

Painted by  
Orchardson

"HER MOTHER'S VOICE."

From the Picture in the Tate Gallery.

[W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.]

# THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Vol. xv.

MAY, 1898.

No. 89.

## *Mr. William Quiller Orchardson, R.A.*

BY RALPH W. MAUDE.



CANNOT believe that there are many places more hideously unpicturesque than Dartford, with its grimy streets peopled with grimmer people, its forbidding chimney-stacks for ever smoking, its cold, sluggish river, and its general air of poverty and dirt. Dartford suggested to my mind nothing but the struggle for existence—a place where men and women may toil for bread, and eat to toil again.

And this was where Mr. Orchardson has chosen to set up his household gods—an artist of the utmost refinement of feeling, a man with an eye always for the beautiful. I got into the pony-trap, marvelling. I had known Mr. Orchardson in many lovely neighbourhoods—at Westgate, where his ivy-covered house stood close to the sea; at Ramsbury, in Scotland. But Dartford—!

Through a succession of narrow streets we jolted, and then the scene suddenly changed. Green fields, yellow-brown haystacks, and a river flowing coily between overhanging trees took the place of dirty streets and smoking stacks; and then, as Polly was turned sharply to the right, came Mr. Orchardson's new house, a typical English country house of that snug beauty which is the special attribute of our English homes. Hawley House, as I learned afterwards, represents different generations; part was built in the time of Edward III., another dates only from 1850, while in the year 1897 Mr. Orchardson, following the custom he always has when he makes a new home—and he is a very migratory person—built a fine, roomy studio. Mr. Orchardson was standing at the door as I drove up, and he welcomed me in that courtly, hearty manner which is part and parcel of the man.

"So you've come at last," he said, laughing, and gripping me by the hand. "What a slow train you chose!"

Vol. xv.—61.

In the hall were Mrs. Orchardson and her youngest daughter, a great pet of the family, who, though only seven years old, has already gained renown for her skill at "nap" and double-dummy whist, in which exciting pastimes she engages her youngest brother, Gordon, whenever he is at home. Mrs. Orchardson suggests "a walk round" before luncheon, giving me strict injunctions not to take Mr. Orchardson too far.

"My wife is *very* careful of me, you see," put in Mr. Orchardson, slyly, and we start off.

"You should have seen this house as it was when I took it. Dilapidated? I should think it was. But Mrs. Orchardson had set her heart on a two-storied house near London—and ladies must have their way, you know—so here we are. It suits me very well. You see, I've got a little bit of everything here. There's the river to fish in opposite the house, there's a little bit of shooting, and then there's golf—"

"Golf," I interrupted; "I thought you never played it."

"Well," said Mr. Orchardson, with a sly twinkle, stopping to look at Nicodemus, the pig, whose end was, I believe, not far off, judging by his size—"I didn't take to it till I got old. Tennis used to be my game. I built what was, I believe, the only open-air tennis-court at my house at Westgate, and there nearly all the best players have had matches. I got quite famous by reason of that tennis-court. I remember once, when I was at Brighton, a friend wanted to introduce me to someone, and when he brought him up, he said, 'Let me introduce you to Mr. Orchardson—the one who has the tennis-court, you know.' Curious renown; wasn't it?"

"But how do you get on with golf?"

"Oh, pretty well. But I was dreadfully disappointed at first. I played my first game at St. Andrews, and I remember I had the queerest, most solemn-looking caddie imagin-



MR. ORCHARDSON, R.A.

From the Picture by Himself in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

able. I made a *fearful* mess of it at first, and the little chap looked on without a word. At last, when I had finished the round, he looked up at me in the funniest way, and simply said, 'It's nae use playin' golf unless ye lairn it as a laddie.' But I must tell you that the next day I had this same caddie, and I got on much better. I was almost annoyed with him for not praising me, for he was as silent as on the day before. But when we finished, he turned to me and said, as if resuming our last conversation, 'A'weel, a' dinna ken.'"

I wish I could reproduce Mr. Orchardson's tones as well as his words. He is a genuine Scotsman, yet there is something foreign about

his manner of conversation, emphasizing, as he does, his phrases with much gesticulation. I can only account for this by the fact that an ancestor of his, from whom he gets the uncommon name of Quiller, was a Spaniard. At any rate, this foreign manner is most characteristic of the man. You notice it always, and he has all the courtly grace of the most polished Spaniard.

