Illustrated Interviews.

LXX.—HUBERT HERKOMER, R.A.

By Frederick Dolman.

WHEN Professor Herkomer painted the prettiest bit of Bushey, in Hertfordshire, for the Royal Academy of 1890, and called it "Our Village," the title had about as full a meaning as could be given to the words. It was in a far country from Hertfordshire, indeed, that Hubert Herkomer first saw the light; but even his birthplace—the Bavarian village of Waal, near Landsberg—has scarcely so strong and enduring an association with his fame as this little community on the north-western outskirts of London. A resident of Bushey for some twenty-five years, Professor Herkomer has done two things there which probably for generations to come will link its name with his own. He has established there a school of art of which it may be said that several pupils will probably achieve the highest distinction. He has built for himself, in the midst of this settlement of studious and aspiring youth, a dwelling-house such as may defy the ravages of centuries, whose interior is a liberal education in the decorative arts and crafts.

HUBERT HERKOMER, R.A.
From the Enamel by Himself.

To Professor Herkomer's friends and admirers a walk through Bushey always has, therefore, a keen interest in relation to his work and personality. On the high-road from station to house you may pass the men and women who have figured, not merely in "Our Village," but in such pictures as "Hard Times" and "The Foster Mother." The picturesque view embodied in "Our Village" will always detain you for a few moments as you identify its several features—the old church partly hidden by a tall oak tree; the inevitable inn, quaint and venerable; and the pleasant-looking cottages grouped around. Just about here Bushey is still rustic, without a suggestion of the London whose irresistible advance must ultimately overwhelm it. In other directions Bushey has of recent years surrendered much to the builder, to whose work Professor Herkomer has himself given stimulus as a necessary effect from the prosperity of the art school, whose well-lighted studios are passed just as you turn down the side road which gives access to "Lululaund."

From the Picture by H. Herkomer, R.A.] "OUR VILLAGE." *[By permission of Mr. Mansel Lewis.*

With either old cottages or new villas Professor Herkomer's house presents an exceedingly striking contrast, which loses little of its force as a second or third visit renders it more familiar. "Lululaund"—the name was a compliment to the artist's wife, Lulu, at the time the house was designed—is a mediæval castle, with faultless masonry and an excellent adaptation to modern needs. Un-English as it is in aspect, its architecture might well suggest Munich and Nuremberg with the boyish memories these old German cities have for Professor Herkomer. In its strength and solidity, however, it is fitted to vie with Chatsworth or Hatfield as an ancestral home, and the artist, in his conversation on the subject, shows that it is with some of our English pride of family, as well as of enthusiasm for art, that he has lavished so much care and money on his house.

It was more than three years since I had seen Professor Herkomer, but on coming into the reception-hall he at once recognised an old acquaintance in the representative of THE STRAND MAGAZINE—he has, of course, the portrait-painter's memory for faces. The words of protest against "interviews" and "interviewers" die upon his lips as he promptly helps me off with my coat, and in a few moments I am most comfortably installed in the studio.

Neither the painter nor his studio have changed much, I find, since my last visit to Lululaund for one of those Sunday afternoon receptions which are the delight of the students and their friends. Professor Herkomer, who is on the verge of fifty, has iron-grey hair, and on the rather drawn, closely-shaven face, which so well befits his tall, agile frame, there are some sharp lines and curves. But these, as I know, are the only evidence of deep sorrow in other years. The high forehead has the firmness and smoothness of youth, and as Professor Herkomer talks there is a quick play of energy about his features.

The studio as a whole is bare in aspect compared with artists' studios generally, with lofty walls and broad ceiling. There is no display of finished work by the painter and his friends—this is to be seen in the picture gallery of Lululaund. There is not the usual litter of drawings and "studies"—these are neatly packed away in spacious cabinets. So placed as to catch the best of

the afternoon light is a portrait of the Duke of Connaught; in a far corner is a large pencil design of some kind, and on an easel by my side is a large cartoon in vivid colours, the purpose of which rather puzzles me until Professor Herkomer enlightens me.

