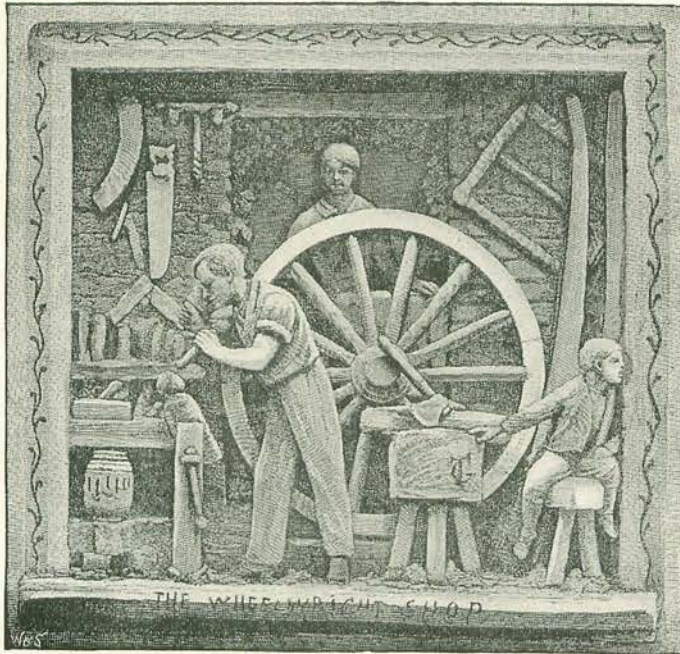


THE POWER OF LIGHT.

George Tinworth and his Work.

BY EDWARD SALMON.



THE WHEELWRIGHT'S SHOP.

(With Portrait of Mr. Tinworth when a boy.)

ALLEXANDER POPE has recorded of himself that he lisped in numbers, for the numbers came. That is to say, he wrote poetry because he could not help it. In the same way, the subject of this sketch, Mr. George Tinworth, whose work in terracotta is now, we may safely say, world famous, is an artist because he came into existence one. Like the poet, the true artist must be born; he cannot be made. Being born, his genius will not fail to assert itself against time and all obstacles. A better instance of this truism could not be found than Mr. Tinworth. If his becoming an artist had depended on his early education, he would never have been what he is to-day. Born in a poor neighbourhood, of poor parents, without a relative or friend of artistic sympathy or inclination, it is, we think, one of the most extraordinary facts in Nature, and one of the

most remarkable proofs forthcoming of the superiority of spirit over matter, of mind over body, that he should from the first have been a sculptor. There was no external inducement to him to become an artist; there was, indeed, every inducement to him to become anything but an artist. But art was part of his nature; it was irrepresible, irresistible; and, like a beautiful flower in a weed-grown garden, a veritable product of mother earth, absolutely untended by man, it sprung into existence, until one day the gardener had it brought before him, and fostered it with a loving care due to a perfect perception of the treasure he had found.

One glance at the pictures which accompany this paper will convey to those of our readers who may never have had an opportunity of examining Mr. Tinworth's work some notion of its excellence from whatever point of view we may look at it. It is almost incredible that Mr. Tinworth is

an absolutely self-educated and self-made man. There is that indefinable something about his work—a blend of culture, genius, assimilation of ideas—which suggests that he must have been born into an art atmosphere, must have inherited artistic faculties, and have received constant encouragement from his friends in his attempts to body forth the forms of things. Precisely the opposite is the truth. George Tinworth first saw the light on the 5th of November, 1843, having been born near Camberwell Gate, Walworth. His father was a wheelwright, doing indifferent business in that busy, overcrowded, uninviting, and then, even more than now, dreary part of the great metropolis. George Tinworth was intended by his parents for the calling in which his father did little good for himself, and in the uncongenial surroundings of the wheelwright's shop he spent his early days. It would be interesting, if it were possible to trace it, to know what created the feverish desire which as a small boy he exhibited to become a sculptor. The first things he ever succeeded in cutting out—without, be it remembered, any sort of hint as to the technique of the subject—were some wooden butter stamps. He also carved small wooden figures. Mr. Tinworth's reminiscences of his boyhood are naturally deeply interesting. One incident in it is illustrated in a picture which Mr. Tinworth has himself modelled, and which is reproduced at the head of this article. It shows the wheelwright's shop, and the lad standing at a vice, carving a figure out of a block of wood with hammer and chisel. At the window a small boy keeps watch for the return of Mr. Tinworth, senior, who may be back at any minute. Directly the signal is given, the figure is hidden out of sight and the work of the shop is resumed. On occasions the small boy turned traitor, and failed to report the father's approach, in which case the aspirant sculptor would get into serious trouble. "In the eyes of the elder Mr. Tinworth," says Mr. Edmund Gosse, with unusual accuracy, "such trifling as this was mere wicked waste of time that ought to be better spent in tinkering up a costermonger's broken cart." Once young Tinworth commenced carving a head with a nail and stone, for the amusement of himself and some other boys, on a poor woman's doorstep. He set to work on the hard stone, and had made considerable progress with the head when the woman