"I must tell you another story of St. Andrews," he went on. "You must know that there is a bunker which is locally known as 'Hell.' A parson who was playing got into this bunker one day, and could not get out of it. In the midst of his efforts, a telegram arrived for him, and a returning caddie

was asked if he had seen him. 'Oo, ay,' was the reply, 'I've just left him doon in Hell, damnin' and swearin' maist awfu!'"

We were in the garden by this time—a sweet, old-fashioned English garden, with a great, spreading cedar in the middle, and, as its most distinctive feature, a quaint Dutch pigeon-house, built in the time of William and Mary, and providing a resting-place for goodness knows how many pigeons. This pretty pigeon-house leads to a wilderness, where the fowls of the air have congregated with a vengeance, and on the right of this is the kitchen-garden. From the garden we went to the front of the house and across the road to the river, which Mr. Orchardson

means to make one of the best trout streams in England. There is nothing he cares for so much as fishing, though he is a good all-round sportsman.

"I used to hunt a good deal at one time," he told me in the course of our stroll, "but, like tennis, I've given it up. What jolly times we used to have, and what stories I could tell you. I can remember one which might amuse you. I was out one day when the going was very heavy, and I had a nasty fall, though I was not seriously hurt. But a friend of mine came riding up to see how I was, and when he got near he went as white as a sheet. 'What is the matter?' I said. 'Good heavens, Orchardson!' he said, in tones of deepest solemnity, 'your brains have come out!' It turned out to be mud and blood! Not complimentary, eh?"

As we strolled along the bank of the river we came upon Mr. Orchardson's eldest son, who has followed his father's profession and is doing very well at it. He was painting a landscape, and as we looked at the work Mr. Orchardson pointed out a defect or two and threw out a suggestion here and there.

"It is very funny, but Charlie developed his turn for painting quite late, as it were, in life. He's not terribly old now, but what I mean is that, when he was a boy, we would have laughed at the idea of his becoming a painter. However, with years of discretion came a



"IN THE CONSERVATORY."

Painted by W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.—By permission of Mrs. Joseph.

desire to be an artist—and here you see he is."

It might be mentioned here that young Mr. Orchardson took the Creswick prize at the Academy schools this year, so that he bids fair to do credit to his father's name. He is the only one of Mr. Orchardson's children who have developed artistic talent. Miss Orchardson plays exceedingly well on the piano, and is a pupil of Mr. Oscar Beringer. She practises many hours a day on the beautiful Bechstein, which her father had specially built for her. Then

the second son is learning to be an engineer, and the two other boys seem to have no desire to set down their impressions of life on canvas, for the one told me that he meant to be a brewer, and the other that his desire was for soldiering. As he is called Gordon, after the great General, he is well named. The little girl, Sheila, beyond a passion for the card-table, does not appear to have developed any particular turn as yet. Perhaps she is destined to become another Sarah Battle!

A bell, which Mr. Orchardson calls "the chapel bell,"

drove us from the fields to luncheon, and on going into the dining-room I had an opportunity of admiring the old hall—the oldest part of the house—with a low, oak-beamed ceiling, and the walls covered with old-gold canvas and dark paneling. The house is one of the most beautifully decorated I have ever seen; not ostentatiously, but with exquisite taste. The panelling in the passage is white, but the old-gold canvas is to be seen on the walls as well, which are hung with engravings of Mr. Orchardson's and other artists' pictures. As I went in to lunch, I noticed one particularly interesting sketch by Mr. Abbey of Mr. John Hare, after his return from America, his pockets bulging with gold, and in his right hand a trophy of American hearts. The sketch was done at the Kinsmen's Club, of

which Mr. Orchardson is a member, and is a capital caricature.

In the dining-room, and facing me as I sat at luncheon, was a good portrait of Mr. Orchardson, by Mr. Tom Graham, and when I asked my host about it he said:—

"You know, Tom Graham, poor Pettie, and I came to London together from Edinburgh, and set up a bachelor establishment in Fitzroy Square. Pettie made one strict rule—neither of us was to get married. And, of course, poor Pettie broke the rule first. I followed shortly afterwards, but Tom Graham has remained a bachelor to this day. Tom was here only the other day, and we had a good laugh over the old times."