"You know, of course, that I have taken up enamel-painting—you saw my shield, 'The Triumph of the Hour,' in last year's Academy. Well, this is the design for my next most important work in enamel. You see it there complete in composition and colouring, but it may be years before the picture is finished. My shield took two years from beginning to end, doing it, of course, with a great deal of other work."

I looked more closely at the design. A number of youths and maidens are disporting themselves round a grim figure of Death, hurling flowers at him as they dance, several smaller allegorical ideas being introduced around this central theme.

"What a striking idea!" I exclaim. "Did you come across it in reading somewhere?"

"No, I've never had a picture suggested by books. Such as it is, the idea comes from here," and the painter humorously tapped his head. "For a long time I've had a fancy for allegory—because a man has painted some successful portraits and genre pictures is no reason why he should not have his dreams sometimes. But I was never quite satisfied with oils for this kind of work—my oil-painting somehow never seemed to me to express all that an allegory should express. At last I hit upon enamel, with which decorators are, of course, familiar enough, but which hitherto has not received from artists the attention that I am now convinced it deserves."

"How did you make this discovery?"

"On a visit to Birmingham, about three years ago, when I went to the Municipal Art School to see my old friend Taylor, the Principal, who was one of my fellow-students at South Kensington. Enamel is used a good deal in one or two of the Birmingham manufactures, and so a good deal of time is given to the subject."

Shield with Pictures in Enamel. "THE TRIUMPH OF THE HOUR." *[by H. Herkomer, R.A.*

"Well, Professor Herkomer, but what *is* enamel-painting?" I inquired, thinking a frank confession of ignorance the best in the circumstances.

By way of reply, Professor Herkomer took me into an adjoining room and showed me a number of small bottles filled with what appeared to be finely-ground glass of various colours. These powders, crushed by hand from solid pieces of enamel, are the pigments with which the painter works. On the other side of this room a furnace has been fitted up wherein the plates are fired under Professor Herkomer's direction. Without attempting to understand the whole technical

process, it is obvious that painting in enamel is a much more troublesome and expensive undertaking than painting in oils.

"On the other hand," I am reminded, "you can obtain a greater brilliancy of colouring with enamel than is possible with oil, and you paint your picture practically for all time. Atmosphere will not affect it; only fire, I believe, can destroy it. There are some enamels painted three or four centuries ago which to-day are absolutely perfect.

"But, of course, I do not suggest that a young painter should begin with enamel—he must first attain to some proficiency in oils and water colours. At the same time, it is desirable that the attention of art students should be directed to the subject. As you know, I gave up my Slade Professorship at Oxford three or four years ago—the work was getting too much for me—but I have undertaken the lecture-ship on Painting at the Royal Academy Schools, and I am introducing the subject there. My Bushey students have been greatly interested in the matter from the first."

"Is enamel suitable for portraits?"

"Not for portraits in the everyday dress of to-day. There must be some very bright colours in the picture. I am just now painting the Bishop of London, and the colours in his ecclesiastical vestments lend themselves to very effective treatment with enamel." Professor Herkomer would have shown me the portrait, but it was at his London studio in Ebury Street, where he works two or three days a week in bright weather for the convenience of some of the exceedingly busy men who sit to him.

"Some people," Professor Herkomer continued, "seem to imagine that I take up so many things, subject-pictures and portraits, engraving and etching, art-teaching, music and musical composition, acting and stage-craft, and now enamel-painting, simply for the sake of *éclat*. I can assure you that *éclat* has had nothing to do with it. I like appreciation, of course—an artist can hardly work without it—but this variety in my efforts has been simply the outcome of a passion for work. For pleasure in the ordinary sense of the word I care very little. My pleasure is mostly a change of occupation. When I am tired of painting I may turn to music, and from music to reading, and so on."

"But you have some physical recreation?"