appeared. The boys all bolted, and though the good soul, who perhaps recognised the lad's ability, called out to him to come back and finish it, he refused to be persuaded that his doorstep decoration was sufficiently appreciated to save him from a wiggling.

In 1861, when Mr. Tinworth was eighteen, he heard of a school of fine art in Lambeth, and immediately turned his thoughts to becoming a pupil. The school was then under the direction of Mr. J. Sparkes, one of the ablest art instructors, probably, who ever lived. Attracted to the school as by a magnet, young Tinworth used to go with a friend to have a look at the place. He found it difficult to muster up courage to enter, but one night luck favoured him. He carried with him a small head of Handel, and met Mr. Sparkes at the door. One can imagine the trembling hand which held out the little figure, carved with a hammer and chisel from a piece of sandstone, for the great man to examine. Mr. Sparkes recognised the subject. "Oh, Handel," he said. The boy was delighted, and only later remembered that he had scratched Handel's name on it, which Mr. Sparkes had noticed. The lad was invited in, and Mr. Sparkes was quick to detect the stuff of which he was made. For some years Tinworth was a pupil at the Lambeth Schools, his progress being very rapid. Mr. Gosse has credited him with working all night sometimes, but this, he assures us, he never did. In 1864 he was admitted to the schools of the Royal Academy, a model of "Hercules," executed under the direction of Mr. Sparkes, having paved the way. The next year he won a silver medal, and was congratulated by Sir William Boxall for a life study. In 1867 he secured the first silver medal in the Life School. Meanwhile he had become an exhibitor at the Royal Academy. In 1866 he sent in a group of figures called "Peace and Wrath in Low Life." It depicted a scene common enough in slum life. Two street arabs were engaged in a stiff fight; two little girls were interfering, and a dog barked in huge delight at the battle.

The bare record of Mr. Tinworth's work might leave the impression that life at this period had begun to grow brighter for him. So far, however, his studies had been a luxury pure and simple. No sort of opening occurred in which he could utilise his peculiar talents. He had mastered his art, and he had broken down the opposi-