"I often laugh when I think of you in those days," put in Mrs. Orchardson.

Mr. Orchardson smiled mysteriously as he opened the door for her to go out.

"Tell me about the day when you first came to London," I asked, as we sat down again. "Did you arrive with the proverbial half-crown in your pocket?"

"I'm afraid I didn't," replied Mr. Orchardson. "I am very sorry for your sake," he added, with a chuckle, "but I didn't. Mine is a most unromantic history. I have never starved nor sold a picture for a pair of trousers. It is a pity, isn't it—for the sake of the interview; but there it is."

"In fact," I suggested, "yours was a case of *veni, vidi, vici*?"



MISS SHEILA ORCHARDSON.  
From a Photo. by George Newnes, Limited.



MR. ORCHARDSON AT THE AGE OF 30.  
From a Photo. by Hubbard & Co., Oxford Street.

"What do you expect me to say?" was all the answer I got. "Come and have a game of billiards in the studio."

As we went through into the studio I stopped to look at some of the engravings in the passage. One of these was of the picture "Hard Hit," which has been among the most popular of Mr. Orchardson's pictures, and is, in the opinion of many, his best work.

"Do you see all those cards?" he said, noticing what I was looking at. "Well, you will hardly believe what a number of packs I strewed on the floor of the studio to get that effect. I bought twenty packs at first, thinking that they would be quite enough; but

round, I noticed a short and very excitable foreigner making towards me. It was poor Pellegrini, the great caricaturist. He came up to me very red in the face, and brandishing his stick. 'Halloa,' I said, wondering what could have come to him. He took no notice of my remark, but, still brandishing his stick, said, 'Mr. Orchardson, if I thought that by killing you I could paint a picture like yours, I would stab you to the heart.' It was the greatest compliment I could have had."

"Did you know Pellegrini well?"

"No; only slightly. A curious chap, he was. Have you heard that story that is told of him when he was dying? No? Well,



"MASTER BABY." (MRS. ORCHARDSON AND HER YOUNGEST SON, GORDON.)  
Painted by W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.

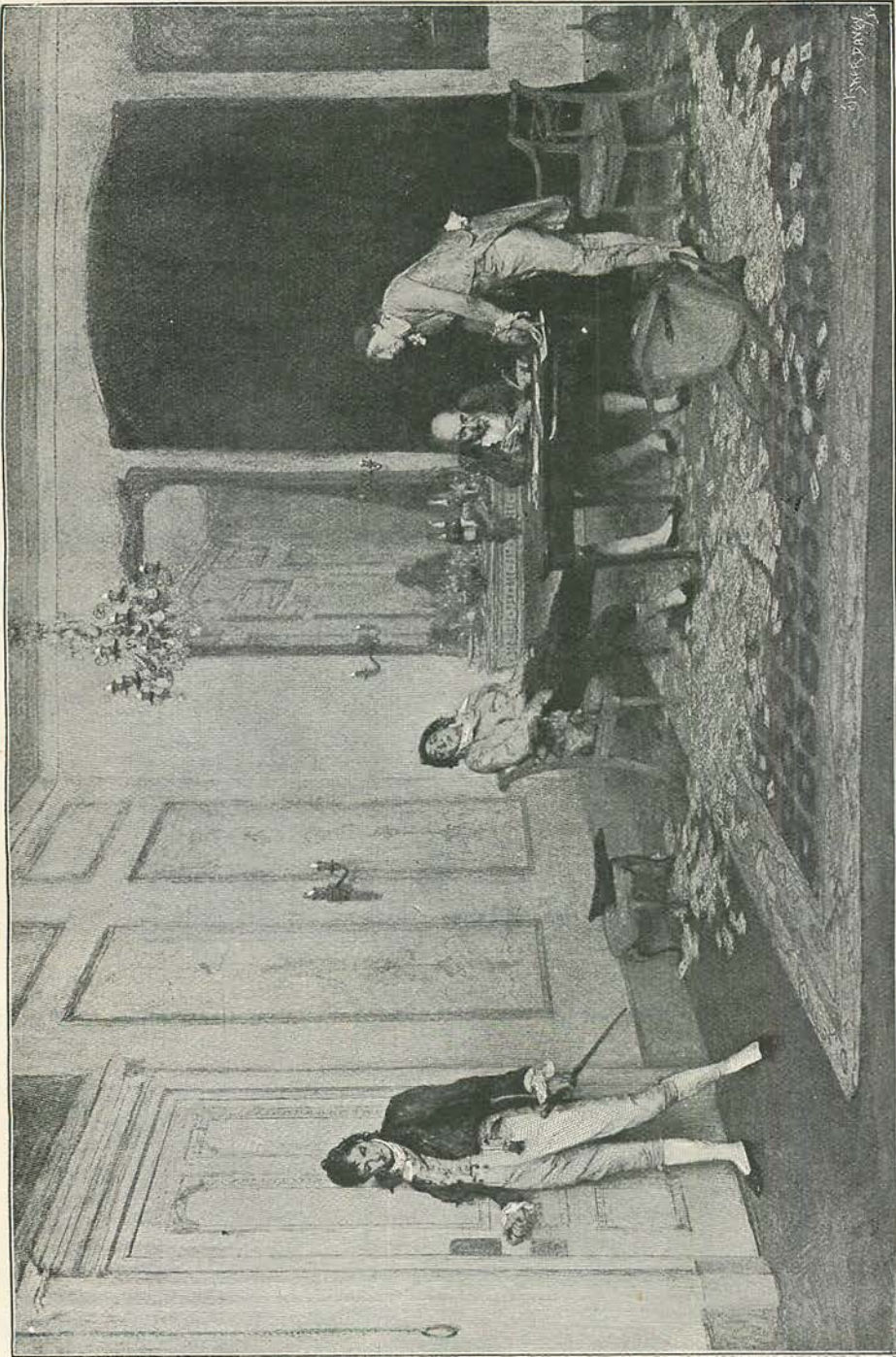
they made no show at all. I had to use fifty to get what I wanted!"

