

# THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

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## *Illustrated Interviews.*

LXXIV.—MR. HENRY WOODS, R.A.

BY RUDOLPH DE CORDOVA.



**I**N spite of his long residence in Venice, there is nothing about Mr. Henry Woods which suggests the "Italian in England," to use the title of one of the most famous of the poems of Robert Browning, whom he knew. Indeed, to use the title of another of these poems, the famous artist remains an "Englishman in Italy," finding the inspiration of his art and the subjects of his pictures in the populace and the architecture of the Queen of the Adriatic.

"I was born," said Mr. Woods, in answer to my first question, when I had caught him during one of his periodical sojourns in London, "in 1846, and am a native of Warrington, Lancashire. My earliest

recollections are of a few lovers of art there. Some of them are still living and have added to their number, as evidence of which they have built an art gallery in the town. Fortunately for me, at the grammar school at which I was educated the head master was an amateur, a clergyman, who used to paint in water-colours. There was also a school of art there: it was founded when I was a child, and my ambition was to attend it. The master was Mr. J. Christmas Thompson, a portrait-painter, and he had studied under Sir William Allen, R.A., who is still living there. My ambition was achieved in this direction, for I went there when I was between eight and nine, and I used to work there even on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, my



From a) Vol. xxi.—1.

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MR. WOODS IN HIS STUDIO IN VENICE.

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

[Photograph.]

only play-time. A great impetus was given to art in the North by the Art Treasure Exhibition in Manchester in 1857. I remember Gainsborough's 'Blue Boy' and Maclise's work being exhibited there, and I remember waiting for an hour and being pushed through the crowd by reason of my size to see Wallis's 'Death of Chatterton,' which was lately at the Guildhall. It was about this time that I obtained a bronze medal, which I still have, and of which, at the time, I was very proud, because it represents two which were awarded to me in 1857. The works for which these medals—two in one—were obtained were done chiefly during my play-time. One of the drawings was some plants from Nature and another was from a cast. They were excellent studies for what was to follow. I recollect that floggings were rather frequent at the grammar school to which I went, but in consequence of my success in art the master declared that he would not flog me any more, though he immediately proceeded to add that he put it to my honour not to deserve the punishment, and that, to my childish mind, took away all the kudos I had gained."

"Did you live up to what was required of you?" I asked, with something like awe at the idea of any youth of eleven being suddenly transformed into a saint.

"No," replied Mr. Woods, with a little laugh of recollection; "I often deserved floggings, but the master kept his word and I never got them, though I was often made the figure-head of a good deal of mischief which the boys went in for, in consequence of my being in their company. It was about that time that I made up my mind to be an artist, though my father wanted to make me an architect, as he had made the acquaintance of one who was restoring the Parish Church at Warrington. It was at the Warrington School of Art, when about fourteen, that I first met my friend—and later my brother-in-law—Mr. Luke Fildes, who came from Chester to study under Mr. Thompson. We soon became friends, and generally worked together. My enthusiasm for art went up by bounds at the great International Exhibition in 1862, to which I went frequently during a fortnight's visit to London. The result of this was that I had a very strong inclination to go to London for good. Up to the age of eighteen, however, I remained at Warrington, working there. Then some art scholarships were offered, all over England, by the Science and Art Department. I did the necessary work,

and was appointed a national scholar at South Kensington. The education at that time was purely experimental, but was good, as, indeed, it is now, but still experimental. The idea of the national scholarship was not to make artists, but to be of use to designers in the various manufactures of England. I chose stained glass designing, because I knew I should in that way be able to study the figure from the antique and the life. I worked at that for a year, and was re-appointed for another year, when I began to make myself useful, and did some preliminary work in assisting in decorative work in the Museum. In my third year they were willing to appoint me again, but I saw that stained glass was of no use to me; I did not care about it. Then I began to do wood drawing, gradually getting work on various periodicals, and among other things, later on, I illustrated Trollope's 'Vicar of Bulhampton.' The *Graphic* was then started, and my old friend, the late Mr. W. L. Thomas, placed me on the staff as one of the first members, and with the early Christmas numbers I had a great deal to do jointly with Fildes. On the *Graphic* I often did work that interested me, and got me into a quick way of fixing an interesting motive, while occasionally I left London for subjects.

"I witnessed many stirring events and often had motives suggested for pictures, which, had I stayed in England, I should undoubtedly have painted.

