

*From a Photo. by]*

MR. THOMAS SIDNEY COOPER, R.A.

*[Elliott & Fry.*

## Illustrated Interviews.

XXXI.—MR. T. SIDNEY COOPER, R.A.



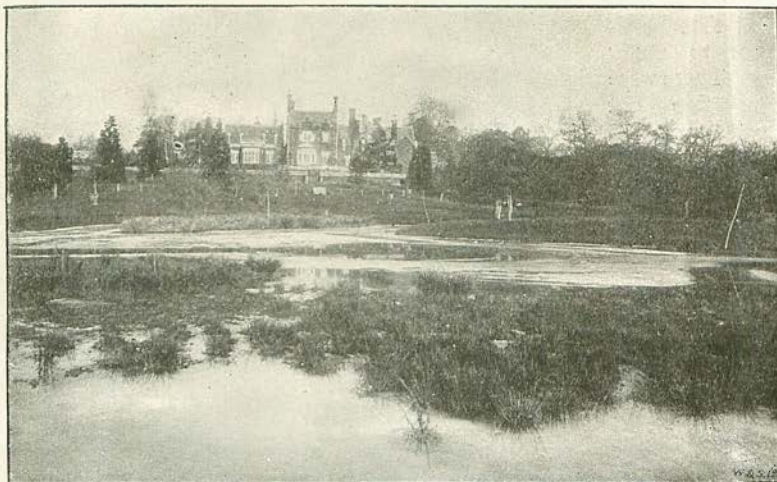
HE first sight I obtained of Mr. Cooper was of considerable interest. He lives in a beautiful spot, about a mile and a half from Canterbury—at Vernon Holme, Harbledown; and as I entered the gate I caught sight of Mr. Cooper before his easel in his studio, taking advantage of the light of a glorious winter's day, and working away at a canvas which I subsequently learnt was intended, with another, to form his contribution to this year's exhibition at the Royal Academy. I stood for a moment quietly and respectfully looking on before ringing the bell at the front door. The canvas presented a landscape, and the cattle were just outlined in with pencil. The painter was working without the aid of glasses, and this for a man who is in his ninety-first year may certainly be said to be highly respectable. Somewhat below the medium height, with marvellously penetrating eyes, scarcely the sign of the stoop of old age, a hand as steady as in '35, when he was just beginning to make a name, and silvery white hair about his head—it was an impressive picture. T. Sidney Cooper's brilliant work of the past and to-day calls for all recognition of his gifts, but it is only when one catches sight of him as I did—snow, nothing but snow, everywhere outside, and the painter, now in the winter of life, clinging with all the old love to his sheep and cattle—it is only then that one realizes the great respect due to the Grand Old Academician.

So I shook my snow-covered boots outside and entered the hall of Vernon Holme. The artist left his easel. It was a hearty welcome to Vernon Holme.

There was no

mistaking the man. He was living there a quiet, happy, contented, and work-a-day life; rising at half-past seven every morning in the winter, and in the summer months at seven o'clock. Before breakfast the palettes are set and the paints made ready. He will work steadily up to dusk. His recreation is his Bible, and twice a day, after lunch and dinner, a chapter is read aloud. His voice is clear, and he reads every word, and suggests its meaning. I heard Sidney Cooper read. His birthdays are *thinking* days—*thankful* days too, it would seem. The lines he wrote on September 26th, 1889, reveal much. He calls them "Musings on My Eighty-sixth Birthday," and they run:—

Another birthday dawns—the eighty-sixth,  
How little take we note of fleeting time!  
Since last this day of joyful glee was here  
What blessings have been mine; alas! how oft  
Have unrequited been! The cares of life  
Engross my thoughts when holy things my heart  
Should fill. Thou who hast made my way of life  
So full of mercies, be Thou still my help.  
When o'er this day of life the night shall fall,  
And called my feet to pass thro' ways unknown,  
Be near me still; be Thou my strength; and when  
The walls decay leave not the tenant lone,  
But by Thy Spirit comfort and uphold;  
I have but Thee, I have no claim of Gate  
Of Pearl, or Street of Glittering Gold, but thro  
Thy boundless grace, my good and bad are both  
Forgiven. In humble fitting place among  
The many mansions, where there is no sin,  
And by Thy Crystal River flowing on



From a Photo. by]

VERNON HOLME—FROM THE POND.

[Elliott & Fry.

Through Heaven's green expanse, I'll learn the new  
And holy song of Worthy is the Lamb,  
And 'neath the Healing Tree shall find that life  
Wished for so long ! ! !

Then he loves to take you about his house, for it is a very beautiful home, and the man who owns it enjoys its comforts the more, for he will honestly tell you that it meant working for.

"I don't do anything without authority," he told me; "I have authority for everything I paint. If I want a sky for any particular picture, I do it from my house. I have windows from all four sides, so that I can see always. Then in the summer I can sit on the lawn and paint. There are some of my sheep—my 'models'!"

We were standing in the recess of the dining-room. Before us were the fields covered with snow, and some sheep were labouring hard to find a stray tuft of grass here and there. Ever since the artist built the house—forty-five years ago—he has kept sheep here and painted them every year. These finely coated creatures before us now are admirable representatives of some ninety ewes and a similar number of lambs. Of bullocks, the great cattle painter has few, though he invariably fattens up three or four every autumn.

Some hours later we again stood in this corner and watched the setting sun. A great cloud edged with gold hung over a black patch of trees.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Cooper, enthusiastically, "it was in that very wood that I first began to study trees. There were some fine old trees there—too far gone to cut for timber. A farm stood on the opposite side of the hill, which I have put in three of my pictures. How well I remember seeing the chains and the gibbet in the road which skirts the wood there—used for hanging Charles Storey,

who committed murder the year after I was born."