"How did you arrive at the title 'Hard Hit'?" I asked.

"Oh, that's rather curious. The man who sat for the hero—if you can call him a hero—of the picture was rather fond of cards himself. One day, when he came into the studio, I noticed that he looked a little depressed. 'What is the matter?' I asked him. 'I was awfully hard hit last night,' he answered. 'By Jove,' I said, jumping up with delight, 'I've got it at last. Hard hit, of course.' That is how the picture came to be so called. I remember, too, a story connected with the picture. It was at the private view of the Academy, and, as I was walking

the poor fellow was very near his end when some great friend came in to see him. Pellegrini was half asleep, and, as the friend noticed a pile of dirty shirts in a corner of the room, he thought he would take the opportunity of having them cleared away, and so make the room more comfortable. He rang the bell, and the servant appeared; but just as she was beginning to gather the shirts in her arms, Pellegrini woke. He started up in the bed very excitedly, in spite of his weakness. 'Don't do that,' he whispered, 'don't do that; don't take away my sketches!' The poor fellow used to take notes on his cuffs. I always think that is such a pathetic story."

At the risk of being wearisome, I must

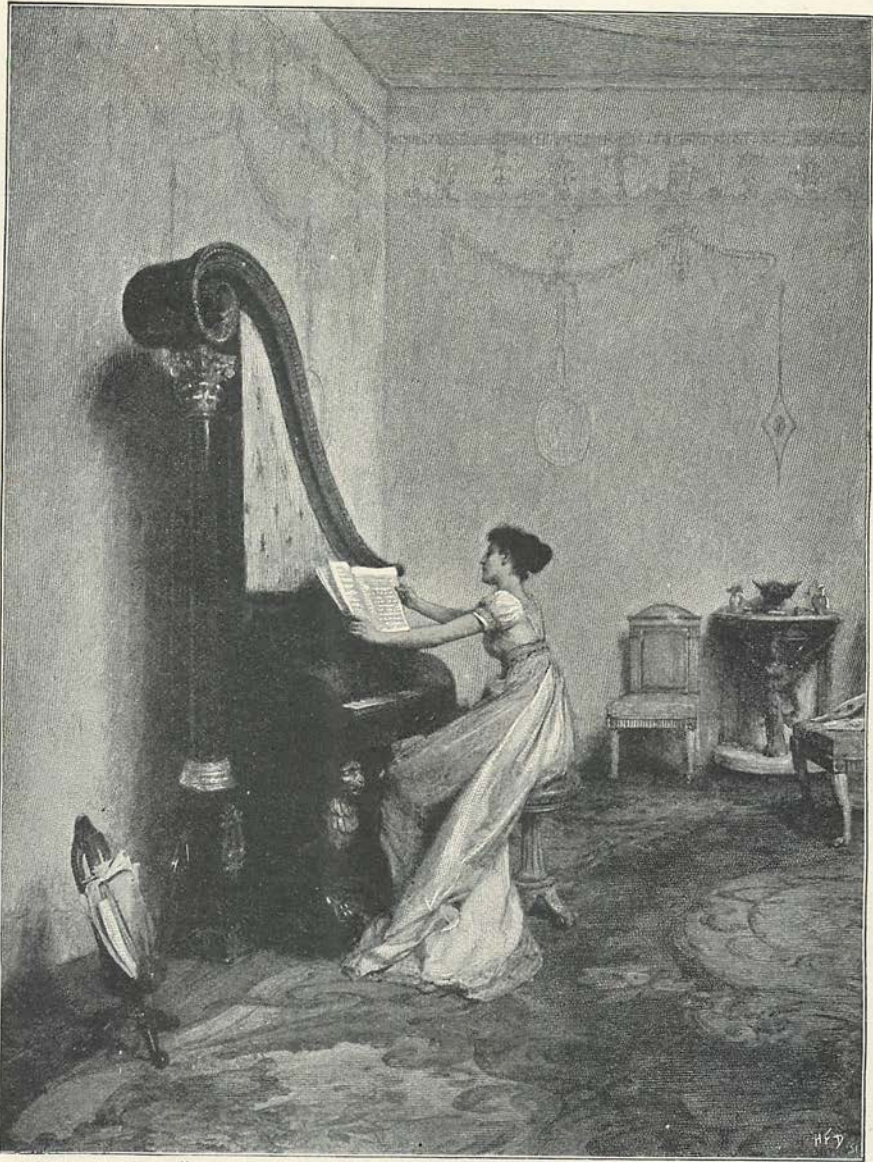


W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.

"HARD HIT."

By permission of Humphrey Roberts, Esq., owner of the Copyright.

Printed by



"MUSIC, WHEN SOFT VOICES DIE, VIBRATES IN THE MEMORY."

Painted by W. Q. Orchardson.—By permission of Messrs. Hildesheimer & Co., owners of the Copyright.

again remark on Mr. Orchardson's charm of manner. He is not the least bit of a "humbug"; he is courteous because it is his nature to be so. He is the most modest and retiring of men; avoiding publicity. "There is nothing I dislike so much as being interviewed, though, curiously enough, I have suffered under it quite recently; but then it was a lady, and now it is an old friend, and to neither can I refuse anything," he told me when I first suggested it to him; and, as he told me afterwards, this is the first time that he has undergone the operation.

