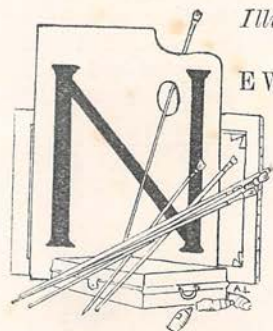


T. C. GOTCH AND HIS PICTURES.

BY LEWIS HIND.

Illustrated by BERNARD HIGHAM; and from Photographs.



EWLYN, that country of corybantic long-shoremen and peaceable painters, is the home of Mr. T. C. Gotch from autumn to spring. His house is perched on high, like an eagle's eyrie, half way up the cliff that climbs from

Penzance to the crest of the hills. You will find him any day between ten and six in his quiet studio, down below in the meadows, or, after working hours, in that drawing-room of his with the wonderful view. Oh what a view! How it haunts one afterwards in shortening days, when early autumn fogs steal down the streets, and there is no sky but the poor parallel of gray that stretches motionless above the housetops. Oh that view! Mount's Bay below, St. Michael's sentinel upon the further shore, and away yonder beyond these waters, so tranquil, so polite that they might serve as ocean to a doll's fishing village, thunders the Atlantic.

But it is not everybody who can spare the time for a jaunt to the end of Cornwall, and although it has been my good fortune to spend long days at Newlyn, and many an hour in that eyrie hanging upon the cliff, it is not in this happy background I am thinking at this moment of Mr. Gotch. A more distracting and, shall I say, a less agreeable environment envelops him. First I see him in London in the early summer of 1891, and then in Paris, last spring in the Champ de Mars Salon, before Dagnan-Bouveret's great picture of "The Last Supper." Those are the two occasions when Mr. Gotch stands dramatically before me. They range themselves into his Disconsolate Year and his Notable Year, and their story may give heart to those who, like him, know nights of heaviness, but to whom morning has not yet brought any particular joy.

It was said of John Whitgift, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, that his motto

was *vincit qui patitur*, and he made it good. In 1891 Mr. Gotch was still enduring. He was industrious, sincere and capable; his teaching had been thorough and eclectic, but he had not yet quite found his *métier*. He saw life, and he painted what he observed all in that gray envelope of atmosphere which the Newlyn men and women have made famous at a dozen Academies. They study light direct, transfused and reflected; they paint the truth; they suggest atmosphere in their pictures, and they can draw with the best, but the Newlyn colony do not concern themselves particularly with colour. The pictures that Mr. Gotch painted prior to 1891 prove him to have been Newlynite to his finger tips.

His Academy contribution of 1890, "Twixt Life and Death," of which we give an illustration, is a typical example of that manner. Gray, sad, dramatic, obvious, it is a scene you may chance upon any stormy day at Newlyn, and one her adopted painters love to mirror. Mr. Gotch was to paint one more Newlyn subject, the "Sharing Fish" of 1891, and then heyho! for colour, allegory, and that fine decorative quality which culminated in the "Alleluia." But when I saw him in the month of May of his Disconsolate Year, he had not decided to winter in Florence, where he was to recapture that colour sense which his admiration for the practice and performance of the Newlyn men had unconsciously atrophied. He stood at the parting of the ways. Dissatisfied with the past, uncertain about the future, he looked sad and vexed, although he did not confess to it on that day in the late spring of his Disconsolate Year.

Here it may be well to say something about Mr. Gotch's life anterior to this period. Strange as it may seem, he began with literary leanings and longings. As a youth in business with his father at Kettering, letters was his aim. He never doubted his power to draw and paint, and in those long, long thoughts that fill the mind at twenty-one, he promised himself that he would live by art until he had

amassed enough money to devote his time without reproach to literature. Fond delusion! He wrote at night in his bedroom by candlelight; he also drew; but it was his pictures, not his scribblings, that touched the fancy and won the approbation of his family. They were of good Nonconformist stock, his grandfather having been one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society. When they discovered that he honestly cared more for art and letters than for business, the

school off Oxford Street, where so many have learnt the pothooks and hangers of painting. There Mr. Gotch remained eighteen months learning and assimilating, after which he took the boat train to Antwerp and entered the Beaux Arts of that city. In Antwerp he remained six months. Verlat was painting professor; but the young Englishman sighed for brighter colours, and directly he had made up his mind that he was out of sympathy



From a photo by]

“TWIXT LIFE AND DEATH.”