"In the summer, however, I used to drop wood drawing and go painting. My first picture was a little Welsh landscape, which was hung at the first exhibition of the Royal Academy ever held at Burlington House, and the following year I had a little black and white drawing exhibited there, since which time, until the season of 1899, I never missed an exhibition."

"When did you first go to Venice?"

"In 1876 I accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Fildes, and started a few little pictures, but after two or three months I came back and resumed my wood drawing for the *Graphic*. How I came to go was simply that Mr. Fildes had been there with Mr. Marcus Stone. They told me a great deal about the city, and said it would suit me, as I had been painting before that, chiefly at Streatley-on-the-Thames, pictures in which the background and figures were of equal interest. The Thames, at that time, was very different from what it is now, and on ordinary weekdays you never saw anyone on it except in the month of August. I began at first at Cookham, where Frederick Walker was painting,

but I didn't know him until some years later. In the following year I went to Hurley, where I painted with Tissot and Heilbuth, Fildes and Macbeth. Tissot was painting studies, and so were the rest of us, of a model who was put in a boat in a meadow, actually for a picture by Fildes. The lot of us had the place to ourselves, so we worked with no interruptions. The modern house - boat was almost unknown in those days, and only one or two steam launches ever came up so high. Henley Regatta was on a much quieter scale than it is now, and was not so well known. The people who went up the Thames were the ones who knew the river and loved it, and cared to picnic and camp out in the meadows. There were some men from the Temple I recollect amongst the early campers out, who always respected the property they were on.

"Amongst working friends at Streatley were Vicat Cole, Keeley Halswelle, and S. P. Jackson. Jackson had a steam launch and Halswelle had a house-boat, one of the first of the kind to be seen there, and we used to have a good time, often spending our evenings on the house - boat, which we took up

the river on Sundays when we went picnicking. I was rather a good canoeist in those days, and I remember once the Thames being in a high flood, and I went up from Cookham to Streatley in a day, often across the meadows instead of going through the locks. Halswelle was a most rapid worker, and did a large number of small pictures to be exhibited at a "one-man show." I think



From the Picture by

"LA BELLA." Original from

[H. Woods, R.A.]

he was one of the most rapid painters who ever existed, and he rarely worked more than two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon.

"Fildes was then making a study for his picture of 'The Widower' at Aldworth, an

old village three miles over Streatley Hill, where there are some Crusaders' monuments and a record in the church that Queen Elizabeth visited it to see them. At Streatley I painted several pictures, all of which were exhibited at the Royal Academy. Only one

found a place over the line, but I had an offer for it from a purchaser, which I refused. When it came back into my hands, thinking I could improve pieces of it, I painted out the figures, but somehow I never did anything more with it, and it has remained in that state until to-day. Heilbuth was a good friend of mine, and in 1878 a fine picture of Van Hannan's, 'Pearl Stringers,' was exhibited in the Paris Exhibition. Heilbuth asked me to congratulate Van Hannan for him on my return to Venice, but I did not then know Van Hannan. On my way back to Venice, however, I saw the picture in Paris he had spoken about, and arriving in Venice I met some Austrian friends who called themselves the 'Sand Club,' as they used to bathe off the Lido. There I was introduced to Van Hannan while we were both in bathing costume, and I was able to give him Heilbuth's message. We have since been close friends.

"My returning to Venice for a long stay had in it something of a dramatic element. One day I went to Streatley and found the rooms I had always occupied engaged, so without unpacking my things I returned to London that night and



From the Picture by

"OUTSIDE CHURCH."

Copyright by Henry Woods, Esq., R.A.

[H. Woods, R.A.]

started off for Venice, where I arrived in three days. In August I returned to England, and among a pile of letters at my studio awaiting my coming I found one from the Art Union of London requesting me to call for a cheque in payment for a picture then at the Royal Academy. On further search I discovered their request for the order for the picture, and telling me that it had been selected by one of their prize-winners. Back to Venice I went—that was in 1878—and took a studio in the picturesque part of San Trovaso. There I painted the 'Ducal Courtyard,' 'Street Trading in Venice,' the 'Gondolier's Courtship,' and another picture, all of which are now in the Schwabe Gallery in Hamburg. Before that, however, I had painted two pictures which were purchased by Messrs. Agnew, the first of a long series of transactions with them.