Vol. xv.—62

Mr. Orchardson, too, is not a society man, nor a club man; he is a "home" man. Nothing is more delightful to him than to be with his wife and children at Hawley House, where he now spends his happiest days. Mrs. Orchardson is his constant companion, reading to him all the best books of the day while he paints in the morning, and often accompanying him on his fishing expeditions in the afternoon. Since knowing Mr. Orchardson, I have often thought that his own happy home-life must have made him feel all the more strongly the bitterness of such





W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.

“THE FIRST CLOUD.”

From the Picture in the Tate Gallery.

Painted by]



"TROUBLE."

Painted by W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.—By permission of James Ogston, Esq.

existence as that shown in his pictures—"A Marriage of Convenience," "The First Cloud," etc. But retiring and modest as Mr. Orchardson is, he carries neither quality to excess. Like every true artist, he is conscious of his own power, and like every true gentleman, he knows his duty to society. He is immensely popular, and his opinion is the more valued in that it is but seldom expressed. Of his own work, it is most difficult to make him talk; and he never courts admiration of it. If he thinks you care for pictures,

he is glad to show you his, but he would rather not. The one thing he is, perhaps, most sensitive about is his work when it is unfinished. The people are few who can say that they have seen an "Orchardson" uncompleted; even his own children are not welcome in the studio while their father is at work.

"I have got nothing to show you in the studio here," he said, as we walked through the beautiful drawing-room, a thoroughly "Orchardsonian" room—if I may coin a

word—and reminding me of none more than that shown in the picture, ‘Her Mother’s Voice.’ “My portrait of Lord Peel is in the studio at Portland Place.”

