THE EXHIBITION

OF THE

ROYAL ACADEMY

By

WILKIE COLLINS

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'The Exhibition of the Royal Academy', published in Bentley's Miscellany in June 1851, is a review of the annual Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy. It followed 'A Pictorial Tour to St. George Bosherville' - a comic account of a painting trip to a French town with his friend Charles Ward - and after it Collins wrote three accounts of famous picture collections in English houses as well as 'A Passage in the Life of Mr Perugino Potts' which in some ways is a spoof of his own biography of his father, the artist William Collins RA. Unlike Collins's first two pieces for Bentley's Miscellany 'The Exhibition of the Royal Academy' was unsigned. It has never been republished until now.

In 1851 the Royal Academy occupied the eastern wing of what is now the National Gallery on the North side of Trafalgar Square in London. Wilkie Collins - aged 27 - was still living with his mother at 17 Hanover Terrace and was supposed to be studying to be a barrister. His three published books had been well received and were moderately successful, but hardly entitled Collins to call himself a writer. The Census entry of 30 March 1851 describes him as 'law student'. His younger brother Charles - now 23 - by contrast was described as 'artist' and was competent enough to have his work exhibited at the Royal Academy. Through his family connections, Wilkie moved all his life in artistic circles. Most of the 80 artists mentioned in this piece would have been known to him; many were close friends. Collins shamelessly uses the cloak of anonymity to praise their work.

Today, few of the artists or pictures mentioned in this review will be familiar to any but scholars of nineteenth century art. But of those that are, most were Collins's friends. Holman Hunt, founder of the Pre-Raphaelite movement which ultimately rejected Charles Collins as a member, was a close friend of the Collins family and Wilkie used his family background in his fourth published novel Hide and Seek. Millais, another Pre-Raphaelite founder and later president of the Royal Academy, painted Collins's portrait in 1850 and was another lifelong friend. So was William Frith who painted Ramsgate Sands - a Collins family holiday haunt - in 1853. Edward Ward, brother of Charles, was also a close friend and the groom in a scandalous marriage in 1848 which Wilkie arranged. Augustus Egg introduced Wilkie to Dickens and the three of them went to Europe in 1853. Although highly praised at the time - and not just by Wilkie - his brother Charles is now remembered only as a footnote to the Pre-Raphaelite movement and for the picture reviewed here, Convent Thoughts. Wilkie also knew well William Clarkson Stanfield who painted the scenery for many of Dickens's amateur theatricals including the production of Collins's play The Lighthouse and The Frozen Deep, which he wrote with Dickens. James Linnell was a friend and neighbour from Porchester Terrace where Wilkie lived as a boy.

Collins spends a great deal of his review examining and generally praising the work of his friends. More than a page is devoted to Hunt, Millais, and his brother Charles. He also heaps praise on work by Egg, Frith, Landseer, Stanfield, and Ward. For those he did not like he had sharp insults.

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"three more intensely uninteresting men than these...we never saw on canvas."

"the artist will best show his reverence for sacred things by never again attempting a Scripture subject."

"Of the portraits this year...it would be most charitable to say as little as possible."

'The Exhibition of the Royal Academy' was the third of nine full-length pieces which Wilkie Collins wrote for Bentley's Miscellany between March 1851 and August 1852. Apart from 'The Last Stage Coachman' published in 1843, Collins's work in Bentley's Miscellany is his earliest known periodical material, though he certainly published other items which are still unidentified.

The receipts for all his pieces for the periodical are held by the British Library and are initialled 'W.W.C.' in what looks like Collins's hand. Wilkie was paid £6-18s (£6.90) for the 10.75 pages of 'The Exhibition of the Royal Academy'. The standard rate of pay at Bentley's Miscellany was ten guineas per sixteen pages - in an octavo volume sixteen pages formed one 'sheet' - eight printed on one side and eight on the other. In fact he was paid slightly less for 'The Exhibition' - the amount would be at that rate for 10.5 pages. Each full page contains almost 600 words, the total count for this piece being 6100 - so he was paid around £1-2s-6d (£1.125) for each 1000 words. At the time, a skilled worker such as a carpenter could expect to earn about £1-4s (£1.20) for working a 60 hour week. Wilkie was paid his fee in cash about two weeks after the publication date which was the first of each month. The payment of £6-18s for 'The Exhibition' is recorded 'June 16/51 By cash'.