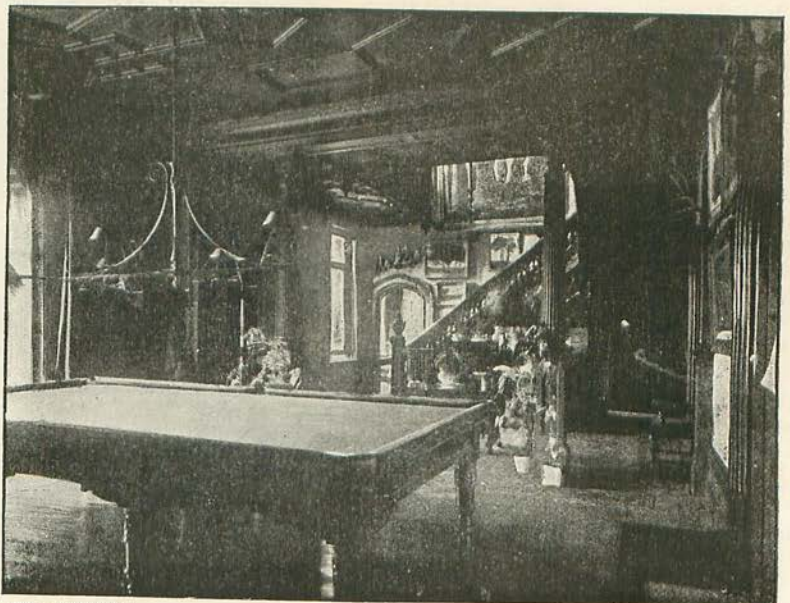
It is not necessary to say that the interior of Vernon Holme is in every way worthy of its owner. The land on which it stands was originally a hop ground, and Mr. Cooper tells with great gusto that whilst the people were picking the hops his men were getting the ground ready for the foundation of the house. The house was built from Mr. Cooper's own designs. The hall, of solid oak, is very fine and massive, and the carving about the ceiling and staircases exquisite. The bosses on the ceiling were cut from Nature's models of hops and wild flowers. The antlers over the doors were a present from Sir Edwin Landseer, and are reminiscences of deer shot by him in Scotland. The engravings comprise proofs after Sir Edwin and Tom Landseer, and Leslie's "Coronation of Queen Victoria."

"There is a little story," said Mr. Cooper, "as to how I came into possession of that engraving—a very rare one—of Tom Landseer's. I painted a little picture for him, and Tom liked it. So it was agreed that I should have some of his proofs in exchange for it. He was very deaf, and he wrote on a piece of paper: 'There's my portfolio; choose one, and I'll sign it.' I did so.

"'Why,' he exclaimed, 'you have chosen the one I put aside for myself.'

"I had selected the 'Deer and Dog in the Snow.'"

Only three pictures by Mr. Cooper hang



From a Photo. by

THE ENTRANCE HALL.

[Elliott & Fry.

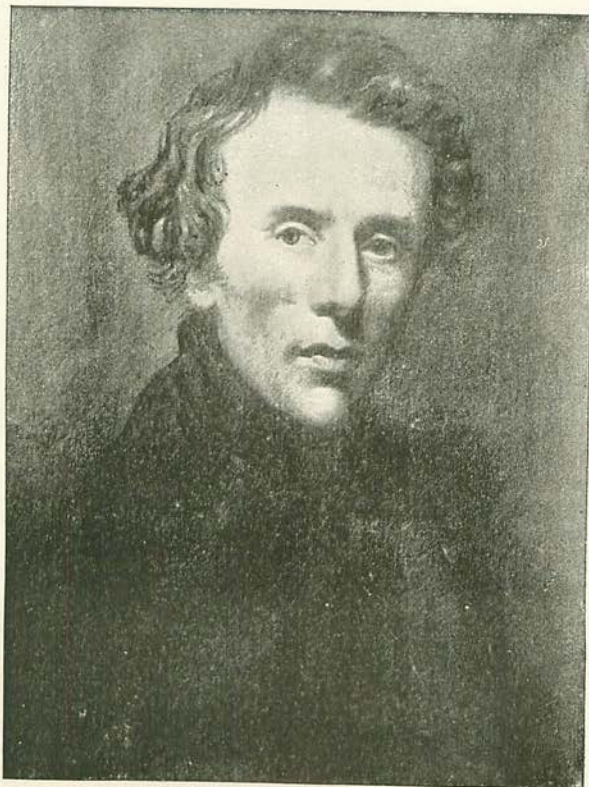
in the hall proper. These are over the mantelpiece. One of these is peculiarly interesting—a group of three sheep, a calf, and a cow, painted three years ago. The work was the result of a dream. The Royal Academician dreamt he was painting this very scene. In the morning he got up and chronicled it on canvas. Ascending the grand old staircase, a huge space is taken up by "Separated, but not Divorced," painted in 1875, and is a study of a magnificent short-horn bull, "Charlie" by name. It was exhibited, but proved too big to sell. Just by the bull's foreleg is a raven pecking at a bone. The artist was asked why he put it there.

"Oh!" he replied, "I wanted a little bit of relieving black and white. Besides, if there is a Crown case over it, it will typify the lawyers picking at the bones."