“And the ‘Four Generations’ picture?” I asked, thinking that the readers of THE STRAND MAGAZINE would be interested to hear about this great work which Mr. Orchardson is executing for the Royal Agricultural Society, and in which the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, and little Prince Edward are to figure.

But Mr. Orchardson would tell me little or nothing about it.

“It will be the largest picture I have ever painted,” was all the rest of the information I could gain.

From the drawing-room we passed into the morning-room, in which is the beautiful

hangs on the wall facing the fire-place, and there are one or two engravings of Titians in other parts of the room. At one end is the billiard-table, and the other is devoted to easels, which, when I was there, were quite untenanted.

“Ladies always amuse me when they first come into a studio,” said Mr. Orchardson, chalking his cue. “They always look round and say, ‘Oh, what a lovely room for a dance!’ It never seems to occur to them that it might be useful for anything else. But, have a cigar. I don’t smoke myself, but I’m sure you do.”

After our game of billiards, we sat down by the fire to chat. It was some time before I could get Mr. Orchardson to talk on the subject which, after all, must be nearest his heart, but at last I partially succeeded. We



From a Photo. by]

MR. ORCHARDSON'S STUDIO AT HAWLEY HOUSE.

[George Newnes, Limited.

Bechstein piano—Mr. Orchardson’s present to his eldest daughter—and several interesting portraits; one of Mrs. Orchardson, another of Miss Orchardson, and a third of Mrs. Orchardson’s father. The morning-room is quite the family sitting-room; and, as we passed through, little Miss Sheila was doing mild battle—this time with hands and arms, not cards—with her young brother, Gordon.

The studio is a very large, light, handsome room, and looks very “workmanlike.” It is but little decorated—only a large tapestry

discussed the different schools of art, and he spoke highly of the Academy teaching.

“The French schools tend to destroy individuality; the English, with all its faults, leaves that alone,” he said. “Ah, I know what you are going to say, that at the Academy there are too many masters. That is true, in a sense. But I really think that it is only the duffer who will get muddled by having different masters. Your real good man is able to take what is best—the cream—of each, and, at the same time, to strike



"THE QUEEN OF SWORDS."  
Painted by W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.—By permission of The Fine Art Society, Limited.

out a line for himself. No doubt, for the duffer, the Academy schools are not good. But, then, who cares about the duffer? Do we want him, eh?"

Tea was brought in as we sat talking by the glow of the firelight. In the next room we could hear Miss Orchardson playing a sonata; the children were shouting and laughing with delight in the garden, and Mrs. Orchardson came running in to "officiate," looking at me, so I imagined, with a somewhat doubtful air, as though wondering whether I had tired her husband unmercifully. "Mr. Orchardson never knows when he is tired," she said, smiling half apologetically, "but *I* do."

"I have still got the energy of youth, though my wife does not quite believe that," said Mr. Orchardson, with his hearty laugh.

"Were you very energetic then?" I asked.

"My dear fellow, I need only tell you that my first picture of any importance was painted in three days. There is not much of a story. I had first begun a picture representing Wishart on his way to take the Sacrament, and I had, as I always do, painted first the head on the canvas, and nothing more. A friend came in to see me, and noticing this beginning, asked me why I did not send it to the Scottish Academy. 'I will,' I said. 'But you have only three days,' he told me. 'Never mind, I'll do it,' I said. And I did."