THE EXHIBITION OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

Since the first establishment of the Royal Academy, no one of the annual exhibitions of that institution has, we think, ever been opened on so important an occasion for the fame of British Art, as this exhibition of the year 1851. Among the vast congregation of foreigners assembling in London, by far the greater number have now to learn for the first time what the English School of Painting really is--have now to discover what our English artists really can do. Under such circumstances as these, it must be felt as a matter of the last importance, that the present exhibition in Trafalgar Square should be the best, or at least one of the best, that has ever been opened to the public. We feel sincere gratification in being able to state, that this year's display on the walls of the Academy is well worthy of the occasion. There may be some unfortunate instances of comparative failure, or total incapacity, among the works exhibited; but our greatest painters have vindicated their greatness nobly; and their younger brethren, the rising men of the profession, have, with few exceptions, made a marked advance towards a higher degree of excellence than they have hitherto reached. In a word, this eighty-third annual exhibition of the Royal Academy contains an unusually large number of pictures, of which as a nation we may fairly feel proud; and from which our foreign visitors may well learn to appreciate the excellence, the originality, and the cheering onward progress of English Art.

The number of works of painting, sculpture, and architecture exhibited this year amounts to thirteen hundred and eighty-nine-a formidable array even to look through, much more to criticise. As the best method of performing the complicated task before us, we will begin where the numbers begin in the East Room, taking the figure subjects first, then the landscapes, then the portraits; and concluding with a word or two on the sculpture. It must be perfectly obvious to everybody that, within the limits of such a notice as this, it will be impossible to review as much in detail us we could desire many works of considerable merit. We must be content with merely directing the reader's attention to several pictures, which will amply repay his most careful consideration.

On entering the East Room, and going round it under the guidance of the Catalogue, the first figure-picture which will attract the spectator is Mr. Hart's "Benvenuto Cellini," instructing one of his pupils. The design of this work is exceedingly simple; the colour warm and mellow, perhaps rather too much so. Further on, past some portraits and landscapes, appears Mr. Uwins's "Ulysses in the Island of Calypso." The upper part of the picture displays much of the painter's wonted grace and refinement; the lower part is less felicitous--the attitude of Ulysses striking us, especially, as being somewhat unnatural and constrained. Frankly let us own it, we never feel so ready a sympathy with Mr. Uwins's genius as when he gives us those brilliant and truthful illustrations of Italian life, which first won him his reputation, and which perhaps prejudice us a little, in spite of ourselves, against even his best efforts in other branches of art.

Passing on, we next observe a crowd of spectators gathered before one picture, looking long and attentively at every part of it; and with good reason; for this picture offers a subject which is universal in its interest, and which is treated by one of the most original and most graphic painters of the age. It is "Caxton's Printing Office," represented by Maclise. The great and striking characteristic of this noble work is its perfect verisimilitude--the scene looks as if it must really have occurred exactly as we see it painted. In the middle of the composition, Caxton is exhibiting the first proof sheet taken from the first press ever set up in England, to Edward the Fourth. The Queen and the young princes stand near, looking on with eager curiosity. Each side of the picture is occupied by the workmen in the printing-office. The illuminator, the wood-engraver, the book-binder, the compositor, the pressman, are all placed before us, each with the materials of his craft scattered about him. The astonishing varieties of expression and character exhibited in the different groups must be seen, and, let us add, studied also, to be properly appreciated. We will merely direct attention here to the expression and attitude of the printer's boy, who is holding up the proof-sheet before the King; to the vacant,

wondering countenance of one of the young princes; to the calmness and elevation, the mental anxiety and physical fatigue beautifully developed in the face of Caxton. In these, and in many other instances which we have not space to particularize, there are evidences of such masterly adherence to the truth of Nature, combined with striking dramatic power, as Mr Maclise has never surpassed, and we even think, not often equalled, in any former work. In all its multifarious details, the picture is managed with the most consummate skill; firmness and finish are carried to their climax in the painting of the different objects in the printingoffice, and the general tone of the colour recals, we are glad to say, much of the power and brilliancy of the best of the artist's earlier works.