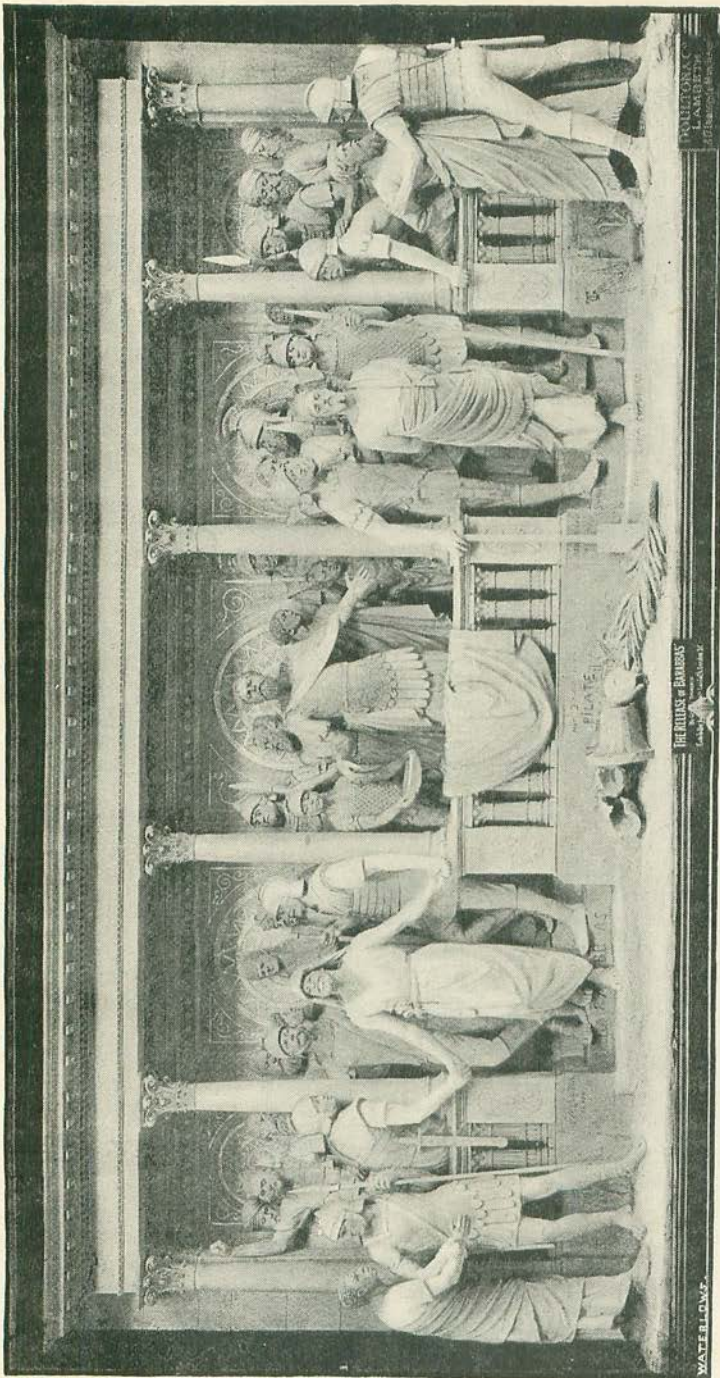


tion of his father; but he was still a wheelwright. About this time his father died, and the young doctor of broken-down vehicles, as we may call him, in order to support his mother had to work still harder at a trade which grew more and more distasteful. He made a bare thirty shillings a week, and modest as were his requirements it would have been strange if more congenial employment could not be found to yield him as much.

Mr. Sparkes, ever his good friend, kept a sharp lookout for an opportunity of enabling him to change his vocation. The opportunity came at last in the revival of art manufactures, which took place in England as the result of the Paris Exhibition of 1867. Amongst those who profited

most by the revival was Mr. (now Sir) Henry Doulton. To send his pottery forth to the world as something more than mere earthenware was his object, and Mr. Sparkes rightly concluded that the man to assist Mr. Doulton was his young pupil. Mr. Doulton gladly gave him thirty shillings a week to start with. After touching up pottery moulds for a time, Tinworth was allowed to exercise his powers of

WAITING FOR THE HEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.



invention by modelling filters. He also copied some ancient Greek and Sicilian coins, executing them in terra cotta many times their original size. It was some of these medallions which first attracted the

Mr. G. E. Street, R.A., the architect of the Strand Law Courts, determined if possible to utilise his peculiar powers. Mr. Street was engaged upon York Minster and the Military Chapel in Birdcage-walk, and

notice of Mr. Ruskin, who has been among Tinworth's warmest admirers. In 1869 Mr. Tinworth completed the fountain designed by his master, which visitors to Kennington Park will know; a little later he executed the Amazon Vase, now in Fairmont Park, Philadelphia; and in 1871 he planned a handsome salt-cellar for Mr. Doulton, on the sides of which were pictured four scenes from the last hours of Christ.