"In my 'Bargaining for an Old Master' I had for a background a shop covered with copper vessels of all sorts. It took three hours to fit it up every day. The proprietor had an imbecile assistant who used to work for nothing. The only business transaction I ever noticed there, and I worked there for five or six hours a day during a period of two months, was the sale of a coffee-pot, which was sold for fivepence. The transaction was not a particularly happy one, for the woman bargained so closely for it that the proprietor cursed her for not wanting to pay enough for people to live on. His ideas of the sum necessary for living on were evidently limited.

"A year or two after I was passing the house and noticed that the shop had gone, but the man was still about. 'You have given up the bronze business?' I said to him.

"'Yes, I do something on commission,' he replied; 'I was getting too thin on it.'



From the Picture by

"CLOISTERS—FRARI CHURCH"

[H. Woods, R.A.]

"I didn't believe that was possible, as he always struck me as being preternaturally thin at the time he was carrying on the business.

"In front of the picture an old man is represented seated in a very decayed gilt chair, which had once been in the salon of a palace. I wanted to find a chair of this description, and I heard there was one in the Ghetto, so I went there. There I saw the very chair I wanted in the shop of a good-natured o'd man, to whom I said that I didn't want to buy the chair, but I would like to hire it.

"'I will lend it to you,' he said; 'you can have it for as long as you like and return it to me when you have finished with it.'

"I noticed that several loafers were hang-

ing about at the time, and about two months after a porter came to me with a seedy-looking person in a frock-coat, and announced that the gentleman had bought the business of the old Jew in the Ghetto, and wanted the chair, which, it happened, I had not yet used.

"'The old man lent it to me,' I said, 'but I will give you ten francs for the loan of it.'

"'Sir,' replied the seedy individual in the frock-coat, 'I sell, I do not lend; the price is sixty francs.'

"The chair was not worth sixty francs, or anything like it, and as they saw I was getting suspicious and vexed, they began to back out. Then I got hold of a piece of firewood—threats are cheap anywhere—and pointed menacingly to the door. As they backed out I threw it after them and followed it by another lump down the well of the staircase, taking care not to hit them, they declaring I should 'hear from them to my disadvantage.'

"I at once started off to the Ghetto to investigate the matter, and found the shop exactly as it was two months ago, with the old man seated smoking in his chair.

"'So you are here,' I said; 'what about that chair? You have sold your business, I hear.'

"'Sold my business,' he replied, 'certainly not; I hope to die in it. Why do you say that?'

"I told him the whole story, and he looked puzzled and said, 'Yesterday a porter came and asked me what I wanted for the chair the painter had borrowed, and I told him thirty francs.'

"In this way I found out that it was an attempt on the part of the man to make thirty francs out of me, but it was abortive, for I never saw them again nor did I ever 'hear from them to my disadvantage.' Cases of this sort, however, are few and far between, but there is always something so amusing in being 'done' in Venice that one bears them no ill-will for the attempt.

"This was my first picture exhibited as an Associate of the Royal Academy.



From the Picture by

"FIRST COMMUNION DAY."

Copyright by Henry Woods, Esq., R.A.

[H. Woods, R.A.]



From the Pictures by

"PREPARATION FOR FIRST COMMUNION."  
Copyright by Henry Woods, Esq., R.A.

[H. Woods, R.A.]

"About 1881 I found that I wanted a larger studio, and looked about everywhere, but could not find one. At last I went to an old bric-à-brac shop and announced I would give a bonus of twenty francs for information as to where there was a likely place I could

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turn into a studio. The following day I heard through this novel advertising source of a sort of temple at the bottom of the garden at the Palazzo Vendramin, opposite the Church of Santa Maria della Carmine. I went down there and found it was occupied by a working

pastrycook. I saw at once that with a few changes I could build just the sort of studio I wanted. Fortunately there was in Venice a Royal Academy gold medallist, an English architect who spoke the language well, and he arranged all the business preliminaries for me. The cake man was in debt for six months' rent, and I told him if he could get out in five days I would pay his arrears of rent and give him sixty francs in addition. He cleared out in three days, but, having spent his money, he returned to the neighbourhood, and threatened both Mr. Scott, the architect, and me with all sorts of dreadful things. I at once took a leaf out of his book and threatened him horribly, and my threats had such an effect that I never saw him again.