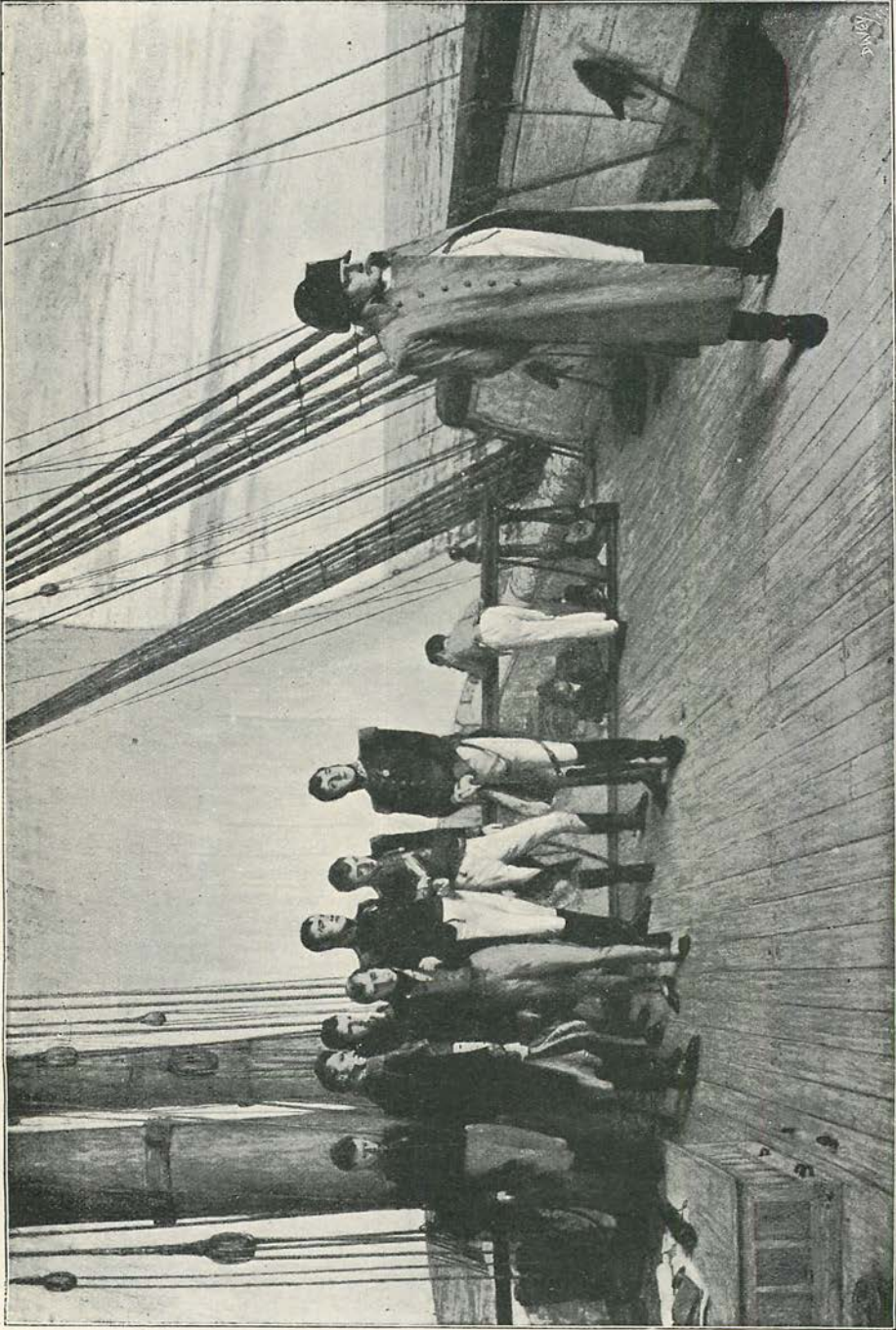
"In three days?"

"Yes; I worked at it night and day for three days, and I finished just in time. It was exhibited and sold; and, curiously enough, when I was in Dundee last I met the gentleman who bought it. He asked me to come and see it once again, and when I did I was astonished at the amount of detail I had been able to put into it. In those three days the picture was absolutely *finished*."

"What made you think of painting your Napoleonic pictures?" I queried, as the servant took away the tea.

"Oh, Napoleon, like all great men, was a hero of mine. One can't help admiring genius, can one? But, by the way, you know my picture of Napoleon on the *Bellerophon*, which is now in the Tate Gallery? Well, when the idea of doing it came to me, I was determined, if possible, to get my background from the original ship. So Mrs. Orchardson and I went down to Portsmouth to see the Admiral there, and I asked him if he knew whether the *Bellerophon* still existed. He did not know, but made inquiries which resulted in the information that there was a *Bellerophon* in the harbour. But she turned out to be a modern vessel, and I had to make my sketches from the *Victory*."

The growing darkness, and the sound of wheels on the gravel outside, warned me that it was time for my departure. Mr. and Mrs. Orchardson came to the door to see me off.