Very different are the impressions we derive from the next picture we see, Mr. Dyce's "King Lear and the Fool in the Storm!" Who that remembers this artist's exquisite "Jacob and Rebecca" of last year--and once seen, could any one forget it?--who would imagine such a failure to be possible as he now exhibits? The Fool is represented to us as sprawling on his stomach, kicking up his heels, and poking his little finger into one corner of his mouth. The King sits swinging his arms about in true theatrical frenzy; his beard is blown out stiff and straight in every hair; and his face is tattoed with some of the most astonishing light brown wrinkles we ever beheld, even on canvas. Did we dare imagine such a desecration of Shakspeare, as a pantomime called "Harlequin King Lear," here we should certainly have a correct representation of the manner in which Clown and Pantaloon might be expected to perform the parts of the Fool and the King.

Mr. Herbert exhibits a single figure of Daniel in his boyhood, from a Scripture composition now in progress. The conception of the character is noble, and it has been nobly worked out. Both in the attitude of the figure and the expression of the features, the same grandeur is preserved, without an approach to anything that is meretricious or exaggerated; without any appearance of trickery in colour, or artifice in arrangement, to detract from the simple, solemn, scriptural beauty of the painter's idea. We earnestly hope, for the sake of the public taste, now rapidly becoming vitiated by the imbecile profanities exhibited in our shop windows as devotional prints, that this picture will be engraved; and engraved at such a price as may place it within the reach of the general purchaser.

The contemplation of such a work of art as Mr. Herbert's unfits us for any lengthened examination of Mr. Chalon's picture of the "Seasons," which hangs near it. We observe that the allegorical nymphs are gracefully and prettily painted, and pass on--after a pleasant glance at two truthful little pictures by Mr. Webster--to Mr. Charles Landseer's "Cromwell reading an intercepted Letter of the Kings. The composition is carefully treated; the scene on the battle-field of Naseby presents itself clearly in its different aspects, and the portraits of Fairfax, Skippon, and Ireton are so introduced as to increase legitimately the historical interest of the subject.

The new President's "Ippolita Torelli," a female figure in a partly reclining attitude, next presents itself. The picture displays all Sir Charles Eastlake's well known delicacy of touch and finish of execution; the refined features and gentle expression of "Ippolita," possessing at the same time that calm poetic beauty which this painter has often before presented to us in his female heads, but never more successfully than on the present occasion.

Mr. Leslie gives us this year the scene from "Henry the Fourth," in which Falstaff administers a mock rebuke to the Prince, in the character of the King. Always admirable in displaying on canvas that highest and truest humour which never degenerates into vulgarity or exaggeration, the painter has equalled his best efforts in impersonating the character of the Prince, to our thinking the most successful figure in the picture. We have all the mischief and recklessness of "Hal" developed in his countenance; and yet, rake as he is, his birth and breeding are expressed or rather suggested, with consummate ability, both in his features and bearing. We may also mention the "hang-dog" look of' Bardolph; the hearty enjoyment in the face of the Hostess; and the timid glance of astonishment cast

by the "drawer" at the Prince, as all in Mr. Leslie's best manner, that manner which places him alone and unapproached among the artists of his age. If we might hint an objection to any part of the picture, it would be to the figure of Falstaff, which strikes us as somewhat conventional. If Mr. Leslie had trusted as thoroughly to his own genius here, as in other parts of his work, might he not have made Falstaff as complete a creation of his own on canvas as all the other figures in this delightful picture?

Never do we remember to have seen Sir Edwin Landseer to such advantage as we see him this year, in his Scene from the "Midsummer Night's Dream." It is hardly too much to say of this picture, that it is in the very spirit of Shakspeare himself. The delicacy and loveliness of Titania; the dense, asinine stupidity of the transformed Bottom, we might have expected to find what we find them here; but in his manner of embodying the Fairies, we must confess that the painter has taken us by surprize, high as our estimate has always been of his abilities. The exquisite fancy, the mixture of quaint humour and poetic beauty exhibited in the impersonation of Peas-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, &c., cannot be too highly praised, as the completest realization of the Fairies of Shakspeare ever displayed on canvas. Even in the more mechanical qualities of "surface" and "execution," this picture is one of the very best the artist has produced; witness the painting of the two white rabbits in the right-hand foreground, which in our opinion carries the power of illusion as far as illusion will go.