"Having made the necessary alterations and got a good studio, I commenced with my picture, 'Preparation for First Communion.' Most of the subjects of my pictures I have always seen in and about Venice, and the motive for this picture was suggested while strolling down a small *calle*. Some women were seated at a door, making what I thought were lace window curtains. I asked about their work, and they told me they were not window curtains, but veils for the First Communion. I asked them how the veils were put on, and they fitted one on a little girl, and the woman gave me the subject by saying, 'It is not everyone who can fix a veil, I can tell you, sir; sometimes they have to get the priest to come and do it.'

"I at once started designing the subject, with a priest superintending the rehearsal. The man who stood for the priest was perfectly dressed for a rector, clean shaven, with white collar and snuff-box complete. In the spring I was finishing my picture, and in the garden behind my studio some gardeners from the country were working and chattering a great deal. This put me out fearfully, so I asked the model to go outside and speak to them. He was really a rough fellow of the *facchino* porter type, though he had the face of a priest. He got a ladder, put it against the wall, climbed up, and drew liberally from the vocabulary of his class when in wrath—blasphemy mostly—telling them that they had broken the professor's soul. At once I saw the fun of the thing and ran upstairs to look at the scene through the shutter of a window, so that I might not be seen. The workmen, mistaking him for a priest in reality, were most devout and had saluted him with, 'Your servant, Rector!' He, on the other hand,

thought they were chaffing, while the poor gardeners, aghast at the terrible language of the holy man, were crossing themselves and standing perfectly speechless at the idea of such a scandal."

"Do you often have such humorous episodes with your sitters?"

"Not infrequently. When talking together there is much in the manner of the Venetians which is almost Shakespearean. I remember a scene particularly so. Once I was painting a scene on a bridge at the Giudecca. On the shady side of it about a dozen *facchini* or porters used to sleep. They do not work much, but they are not lazy like the Neapolitans, for they can only get employment when a ship comes through. I had promised these men a bottle of wine if they would clear out of their favourite haunt until the picture was finished. One day some six or seven of them were awake, and one said to the other, pointing to my picture, 'One must have patience for this craft.' The second replied, 'It's not alone that, because, if it were that alone, I, too, could do the painting; I have patience. For thirty years I have waited for a "Terno" (the highest prize) in the lottery from the saints, and I have patience; and yet I am not good at this craft.' Then in turn he pointed to my picture, and declared emphatically, 'No; wanting a passion for the fine arts, patience is useless.'

"The third came to the rescue with the philosophic reminder that I had promised to pay a bottle when the picture was finished, and they left off speculating on art and patience to contemplate the bottle in imagination. They got their bottle, but they had to wait a whole year for it.

"Soon after that I commenced a series of pictures about the Scuola San Rocco. There is a stone seat there where loafers lie about. One day there was a little crowd about me talking of my work, and as they were making a good deal of noise I turned to the ringleader and said, 'When the picture is finished, framed, and in the public gallery, and thou hast paid thy half-franc to see it, then criticise it—not before.'

"'Sir, I am no critic,' replied the man. 'I work, and I have a family depending on me.'

"'Thou didst criticise,' said another man, while an old man, rather wishing to excuse them, broke in with, 'There is no one here, sir, who has the capacity or would presume to criticise.'

"Then another spoke; he would have done for one of the clowns in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and said, 'If my master was



here he could criticise,' upon which the old man asked, 'Who is thy master?' I expected the answer to be 'Bottom,' but he gave the name of a well-known man in Venice, and the old man, with a contemptuous expression, said, 'There are tailors here in Venice who know more of the finearts than thy master.'

"At San Rocco there was a man who used to worry me by his conversation. He had apparently small means of his own, for he passed his time dozing, generally. After pestering me a good deal he one day asked me if I knew Professor——.

"I replied, rather curtly, 'No.'

"Next day he opened out with, 'It is curious you don't know my friend the professor.'

"'What does he do?' I asked. 'This sort of thing?' and pointed to my picture.

"'Oh, no,' he replied; 'my friend is no painter on the streets.'

"A girl standing by broke in with, 'I suppose he is a house-painter.'

"'He has his studio,' he went on; then, seeing he had made rather a mess of it, he said, pointing to my picture, 'But anyone can see you are a signor with a caprice, because you have a gondola.'

