon; seven portraits and a study of a Breton woman in 1892; four portraits, including one of her mother and another of her grandmother, a study entitled "La Nuit," and a large pastel, "La Tondeur," in 1893; nine portraits and a pastel, "La Belle Fromagère," in 1894; ten portraits in 1895; and nine portraits in



A NOCTURNE.

1896. The year 1894 is noteworthy as that in which she received her third medal from the Salon des Champs-Élysées, and a prize of four hundred francs (founded by Maxime David, the miniaturist) from the Institut de France. But these are by no means the only honours which she has received. In 1896 she was presented with the rosette of an officer of Public Instruction; and in February, 1897, the Union des Femmes

Peintres et Sculpteurs awarded her its first prize of five hundred francs, the Prix Bertaux, upon her sending to that year's exhibition of the society twenty portraits and an exceedingly fine study of a cardinal, entitled "Le Liseur."

Some time ago Madame Debillemont-Chardon was directress of the Ecole de Dessin of the tenth arrondissement in Paris, but she found that the time needed to give instruction there seriously interfered with her work as a miniaturist who was rapidly becoming known over nearly the whole of France. She had, therefore, to resign her position. At the present time I do not think I am far wrong in saying that she is the busiest woman in Paris. Many are the aristocratic families of France who have gone to her to have miniatures painted, just as their ancestors went to Isabey *père* and Maxime David; and hardly a week goes by without some one of noble birth from the provinces who is *en passage* in Paris calling at her house in the Rue Nouvelle with a

commission which must be executed within a certain time. Sometimes it is very difficult to carry out these commissions, for I have said enough about Madame Debillemont-Chardon's work and methods to show that she does not paint her miniatures in a hurry. Generally speaking, about six sittings of one hour each must be given. How many hours must be devoted to work on the miniature between times will be known by any one who has tried his or her hand at this branch of art. In the case of a composition, much longer time is needed. Then, quite apart from commissions, Madame Debillemont-Chardon has a large number of pupils (French, English, and American), who assemble twice a week in that bright little studio of hers to draw from the living model. There are some people, I am told, who do miniatures from photographs; but satisfactory work cannot be done in that way. Madame Debillemont-Chardon's pupils are trained to draw and paint just as they would be in any other Paris studio where serious work is done.



DARBY AND JOAN.



AN ART CLASS AT MADAME DEBILLEMONT-CHARDON'S.

And when not drawing from the model, students can find many other better ways of training themselves than by copying photographs. She recommends them to make studies of still life subjects; the most ordinary objects (for instance, pots of flowers with a background of curtains or wall-paper) are

found excellent for home practice. Once a year an exhibition of her pupils' work is held.

To give some idea of the success of Madame Debillemont-Chardon's teaching, I may add that thirty of her pupils had miniatures received at the Salon des Champs-Elysées in 1896.



## Two Silences:

BY ZOË PROCTER.

A DOOR that is shut, where thousands wait  
 And listen for whisper or breath;  
 But never a sound comes through the gate:  
 And this is the silence of Death.

But more than the souls who throng that door  
 Are those in the tide of the strife,  
 Who ask for a word to still the roar:  
 And this is the silence of Life.