But "Charlie" is interesting for other reasons. It represents a triumph of art. Mrs. Cooper did not like the bull's head, and said so. Mr. Cooper made up his mind to paint in another head. It took a long time—many and many were the attempts to put a new head on old shoulders, and the one now in the picture took as long to paint as all the rest of the picture. It is a remarkably real and brilliant effort. The other large picture by Mr. Cooper is "Isaac's Substitute," painted in 1880—a Scotch ram—the only object in the picture being Isaac's substitute. It was suggested one day after reading the words from Genesis xxii. 13: "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns." Close by are

some sheep painted on the 26th September, 1874, on the occasion of the artist's seventy-first birthday. It was completed in five hours, and here it should be mentioned that for the last twenty years Mr. Cooper has always painted a finished canvas on his birthday—pictures which are never sold.

A peep into Mrs. Cooper's room revealed something that says much for the continued determination of purpose which has always characterized the great painter's life, and his extraordinary and persistent powers of endurance under great suffering. I had noted some excellent copies of his father's works by Mr. Neville Cooper, and a portrait of the Royal Academician himself, painted by Scott in 1841. Also an old donkey, done in 1835, belonging to Mrs. Cooper—Mr. Cooper has been twice married—seeing that it was painted in the year in which she was born. Two water colour drawings were then shown to me. They were artistic reminiscences of his severe illness last year. Beneath a group of cows were written these words: "Painted



SIDNEY COOPER, AGE 38.  
From a Painting by Scott.

in bed, November, 1893, for my dear wife for her nursing.—T. S. C., R. A." The other was some sheep in the snow—reproduced in these pages—and inscribed: "To Neville. Painted in bed, with bronchitis, November, 1893.—T. S. C., R. A." Such efforts as these betoken much. It is a significant fact that Sidney Cooper was the last country patient the late Sir Andrew Clark ever visited, for he was struck down four days afterwards. The great physician's words on saying "Good-bye" to Mrs. Cooper were: "I never met a man at eighty with more vitality in him



PICTURE PAINTED DURING LAST ILLNESS.

than your husband, and he is ninety!" and he added, upon being thanked for his prompt attendance: "I look upon this as being one of the events of my life."

The dining-room is perhaps the finest room in the house—being 35ft. long and 35ft. high. Its carved oak arched ceiling is superb—and the carved fireplace, round which ivy is trailing, is also a fine sample of this particular art. It was in this apartment that I had the privilege of going through portfolio after portfolio of the daintiest of pencil studies—little artistic efforts which seemed to have life and breath of their own. There are many personal works here—at one end of the room hangs "Scotch Mountains and Sheep," the opposite side being occupied by the largest picture

the artist has ever painted—the canvas measures 11ft. by 7ft.—"Pushing Off for Tilbury Fort, on the Thames," painted in 1883, and exhibited in the Academy of the following year.

As we stood before this beautiful work—a scene of perfect calmness in the meadows, with a group of cattle lazily lying in the fore-



From a Photo. by]

THE DINING-ROOM.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.



From a Photo. by]

THE DINING-ROOM.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.

ground, and a boat full of soldiers being rowed towards the guard-ship, *Ramilies*, in the distance—Mr. Cooper said :—

“I saw that very scene on my fortieth birthday, when seeing a friend off from Tilbury. Its beauty impressed me in a way few such scenes have done, and I said within myself, ‘Should I ever reach my eightieth birthday, I will paint that.’ And I did. I started it on September 26, 1883, and it took me exactly forty-nine days to paint.”

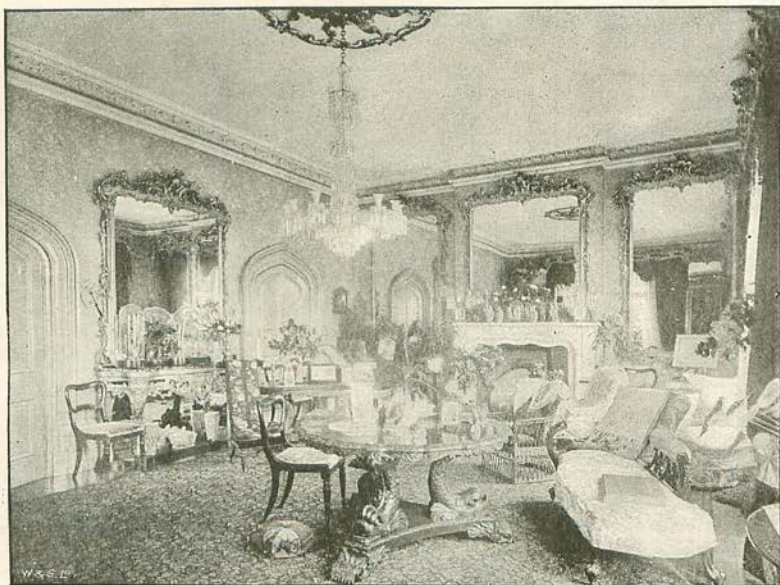
There is much of interest in the drawing-room, with its fine statues by P. MacDowell, R.A., its family portraits intermingled with great bowls of winter blossoms and grasses gathered from the adjoining fields, its many artistic treasures — not omitting the tiny canvas which the artist painted at the age of seventy.

“I painted it,” he said, very quietly, “because

I thought I had got to the end!”

But we only spend a moment or so there, for Mr. Cooper is leading the way to the studio. We cross the great hall, through the library, whose walls are completely hidden by sketches of, surely, every animal that ever enjoyed the green fare provided by the meadows of Britain — the artist opens the door and bids me enter. It is a remarkable

studio—and I should say stands alone and distinct amongst those pertaining to Royal Academicians. There are a few studies hanging on the woodwork which surrounds the window—there are the two diplomas, one of which, dated November 3rd, 1845, made its possessor an Associate of the Royal Academy, and the other a Royal Academician on March 23rd, 1867—but otherwise the blue walls are bare, perfectly bare. There may be



From a Photo. by]

THE DRAWING-ROOM.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.