"On another occasion I was working in

the Campo Giovanni e Paolo, quite in the traffic of the foot-passengers, but I always received every possible consideration, for the people gave me a wide berth so as not to interfere with me in any way. Most funerals

must pass this Campo on their way to the cemetery. Some have a band waiting there. They land, and the procession makes the round of the Campo. On one occasion one of these processions pulled up just where I was, and one of the mourners addressed me, and, pointing in the direction of the coffin, said, 'He also was a painter.' I bowed, and the man added, 'And of great hopes.'

"Have you no favourite place for painting near Venice?"

"Yes, a very favourite place is at the foot of the mountains going to Cadore. For over fifteen years I painted there, my most important pictures being 'The Water-Wheels of Savassa,' 'First Communion Veil,' and 'A

Village in Venito.' At that time a little carriage used to come every day to fetch me. One day, however, it did not turn up, and while I was waiting outside the mills a magnificent carriage belonging to the noble of the neighbourhood stopped, and the servants

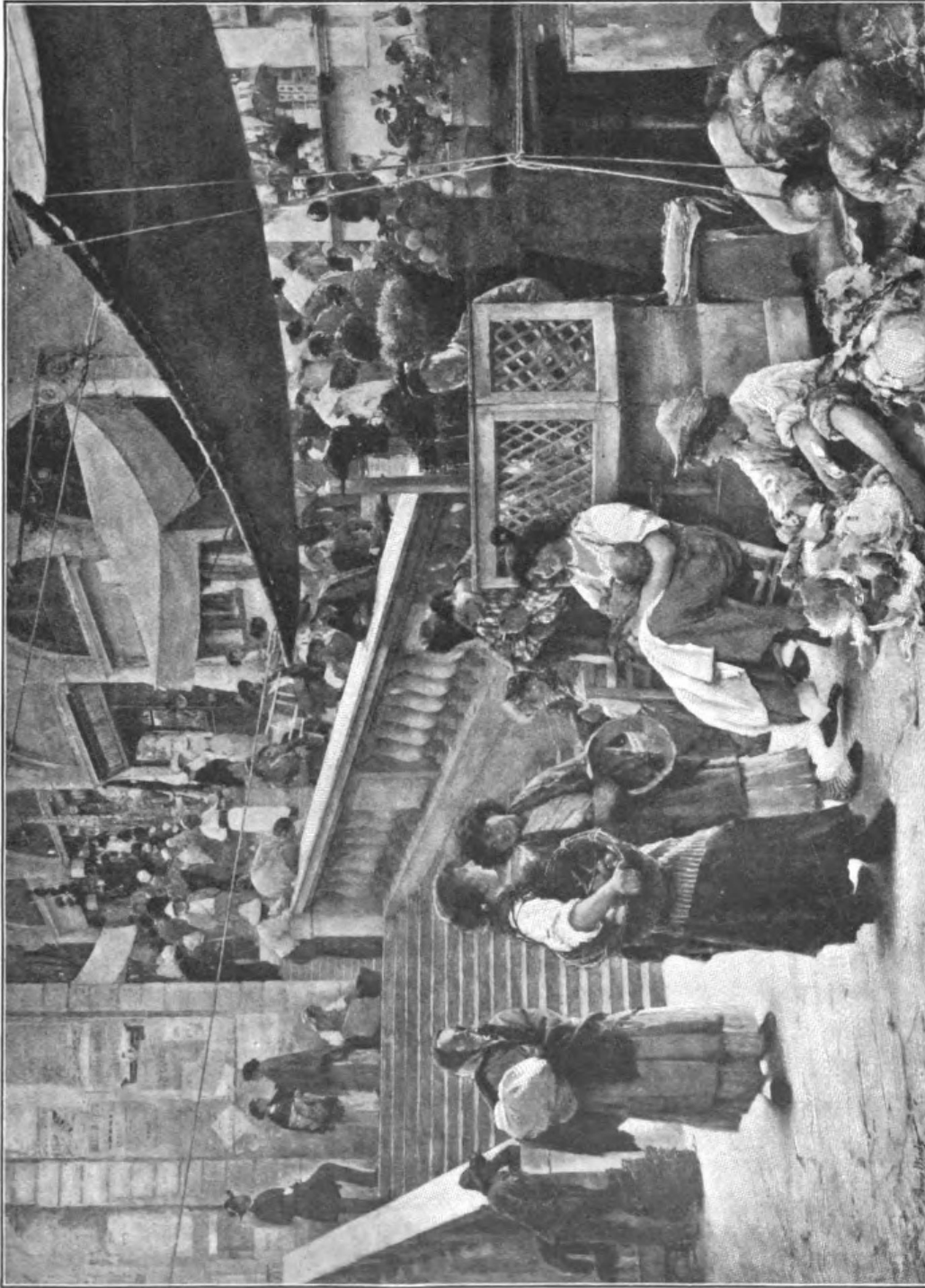


From the Picture by] "THE FIRST COMMUNION VEIL." [H. Woods, R.A.  
Copyright by Henry Woods, Esq., R.A.