Stopping for a moment, to admire Mr.Uwins's charming little picture of "The Parasol," we arrive opposite Mr.E. M. Ward's "Royal Family of France in the Prison of the Temple." There is real pathos, of the simplest and most impressive order, in this fine picture. We look at the beautifully-conceived sleeping figure of Louis the Sixteenth; at the expression of the Queen, who is mending his coat while he slumbers; at the Dauphiness watering the lily already drooping in the glass; at the Dauphin mending his shuttle-cock, the last plaything left to him; and we acknowledge that the scene is presented to us with a touching truth to Nature, and a graphic eloquence of expression, which move our sympathies even more than our admiration. In displaying, as a contrast to the mournfulness and resignation of the royal prisoners, the group of revolutionary ruffians just seen behind them smoking and playing cards in an outer room, Mr. Ward has shown how admirably he understands the dramatic connection between the pathetic and the terrible; while, in grappling with the technical difficulties of his art, he has advanced this year to a degree of excellence, which even his heartiest admirers of former seasons can hardly have been prepared to see.

In "Hogarth brought before the Governor of Calais as a spy," Mr. Frith gives us another of those character-pictures by which he has honestly won a high reputation. He is still as excellent as ever in the more refined subtleties of expression. In the face of Hogarth, we have all the characteristic coarseness and wit of the great painter, capitally combined with his look of reckless unconcern, and his malicious enjoyment of the perplexities of his military judge. The rest of the personages in the picture are not less happily hit off--the dirty, scare-crow French soldiery of the day, and the courteous but rigid commanding officer seated bolt upright in his arm-chair, being especially remarkable as excellent and careful representations of national character. The more initiated among the visitors to the exhibition, will not fail to recognise in the "painting" of this picture a remarkable purity and truth--a bold and most successful attempt to treat a simple daylight effect in all its simplicity, without the slightest adventitious aid from artificially bright lights or dark shadows, in any part of the canvas.

With this work, we take our leave of the figure subjects in the East Room--Mr. Redgrave's "Flight into Egypt" (the only remaining Picture), being one of those commonplace attempts to be solemn by dint of dingy blue, yellow, and brown, worked into a high state of polish all over sky, earth, and figures, which proclaims its own mediocrity too palpably to need any remark whatever on our parts.

Beginning, in the Middle Room, with Mr.Poole's "Goths in Italy" (No.344), we are forcibly impressed by a certain air of barbaric grandeur and simplicity--a striking wildness and mystery --spread over the

whole picture, which is admirably in keeping with the subject. Whatever he may paint, Mr. Poole always works powerfully and originally--always produces, as in this instance, an effect which is peculiarly and distinctively his own on the mind of the spectator. Far different is the case with Mr.Hook, who has attempted the well-worn subject of the "Brides of Venice." Here we see nothing but several pretty girls clothed in pretty dresses, disposed in pretty attitudes, and assuming pretty expressions--not the Brides of Venice, but modern young ladies personating their characters in a drawing-room "Tableau."

Mr. Brown's large and elaborate picture of "Chaucer reading the Legend of Custance to Edward the Third," deserves to be mentioned by us with that respect which hard work honestly persevered in throughout, should always command. It must be confessed, however, that we looked with regret at the whole composition, as a work in which the confusion of the figures, and the absence of any attention to harmony, had seriously damaged the effect of many detached parts that were individually excellent. We hope to see Mr. Brown doing more justice to his own industry and intelligence on a future occasion.

Mr. Cope's picture (in three compartments) of "Laurence Saunders, the second of the Protestant Martyrs in the time of Mary," takes rank among the noblest productions of modern art. In the first division, the wife of the martyr, with her infant child in her arms, is seen ringing at the prison door, to ask a last interview with her husband. The attitude of the figure is simple, the expression of the features free from even an approach to exaggeration; and yet what unutterable woe there is in those calm, piteous eyes! what meek piety, what solemn resignation in that sad, pure face! The second compartment shows us the interior of the prison. The wife has been refused admission, but the gaoler has brought in the infant to receive its father's farewell. The yearning fondness, mingling with saintly patience and firmness, in the martyr's countenance--the attitude of the child stretching out its little face and arms towards its father--must be seen, and pondered over; not described--no mere words could do it justice. In the third division, we behold the martyr going out to the pile on which he is to be burnt--his courage undiminished; his trust unshaken--an impressive conclusion to the story of an impressive picture. If this work appealed less eloquently to the best and purest feelings of the spectator, we might take some exception to the manner in which it is painted--in the sense of workmanship. But, seeing it what it is, we feel that slight technical objections would be petty and misplaced, applied to such a picture as this--a picture of "High Art," in the most elevated and comprehensive meaning of the term.