"Yes, I am fond of cycling, and I rather like the game of croquet as it has lately been revised. For winter evenings I have devised a table on which one can play croquet indoors. I regret that I never learned billiards, but I am afraid I am too old to begin now. For the rest my life here is such as I wished and prepared for—every hour of the day is agreeably occupied in one way or another, according to a definite programme. At the same time, I am able to have my work facilitated in every possible way. Everything is ready for me—I do not even set my own palette."

From the Picture by] "THE MAKERS OF MY HOUSE." *[H. Herkomer, R.A.*

"I suppose your distance from town saves you from a good deal of distraction?"

"Yes, I could never live as I do in Kensington or St. John's Wood. I am always very glad to see my friends here on Sunday, but promiscuous callers every day during the week would run away with no end of time. I go to theatres occasionally—to *matinées*—and should like to go more often; but for most of the pleasures of the London season I never cared. You see, I come of a family of workers—for generations my forefathers were peasants and craftsmen. With all the education and knowledge my

life has given me I remain at heart a peasant still."

As Professor Herkomer used these striking words I looked over to the other side of the studio, where there was a large panel framing three pictures of craftsmen in their working clothes. They are Professor Herkomer's portraits of his father and uncles, who, being installed by him at Bushey, had assisted in the building of Lululaund.

"There is no doubt that this hereditary influence counts for much. The other day a lady was sitting to me for her portrait, and as I painted I put my view of life. 'But,' she objected, 'some of us really can't work. Our ancestors for generations have done nothing but play. And as we have to get through our lives somehow, so we must play too.' I thought she put the matter from her point of view very well."

Professor Herkomer cannot speak of his father and mother without suggesting the reverent love he bore them. "It has been my religion," he declares. For one thing, never did parents more keenly sympathize with a son's ambition. As a boy Hubert Herkomer showed talent for both music and art—whilst the mother favoured the former as her son's vocation, the father strongly preferred the latter. The worldly circumstances of the family did not render it likely that the boy would be able to qualify himself for either. When he was only two years old his parents had resolved to escape from the social distress in which Bavaria was plunged, after the failure of the revolutionary movement of 1848, by emigration to the United States. But America proved to them a land of broken promises. They recrossed the Atlantic in 1857, and arrived at Southampton as poor as when they had left their native village six years before. Their port of arrival became their home, a small and precarious income being obtained in Southampton by his father's irregular employment as a joiner and carver, and his mother giving lessons in music. For a long time their joint earnings did not average more than 30s. a week. In these circumstances it is not surprising that practical people strongly advised them to put their son to some trade or business, instead of encouraging his artistic ambition.

"Some friends pressed my parents to let me enter the Ordnance Survey office in the town, where I would be sure to rise soon, and where my future would be secured, as pensions always followed after thirty or forty years' service. Thirty or forty years! It would be a comfort to think of, and would relieve my parents, once for all, of anxieties for my future. Thus argued our friends. But my father's answer was short and almost fierce. 'No,' he said, 'my son shall be a free artist, and not a slave.'"

Having taken this resolution, the father did everything in his power, by his own effort and self-denial, to enable his son to obtain the necessary training. As a beginning, Hubert, when thirteen years old, was sent to the Southampton Art School in connection with South Kensington, which he attended three times a week.

"It was a great excitement," says Professor Herkomer, "though not unmixed with disappointment, for I was set to copy those stupid outlines of casts, and the master was a man whose sole remark by way of criticism seemed to be, 'Yes, that's all looking very nice.' He was one of the first batch of masters sent out by the Science and Art Department, and was indeed a poor creature."

Professor Herkomer tells many an anecdote of his early struggles in illustration of his father's splendid character. When he was about seventeen his father was fortunate enough to obtain a commission for some wood-carving from models at Munich. He took his son with him in order that he might attend the Munich Art Schools, but even there the lad was only allowed to draw from casts.