came and inquired for the painter. I made myself known, and they said there was no carriage available at the inn, so their master had sent them for me. When I arrived at

“ ‘Well,’ he exclaimed, aghast, astonished at the splendour of the equipage, ‘is this how the Associates do it?’ ”

“During the course of the evening Mr.



[H. Woods, R.A.]

“THE FOOT OF THE RIALTO, VENICE.”  
Painted in 1881. Copyright by Henry Woods, Esq., R.A.

[From the Picture by]

the inn in this carriage it took a turn in front of the house, and to my surprise I saw my friend, Mr. J. C. Hook, R.A., waiting there.

Hook told me of his having been in Venice in '48, and the active part he took in the stirring affairs there in that year. He was very tired and went to bed early, while I went

into the kitchen, where the *habitués* of the inn always sat. They inquired as to who the gentleman was, and I said that he was 'an English professor of painting who was also a Venetian veteran of '48.'

"The English professor merits some attention at our hands,' said one of the men, and loving, as they do, any excuse for demonstration, they started to make the necessary preparations. Bengal lights and a band were at once arranged for for the next evening, and I went to bed. The following morning, however, I received a note from Mr. Hook saying that he had to leave for England the same night, and, just to get a few hours there, that he had gone off to Venice. This was a great disappointment to the people for they really love the English, and would have been delighted to have paid a compliment to an Englishman who had taken part in such stirring events as those of '48."

Then our talk turned on Mr. Woods' method of work, and he said, "I was elected a Royal Academician with MacWhirter and the late Henry Moore in 1893. I really paint quickly, but change a good deal during the progress of a picture. Whenever I am working at a picture in which there is any architecture, like steps or a balustrade, I have it copied and coloured like the original and pose my models on it, for a time at all events, rather than go always to the spot. By that time, however, I have already finished my background, and, if it is a quiet place, I have posed someone in the proper position wearing the particular colours I am working on, so that everything may be absolutely right. The light in Venice is a very flattering one, and is never like the white light one gets in London. The greater part of my pictures is done in a glass studio, quite like open air."

"Was your picture in the last Academy, 'A Venetian Autolykus,' painted in that way?"

"Precisely. He was an absolutely real man, and used to cry, like Shakespeare's *Autolykus*, 'Pretty ribbons for pretty necks.' I had intended painting one of these fellows for some years past. Whilst at work on the background the very man I wanted turned up, his tray piled with trinkets, powder-puffs, and pearl-powder, which form the largest part of their trade, with stockings, handkerchiefs, and similar articles—all rubbish, but of the most beautiful colour. He spoke to a woman who was working at artificial flowers, but she was deaf to his blandishments, and finding no business was to be done he put down his

stand and said, 'Business is so bad I will sell the whole thing for thirty francs.' It was the very thing I wanted, so I called to my gondolier and said, 'Put it in the gondola just as it stands.'

"Oh, make it forty francs,' said my Autolykus, 'it is surely worth that.'

"Not wanting the thing disturbed I made it forty francs, and in a minute the place was alive with gossip on 'the caprice of the painter.' A fat woman sitting by, who evidently had a shrewd knowledge of human nature, said: 'It's no caprice of the painter; he knows what he is doing; it would cost him three times as much if he paid the man every time he wanted him to sit to him.'"

From the people our talk verged to the city itself and the changes which have occurred there in late years.

"There are few really nasty changes," said Mr. Woods, "although the fine view of the Church of the Salute coming down the Grand Canal has been completely ruined by the erection of a new 'Palace,' and the beautiful island of St. Helena, where I painted two of my earliest pictures, has been destroyed by a railway truck manufactory at the very entrance of Venice, a state of things only comparable to what the building of a similar establishment would be in St. James's Park.

