HOW FAMOUS PAINTERS WORK:

PEEPS INTO THEIR STUDIOS.

BY LEWIS HIND.

THE other afternoon I met a friend, who is also a well-known painter, at Mudie's Library, and observing a copy of Mr. Zangwill's "The Master" upon the counter, I inquired if he had perused that interesting work.

My friend shook his head. "I never read novels about painting," he replied. "I can't stand the long-haired velvet-coated heroes. They stroll out upon the seashore, and in the course of one afternoon paint a little thing which they sell the next day for £1000. In real life it's only second-rate artists who wear their hair long; very, very few play the banjo; and it is quite the exception for wealthy and beautiful ladies of title to fall in love with us."

Nowadays there is not much to distinguish the average eminent painter from any other average eminent man. If you were to meet Sir John Millais in a first-class carriage on the Underground railway you would probably take him for a country squire. Mr. Alma Tadema might be a Dutch tulip-grower; Mr. Luke Fildes a French merchant; Mr. Seymour Lucas a man with a keen eye for a horse; Mr. Marcus Stone a lord; Mr. Herkomer an actor; and Mr. Dicksee a fashionable young doctor with a pretty taste in furniture and pottery.

As a matter of fact the painting of pictures only too often develops into a business, much as the selling of dry goods or the manufacture of chemicals. Young Pictor Ignotus begins life with fine theories about art for art's sake, and for a time remains faithful to his youthful ideas. But the years fly by, his father's allowance ceases, and he begins to understand that his art, like everything else in life, is governed by the inexorable laws of supply and demand. Then he marries—painters always marry early—and the desire to be on the right side of the fence on quarter-day becomes a much more potent factor in his life than vague dreams about art for the sake of art. Painters

From a photo by] [*Ralph W. Robinson, Redhill.*

THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY: SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS, BART.

moreover seldom manage their pecuniary affairs shrewdly. When success comes early they have a way of building lordly dwelling-places with the first-fruits of their earnings, amassing a noble debt, which hangs ever afterwards like a millstone about their necks. There are cases on record of Royal Academicians who have been hampered financially by extravagances of this nature till the day of their death.

The lives of all painters who have attained to eminence are records of unceasing toil. They work quite as hard in proportion as doctors or barristers. A fashionable portrait-painter will make appointments for five sitters a day for weeks together. The mere physical act of painting makes such demands upon the strength that I have known one of these children of fortune, after an hour's work, be in the state of perspiration produced by a hard set of tennis upon a hot summer's day.

There are of course some men who paint without any regard to the marketable value of the work they produce. These are mainly landscape artists, impregnated with such a rare feeling for the beauty of the world, and so passionate a desire to become at one with nature, both in their lives and in their art, that they never acquire the common desire to be the architects of their own fortunes, or to shine in the drawing-rooms of Belgravia. But these are the exception. Most men come in the end to producing little else but those subjects in the painting of which they have become famous—subjects which the public expects from their brushes. Mannerism claims them, and so it follows that year after year one is able to assign most of the "line" works at the Academy to their authors, without the trouble of referring to one's catalogue.

And after all is not this very natural? Most of us prefer to do that which we can do well. Lord Leighton was an adept at those richly-coloured, highly-finished classical themes, so unlike anything that mortal eye ever looks upon in this grey world; Mr. Alma Tadema is a master of white marble and blue skies; Mr. Orchardson of yellow walls and eloquent empty spaces; Mr. Hook of pleasant summer seas; Mr. Dicksee of the sentiment that trills through drawing-room songs; Mr. MacWhirter of the silver birch tree—"our lady of the woods"; and Mr Sidney Cooper of unemotional cattle. Knowing that the public expects these subjects from their brushes, or changes rung upon them, it is certainly to the credit of these gentlemen that they do sometimes shoulder their easels and sally forth to new scenes. Mr. MacWhirter, for instance, a few summers ago sent to the Academy a dazzling picture of Alpine flowers, and Mr. Alma Tadema occasionally marches in the ranks of the portrait-painters. Some of the more ruthless among the art critics attempt to probe painters with pitchforks from the grooves in which they are so willing to travel, while at the same time they lash about them at the legs of the public who run alongside, and encourage the painters to keep each in his own groove. But nothing ever comes of it, as the painters pretend they were not aware anybody was probing them.