"I longed to draw from the human figure," says Professor Herkomer, "and it was my good father who first sat to me for such study. We rose at six o'clock every morning, we then washed in cold water all over, and whilst I dressed my father made the fire in the stove and put the water on to boil. During that time my father remainded undressed, and in the intervals of his domestic work posed for me. When the water boiled it was time to lay aside the sketch, but to be renewed the next morning."

A year or so later in Southampton this kindest of fathers became Herkomer's model in his first drawings for the Press. A new comic paper was started in London, and, on the recommendation of a journalistic friend, Herkomer was engaged to supply a weekly cartoon for £2 apiece. "I did cartoons," he recalls, "for 'Death and Folly Feeding War,' 'Bradlaugh Besmearing a Figure of Truth,' and several connected with the fall of Queen Isabella of Spain. As my father sat for the Pope, for Nemesis, for Bradlaugh, in fact, for all the figures, the editor complained that my figures looked 'too German.'"

With this engagement Herkomer thought his fortune was made. But the paper stopped after six weeks, and his efforts to obtain similar work in other directions had little success. He had already spent a few months in London attending the South Kensington schools, and to London he returned in order that he might be in personal touch with the publishers. Living and working in a small Chelsea lodging, Herkomer, as he bluntly states, had a hard time of it for a year or two. Once his want of money obliged him to seek employment as a zither player with some Christy Minstrels. This appointment he did not obtain for a time, and meanwhile he was actually occupied in stencilling work in the South Kensington Museum at ninepence an hour.

"Did you never lose heart all this time?"

"No; I suppose I had such a fanatical belief in myself. I worked on in spite of such sordid troubles, just as in later years I never allowed domestic sorrow to disturb my daily task."

From the Picture by] "THE LAST MUSTER." *[H. Herkomer, R.A.*
By permission of Messrs. Jean Boussod, Manzi, Joyant & Co., owners of the Copyright.

With the starting of the *Graphic* in 1869 the young artist's difficulties came to an end. "From that time," says Professor Herkomer, "I never wanted work."

It was as a full-page drawing for the *Graphic*, entitled "Chelsea Pensioners in Church," that his masterpiece, "The Last Muster," was first conceived. It attracted some attention in the newspapers, and at the request of the proprietor, Mr. W. L. Thomas, Herkomer did a water-colour of the same subject. He then undertook the big picture in oils contrary to the advice of all his friends, who considered that the red-coats could not be managed on a large scale. It was painted against time, Professor Herkomer tells me, during the winter of 1874 in readiness for the Academy of that year.

"Never, probably, was so important a picture worked out in such a way. No design was made of the groups and no measurement taken of the architectural perspective. On the raw canvas I sketched the central dying figure and the big man on the seat in front of him. I merely guessed at the probable correct sizes and distances between the figures. Then came the figure next to the dying man, the one that looks into his face, alarmed, and touches his arm to see what the matter is. Then the figure next to the bald-headed man in the front seat, and so on. I always had two men together to see how one face came against the other.

"I could not work at the picture in the chapel itself; therefore, how to manage from sketches, and to sketch the oblique perspective correctly, without one jot of knowledge of perspective, was not easy. I sat in the chapel and looked at the background until I was sure of the direction of its lines. Strange to say, my eye did not mislead me, and every man in the picture, front and back, found his correct place in the composition."

"The Last Muster" was *the* picture of the year 1873, and at the age of twenty-five Herkomer had made his career. The members of the Hanging Committee at the Royal Academy clapped their hands when the picture was brought before them, and

From the Picture by] "FOUND." *[H. Herkomer, R.A.*

Now in the National Gallery of British Art, Millbank.

Leighton and Richmond both wrote letters of congratulation to the young artist. The picture was sold for £1,200.

A work which has some resemblance to "The Last Muster"—"The Chapel of the Charterhouse"—was purchased by the Chantrey Trustees and now hangs in the Tate Gallery, where Professor Herkomer is also represented by the picture "Found," which is reproduced on this page. The canvas depicts the discovery of a wounded Roman soldier by a British goatherd, a half-savage woman, who has, nevertheless, some feeling of pity, the episode serving to set forth a fine piece of wild Welsh scenery.