It would be tedious, if it were not well-nigh impossible, to give anything like a detailed account of the many hundreds of admirable scenes which Mr. Tinworth has executed in terracotta, sometimes wholly, sometimes partly in relief, sometimes inches in depth and width, sometimes feet. The work by which he has become famous has been nearly all Biblical. His sculpture in the Academy in 1874-5-6 was sufficiently remarkable in treatment to make people anxious to secure specimens of his genius. In particular, Mr. Ruskin became as strongly convinced of his genius as he is of Turner's, and whilst Mr. Ruskin was not slow to tell the world what he thought of Mr. Tinworth, the late

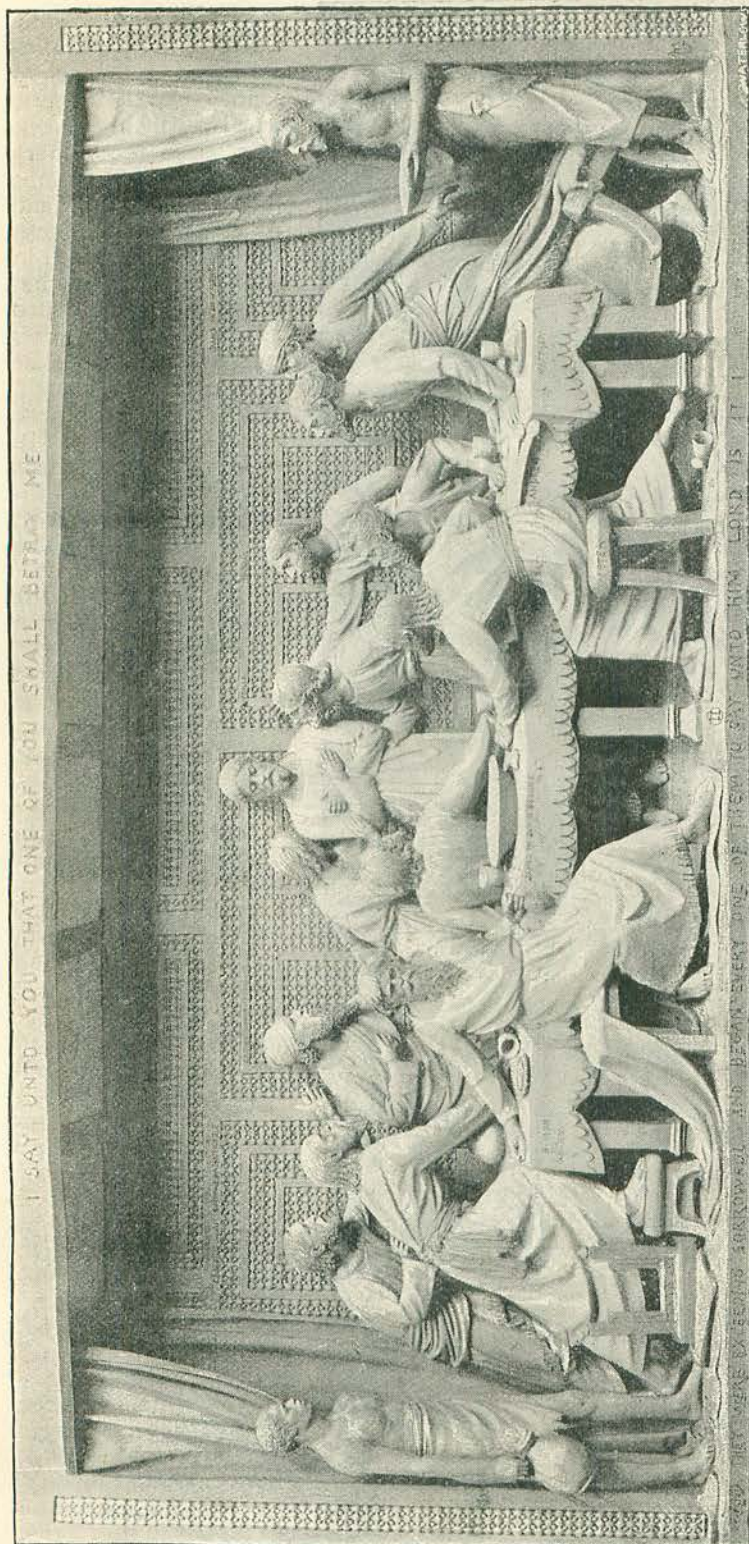


THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

having secured from Messrs. Doulton a terra-cotta of a tint to suit his purpose, Mr. Street gave, or got, Mr. Tinworth