Painted by]

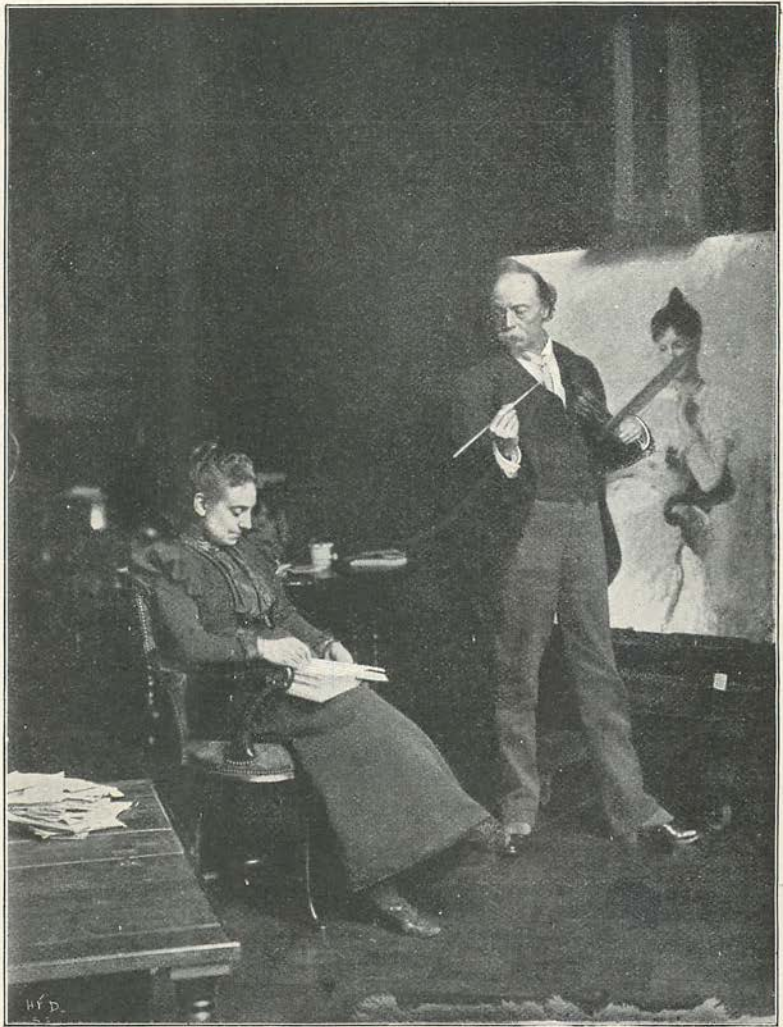
“NAPOLEON ON BOARD THE ‘BELLEROPHON.’”  
From the Picture in the Tate Gallery. Purchased by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest.

W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.

"Don't you think you'd much better not write anything about me?" he called out, as I drove off. And then, as the carriage turned into the road, I heard him shout: "Come and see me at Portland Place next week."

Needless to say, I availed myself of this kind invitation. Much as I had been delighted with Mr. Orchardson's country house, his home in Portland Place is even more beautiful, though in a far severer style. Nothing could exceed the taste of the decorations of the handsome dining-room, in which a beautiful example of the late John Pettie's work hangs, close to an early portrait by Mr. Orchardson. The studio, too, though not so large as the one at Dartford, is infinitely more handsome.

No wonder that people who have sat to the artist in this delightful studio have declared that the hours so spent have been among their most delightful. The great artist keeps up a continual flow of conversation with his sitters, never letting them for a moment fall into a stiff, unnatural pose; and this can present no great difficulty to a man with so keen a sense of humour and such a fund of anecdote. Great as have been Mr. Orchardson's pictures, there are many who think the portraits, to which he principally devotes himself now, even greater. Take the portrait of the artist himself which is now in the Uffizzi Gallery, in Florence (see page 484)



MR. AND MRS. ORCHARDSON IN THE STUDIO AT PORTLAND PLACE.  
From a Photo. by George Newnes, Limited.

—what finer work could you have, or what better likeness?

But it is not the province of this article to criticise Mr. Orchardson's work. One of the greatest artists living—the greatest, in many people's opinion—he is also one of the most popular. At the Tate Gallery, his "Napoleon on Board the *Bellerophon*" and "Her Mother's Voice" are always surrounded by sympathizing lookers. For his is not only great art; it is work which goes straight to the heart and plays upon the strings.

And all the personality of the man is in his pictures—all the refinement, the gentleness, the grace.