From a Photo. by]

THE LIBRARY.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.

a reason for this—a very simple one; an honest recollection of the days that have been is not to be forgotten in the comforts and successes of the days that are now! When I left Mr. Cooper, and after I learnt what I did, I could only put these bare walls in the studio at Vernon Holme down to such thoughts as these.

He told me that the easels and palettes are all old friends—the Academy box on the floor is chipped and cut about, and goes back to the forties. It is not

worth a shilling; but a big cheque wouldn't buy it. Packed against the walls near the floor are scores of canvases, studies innumerable, old-time and present-time first artistic "thoughts." "Nancy Macintosh" is particularly interesting, because it is one of the artist's figure studies of the time when his work was just becoming to be recognised—1836. Nancy was painted in Cumberland under Cross Fell, and is a good type of the women who used to go up and milk the cows for the drovers, who—it is much to be regretted—used to exchange their employers' milk for nips of whisky! The Academy pictures are even now well forward. I was just looking at one of these—a bridge scene, and a subject the artist assured me he had long been wanting to paint—when I turned towards Mr. Cooper again and found him in the act of lifting a large canvas on to the easel. He would not allow me to assist him.

"That," he said, after it had been securely placed on the easel, "is to be the picture of my life! The subject is 'The High Hills, or the Refuge for the Wild Goats,' from the 104th Psalm. It is not finished yet. The



From a Photo. by]

THE STUDIO.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.



From an early Drawing by]

NANCY MACINTOSH.

[T. S. Cooper, R.A.

notion occurred to me when last in Switzerland. I had to go up the mountain some four hours' journey before I reached the spot from which the idea is partly composed. We went as high as the goats would go in order to get the moss, heather, and different grasses on which they feed. As far as the goats are concerned, I obtained the principal ones when in North Wales."

A flood of renewed light came in at the studio window—for the afternoon was still young—and Mr. Cooper stood for a moment by the side of the picture and was thus photographed. The light lit up the canvas—so I left Mr. Cooper at work, and spent the afternoon in wandering about the Brotherhood Farm, where some of his sheep and cows are to be found. It is a farm possessing a distinct interest, for on a grassy slope by the side of one of its meadows is situated the well of the Black Prince—a well roofed in by modern brick, over which the ivy is growing, a sublimely picturesque corner,

\*Vol. vii.—31.

where the first bearer of the motto "Ich Dien" was wont to come and bathe his eyes.

"Why, sir," said the old Sub-Prior with pardonable pride when showing me the well, "people send from all over the world for that water, and the last gentleman that had it was Mr. Sidney Cooper, the painter."

Mr. Cooper told me that he obtained the water for a young lady in his family.

It was nearing dusk when I returned to Vernon Holme, and once again I saw the great artist through the window of his studio, packing up his things and taking a last look for the day at his work on the easel. We met in the hall.

Then I learnt something of his eventful life. He looked back on his career very quietly—never striving to make "points," never yearning for effect, though every incident was in reality a picture in itself. Imagine

the little fellow—deserted by his father at the age of five—with the tiniest of prospects before him of ever cultivating the gift which was born with him when he first opened his eyes in a little room in St. Peter's Street, Canterbury, on September 26th, 1803.

The mother was left with five young children—at the time of the long war—terrible days for them. But the mother worked hard, and her youngest boy never forgot it, as will be seen later. He was christened Thomas, and the name of Sidney was added some time after—in this wise: The little fellow's great-uncle was in the Navy, and had been at Acre with Sir Sidney Smith, who had a great love for Kent and its surroundings.

"Any news from Kent?" asked Sir Sidney of his great-uncle one day.

"No, Admiral. Only Cooper's got another boy."

"Indeed; then let him take my name!"

So "Sidney" was set down in the church registry.



"They never would call me 'Sidney,'" said Mr. Cooper, as he remembered this; "but when I commenced to draw on my slate, at the age of eight, I always used to put 'T. S. C.' in the corner. The very first drawing I ever did was with a slate pencil, of the Bell Tower of Canterbury Cathedral, and one of my schoolfellows used to encourage me by doing my sums for me, if I would draw him a house with a bird on the chimney.

"I was always in the fields—my heart was in the green valleys and meadows. I loved to sit by the streams, and on my Wednesday and Saturday half-holidays from school I would seek out some nook and draw horses and dogs and sheep on my slate. I had no paper and pencil. It was not until I was twelve or thirteen that my career really commenced. Then I started to paint coaches for Mr. Burgess, of Canterbury, at 12s. a week. Every moment I could spare I was trying to improve myself in drawing—but even then I still had to cling to my slate and pencil. But, I got some lead pencils at last. Let me tell you the story, and its sequel.

"I was sketching the central tower of the Cathedral. A gentleman was also drawing another part of the sacred edifice. We met often, without speaking. One day he came up to me and asked me what I was doing. I told him. He laughed merrily at the idea of thus working on a slate, and some two or three days afterwards he made me a present of his bundle of pencils and paper. I could scarcely contain myself. He patted me on the head and went his way. But, I had no knife! One day I saw a gentleman near the

Cathedral—a very solemn-looking gentleman in clerical attire. I went up to him.

"Please sir," I said, "have you a knife?"

"Yes, my lad—what do you want it for?"

"I told him. And he sharpened all my pencils for me—every one of the dozen. Who was he? The Archbishop of Canterbury!"

Young Cooper was destined to discover who it was that gave him his first pencils. A pleasant little party was assembled in London—Mr. Cooper was now well known—and amongst those gathered at the board

were Stanfield, Tom Landseer, and George Cattermole. They were telling little stories of the early days, and the cattle painter related the incident of the slate and pencils.