Cheshire; a portrait panel of Lord Shaftesbury in the Shaftesbury Institute, and another of Mr. Samuel Morley in the Morley

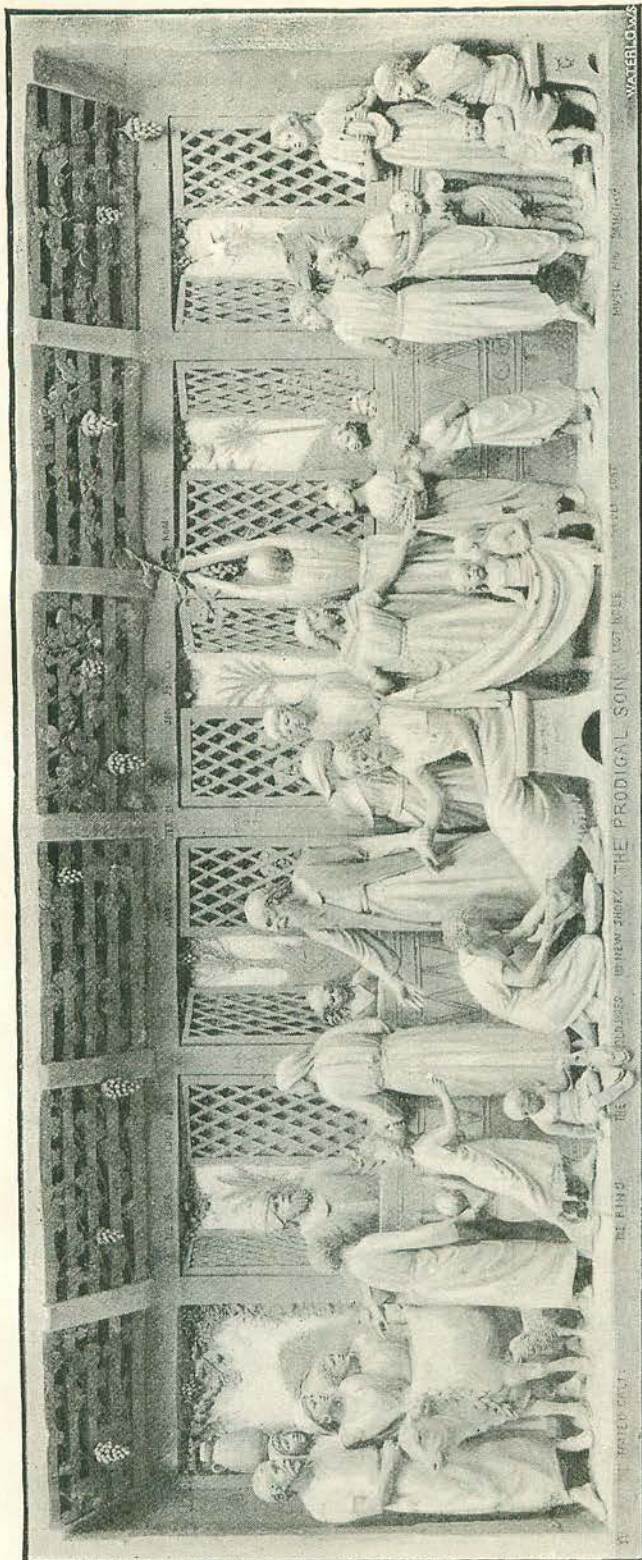
commissions to execute a reredos for York Minster, and twenty-eight semicircular terra-cotta panels which anyone may see in the Military Chapel. This was some fifteen years ago, and may be regarded as confirming Mr. Tinworth in the line of art he has since exploited to such advantage. Where his work has all gone he does not know himself. It is scattered over the face of the globe. In addition to those panels just mentioned, "Gethsemane," "The Foot of the Cross," and "The Descent from the Cross" are to be found in the Edinburgh Museum; "The Brazen Serpent" and a second panel of "The Descent from the Cross" are in Sandringham Church; "The Last Supper" is in Walthamle-Willows Church; "Touch Me Not" is in Tisbury Church, near Salisbury; "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes" is in Bengoe Church, Hertford; "Christ Before Herod," a panel some 20 ft. by 10 ft., worth travelling far to see, is in Messrs. Doulton's show room at Lambeth; "The Ascension" is in St. Mary Magdalene's at Upper Tooting; whilst panels for the reredos and font of the English Church, built by Sir A.W. Blomfield at Copenhagen; panels of "Temptation," "Faith," "Darkness," and "Light" forming the memorial to the late Mr. Bromley-Davenport at Capesthorpe, Cheshire; a portrait panel of Lord Shaftesbury in the Shaftesbury Institute, and another of Mr. Samuel Morley in the Morley