As the world is too strong for most of us, so in the end is the Royal Academy too strong for the painting fraternity. In their hot youth most young artists of spirit abuse that institution stoutly and vehemently, and call upon the Queen and the Home Secretary to rescind the privileges wielded by the Immortal Forty; but the Forty sit quietly in their deep chairs, stroke their beards and smile. They know! The years pass, the most terrible of the young iconoclasts become elected to Associateships, and without a murmur they conform to the rules and are soon smiling at the hoarse cries of a new generation of terrible young outsiders. Such has been the history of many men who are now snug and safe within the walls of Burlington House. But why mention them? Why wave torn colours? Why shout old battle-cries? Would we act differently, you and I? Stop! There is one man who, having been called in to take his seat in the council chamber, tarried there but a little while; then one day he seized his old flag, and with his ancient battle-cry upon his lips rushed forth again into the darkness. That man is Sir Edward Burne-Jones, who a few years ago resigned his Associateship. But then he is a great painter, with a great following, and as powerful, standing alone, as any of the Forty.

How do artists work? To that question there can only be one answer. Each painter early discovers the method best suited to his habits and temperament, and having found it, the method crystallises into rules, which, if he have that grit in him which helps to make a man great, guide him evermore. Let me take two examples—Mr. Orchardson, one of the oldest of the Royal Academicians, and Mr. Solomon, one of the latest Associates.

Mr. Orchardson, whose delightful interiors—"Mariage de Convenance," "A Social Eddy," and "The Queen of Swords"—are known to everybody, does not put brush to canvas until he has seen the picture complete in his mind's eye. He then jots down the scheme upon a piece of paper and proceeds forthwith to paint the picture. His most famous work, "Napoleon on board the Bellerophon," was conceived and carried out in this way. Long had the idea been in his mind that the subject was extremely paintable, and one day, passing up and down his studio in Portland Place, he suddenly saw the whole scene—the bare deck, the brooding, watching staff and the disconsolate Emperor standing apart frowning at the ocean, over which he was being borne to banishment.

This method seems to me to be quite the happiest, as the first fresh impression is thrown in the first fresh flight of the painter's fancy direct upon the canvas. Those artists who make small finished sketches before beginning upon the picture itself hardly ever succeed in imparting to the final canvas the spontaneity that characterises the early sketch. It follows that the study is almost always the better of the two—a statement which anybody can verify by examining sketch and finished picture side by side. How often on Show Sunday has the eye wandered from the *magnum opus* to the sketch for the picture, rapidly jotted down upon a piece of waste canvas and pinned upon the studio wall, and how swift has been the relief to the eye, like a fragment of natural talk in a page of stilted dialogue.

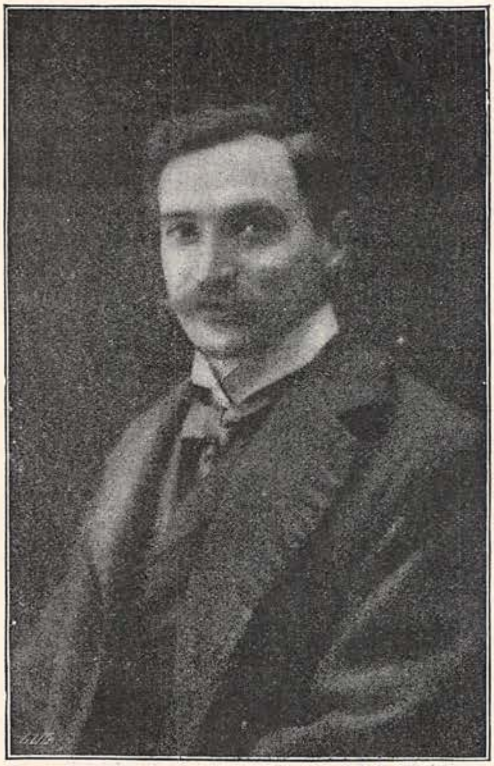
Although many painters are in the habit of making finished studies, the custom is not universal, as when, a few years ago, the Fine Art Society, purposing to hold an exhibition of such studies, applied to several painters for the loan of a few examples, they received replies from many painters to the effect that they could not oblige as they were not in the habit of making first studies for their pictures.