"The Guards' Cheer," a more recent work, may, in its way, become almost as memorable as "The Last Muster." Professor Herkomer saw the Royal procession on Jubilee Day, 1897, from the windows of the Athenæum Club, and his attention was caught by a group of guardsmen, with a child in their midst, who stood by the Crimean Statue and vociferously cheered as the Queen passed by. The incident became the subject of the artist's brush, all the models being guardsmen who had served in the Crimea.

The "Chelsea Pensioners" suggested a rare skill in portraiture, and about this time he was favoured with sittings by Wagner, Ruskin, and Tennyson. But it was some years before Herkomer gained general recognition as a portrait-painter. His first commission, he tells me, was in 1879, when King's College, Cambridge, asked him to paint a portrait of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe.

"For some years," Professor Herkomer remarks, "portrait-painting has, of course, been my principal source of income. But it is not the easy means of making money which some people are apt to imagine. So much depends upon your sitter. The least distinguished people are not always the easiest to paint. I was painting the portrait of a certain lady, whose name you wouldn't know, last summer, and somehow or other I couldn't get the features right. Ultimately I had to leave for my two months' holiday in Germany with the portrait still unfinished—a haunting burden on my mind during the whole time.

"You mentioned Mr. Cecil Rhodes just now. Mr. Rhodes was one of the best sitters I ever had, full of the ease and *bonhomie* that so lighten the portrait-painter's task." This testimony from Professor Herkomer, I may add, was the more remarkable considering Mr. Rhodes's restless temperament.

Of all Professor Herkomer's portraits, that of the beautiful "Miss Grant," exhibited in the Academy of 1885, is certainly the most celebrated. It was the portrait of a friend's daughter, but for some time the identity of "the White Lady" was the subject of speculation.

"Endless verses," says Professor Her-

komer, "were sent me to send on to her; stories and fabricated biographies were written about her by the dozen. I heard the picture mentioned at hotels, and even in the trains on the Continent. At Berlin the only chairs in the Exhibition were placed in front of this picture—it was Miss Grant, Miss Grant, Miss Grant. Many offers of purchase were made to me—two, strangely enough, from gentlemen whose daughters were supposed to be the image of my Miss Grant. But I painted it for myself, and it was not for sale."

Mrs. Herkomer comes into the studio to summon us to afternoon tea. This is served at a table in the good old English style, the Herkomers' youngest child, a winsome little girl, being present at the meal. The artist's eldest son, Siegfrid, who was married last year, has made his home—patriarchal fashion—in some of the upper apartments of the spacious Lululaund, whilst a married daughter lives at Watford. A little son of ten is away at school. An artist cousin of the same name as himself is settled in London.

From the Picture by] "THE GUARDS' CHEER." *[H. Herkomer, R.A.*
By permission of the Fine Art Society, owners of the Copyright.

After tea I renew acquaintance with other parts of Professor Herkomer's house. I notice the progress which has been made with the decoration of the dining-room, of which the main feature illustrates "Human Sympathy." Round the walls, moulded in relief and richly painted, is a series of characteristic human figures whose hands are joined together in an unbroken clasp. I admire anew the lovely frescoes in the studio, "Liberty" and "Love," and the music gallery wherein a full orchestra can be seated. As befitting the purpose of this room, a sunblind against one of the windows has had inscribed upon it the following lines:—

> Dancing is a form of rhythm,
> Rhythm is a form of music,
> Music is a form of thought,
> And thought is a form of divinity.

In these, as in nearly all the other rooms of Lululaund, the fine woodcarving, made chiefly by the artist's father and uncle, is the most noteworthy feature. The bookcases, for instance, instead of being open in front or protected by glass, have wooden sliding-doors, and instead of various coloured bindings you see rich carvings. Every piece of furniture has been separately designed and fabricated in Professor Herkomer's workshops.