THE LAST SUPPER.

Memorial College, are all evidence of the wide demand which in recent years has been made on Mr. Tinworth's ability. A mere list of the names and homes of his works would fill many pages of *THE STRAND MAGAZINE*. It is gratifying to know that they are as highly appreciated abroad as at home. He was given bronze medals in Vienna in 1873 and in America in 1876, a silver medal and decoration in Paris in 1878, and a gold medal at Nice in 1884. Also decorated by the French Government for his exhibit in the 1878 Exhibition.

Mr. Tinworth's panels constitute what has been aptly called "The Bible in Sculpture." From the plucking of the apple by Eve right away through the sacred volume to the last days of Jesus on earth, few important incidents have escaped his hand. The story he has to tell is that of Holy Writ. His religious predilection, unlike his artistic, is easy to account for. His mother belonged to a strict Nonconformist sect, and taught her boy his Bible almost as she taught him to speak. He knew every chapter thoroughly, long before he contemplated attempting to



convey to others his conception of what it was all about. Tinworth's success with the Bible justifies a wonder and, perhaps, even a regret that he has not tried his hand at, say, some of the scenes in Shakespeare. He has, we believe, only once essayed a subject of importance not Biblical, namely, "The Sons of Cydippe," suggested by a poem of Mr. Gosse's. The artist seems to have little sympathy with scenes outside Scripture, and no doubt Mr. Gosse is correct when he says that, as Mrs. Tinworth trained her son to look upon all other literature as dross, so "to this day the Bible remains the only book which he reads without indifference."

If we might make a choice where all are so admirable, we should be inclined to pronounce Mr. Tinworth's treatment of subjects from the New Testament as pre-eminently his triumph. He does in sculpture for the story of Christ what is done every ten years on the boards in the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play. Mr. Tinworth is an evangelist in art. Just as the Passion Play is intended to point the moral of the wondrous narrative of the Saviour's sojourn on earth, so Mr. Tinworth freely admits that he forgets his art in his regard for the story he has to tell. The highest compliment we can pay him in all sincerity is to confess that he makes most of us forget it also.

Let us take the half-dozen panels which we reproduce. They are like pictures of living beings. "Waiting for the Head of John the Baptist" is a presentment of a tragic instance of woman's unrighteous influence such as few men could give us. On the left of the picture stands Herodias, cruel, hard, revengeful, who



TUG OF WAR.

has just bidden her daughter ask for the head of John the Baptist. Herod had taken an oath to give her whatever she demands, little expecting that it would be this, and



CROSSING THE CHANNEL.

we see him plunged in an agony of grief, his face buried in his arms on the table. Around are guests, whose countenances—handsome, lifelike—are full of anxious curiosity. One needs only to note their expression to realise that the moment is one of pain and shame. Again, a very indifferent acquaintance with the circumstances of the judgment of Pilate is necessary to enable us to grasp the full significance of "The Release of Barabbas."

In the centre stands Pilate, who has appealed to the multitude to make a choice between Barabbas and Christ. The scoffer to-day describes the event as the first popular election, and in the selection of the Son of God for punishment, and the release of the sinner, finds one of his texts for arguments against universal suffrage. Contemplation of this picture is enough to induce one to believe the scoffer is right. The smile of triumph on the face of Barabbas, and the beautiful resignation of Christ—note the head thrown slightly back in noble dignity, the eyes slightly closed in pained consciousness of a great misjudgment—are realism itself.