Mr. Solomon's method is the antithesis of Mr. Orchardson's. The mere act of painting does not give him very much trouble, as his eye for colour is true and sure, and he knows just what effects he can produce. But he spends an infinity of time over draughtsmanship and composition. You may call upon him on a Monday morning and find his picture apparently finished. You express your admiration of the work, and ascribe his own muttered criticism and the ominous shaking of his head to the artist's natural discontent with anything falling short of perfection. If you call again a fortnight later it is likely enough that you will find the picture quite changed. The three cupids that hovered so prettily about the head of the central figure have disappeared and now trip gracefully along the ground at her feet. When you tentatively regret the change the artist replies, "I didn't like it. 'Twouldn't come well. The lines were ugly. So I scraped it all out."

Mr. Solomon paints and repaints upon the canvas, losing a figure here, gaining a drapery there, till in the end the picture that you admire at the Academy is not one, but three or four overlaid each upon the other.

From a photo by] [*Ralph W. Robinson, Redhill.*
MR. W. Q. ORCHARDSON, R.A., IN HIS STUDIO.

As Mr. Solomon's is a typical working studio, let me describe it. Oblong in form, the north wall has been knocked down and a roomy glass house built out from it, giving a clear and equable light. This is known in art parlance as a *plein air* studio. A platform stands in the middle of this glass chamber, and upon it is placed a couch. Sprawling upon the velvet, laughing, crying and cooing, is a baby of about two years of age, who has the distinction of being one of the models of Mr. Solomon's new picture for the Academy. The mother sits by the side of the sofa striving to repress the infant's spirits, and about half a dozen yards off the painter stands before a large upright canvas fixed upon an easel, as firm and solid looking as the scaffold about a modern building. The walls of the studio are hung with various pictures of his own making, gifts from brother artists, and photographs of old and modern masterpieces. On a low wide table paint-brushes of all kinds, sketch-books, squeezed tubes, fat tubes and lean tubes of pigment are littered. In the east corner of the studio a small drawing-room has been built, hung about by heavy curtains, furnitured after the manner of such apartments, and lighted by a lamp. Here Mrs. Patrick Campbell sat for her portrait.



From a photo by] [*H. S. Mendelssohn.*

MR. SOLOMON J. SOLOMON, A.R.A.

Painters have long discovered the advantage of such a room for the painting of artificial light effects. When Mr. Luke Fildes was working upon "The Doctor"—a cottage interior—of which an exact reproduction appeared in the picture—was built by Mr. Fildes into his studio in the Melbury Road. A set scene of this character adds enormously to the heavy cost of painting a picture, which often amounts to as much as £150 for models, paints and canvas alone.

Some of our most famous artists have their studios in the country. Mr. G. F. Watts, R.A.—a national benefactor, whose gifts adorn so nobly the National Portrait Gallery—has made for himself, within the last few years, a charming home at Compton, on the Hog's Back, in Surrey. Built in the midst of tangled woodland, "Limnerslease" shows inside and outside the fine taste of Mr. and Mrs. Watts. Nature has not been rudely curbed, nor have convention and formality been allowed to spoil the rural beauty of the scene. An old-fashioned garden with the flowers which used to charm our grand-parents lies behind the studio. The morning sunlight floods the beautiful room where the veteran artist labours at an hour when most of us are lying abed, for Mr. Watts has been an early riser all his long life. As a young man he trained himself by sleeping on a board, and to this early rising and other Spartan habits Mr. Watts attributes his activity.