We return to the studio for a smoke, my host (who had only just renounced the anti-tobacco faith) contenting himself with cigarettes, whilst offering me a cigar. On the table, as we smoked, I noticed a portfolio of manuscript music.

"It contains some of my compositions for the zither. I have always been very fond of this instrument, as well as the violin, and I have now enough of these compositions to form a volume, which is shortly to be published in Munich. The zither is little known in this country, but it is played a great deal in Germany."

Painted by] PORTRAIT OF MISS GRANT ("THE LADY IN WHITE"). *[H. Herkomer, R.A.*

By permission of Messrs. Obach & Co., Cockspur Street, owners of the Copyright.

"I suppose there is no prospect of another music-play from your pen, Professor Herkomer?"

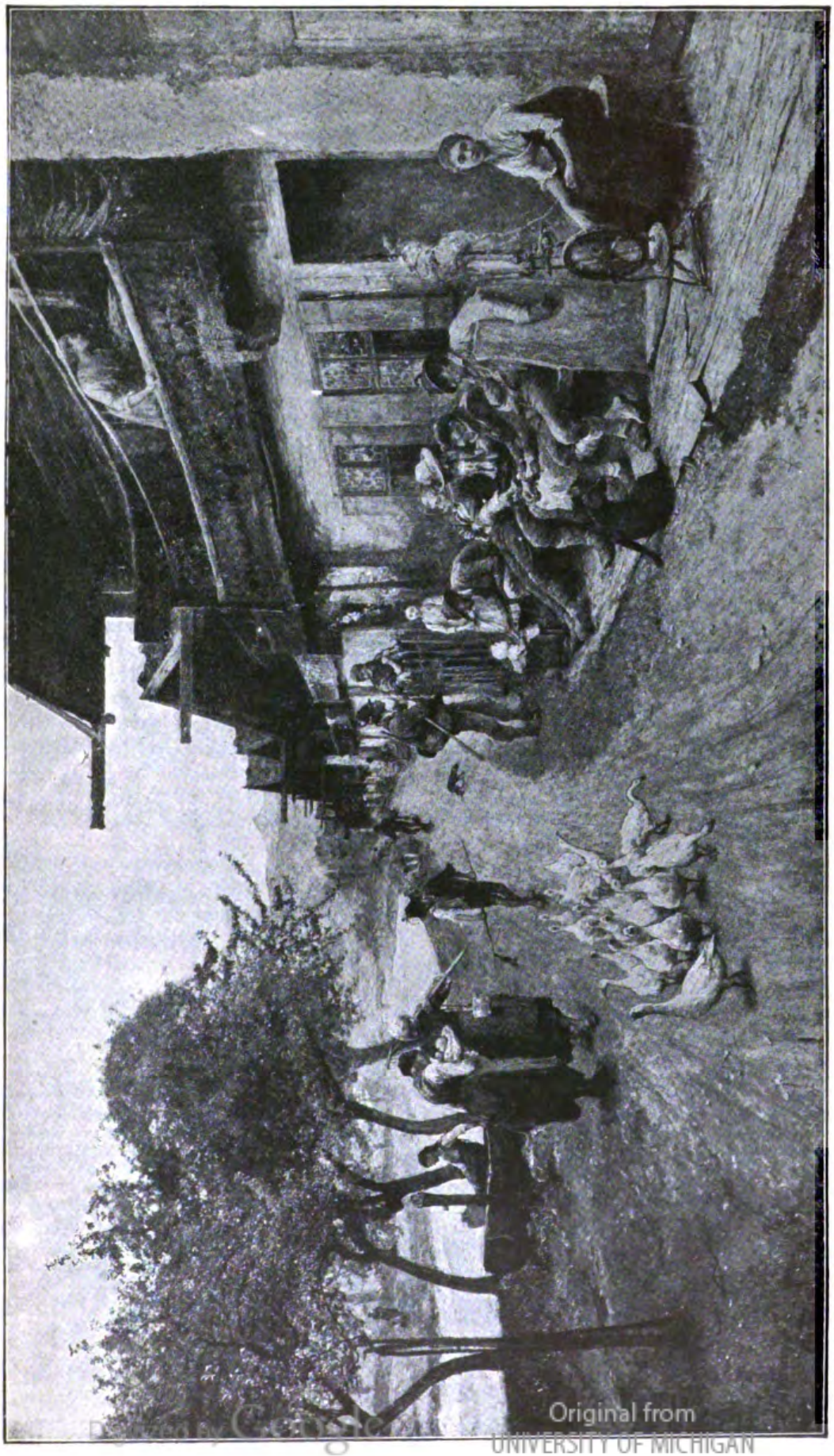
"No; I am afraid the mood for dramatic composition and production has passed, although I derived much pleasure from my work in that way and the appreciation which it received from my friends. My theatre here is now only used for concerts, in which the students, past and present, take the principal parts."