If that populace had reversed their verdict, and Christ had been freed, whilst Barabbas had been led forth captive and condemned, there would have been no calm acceptance of the judgment on the one hand, nor sinister smile of triumph on the other. If any among us fails to understand the character of the God-Man doomed to die to save souls, let him look into the face presented to us in "The Good Shepherd,"



"G. T.—HIS MUG."

and in the central figure of "The Power of Light." Mr. Tinworth makes the ideal so real for us, that what has been, perhaps, mostly a tradition, becomes entirely a living fact. Whether it is Christ mocked at before Herod, or present at the Last Supper, declaring that one of the Apostles shall betray Him, or blessing the little children, Mr. Tinworth's conception of Him is, as we have said, so perfect in its art, that it never occurs to us to inquire whether he is right in this technical detail or that: we think only of the beautiful and pathetic story. "The Prodigal Son" illustrates one of the most striking parables by which Christ enforced His teaching.

Like most geniuses, Mr. Tinworth allows himself moments of relaxation. He possesses a vein of humour not less pronounced at times than his power of treating the grandest subjects. He seems very conscious of the truth of the adage that the ridiculous and the sublime are never far apart, and even in so pathetic a picture as "Waiting for the Head of John the Baptist," it will be seen he has introduced a monkey, whose action forms a relief to the sombre features of the picture. In a panel of "Daniel in the Lions' Den" a young lion stands on his hind legs to read something on the wall. It is Psalm xci. which says, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot." The young lion's concern is explicable immediately, and even Daniel's peril for the moment cannot prevent a smile from the spectator. As a rule, however, Mr.

Tinworth's humour has found vent in the devising of small ornaments. He has shown considerable partiality for mice and frogs.

In a characteristic piece, "The Tug of War," which we illustrate, the mice and frogs are striving hard for the mastery. No doubt a good many of our readers have in their homes a little boatload of mice in Doulton ware, called "Cockneys at Brighton," in which some half-dozen mice are indulging in the favourite pastime of the Cockney at the seaside. One plays a concertina in the stern of the boat, and another in the bows hangs his head over the side in a dreadfully bilious manner. It is unpleasant to have to record that the mice have exhibited an utter want of grati-

tude for the immortality conferred upon them. Some of them recently ate away a portion of Mr. Tinworth's nether garments, and having declared war not only against the frogs but against the man who was equally fond of both, Mr. Tinworth has felt himself compelled to buy a mouse-trap,

in which many of them play the parts of criminals instead of holiday-makers. A mug in Doulton ware contains a profile of Mr. Tinworth, which he facetiously describes as "G. T., his mug." In Henry VIII. he modelled in miniature, "A man who found marriage a failure, and liked it to be so." "Cupid Sharpening his Arrows" is a characteristic little piece. Mr. Pickwick has also taken Mr. Tinworth's fancy, and a complete set of Æsop's Fables is

among his less pretentious work.

Incomplete as this account of Mr. Tinworth's work must necessarily be, enough



MARRIAGE A FAILURE.



CUPID SHARPENING HIS ARROWS.

has been said to explain why it is that he has won the praise of, and made friends among, the greatest of artists and art commentators and critics. Mr. Ruskin puts the matter with his usual brilliancy and force when he says: "After all the labours of past art on the life of Christ, here is an English workman fastening, with more decision than I recollect in any of them, on the gist of the sin of the Jews and their rulers, in the choice of Barabbas, and making the physical fact of contrast between the man released and the man condemned clearly visible. We must receive it, I suppose, as a flash of really prophetic intelligence on the question of universal suffrage." Working away in the studio which Messrs. Doulton have provided for him at the top of their premises in Lambeth,—where he is shown in our

illustration engaged on a sketch model of the late Professor Fawcett,—he gets many an inspiration. Ever since Christ disappeared from the world, artists with palette and brush, or mallet and chisel, or moist clay, have sought to embody the events of the age in which He lived. To none has it been given to present pictures of the actors and actresses of that momentous time more living and vivid than those of Mr. Tinworth; whilst the elucidation of the story of Holy Writ in its fulness is certainly assisted by a study of Mr. Tinworth's work.

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MR. TINWORTH IN HIS STUDIO.