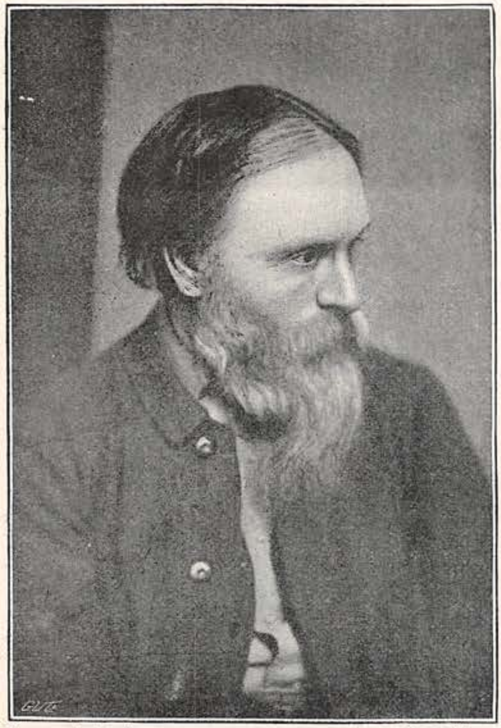
When you enter his splendid studio a great white figure of "Energy" reminds you that he is also a sculptor; indeed every expression of art interests him. He and Mrs. Watts have supported most liberally the society which aims at the spread of arts and crafts in our towns and villages. Mr. Watts likes working in his Surrey studio during the winter, paying occasional visits to his better-known Kensington home. He is always busy—a splendid example to everyone who sees and knows him. Probably no artist has ever before had the rare honour of twice declining a baronetcy, but Mr. Watts rightly believes that his countrymen will respect him quite as much (or even more) without a handle to his name. He has held his great talents in trust for the ultimate benefit of thousands who, by the medium of Mr. Watts' portraits of his leading contemporaries, are made acquainted with their faces and also with a famous artist's ablest work.

For those who seek light and loveliness there is probably no house and studio in the world equal to Mr. Alma Tadema's. This magnificent dwelling-place—his own design from roof to basement—stands in the clear air of St. John's Wood. As you walk up the classical arcade that winds through the garden by waving trees, shrubs and many flowers, a frieze of parti-coloured tiles overhead flashes upon the eye. The door being opened, a flight of dazzling brazen steps, starting up like a golden ladder, invites to the studio; but you first walk through a little winding pathway to the left, bordered by palm trees, evergreens and ferns, leading to a little alcove where afternoon tea is served. The walls are divided into panels, each decorated by a painter friend. The studio itself is a wonder of white and silver, with balconies and galleries overhead on a level with the topmost of the trees that wave in the large garden where fountains play and birds sing. Mr. Alma Tadema is the painter of sunshine and blue skies; his life and his work are in harmony with the motto which streams across the studio walls—"As the sun colours flowers, so art colours life." It is only by degrees that Mr. Tadema has discovered the value to his art of the dazzling background which now vivifies his studio. In the old days in Antwerp he found that the black Pompeian decorations made his pictures too heavy, so he painted his next studio red, with the result that they became too hot. Arriving in Brussels he painted his walls light green. Afterwards in London he tried blue and green, and so on to the white and silver with which they are at present decorated.

From a photo by] [*W. Shawcross, Guildford.*

"LIMNERSLEASE," THE SURREY HOME OF MR. G. F. WATTS, R.A.