In "Rinaldo destroying the myrtle," Mr. F. R. Pickersgill has not got beyond respectable mediocrity. Not even by accident does he appear to have hit on anything original, in characterising, composing, or colouring any one of the numerous figures in his picture. We turn with pleasure from this work, and from the execrable vulgarity of Mr. Brodie's "May and December," to Mr. Frost's "Wood-Nymphs. The painter's refined feeling for form appears here to as much advantage as ever; the faces of his nymphs are still exquisite in their pure, ideal loveliness--would we could add that the glow and richness of colour, hitherto undeveloped in his works, were apparent on the present occasion. This is all that Mr. Frost wants; and to accomplish this, he need only learn to feel clue confidence in the resources of his own genius.

If "Nell Gwynne" could return to life with such a face as Mr. Egg gives her in his picture of this year, could the man be found, who would not be just as anxious to kiss her, as "Mr. Pepys" himself? The present is, in many respects, the best work the painter has produced. The greedy anxiety of Pepys to make the utmost of the kiss he is allowed to snatch from "Poor Nelly," is a capital piece of expression; full of comedy, yet free from coarseness. Equally good is the jaded, rouged face, and arch, vagabond look of the "player-woman" who is having her shoe put on. All the other figures in the picture are simply and naturally introduced--there is nothing that looks artificial in any part of the arrangement.

The painting, too, is admirably firm and forcible; and the coloursaving a little tendency to yellowness, in parts--displays a truth and richness well deserving of especial notice and praise.

We would fain delay over Mr E. M. Ward's "John Gilpin;" but our narrowing space obliges us to leave it with a passing word of commendation, as worthy in its spirit and humour of the immortal ballad which it illustrates. Going on, round the remaining figurepictures in the room, we do not find much to delay us. Mr. Faed's "Cottage Piety" is nothing but a mechanical imitation of the manner of Wilkie, which we need not stop to criticise. Nor do the "Dover Hovellers," by Mr. Hollins, incline us to make any long pause--three more intensely uninteresting men than these same "Hovellers," we never saw on canvas. Mr. Elmore's "Hotspur and the Fop demands, and has, our best attention. The picture is finely drawn and composed, and in many places, very well painted. The "Fop" is the conventional fop--a gentleman whom we are heartily tired of seeing represented; but the group carrying the dead body, and the expression and position of Hotspur, are full of dramatic energy. Mr. C. Collins's "Convent-Thoughts" we intend to notice further on, with the works exhibited in the West and North Rooms, by Messrs. Hunt and Millais--the novel and strongly-marked style which these three artists have adopted alike, warranting us in reserving their pictures for special and separate remark.

Not forgetting to admire, as we go, Mr. Frith's pretty "Gleaner," we now pass into the West Room. Here are two Scripture-subjects, by Messrs. Dobson and O'Neil; some "Arcadians" by Mr. Patten; and a "Defeat of Shylock" by Mr. Hook, all of very ordinary merit. Mr. Goodall's "Raising the May Pole" is a great improvement on his latter works. It is clever in design and arrangement, and presents some excellent effects of colour. Mr. Kennedy, in his "Theodore and Honoria," works in so blotchy and patchy a style, that his canvas looks as if it had broken out into an eruption of paint--while Mr. Horsley, in "L'Allegro and Il Penseroso" goes to the opposite extreme, and produces a surface as smooth and cleanly as a new coach panel. Mr. Stone's "Scene from the Merchant of Venice" is, we think, destined to please very generally. The female figures are elegantly and beautifully conceived--the men are the best Mr. Stone has ever painted, showing far more of masculine character and energy than we remember in any of his former works. Mr.Johnston's "Family Worship" gives us the old story--the family party are all trying to look pious; and the effect of colour is of the usual "dim, religious" treacle-brown hue, which seems to be a staple commodity of all domestic-devotional pictures of this class. Mr. Armitage's "Samson," is a work of great power and imagination-bold and original enough in conception to give goodly promise for this artist's future career, provided he guards himself rigidly against even a tendency to extravagance and display. We have rarely seen a larger canvas covered to smaller purpose, than by Mr. Barker; whose "Incident in the life of William Rufus" would have been more fitly exhibited on the side of a caravan, than on the walls of the Academy. Mr. J. H. G. Mann--a name new to us--has painted a very nice little picture of a "Mother and Child." Of Mr. Le Jeune's "Sermon on the Mount," we can only say that the artist will best show his reverence for sacred things, by never again attempting a Scripture subject.