"As for the steamers about which there has been so much talk, they are of great use, and they pay, so that their presence is inevitable. Before their advent one could anchor one's gondola and swim out with the tide along the Grand Canal, and that used to be a favourite amusement of mine. Now one can do neither of these things, but the city has benefited greatly by the increased commerce. Of course, in the small canals the gondola is not intruded upon in any way, so that there is little interference with the picturesqueness there. To see the real life of Venice one should go in the hot weather. Then, towards the evening, you will hear the splashing of water and the laughter of children, and see the little ones supported on washing-boards, the fathers with the babies in their arms and the mothers taking care of the younger ones, all swimming about, enjoying themselves to their hearts' content."

"Is not the hot weather rather an unhealthy time in Venice?"

"Not at all. It is the Venetian bathing season; the visitors are Italian, chiefly from every part of northern and central Italy, although the air is mostly sirocco. It is cooler in July than anywhere on the

Lombardy or Venetian plains. August is trying, consequent on mosquitoes, which are lively and aggressive.

"Compared with some years ago there are very few English residents now in Venice. Mr. Robert Browning was generally there during the autumn and early winter months. I think everything Venetian delighted him, particularly the plays in the Venetian dialect. I remember him telling an interesting

serve him, as he tells me that he cannot accept charity. He evidently looks upon my efforts on his behalf in that light; but we must think over something, as I know he is very badly off. I found out with some difficulty the Italian store where Manin bought his small necessities, and arranged with the proprietor that Manin should supply his wants at a very small cost. This plan succeeded for a few days only. Then the shopkeeper came



From the Picture by]

"A MODERN AUTOLYCUS."

[H. Woods, R.A.

Copyright by Henry Woods, Esq., R.A.

anecdote of Daniel Manin at Sir Henry Layard's dinner-table. Of course you know Manin was styled the 'Liberator,' and was the great man there in the stirring time of '48.

"Years ago I was residing in Paris," said Mr. Browning. 'Dickens was there also, and mentioned that Manin was living in Paris, a man who interested him much. He had found him out and done what he could to assist him. I am now at my wits' end to

to me in a most excited state, saying that the "arrangement for Signor Manin could not go on. Even now there's a crowd of the poorest Italians in Paris besieging my shop, demanding my rice and macaroni at the price I charge Signor Manin."

"The good patriot had undoubtedly informed his fellow-countrymen where they could fare well and cheaply. All subsequent endeavours to help were useless."

# Captain Barnacle.

BY JOHN OXENHAM.

Author of "God's Prisoner," "Rising Fortunes," "A Princess of Vascovy," etc., etc.



HERE came the usual peremptory rat-tat on the front door, and Miss Charity, in her faded black silk and her most engaging smile, ran up the stairs to answer it. Her sisters, Miss Faith and Miss Hope, in the dark little parlour-kitchen followed the track of the adventure up above with straining ears and anxious hearts. For you must know it was the 4th of August, and

later, dear, and some of them have worried you two so that I've wished they'd never come."

"They've gone upstairs," said Miss Faith, listening intently, with a sparkle in her eyes. "I'm inclined to think it's all right. I wonder if they'll take all the rooms and if they'll want late dinners. I wish Parliament would pass a law making it compulsory to dine at one o'clock. It's ever so much better for them than stuffing themselves with all kinds of

things when it's almost bedtime.

They must have the most horrible dreams, some of them, I'm sure. They're coming down again. They're in the dining-room. They're going out. H'm!—call again, I suppose, when they've tried to beat down somebody else with our prices. Well, Charity, dear—taken?"

"Not yet," said their younger sister, as she came down into the kitchen. "Look back presently."

"Or otherwise, as the case may be," said Miss Faith.

"But I don't know that they'd have suited us very well, Faith. She was an extensive person, all over jet beads, and five children, and a nurse and a parrot."

"A parrot?" cried her sisters.

"Whatever does she take a parrot about with her for?" asked Miss Faith, who got her breath first.

"It belonged to her husband who is dead, and she says she looks upon it quite as one of the family, and it goes everywhere with them. It remembers him perfectly, and sometimes cries: 'George! George!' till she has to cover it up."

"I hope she won't come back," said Miss Hope. "It would be almost as bad as having a dead body in the house."



"WITH STRAINING EARS AND ANXIOUS HEARTS."

not a single one of their rooms was let, and that was a serious matter.