It is the painters of subjects and of portraits who own the most beautiful studios. A luxuriously appointed apartment, with the spoils of every clime upon the walls and floors, forms an excellent bait to sitters. Landscape painters are not so particular about their surroundings, and if they live in the country they are often content that their studios should be workrooms and little else. Let me describe the studio of a famous landscape painter where I have spent many pleasant hours. A big man himself, he likes to work in a big studio. This enormous chamber, with rafters stretching high overhead into the dark, and tall windows that stare out upon the Atlantic ocean, has no furniture but a couple of chairs, a great open stove, with hissing water in a bowl of copper standing upon it, and a long looking-glass fastened against the further wall. The floor is uncarpeted, and the draughts (on this coast the winds blow bitterly) are excluded by half a dozen fishing-smack sails



From a photo by] [*F. Hollyer.*

SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES, BART.

dyed by innumerable seas and winds into a rich brown colour like velvet. The picture, an 8-foot autumn sunset landscape, still requiring a week of work, stands on an easel close to the wall. The painter is never still, and he rarely paints for more than two minutes upon any portion of the canvas. He paces backwards and forwards like a lion in a cage, here sweeping square brushfuls of paint down the canvas, there toning down a light with a flick of a neutral tint. Like his brother, the figure painter, he is never content. You hear him mutter—"Sky's much too heavy," or "I shall take out those sheep," or "Must tone down the moon; it's too cheesy," and so he continues erasing and repainting, observing the effect with head cocked sideways, studying the reflection of the picture in the glass, day after day, from morning till evening, till at last the moment of sending in to the Academy arrives, and willy-nilly he must put down his brushes and pack off the picture to London.

Sir Edward Burne-Jones has no liking for an ornate studio. His floors and walls are bare; and as for incompleted pictures, I have never seen such a collection. "It would take me a hundred years to finish them all," he sometimes remarks with a sigh. To Sir Edward it is always a delight to begin a new picture. He never finishes it straightway out of hand. They wait for the mood when he can do them justice; and with such a collection of fragments by him, it follows that he knows not the meaning of an idle day.

Perhaps no artist ever took such pains over the preparatory stages of his pictures as did the late Lord Leighton. He first finished them all in monochrome—and many judges think they were far finer at that stage than when completed. He devoted as much time to the study of his draperies as many painters give to the work itself. You have seen these first-fruits filling pages of the popular handbooks to the Royal Academy. In 1890 the *Pall Mall* "Extra" published half a dozen studies for a "Tragic Poetess," for "Solitude," and for the "Bath of Psyche." They were executed in monochrome, fully modelled and drawn, with the exception of the patterns upon the dresses, and were marked by a spontaneity which was often

From a photo by] [*Ralph W. Robinson, Redhill.*

THE LATE LORD LEIGHTON IN HIS STUDIO.

absent afterwards. How hard the late President worked, and how admirably he divided his time! The hours of his day were all numbered, and each hour had its appointed task. At a certain moment of the afternoon one always met him driving from his home to the Athenæum Club—alone; at classical concerts he appeared on the stroke of the hour, and he left always the moment the last note died away—alone. On Sunday afternoons during the season he was always to be found at his beautiful house in Holland Park Road talking in half a dozen tongues with men and women from every clime. Who, as things of this world go, had such a brilliant success? And yet it is on record that a few days before he died, Leighton remarked to a friend, "What a disappointing thing life is!"

From a photo by] [*Ralph W. Robinson, Redhill.*

MR. LUKE FILDES, R.A.

The studio properties of painters of classical subjects—men like Lord Leighton, Mr. Alma Tadema, Mr. Richmond, and Mr. Waterhouse—are draperies of various colours, jewels, ornaments, barbaric and mediæval, and suitable models. The historical painter must be a collector of old costumes, a student of Macaulay, Gibbon and Green, and a snapper-up of every trifle of a past day that may be of use to him in his work. Mr. Seymour Lucas, for instance, is an authority upon old armour, and the possessor of many fine examples of warlike accoutrements. Before painting "Peter the Great in Deptford Dockyard," he spent months in research. His first step was to carefully examine the prints of the period in the British Museum, and after much seeking had the good luck to hit upon a presentment of Deptford Dockyard at the period of Peter the Great's visit. On another occasion, while roaming about London, he chanced upon a weather-beaten statue of an admiral of Peter's time in a sequestered spot in the east end of London. Then a coat came under his notice. But he had still to find a solution to perhaps the most difficult problem of all, namely, a yard where he could study the building of a three-decker wooden vessel. In these days of iron ships this was no easy matter. But at length his patience was rewarded when he learnt that wooden ships are still built in a yard upon the East Coast, and received permission from the owners to make studies upon the spot. So, step by step, he accumulated materials for his picture, with the result that when it was finished we were interested by an exact representation of the same, and even students of the period could find no flaw in it.