The North Room has been made a new room this year, by hanging pictures in it, instead of architectural drawings; which have been removed to the Octagon Room. By this excellent arrangement, extra and well-lighted space has been gained for the young painters especially; who, with not more than one or two exceptions, have been treated on the present occasion with perfect justice--nay, with extreme liberality in some cases. For example, Mr. Rankley's "Pharisee and Publican," and Mr. Solomon's "Oliver Goldsmith" --the first of which strikes us as a display of sentimental mock piety; and the second, as a clumsy caricature--are so hung as to appear under every possible advantage of position to any spectator who may be able to discover the merit in them, which we cannot discern. In truth, the chief attractions to us, in the North Room, are the landscapes, which we have yet to notice. We remember nothing which it is necessary to particularise, but two clever animal pictures by Mr. Ansdell, and the "Woodman's Daughter," by Mr. Millais. The mention of this

last work reminds us that it is now time to offer our promised remarks on, what is called the "new," or "PreRaphael" style.

The characteristics of this style, in the eyes of the general spectator, may, we think, be pretty correctly described as follows:--an almost painful minuteness of finish and detail; a disregard of the ordinary rules of composition and colour; and an evident intention of not appealing to any popular predilections on the subject of grace or beauty. The most prominent representatives of this new school are Messrs. Millais, Collins, and Hunt; whose pictures we are now about to notice.

Mr. Collins's picture, in the Middle Room, is entitled Convent Thoughts and represents a novice standing in a convent garden, with a passion-flower, which she is contemplating, in one hand, and an illuminated missal, open at the crucifixion, in the other. The various flowers and the water-plants in the foreground are painted with the most astonishing minuteness and fidelity to Nature--we have all the fibres in a leaf, all the faintest varieties of bloom in a flower, followed through every gradation. The sentiment conveyed by the figure of the novice is hinted at, rather than developed, with deep poetic feeling--she is pure, thoughtful, and subdued, almost to severity. Briefly, this picture is one which appeals, in its purpose and conception, only to the more refined order of minds--the general spectator will probably discover little more in it, than dexterity of manipulation. Mr. Millais aims less high, and will therefore be more readily understood. He exhibits three pictures. The first represents a girl standing in an attitude of extreme weariness, in the chamber of an ancient mansion. The dress of the figure, the stained glass on the windows, the stool from which she has risen, all display the most dazzling and lustrous richness of colour, combined with high finish of execution. In the second picture, "The return of the Dove to the Ark," we have only the wives of two of Noah's sons; one holding the dove, the other caressing it. Here, every stalk of the straw on which the figures are standing, is separately painted; the draperies are studied and arranged, with great skill and power; and the flesh-tints are forcible in an extraordinary degree. The third picture, "The Woodman's Daughter," is more remarkable for the landscape than the figures. The woody background of the scene is really marvellous in its truthfulness and elaboration. Mr. Hunt exhibits one work --" Valentine receiving Silvia from Proteus;" and exceeds, in some respects, even Mr. Collins and Mr. Millais in the intricacies of high finish, and in minute imitation of the minutest objects in nature. "Silvia" is kneeling upon some dry leaves, treated with an elaboration beyond which art cannot go. The drapery, too, of this figure is painted with the most masterly firmness, brilliancy, and power; every inequality of the wooded background is represented with admirable fidelity to nature; and the patches of sunlight falling upon shady places through gaps in the trees above, shine with a dazzling brightness which never once reminds us of the trickeries of the palette--which is the evident result of the most intelligent and the most unflinching study.