Cattermole jumped up.

"Why, Sidney," he cried, "are you the slate? *I am the pencils!*"

"Then," continued Mr. Cooper, "came my work at the theatre. It was one evening and I was sketching—when I heard a cough behind me. I turned and saw a man looking over me.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "you

draw well, my boy. You have a good eye—but you must learn perspective."

"What is that, sir? I have never heard of it before."

"Well," he replied, "it shows the proper size of objects at a distance—how to draw a street, a road, a distant hill or tree, etc. If you like to call on me, I'll show you."

"Where do you live, please, sir?" I asked.

"In Canterbury—at the theatre!" he answered.

"Oh! my mother wouldn't let me go to the theatre!" I assured him.

"However, I went. I vividly remember



From a Photo. by

BLACK PRINCE'S WELL.

[Elliott & Fry.]



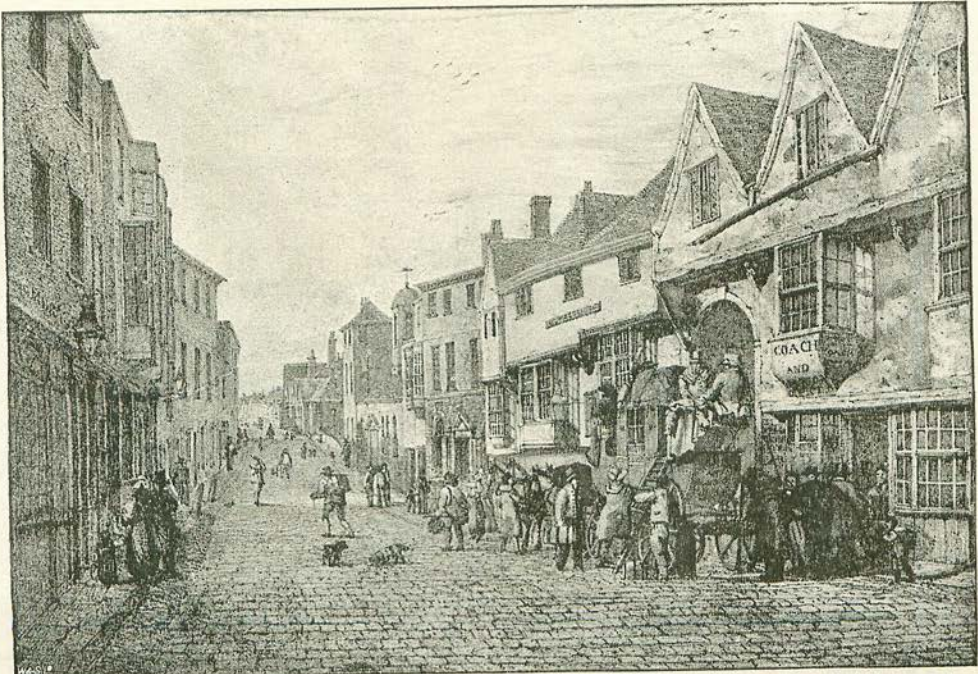
From an early Drawing by]

GATEWAY—ST. AUGUSTINE'S MONASTERY.

[T. S. Cooper, R.A.

it. When I entered, there was the canvas laid down on the stage for a Roman scene. The actors were rehearsing on the space in front. So Mr. Doyle—for that was the man's

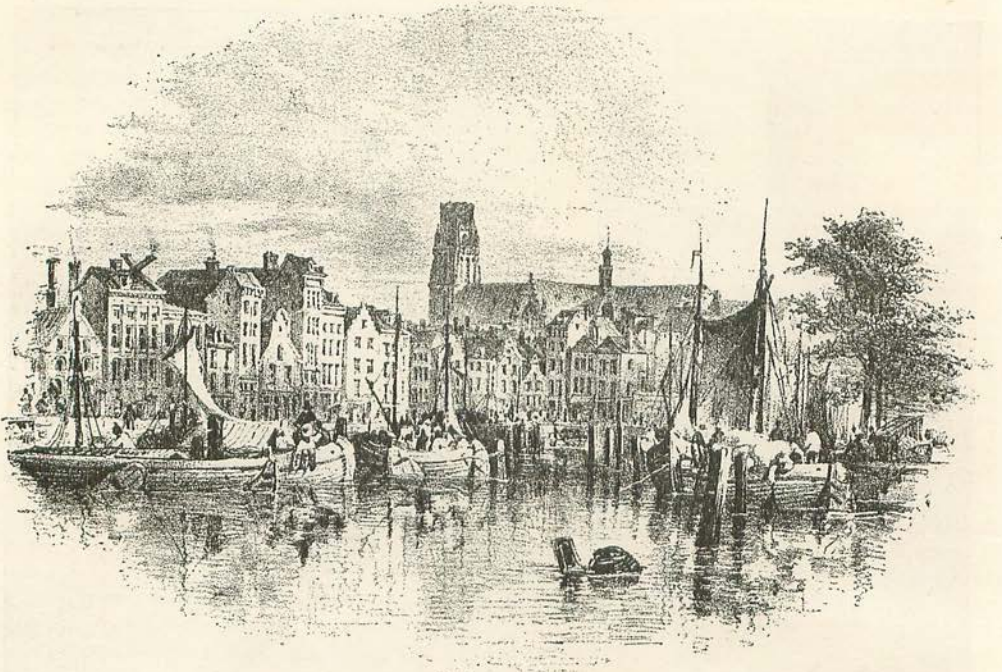
name—instructed me in perspective, and I learnt the artistic value of things that I had long seen in Nature. The theatrical company left—it used to go a sort of circuit to



From an early Drawing by]

HIGH STREET, CANTERBURY.