"Many of your students settle here permanently after their school work is over?"

"Yes, and I am very glad that it is so. You see, our relations are not the ordinary relations of master and pupils. In the first place, as you know, I take no fee for my tuition, the school being in the hands of a small limited company. The student who seeks admission must first satisfy me by a finished work of some kind of skill in the use of the pencil. My own teaching is directed to the correction of tendencies whilst giving free scope to the individuality of each student. Thus, although I have a school, it has been truly said by critics that I shall have no imitators.

"You know of my Sunday receptions. Well, I have lately supplemented these by two evening receptions during the week. The men come one evening, the women another, and over a cup of coffee we talk about our difficulties and ambitions."

The Herkomer School has usually about eighty students, the majority being of the fair sex. "I have had students," he told me, "from all parts of England and from various parts of the world—Americans and



"AFTER THE TOIL OF THE DAY."

From the Picture by H. Herkomer, R.A. [*By permission of Mr. Mansel Lewis.*

Australians, Japs, and even an Indian Prince. One of the most striking things is the increasing proportion of ladies, which it is difficult to fully account for. I often do my best to discourage them from entering upon art as a career, but it is not of much use."

Professor Herkomer's private secretary enters the studio to consult him as to a telegraphic appointment with a "sitter," which had apparently been overlooked. The incident was suggestive of the pressing calls to which Professor Herkomer is subject as a portrait-painter. They come not alone from English people. He has twice visited the United States, and in the country of his birth his fame is as great as in that of his adoption.

"So many requests have come from my German friends," he tells me, "that I have at last decided to spend a month or two in Berlin, taking a studio and devoting myself during that time to portrait-painting. My visit will coincide with the holding of an exhibition in Berlin, at which there is to be a representative collection of my works, both subject-pictures and portraits, in oils and water-colour as well as in enamel. I am a citizen, you know, of both England and Germany."

"But how can that be?"

"Well, at the outset I became a naturalized British subject. But I became a German subject again in 1888, in order that my marriage with my present wife might be legal, which, of course, it was not, according to that stupid law about a deceased wife's sister peculiar to England. My wedding, you know, took place in Germany—in the tower at Landsberg, in fact, which I erected to my mother's memory. Naturally, I supposed that I had thereby lost my English citizenship. But on consulting an eminent Q.C. I was very pleased to find that this was not so, and I obtained a special certificate of naturalization. So, you see, I am an Englishman in England and a German in Germany."

Let me add, however, that Professor Herkomer's English, in its fluency and purity, is as to the manner born, albeit he occasionally introduces into his conversation illustrative German phrases. It is as an English artist that honours have been conferred upon him by several European countries; and although he has found many subjects in his native Bavaria, such as "After the Toil of the Day," which was his first contribution to the Royal Academy, his most successful pictures have undoubtedly been of English scenes and English people.

"Will you have my carriage to the station?" Professor Herkomer inquires as I rise to go. But I decline his courteous offer, for it is but a mile's walk along a moonlit road, through crisp, country air which helps to explain the exuberant energy that, on reflection, is the most abiding impression I carry away from Lululaund concerning its master-builder.