Such are some of the most prominent peculiarities of these pictures which come within the limits of so brief a notice as this. If we were to characterise, and distinguish between, the three artists who have produced them, in a few words, we should say that Mr. Collins was the superior in refinement, Mr.Millais in brilliancy, and Mr. Hunt in dramatic power. The faults of these painters are common to all three. Their strict attention to detail precludes, at present, any attainment of harmony and singleness of effect. They must be admired bit by bit, as we have reviewed them, or not admired at all. Again, they appear to us to be wanting in one great desideratum of all art--judgment in selection. For instance, all the lines and shapes in Mr. Collins's convent garden are as straight and formal as possible; but why should he have selected such a garden for representation? Would he have painted less truly and carefully, if he had painted a garden in which some of the accidental sinuosities of nature were left untouched by the gardener's spade and shears? Why should not Mr. Millais have sought, as a model for his "Woodman's Daughter," a child with some of the bloom, the freshness, the roundness of childhood, instead of the sharp-featured little workhouse-drudge whom we see on his canvas? Would his colour have been less forcible, his drawing less true, if he had conceded thus much to public

taste? We offer these observations in no hostile spirit : we believe that Messrs. Millais, Collins, and Hunt, have in them the material of painters of first rate ability: we admire sincerely their earnestness of purpose, their originality of thought, their close and reverent study of nature. But we cannot, at the same time, fail to perceive that they are as yet only emerging from the darkness to the true light; that they are at the critical turning point of their career; and that, on the course they are now to take; on their renunciation of certain false principles in their present practice, depends our chance of gladly welcoming them, one day, as masters of their art--as worthy successors of the greatest among their predecessors in the English school.

With these observations, we take our leave of the figure pictures, and proceed to the landscapes.

Mr. Stanfield's most important picture this year, is the "Battle of Roveredo." We remember no work by the great landscape painter which better displays his powers than this. The moment taken, is when the troops of the French Republic were crossing the Adige. The stir and confusion of the scene are represented in the most masterly manner. The picturesque buildings in the middle distance, the hills beyond, and the snowy Alps, towering over all, are painted with that remarkable facility in rendering space, distance, and effect, for which Mr. Stanfield is unrivalled. The power of this picture is, indeed, extraordinary--its variety of objects, its brilliant colour and free forcible execution, "tell" upon the eye at almost any distance. There is a Dutch View (No.48), by the same painter, which is especially remarkable for the beautiful modelling of the sky--and a sea-piece (No. 743), which is one of the freshest and finest works of this kind that lie has ever produced.

Mr.Roberts, in the "Interior of the Church of St.Ann, at Bruges," triumphs as successfully as usual over all architectural complications, without ever confusing, or wearying the eye. We notice particularly the painting of the wood-carving running along the wall of the church, as a specimen of that perfect execution which exactly hits the medium between extreme finish and extreme freedom of handling. The "Surprise of the Caravan" (in the Middle Room) by the same artist, is a gorgeous eastern scene, bold and powerful in treatment, and strikingly brilliant in effect.

Mr. Creswick's pictures this year would amply justify his election as an Academician--were any such justification wanted. His best work is "The Evening Hour" (No. 147). The effect of fading light on the foliage and water is beautifully conveyed--the whole picture looks, indeed, as if it must have been painted in the open air, so admirable is it us a study of the light, shade, and colour of nature.

Mr. Danby has a "Winter Sunset" (in the Middle Room), in which the frosty stillness of the atmosphere, the solemnity of the clear darkening sky, and the last fiery reflections from the setting sun, are depicted with a grandeur of feeling and a vigour of treatment deserving of the highest praise we can accord. Equal to the works of the best Dutch masters in truthfulness, this picture possesses, in our opinion, a poetry and beauty of effect which, with the single exception of Rembrandt, the old painters have never rivalled.

Mr. Lee's landscapes are too patchy in execution, and too meagre in colour, to please us, this year. "The Market Cart" (No.55) is the best of his productions. Mr. Witherington studies carefully from nature; but his colouring is raw, and he is sadly wanting in sharpness and firmness of touch. Mr. E. W. Cooke has made a great advance on the present occasion. His "Views of Venice (Nos. 539 and 732), are by far the best things he has ever done. They are clear without hardness--brilliant and forcible, without exaggeration of colour--and (we speak from experience) excellent as truthful representations of the scenes they depict. Mr. Linnell is too uniformly yellow and brown, in his "Woodlands "--we infinitely prefer his smaller picture (in the North Room), which has great breadth and beauty of effect, especially in the sky. Mr. Redgrave's "Woody Dell" (No. 443), proves to us that he ought, for the future,

to confine himself entirely to landscape. As a study of foliage, this picture is the truest and the best in the present exhibition.