[T. S. Cooper, R.A.



*From an early Drawing by]*

ROTTERDAM.

[T. S. Cooper, R.A.

Canterbury, Faversham, Hastings, and Maidstone, and when they came again next year I helped him once more. I still continued coach-painting — Mr. Burgess employing

me to do the rough work—rubbing down the carriages, lying on my back underneath—grinding colours, etc. When I was sixteen the company returned. Poor Doyle died,



*From the Painting by]*

TUNFORD FARM.

[T. S. Cooper, R.A.

and I was engaged as scene painter at a guinea a week. So I went with them to Faversham. I well remember my only appearance as an actor. The piece to be played was 'Macbeth,' and the scenery used was some I had painted for 'Rob Roy.' The manager told me I must play the part of the bleeding Captain, and I wore a Scotch dress—intended for *Norval*—which Mr. Smollet, an actor, had given to me for painting some imitation lace on a dark dress he had. Well, I simply broke down, and was positively conducted off the stage. Buckstone played *Ross* in this production. It was the first time I ever met him. He was a dapper little fellow—very lively and brimming over with fun. We remained bosom friends to the day of his death. When he got prosperous and had married a second wife, every other Sunday I used to go and dine with him. He was just then beginning to get very deaf.

"One night I said to him: 'Buck, I want a private box.'

"'All right, Sidney, whenever you like.'

"'Next Tuesday, eh?'

"'All right, my boy—next Tuesday.'

"After dinner we were chatting, and I said: 'Well, I've got my sketch-book with me, and in return for the box I'll draw your wife's portrait and the baby. It won't take a

quarter of an hour.' So they sat. I drew a sheep and a lamb suckling."

Mr. Cooper's first work of importance was founded on his first love. The Cathedral and its precincts was one of the dearest spots on earth to him, and he did some excellent drawings on stone of the Cathedral and Canterbury in general. The gateway of St. Augustine's Monastery and High Street, Canterbury, showing the coach waiting outside the "George and Dragon," are good examples of these—particularly the latter, as it tends to show something of what the Cathedral city was like when Mr. Cooper was unconsciously stepping to fame with the aid of a school slate and pencil. At last he got to London and gained a studentship at the Royal Academy, then held at Somerset House. It filled his heart with hope—he realized all his longings; but his uncle, who had promised to support him while working away at the Academy, suddenly threw him over, and young Cooper was forced to go back to Canterbury, and was obliged to paint coaches once more and give lessons in drawing. It was an important step when he, together with his friend William Burgess, decided to try the Continent. The young artist was now twenty-four years of age. He positively painted his way from Calais to Brussels by doing likenesses of the proprietors of small hostelries, together



From the Painting by

THE FLOCK MASTER'S HOPE.

[T. S. Cooper, R.A.]



From the Painting by]

A BROOK IN THE MEADOWS.

[T. S. Cooper, R.A.

with their families, in return for his board and lodging.

"I got on very well in Brussels," said Mr. Cooper, "giving lessons there, and began to make money—indeed, I must have made some five or six thousand francs a year after I had been settled there some time. It was at Brussels I met Verböckhoven, the great animal painter, whose drawings of animals were absolutely faultless. At that time I was confining myself to old buildings, Gothic architecture, picturesque bridges, etc., and putting them on the stone. One day Verböckhoven was looking at some of my pencil drawings and said:—

"'You could paint cattle.'

"I assured him I could not.

"'Oh, yes,' he said; 'here is a palette—try.'

"Some of his studies were tacked on the wall, and I began to paint a black spotted cow. Just at that moment a Miss Searle, one of my pupils, came in accompanied by her father, and Mr. Searle said to me:—

"'What! are you taking lessons?'

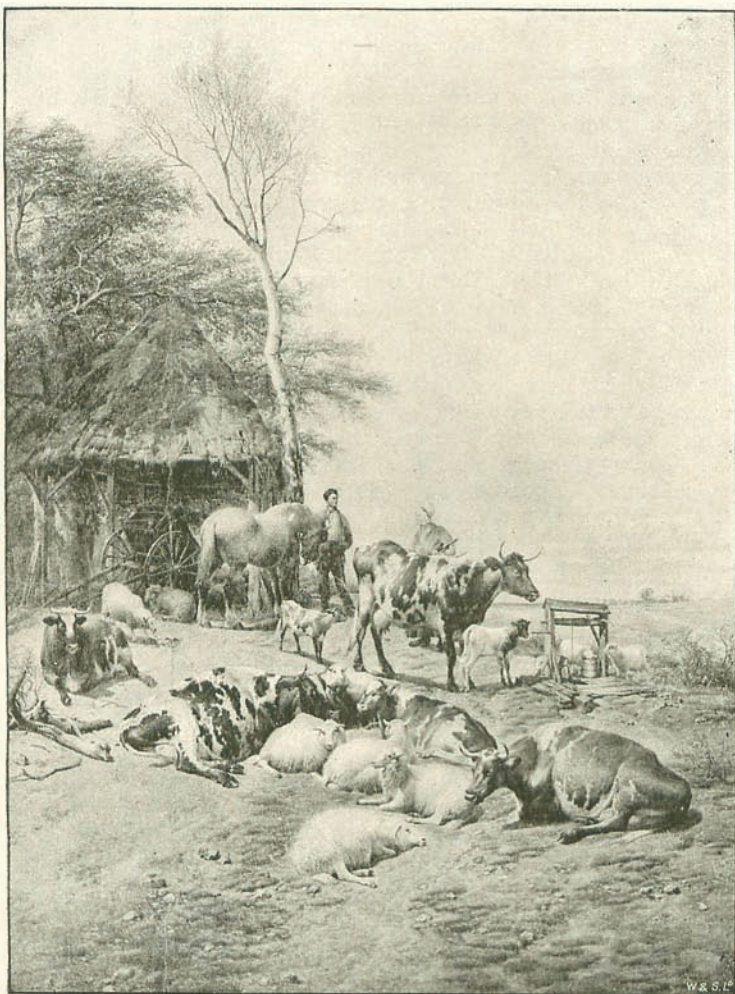
"'No,' I answered; 'Monsieur Verböckhoven thinks I can paint, so I am copying that cow.'