By T. C. Gotch.

(Exhibited in the Royal Academy, 1890; now in the possession of Mr. George McCulloch.)

[H. Dixon.

family wisely gave the boy his head, and put their's together with the view of helping him all they could. A portfolio of early drawings were collected and despatched to Mr. E. M. Wimperis, who since those days has blossomed into a delightful and popular painter, and who now sits in the vice-presidential chair of the Institute of Painters in Water Colours.

Well, the drawings pleased Mr. Wimperis, and the youth from Kettering was advised to begin his studies at Heatherleys, the art

with the “black school” of painting taught at Antwerp he returned to London.

Many men have sought for the philosopher's stone; others, mechanically inclined, have striven for mastery over perpetual motion; others, again, feel themselves drawn to speculation and experiments relating to the secret of the old masters of painting. It has been remarked that the giants of the past merely mixed their colours with brains, time doing the rest. A Mr. Samuel Lawrence who flourished some twenty years ago rose to



From a photo by]

"THE CHILD ENTHRONED."

By T. C. GOTCH.

(Exhibited in the Royal Academy 1894; now in the possession of Mr. G. McCulloch, by whose kind permission this picture is reproduced.)

[H. Dixon.

fame on the strength of his own pronouncement that he had discovered this secret of the old masters. To his studio Mr. Gotch went on his return from Antwerp, and with Mr. Lawrence he remained three months. When I leant my elbows on the table and said coaxingly to Mr. Gotch, "Tell me the secret," he replied, "Oh, it's far too technical to explain," whereupon I shunted from that siding of our conversation, and the painter, inclining his head in recognition of my restraint, proceeded to narrate his artistic adventures at the Slade school, where he remained two years under Legros.

About this time he came under the influence of Gogin, a man hardly known to Academy patrons, but one who had considerable influence upon contemporary art and artists. In these days every little painter knows all about values. The admirable schools of Paris have given the best of their teaching

to a procession of Englishmen who are now vigorously painting in every quarter of these islands—better sometimes even than their masters. We all know now that there is one light of the sky, another of the sea, another of the sand upon the shore, and another of the grass cliff that dips in humility to the water's edge. When we paint we set ourselves to make these values

true before we give a thought to the drawing of a wave, or the form of a cloud, or the modelling of that strayed sheep upon the cliff. But Gogin knew all about values a quarter of a century ago when we were still in the slough of academic convention. Strange! Better still, he taught, and Mr. Gotch profited by the teaching of M. Gogin, who, on this subject was a quarter of a

century in advance of the general.

The painter of "Alleluia" had now reached the fourth year of studentship. What should follow? One word, one word only, rises to the lips in answer to that question. Paris! Paris the gay, the bright, where the art of encouragement is still practised and the student's work always in some grave master's eye. Mr. Gotch sat at the feet of Jean Paul Laurens. He lived in one of those turnings decked with white houses off a wide road in the Montparnasse quarter, where the sun

is always shining, and students wear a perpetual smile just because it is Paris. Three years he remained in the city on the Seine. There, on a certain day, a piece of very good luck befell him. He met a fellow-student, who was also doing good work, and who has since done better, which has been oftentimes hung at the Royal Academy and elsewhere—a young English lady. They



From a photo by]

"DEATH, THE BRIDE."

By T. C. GOTCH.

(Exhibited in the Royal Academy, 1893; now in the possession of the artist.)

[H. Dixon.]

married; they lived in a little flat high up in a white building overlooking a sequestered courtyard in the Quartier Latin, and, like the prince and princess in the fairy tale, they were happy ever afterwards. Mr. Gotch owes much to his wife's intelligent and sympathetic criticism and appreciation. She brought him luck too, for in 1882 a picture signed T. C. Gotch was hung upon the line at the Royal Academy. It was called "Phillis," and speedily found a buyer.

plan, and it was not till 1887 that they finally settled at Newlyn, where they found the company of painters living in the old fishing village—Mr. Stanhope Forbes, Mr. Bramley, Mr. Chevallier Tayler, Mr. Percy Craft, Mr. Norman Garstin, Mr. Fred Hall, and others—much to their liking.