Want of space prevents us from doing more than indicating the following landscapes, as well deserving of attention:--In the East Room, Mr. J. D. Harding's "Bonneville," Mr. Jutsum's "Devonshire Coast," Mr. E. Lear's "Town in North Albania," Mr. Creswick's "Valley Mill," and Mr. Middleton's "Clovelly." In the Middle Room, Mr. Creswick's "Over the Sands." Mr. R. C. Leslie's "Hermitage Rock," and Mr. Stark's "Forest Farm." In the West Room, Mr. G. Stanfield's "East Tarbet," Mr. Gudin's "North East Coast of Scotland," Mr. Danby's "Ship on Fire," Mr. Back's " Caerhyh Church," Mr. Danby's Summer Sunset, and Mr. Raven's "Scene in Eridge Park." In the North Room, Mr. Middleton's" Fair day in February," Mr. A. J. Lewis's "Lane Scene," Mr. J. Danby's "Blackrock Castle," Mr. De Groot's "Anxious Moment," and Mr. G. A. Williams's" Evening of a stormy day."

Of the portraits this year, taken generally, it would be most charitable to say as little as possible. They are the worst part of the exhibition. The portrait-art of England seems to be declining lower and lower--we look in vain for the simple arrangement and grand colour of the works of our early school. Both are gone; and, in their stead, we have feebly-painted ladies and gentlemen, grinning and attitudinising like so many mountebanks. For ininstance, Mr. Knight paints a portrait of Mr. Barry (No. 85); and, because he happens to be a celebrated architect, thinks it necessary to make him flourish a pair of compasses, with a smile of unutterable triumph. Mr. E. Williams paints a huge portrait--of Moritz Retzch --who, by the way, if this is a good likeness, must be one of the dirtiest of men--and figures him forth, fiercely drawing attention to himself with two of his fingers, as if he was saying :-"Come! look at me! see how my hair wants brushing, how my face wants washing, how my shirt-collars want ironing!--see what a sublimely slovenly man of genius I am!" If this be portrait painting, how preferable are the daguerreotypes in the shop-windows!--they show us, at least, what the dignity and simplicity of nature really are.

Among the exceptions to the mass of mediocre portraits exhibited this year, we may especially mention Mr. Herbert's two children (No.33), a work admirable for truth, simplicity, and power, in spite of a little hardness and quaintness. Again, Mr.Maclise's portrait of Macready in the character of "Werner," is a noble reminiscence of the great actor in one of his greatest parts. Mr. Grant, too, has a portrait of Mrs. Livesay (No. 190) full of grace and beauty; but marred by carelessness in drawing and execution. Sir J. Watson Gordon comes nearer to the good old style than any of his contemporaries. His portrait of Sir John Pakenham displays great simplicity and power; but he must beware of a tendency to dinginess and blackness which we observe in some of his other works. Beyond the productions we have now noticed, we remember no mentionable portraits above mediocrity. Beneath mediocrity-far beneath it--there are many more that we could particularize; but it would be to no purpose to comment on them here. Most of these pictures are evidently the result of a natural incapacity which no advice could ameliorate, and on which it is therefore unnecessary to dwell. Let us, rather, go down at once to the Sculpture Room-here, at least, the eye will not be repelled by crudities of colour-here it is sure to find refinement and repose.

The best statue this year, is Mr. MacDowell's "Psyche"--a very beautiful idea, beautifully developed--pure, simple, and poetical, like all the sculptor's works. In Mr. Legrew's "Rachel," the forms have been well studied; the dead child hanging over the mother's knee is finely imagined--at once impressive and true to nature. Mr. Huncock's "Youth and Joy," and Mr. Marshall's "Hebe Rejected" are both works of great merit--the latter especially pleased us, by its refinement and simplicity. The remaining statues--there are comparatively few in the room, on this occasion--do not appear to possess more than ordinary interest, or to display more than ordinary ability. As for the busts, we must confess that our recollection of them is very confused. We have a general remembrance of heads of ladies with poetical features, and classically-dressed hair, and heads of gentlemen with muscular noses and mouths, and

majestic necks and shoulders; but to mention any individual heads among the collection, is beyond our power. We leave the task of criticism here--and in the South Room, where miniatures by hundreds bewildered us even more than the busts--to our readers; and take our leave of the Royal Academy, our last visit confirming the impression derived from our first, viz.--that, with the single exception of the portraits, this is one of the best exhibitions that has been opened to the public for many years back.

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Couple standing on the steps of the Royal Academy, Trafalgar Square
James Tissot (1836-1902)
London Visitors, c.1874 (Toledo Museum of Art)