A large historical picture will take from nine months to a year. Mr. Edouard Detaille, the famous French painter, often spends a longer period over a canvas. "The researches take me a long time," he said to an interviewer; "but, as you see, I am the fortunate possessor of a first-rate collection of old uniforms and arms. Every kind of bric-à-brac finds its way to Paris from all parts of Europe, and I am always on the lookout. I work all day, but never at night. As to panoramas, I took immense pains over Champigny and Resonville. I visited the battlefields again and again and did all the work myself, save the skies. These two panoramas took up the whole of my time for a year, and eighteen months, for you know this kind of painting is like any other, only the composition has to be somewhat larger."

Animal painters find it convenient to live in the neighbourhood of the Zoological Gardens, and the authorities of that institution are kind to them, for when the beasts die they courteously send the bodies over in a cart to the painter. One morning, when Mr. Briton Riviere was at breakfast, a servant entered the room with the remark, "If you please, sir, a lion have come." Mr. Briton Riviere stepped out into the street, and there, sure enough, was a lion upon a truck. The beast had died during the night. But a limp, dead lion is a very different object from the splendid living beast, with every muscle taut and radiant with the symmetry of limb and motion that delight the painter's heart, so the dead animal is merely utilised in the way that medical students study the subjects of the dissection-room. The animal painter goes direct to nature (to the Zoo) in quest of inspiration for those last master-touches which constitute the difference between a mere anatomical study and the representation of a living animal.

Tame creatures, such as horses, dogs and donkeys, Mr. Briton Riviere admits to his studio. They enter from a large stable door, and sit, or rather stand, patiently upon a bed of straw. One of his most famous pictures is that magnificent work illustrating the lines—

They say the lion and the lizard keep
The courts where Jamsheyd gloried and drank deep.

A couple of lions prowl over the time-worn terraces, while another stalks up the flight of steps leading to the deserted building. Lizards crawl from between the interstices of the stones. The painting was approaching completion when a friend, who was well up in natural history, remarked that lizards never came out by moonlight. What was to be done? Mr. Briton Riviere determined to carry his trouble to Professor Huxley. "Oh, that's all right," said the Professor. "A big lion walking over its hiding place would make any lizard creep out, moonlight or not, just to see what was the matter."

From a photo by] [*Ralph W. Robinson, Redhill.*

MR. J. C. HOOK, R.A., PAINTING A SKY OUTSIDE HIS HUT.

How different is the method of the landscape painter. He wanders about the country with a sketch-book in his pocket, and when he sees a land or seascape that is paintable he makes a note of the drawing and of the colours, fixes the scene in his memory and then shuts himself up in his studio day after day till the work is finished. A few years ago it was the fashion among certain advanced men to paint landscapes entirely out of doors; but effects are so transitory, changing before one can say, "Lo, it has changed!" that many find it a better method to make colour and pencil notes of the effect at the moment, and to paint the scene afterwards from memory.

When the day's work is over there are no men so sociable as painters. Few of them work at night-time; not many are over-fond of reading, and as they are alone the best part of the day they are only too ready to spend the evenings in each other's studios, when the talk is mainly of art, and criticism of each other's pictures—so frank, so gay, so inconsiderate that critics, who call themselves outspoken, start when the comments are repeated to them.