It was about this time, or perhaps a little later, that the Newlyn pictures began to be noticed at the Royal Academy. In Gallery XI the visitor suddenly found himself surrounded



From a photo by]

"A GOLDEN DREAM,"

By T. C. Gotch.

(Exhibited in the Royal Academy, 1893; now in the possession of the artist.)

[H. Dixon.

Student days are now over. He stands upon the threshold of his career. The idea of a literary life has long been given up. His call is to paint, and he is eager to show of what he is capable. Seeking for a home with congenial surroundings, Mr. and Mrs. Gotch chanced upon Newlyn, which artists were just then beginning to frequent on account of its equable gray light and kindly climate, which permits them if they desire to work out of doors most of the year. But a compulsory voyage to Australia spoils this

by Cornish works which had this in common—they suggested the honest and refreshing light of day, as seen in the open air, and not the second-hand illumination of a London studio. For four years Mr. Gotch was content to produce Newlyn subjects, such as "Twixt Life and Death," exhibited in 1890, and "Sharing Fish" in 1891. It was just after the opening of the Royal Academy of that year that we first met. I have called it Mr. Gotch's Disconsolate Year, and really the phrase comes near to truth. The gray



"AL L E L U I A!"—By T. C. Goron.
(Exhibited in the Royal Academy, 1896; purchased by the Chantrey Trustees.)

sorrowful subject-pictures he was painting at that time did not please him. Although he had a strong and consistent admiration for the work of his comrades at Newlyn, and the general aim and tendency of the school, he felt far from confident that his own temperament could ever find adequate expression within those lines. It was the crisis of his career. He did the pleasant thing and the wise thing. He went straight to Italy—to Florence, where he surrendered himself to the calm and radiant pictures of Botticelli and those frescoes of Benozzo Gozzolios in the Palazzo Riccardi at Florence.

Then his colour sense reasserted itself, and he produced "My Crown and Sceptre," which was hung upon the line in 1892. With this picture Mr. Gotch found his *métier*—the work that was nearest to him, that he could do best, and, as it happened, that best pleased and interested the public. He has forsaken the realism of modern life for the realism of allegory. "Here are my pictures," one can imagine him saying; "read into them what you like." Thus "A Golden Dream" may picture a real maiden plucking fruit in a Kentish orchard, or she may be a dream-child gathering phantom blossoms in fairyland. Read into it what you will, it is an agreeable fancy, beautiful in colour, which is unfortunately lost in the black and white reproduction. At the Academy of 1894 "The Child Enthroned" found many lovers. Small wonder when one comes face to face, as in these pages, with this serious child of the unclouded brow and the fair unadorned hair, clad in so glorious a robe, and with aureole about her head. You meet her again in "The Child in the World," standing alone and unafraid in the innermost, horriddest home of the Dragon, called the World, who is powerless against her innocence, as the lions

in the presence of Daniel. In "Death, the Bride," of 1893, Mr. Gotch struck a deeper note. Silent is this friend, yet she speaks. She comes gliding through the poppies, emblems of rest without tears, a film of gauze about her head, which she lifts aside to show her grave face, a whisper of invitation upon it, as if she would say, "I am a little serious, I know, and my clothes are not bright and beautiful like a bride's; but I am your friend nevertheless, and when you are ready for me you will find me ready for you. For if you are very lonely I am very patient."

These pictures were heralds of the important work "Alleluia," which Mr. Gotch exhibited this year, and which was purchased by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest. As it adorns these pages, and as the meaning is plain, no description is necessary. It was painted at Newlyn, and occupied Mr. Gotch, working six and seven hours a day, for the best part of a year. Almost every eastern and western nation is represented in the rainbow robes which clothe the children. Thirteen in number, the face of each singer bearing the impress of her temperament, they vie one with another in a song of praise.

1896 has been Mr. Gotch's Notable Year. Early in May he learnt that "Alleluia" had been purchased for the nation. Towards the end of that month he went to Paris, to find "The Child Enthroned" well hung upon the line at the Champs Elysées Salon. The second morning of his sojourn there he was notified from London that this picture had been purchased for an English collection, and hardly had he returned from Paris when he read in a London evening paper that a gold medal of the second class had been awarded to the painter of "The Child Enthroned" by the Salon jury. A notable year indeed has 1896 been for Mr. Gotch.





MR. T. C. GOTCH.