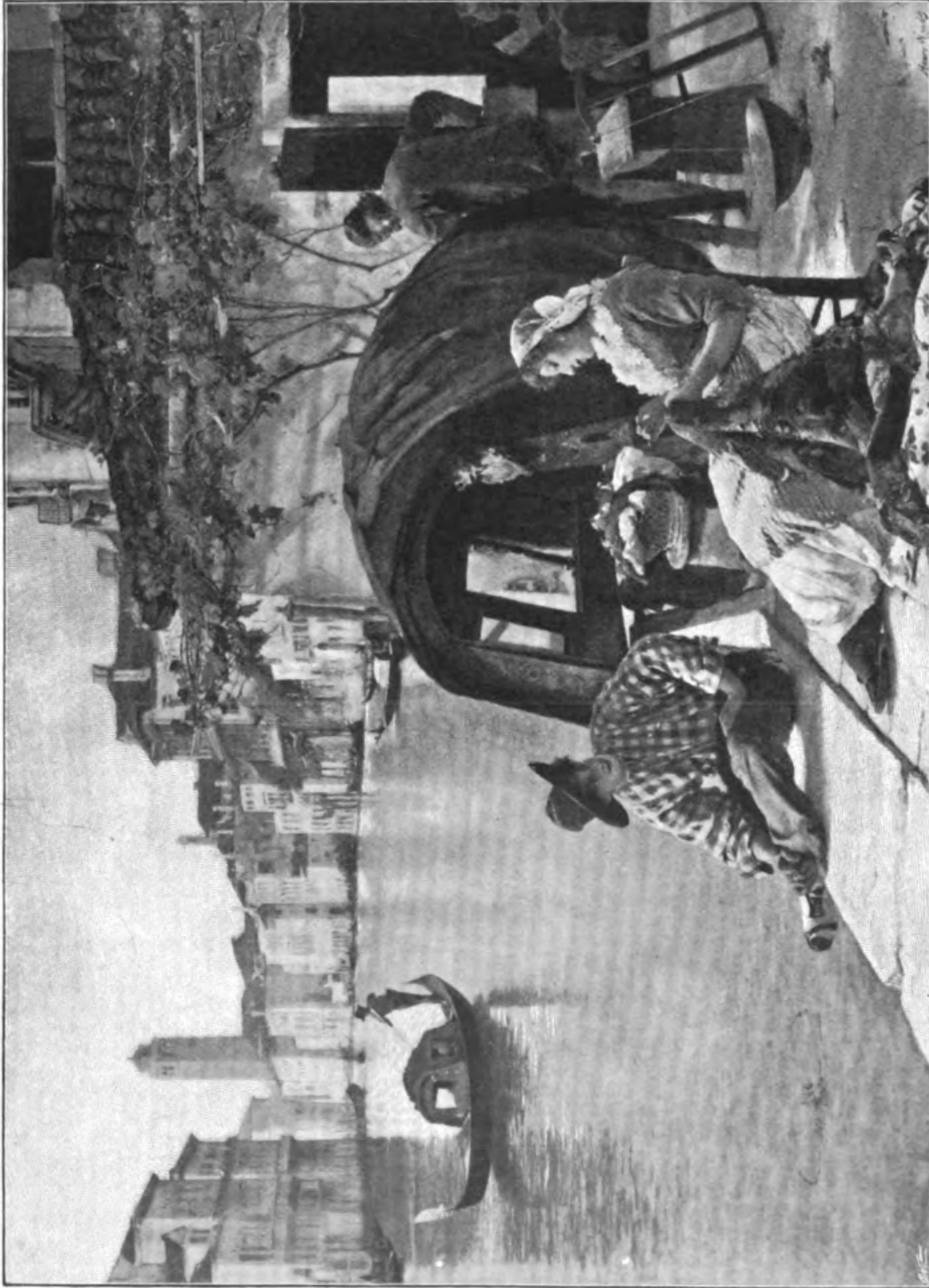
There was the usual tentative colloquy on the front door-step. Then—

"They've come in," said Miss Faith, and clasped her hands thankfully. "I had a feeling we should let to-day."

"Well, if they're nice people we'll hope they'll stop in," said Miss Hope; "but we mustn't be disappointed if they don't, Faith, dear. They don't always, you know, and sometimes when Charity has told us about them afterwards we've been very glad they didn't."

"I know. But I can't ever remember not having a room let on the 4th of August, Hope. It's awful."

"We've always had somebody sooner or



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(Schwabe Gallery, Hamburg. Mr. Woods was elected A.R.A. after painting this picture and "The Foot of the Rialto," page 12.)