"'I wouldn't try another,' said Verböck-

hoven, looking over, 'if they think you are taking lessons I shall lose all my pupils! Never mind—let it go—go in and win, Cooper!'

"Then came the terrible revolution of 1830. I was forced to return to England, and I did so, in May, 1831, with a wife and child, and £13 in my pocket. I made my way to London, and, fortunately for me, Ackerman's, in the Strand, liked a bundle of my drawings and purchased them at five shillings apiece. Then the struggle commenced. I had taken a second floor in the Tottenham Court Road, and morning after morning, with an orange and a couple of Abernethy biscuits in my pocket, I used to set out for Regent's Park, where there were often from 500 to 1,000 cows in those days, and try and sketch them. My methods were simple. I always had six or eight sketches going at one time, so that if a cow moved from one position I could go on with another, and only wait until I caught my cattle friend in the old position. At night I worked at home over my pipe, and earned my daily bread by drawing them on stone for Ackerman."

But success came at last—and through an old fellow student, Catterson Smith, who eventually became President of the Royal



From the Painting by]

FARM IN EAST KENT.

[T. S. Cooper, R. A.

Academy of Dublin. Mr. Cooper had painted a small canvas, 10 in. by 8 in., of a cow and two sheep—he had done it when it was too wet to go to Regent's Park. Caterson Smith found him out and called on him. He caught sight of this little group of cattle.

"Look here, Cooper," he said, "I should give up architectural stuff and stick to this. I'll buy this picture. How much?"

"Oh, a few shillings," the young artist replied.

"Two pounds?"

"Done."

So Caterson Smith purchased the Royal Academician's first painting of cattle.

"Soon after this I began a larger one," said Mr. Cooper. "I had removed to Windmill Street—to a *first floor*. The canvas was a

3ft. one. One morning I was surprised to have a visitor announced. He came up.

"Your name is Mr. Cooper?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"I've seen a little picture of yours, and I was anxious to find you out."

"He found me out in a strange way," remarked Mr. Cooper. "It seems that Caterson Smith had left the picture he had purchased at a frame-maker's in Greek Street, Soho, and the shopkeeper liking it had put it in his window. Here my strange visitor had seen it, and not until Smith wrote for the picture was he able to discover me.

"What's that you are painting?" asked the stranger, looking at the 3ft. canvas on the easel.

"Oh! just some cattle coming through a stream, sir."

"Very nice"—rubbing his chin and eyeing it critically—"very nice. How much?"

"I hardly know."

"Well," he said, "if you will finish it I will give you £15 for it."

"I agreed, and when he left he gave me his card, and I saw his name was Cribb, and that he lived at King Street, Covent Garden.

"I painted another for him. Then the cholera broke out, and my wife, who was far from well, wanted to go to the seaside for a few days. Cribb had not paid me for my second picture—I wanted the money, so I called on him. He sat reading the paper for one hour and a half by the clock in Covent Garden Market, without speaking.

"I woke him up again with my request to be paid.

"Look here," he said, suddenly, "I don't

think young men should have so much money to run about with!

"However, he paid me £10 on account."

The estimable Mr. Cribb lost a trifle by his meanness towards the great painter in embryo. A Mr. Carpenter, a Bond Street dealer, had found young Cooper out, and gave him a commission to paint a picture for £30. It was exhibited in 1833, at the Suffolk Street Gallery—and on the line—a half-length picture of "A Kentish Farm." The Press were most enthusiastic. "Here's a new man," the critics said, "a new man who will create a great school." The news sheets were full of praise, and Mr. Cooper told me how his wife and children made a scrap-book by cutting out all the laudatory notices in the papers and pasting them in. Young Cooper went to the private view, and the keeper came up to him and said that Mr. Vernon wished to be introduced to him. Mr. Vernon—Robert Vernon! He was one of the great art patrons of the day; the kindest and most liberal of men towards artists.

So they were introduced. He wanted to buy the "Kentish Farm," but it was in the hands of a dealer, who was asking a hundred guineas for it; and Robert Vernon never bought from dealers. However, Mr. Vernon would call—he had his address from the catalogue. The first two men to shake hands with Sidney Cooper on his success were Stanfield and Roberts. Mr. Cooper had now moved to St. John's Wood. A few days passed by, when three gentlemen called. One was Mr. Vernon; the other Fawcett, the comedian; and John Maddison Moreton, who has made us cry with laughter over his "Box and Cox."

"I sold Mr. Vernon," Mr. Cooper said, continuing this delightful narrative, "a little picture for £15. It was a group of cattle and a woman with a donkey, the donkey bearing baskets, in one of which sat a child. That was my own little girl—now the only survivor of three daughters."

"Fawcett had been examining the sketches in my room. Suddenly he cried out:—

"Vernon, Vernon, look at this! It was a picture I had begun for the Academy and one I called 'Tunford Farm.'

"Vernon seemed delighted with it.

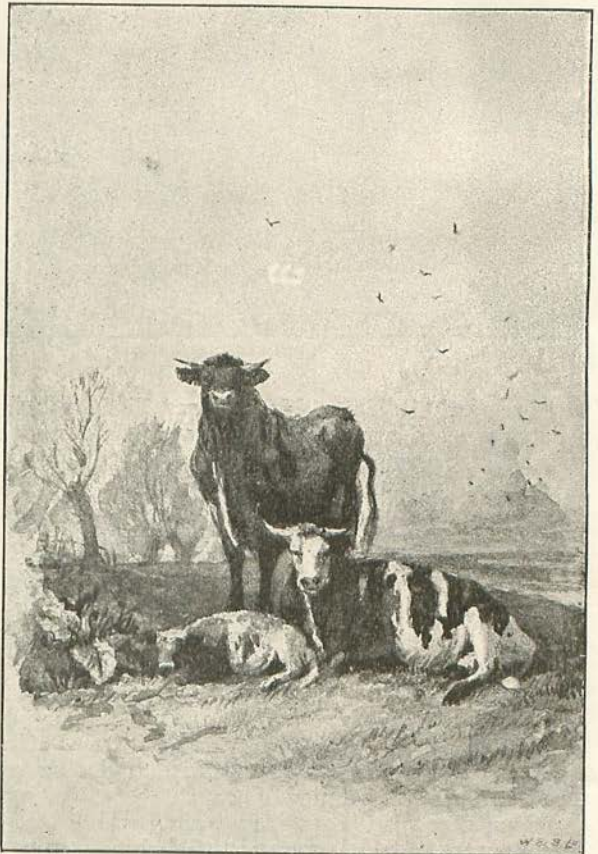
"'What's the price?' he asked, suddenly, after a good look at it.

"'Well, sir,' I said, 'seeing that it is the same size as that exhibited at Suffolk Street—£30—I had £30 for that.'

"'Yes,' said Vernon, 'and the dealer asks a hundred for it. I'll give you a hundred for that on the easel—on condition that you annul the purchase of this little £15 picture!'

"'Tunford Farm' was exhibited in the Royal Academy of 1834, and it now hangs in the National Gallery as one of the Vernon collection. That is sixty years ago, and I have never missed a year since, and hope to exhibit again this year."

"Tunford Farm"—a subject which Mr. Cooper has painted twice—created a great impression. There was no cattle painter then, and as Wilkie once remarked—and whenever Wilkie used to dine at Mr. Vernon's he would go up and look at the picture—"That's the man to fill the gap." The picture was very nearly turned out. It was chosen, but had got put aside. The gallery was already hung,



FIRST SKETCH FOR "THE MONARCH OF THE MEADOWS."  
BY T. S. COOPER, R.A.

and one of the Hanging Committee, Mr. Jones, R.A., positively had his own picture taken down and "Tunford Farm" put up in its place. This alone should tell of the excellence of the work. From that eventful day in '34 Mr. Cooper has gone on year by year substantiating his claim to be regarded as the finest painter of cattle this century has seen. It would be impossible to give a complete catalogue of his many works, his studies of cattle are countless. One or two examples of his genius are reproduced here—namely, "The Flock Master's Hope," "A Farm in East Kent," "Tunford Farm" (the second painting of the picture which realized so much for him), "The Brook in the Meadows," and the original sketch for "The Monarch of the Meadows," which was so mysteriously stolen in September, 1881. No artist has had his pictures more "counterfeited" than Mr. Cooper. He was so frequently asked to say if a picture was his or not, that at last he was obliged to charge a fee. According to Mr. Cooper's certificate book, during the last few years he has had 241 so-called Cooper works submitted to him, 219 out of which proved to be only copies!

I have referred in the early part of this paper to the great love Mr. Cooper had for his mother. When I said "Good-bye" to him it was with a promise—very happily and readily made—to stay for a moment at a certain spot in St. Peter's Street, Canterbury. There stands the Sidney Cooper School of Art—a school Mr. Cooper founded in 1870, giving gratuitous instruction to the students, and subsequently presented to the City of Canterbury in 1882.

"I wanted the youth of Canterbury to have the shorthand of drawing—I had to find it out myself," Mr. Cooper told me.

But there was another reason. At the banquet given in honour of the Royal Academician at his birthplace in October, 1870, Mr. Cooper rose and said:—

"I had but one object—nay, I had two objects—in erecting that Gallery of Art which



THE SIDNEY COOPER SCHOOL OF ART AND BIRTHPLACE.  
From a Photo. by Elliott & Fry.

I have devoted to the inhabitants of my native city and its neighbourhood. The one was to dedicate it to her who fostered me in my years of infancy and youth"—and at the recollection of his mother, the great painter was so overcome that he could not for some time proceed with his remarks—"and I determined to erect it on the very site of my birthplace; and the other object was that the youth of Canterbury who feel a desire for the study of art may avail themselves of those opportunities which were denied to me."

Half an hour after I left Sidney Cooper I was watching the students at work and carrying out the wishes of the thoughtful founder of this excellent institution. But, I must confess to staying longer outside than I did inside. Next door to the school is a quaint old gabled house, striking in all its picturesqueness, and even a stranger would not pass it by without turning to look at it. How much more interesting it becomes when you know that the old-fashioned latticed window on the first floor opens into the room where a certain little fellow first saw the light ninety years ago, and that on the very stone step which leads to the door that same little fellow, a few years later, used to sit with his slate and pencil. Thomas Sidney Cooper, R.A., told me so; and he, above all others, ought to know.

HARRY HOW.